

WELCOME TO CONFERENCE DELEGATES

THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE NEWSLETTER EXTENDS A HEARTY WELCOME TO ALL DELEGATES AND VISITORS TO THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RANK-AND-FILE CONFERENCE.

Certain trade union officials, and certain newspapers, have done their best to make the Conference a failure. They did not think it right that you should come together to discuss your problems.

They think that they and not you, they and not the men and women from the workshops, pits, docks and building sites, are the ones to decide what your problems are and how best to solve them.

They said the Conference was a 'conspiracy'. They said it was a 'plot'. They did their best to stop the election of delegates. They put the utmost pressure on militants who had agreed to sponsor the Conference.

Despite all their efforts the Conference is taking place, exactly as planned. We have provided the hall and the facilities for a discussion. The rest is up to you.

We hope you will speak up. Speak your minds. Exchange experiences of struggle. Chart a course for working-class resistance to sackings.

And then—go back to your workmates and branch colleagues and say exactly what you thought about this workers' Conference.

The Conference opens in the Holborn Hall at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday. The chair will be taken by Peter Fryer, Editor of The Newsletter, and the opening statement will be made by Brian Behan.

All amendments to the draft Charter of Workers' Demands, printed in The Newsletter last week, and any other resolutions, should be submitted before 1 p.m. so that they can be duplicated and circulated to delegates.

THE NEWSLETTER

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HERE'S WHY THE SOUTH BANK STEWARDS FIGHT ON

By HUGH CASSIDY, Chief Steward on the Shell-Mex site

ON behalf of the stewards of the Shell-Mex site, I have been asked to give the reasons why we stewards think it as just as important now that we continue this struggle as it was in the beginning. If the stewards and the rest of the men who are still locked out by 'Mac's' were to 'call it a day' and go their various ways, then the rank and file would say that the South Bank lads were sold out, but nothing further could be done.

We stewards are not of that opinion. We say that to bring this dispute to a successful conclusion, then we must continue the struggle.

Through our branches we must force the various unions to press for the reinstatement of all the lads who have been discriminated against by 'Mac's' refusing to re-employ them.

I have just been informed that 'Mac's' have blatantly broken an agreement made between them and the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers that there would be no victimization against their stewards.

'Mac's' have denied ever having agreed to re-engage these stewards, and now, surely, the ASW must take action on this matter.

We have the Transport and General Workers' Union officials again applying for the re-engagement of their members and being refused.

Out into the open

The Constructional Engineering Union have still got three shop stewards outside, despite the fact that Bro. Patterson, the general secretary, has openly stated that an agreement has been reached between McAlpine's and the CEU that his members would all go back.

The same officials who are now having their agreements
(Continued on page 295)

Revelations at Friendship Society Meeting

ROY SEAR, secretary of the British-Polish Friendship Society, was called to the headquarters of the Communist Party in September and instructed to sack his typist because she was a 'Trotskyist', and to produce the society's membership lists for inspection by Communist Party officials.

Twelve days later he was told by an official of the Polish Embassy in London that a message had come from Warsaw cutting off the society's subsidy—over £3,000 a year—from the Polish authorities.

Warsaw also insisted that the society's premises in Regent's Park Road be turned over for use as Embassy flats, and that the typist 'must go at once'.

Mr Sear revealed this at a special general meeting of the society in London last Saturday, despite attempts by BPFSS chairman Mr Gordon Schaffer to silence him by ruling his remarks out of order.

(Continued on back page)

COMMENTARY

UNDILUTED COCOA

LORD CADBURY'S cocoa—or some other stimulating beverage—seems to have gone to the head of Mr W. Roy Nash of Lord Cadbury's News Chronicle. But what has dripped off the end of his pen is something much less pure and nourishing than Cadbury's chocolate. In a last-minute attempt to sabotage the national industrial rank-and-file Conference, he has produced yet one more in the dreary series of witch-hunting 'exposure' stories. This time it is all about a sinister 'Red Club', the 'hidden movers' behind tomorrow's gathering of workshop representatives.

Mr Nash's story is so thin that his own paper comments editorially that 'it sounds almost too fantastic to be real'. And indeed, let any militant look at the so-called 'evidence': a few sentences that could have appeared in THE NEWSLETTER at any time in the past eighteen months, had Mr Nash cared to quote from our paper—sentences that in cold fact are less 'revolutionary' in their implications than the draft Charter of Workers' Demands which we printed last week and which the News Chronicle, for reasons best known to itself, ignored; plus a letter alleged to have been written *seven years ago!*

Mr Nash will have to do better than this if he is to make the flesh of the worthy Liberal matrons crawl in anticipation of the bloodbath being prepared by those 'unseen guiding hands'. We could quote score upon score of utterances by 'respectable' personalities in the Labour movement that would make his 'revelations' look like the conversation of Sunday school teachers. In fact the working-class movement has always looked like a 'conspiracy' to the employers. If our Conference is a 'plot' then never in history has there been such an open one. The names of those calling it were printed on the invitation for all to see. There is no need to look for 'hidden movers': on our Editorial Board are militants whose records of activity on behalf of their class have already damned them in the employers' eyes. What 'code names' do men like this need? Under their own names they have gone to prison, some of them—and may do again—for the crime of opposing arrogant employers and brutal police; and they have gone proudly. What need have these men to 'meet in secret'? This week-end's gathering, while it will not be open to Pressmen who specialize in hounding and harassing militants in their homes, will be open to every worker who wants to see for himself whether the Conference will help his class or not. What need have these men to 'encourage strife'? The employers and their Tory government have created more explosive material in the past two years, by their policy of sackings and attacks on stewards, than an army of 'agitators' could create in two centuries.

On October 30 the News Chronicle wrote: 'Unless his union card is restored to him, and there is no sign that it will be, [he] is silenced and becomes an unemployed, unskilled, old man.' This did not refer to Brian Behan, but to Boris Pasternak. We wrote to the News Chronicle saying that while we agreed Pasternak had been given a rough deal, what about a word of sympathy for a builder's labourer expelled by his union

for adherence to trade union principles? This grand old Liberal paper, true to its grand old liberal principles, did not print our letter; instead it repeats its grotesque allegation that 'unseen guiding hands' caused the South Bank stoppage 'in which nearly 1,300 men were jobless for weeks'—as if no McAlpine existed!

Nothing the News Chronicle says, however, can alter the conviction in the minds of hundreds of thousands of workers that employers, Tory Ministers and Right-wing trade union officials are determined to smash workshop organization and 'discipline' the militants. Here is the real conspiracy, hatched in the Pall Mall clubs, not the 'Red Clubs' of a cocoa-drinker's nightmare. If our Conference helps to rally working-class resistance to sackings, then it will not have been in vain. Meanwhile, our advice to Mr Nash is to take more water with his cocoa.

'INDUSTRIAL' AND 'POLITICAL' ACTION

WHERE did the idea come from that industrial and political action must be kept rigidly separate, so far as the Labour movement is concerned? After all, the Labour Party was founded, largely on the initiative of the trade unions, to supplement industrial by political action; and so late as 1920 the trade union movement, with men like Ernest Bevin well to the fore and even J. H. Thomas participating, threatened to bring down the government by means of a general strike if it did not change its foreign policy. That famous Council of Action was unmoved by the argument that Lloyd George, Churchill and Co. had a majority in Parliament, nor would it agree to 'wait till the next election'.

Perhaps the crucial year was 1924, when we had the first Labour government. Dockers, railwaymen and other workers put forward their demands on their employers with fresh confidence, many believing that with 'our people' in office the administration would favour their side for a change: for instance, that the police would be used against blacklegs instead of against strikers. Great was their disillusionment when they found the Emergency Powers Act used against them!

Bevin himself felt obliged to write, in his trade union journal, in reply to suggestions from the 'political' side that the union leaders should have restrained their members so as not to 'embarrass' the government:

These movements could not have been checked, nor would it have been wise to have held them up because a Labour government assumed office. After all, the demands made were and are perfectly legitimate . . . To check the movement would be to dispirit the workers, to weaken their faith in industrial action, and to encourage the employers to encroach still further on the present standards (The Record, April 1924).

After that experience, a tacit understanding seems to have developed, so far as the leaders of the Labour movement were concerned, that the trade unions must not use their power to effect political changes, while the politicians had the right and duty to be as 'neutral' as their Tory counterparts in face of industrial disputes. In 1934, when the Labour Party conference debated the use of the general strike to prevent war, Bevin, the bold spokesman of the Council of Action in 1920, spoke strongly against it.

The separation and counterposing to each other of 'industrial' and 'political' action is a typical product of the bureaucratizing of the movement.

SOUTH BANK (Continued from front page)

broken are the same officials who condemned the stewards for the actions taken to uphold agreements that 'Mac's' had repeatedly broken.

We stewards are now of the opinion that the unions concerned must surely realize that this is McAlpine at last coming right into the open and showing publicly that at no time do they intend to have any trade union organization on the South Bank.

The officials cannot place the blame on the stewards for the present set-up.

But the stewards can now, without prejudice, place the blame on the unions concerned if they fail to take up this challenge that McAlpine has deliberately thrown down to them.

All that the locked-out men on the South Bank site want is that their unions prove to the men who are back at work—men who have gone back thanks to the combined efforts of Matthews, Lowthian and the police—that the trade union movement is bigger than any employer, that they will fight the employer as ruthlessly as the employer always fights.

Only way to prove it

There is only one way to prove this to the men inside the gate, and that is to ensure that the stewards and all other lads victimized are reinstated on the South Bank.

Unless this is accomplished then we stewards think that

SOUTH BANK STEWARDS APPEAL TO ALL TRADE UNIONISTS

The following appeal has been issued by the Shell-Mex stewards:

BROTHERS,

Ten of our members have been charged with alleged 'offences' arising out of peaceful picketing of McAlpine's site on the South Bank.

McAlpine's lawyer was present during all the proceedings and quite openly gave advice to the prosecuting counsel.

Brothers Lynch and Behan were given two months' and six weeks' imprisonment respectively.

We are compelled to launch an appeal fund to cover the cost of appealing against these sentences, and also to pay some heavy fines for other brothers also found guilty of peaceful picketing.

We hesitate to ask for more money, but nevertheless these victims of our struggle for trade union principles urgently need your assistance.

We ask you therefore to send donations to:

HUGH CASSIDY, 61 Bengarth Road, Northolt, Middlesex.

The following stewards have still not been reinstated and we ask you to pass resolutions to the executive committees concerned demanding that all labour shall be withdrawn to secure their reinstatement:

TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION: H. Cassidy, P. O'Hey, A. Roy, J. Carmichael, D. Addington. M. Lynch, J. Dawson, J. Vigo, J. Blackman, V. Lynett.

CONSTRUCTIONAL ENGINEERING UNION: M. O'Mahoney, E. Blackey.

AMALGAMATED UNION OF BUILDING TRADE WORKERS: M. McGuire, P. Power, D. Nolan.

AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF WOODWORKERS: C. Leonard, T. Scollan, D. Murphy.

AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING UNION: P. O'Neill.

The position with the trade unions is as follows:

The Building Trades Group of the TGWU are demanding the reinstatement of all their men, and a special meeting of their executive committee is being held to investigate the dispute.

The ASW are demanding the reinstatement of their shop stewards and have held special meetings with McAlpine's to press this demand.

the trade union movement in building is finished as far as London is concerned.

Whereas if the stewards are returned to the job it will be the greatest thing that has happened to the trade union movement in years.

The rank and file are well aware of these facts; I quote from only one of the many resolutions which have been sent to Bro. Frank Cousins, general secretary of the TGWU:

'This 1/498 branch supports the action of the picketing of the Shell-Mex building site for the purpose of obtaining the reinstatement of the shop stewards.'

'We feel that negotiations should be reopened with the firm of McAlpine's in order to secure the re-employment of our stewards.'

'Good name at stake'

The branch secretary who sent this resolution added: 'My members felt that the good name of our union is at stake on this question of the apparent victimization of the shop stewards following the return to work of the men.'

On our unions' instructions we are holding ourselves available for work at all times. We have complied with all instructions issued by our unions and we now say to our union officials:

'It's now up to you to show the employer that he can't "rephase" his job by excluding known trade unionists.'

FOUR MORE BUILDING WORKERS GIVE THEIR LIVES

FOUR men were killed and others seriously injured on Tuesday when scaffolding on the roof of a new power station being built at Northfleet (Kent) fell 70ft.

The workers downed tools and marched through the streets of Gravesend.

This is the latest and most serious in a long series of fatal accidents on building jobs.

At the Belvedere (Kent) power station site, a rigger working 46ft up on an oil tank was swept to his death on October 14 by a wire hawser. His death was the second on the site in three months.

Then on November 6 one man was killed and another seriously hurt at Belvedere when a skip used for lowering concrete struck them as they were working on a shaft and they fell 50ft.

Other recent fatalities include a fall by a woodworker on the Selfridge's extension, London, and falls by two steel erectors at Jarrow when the roof trusses of a partly erected oil tank collapsed.

In seven months there were three fatal accidents on McAlpine's Shell-Mex job, on the South Bank of the Thames.

There are about 14,000 accidents a year in the building industry; last year 156 of them were fatal.

COVENTRY CONVENERERS STAND BY THE LADS AT WICKMAN'S

By Our Industrial Correspondent

CONVENERERS of forty-three Coventry factories, meeting on Monday to discuss the strike of over 400 workers at Wickman's machine tool plant, decided to ask union members in their factories to contribute not less than 2s. each a week to the strike fund as long as the dispute lasts.

The strike is now in its fourth week. The workers are demanding short time instead of redundancy, but the management has so far refused to grant this.

It has announced that it is prepared to allow short-time working until the end of December which, it claims, will allow time for discussions with the unions.

The strikers insist that they will not return to work until they receive a guarantee that all work will be shared, and that this will cover the sixty workers who received their notice through the post.

Wickman's, which is a subsidiary of John Brown's—the firm that recently sacked all its workers at the Belvedere power station (Kent)—can hardly claim that it is in financial difficulties.

Since May 1943 its capital has zoomed from a modest £675,000 to the impressive figure of £4 million.

STOP PRESS. The strike ends on Monday. Short time will be worked until the end of December; meanwhile redundancy notices will be 'non-effective' and discussions will take place.

MERSEYSIDE MAY EXPLODE ANY DAY NOW

By WILLIAM HUNTER

A RECENT notice published by the Merseyside Dock Labour Board informs the docker who is absent from work for 'less than two days' that he no longer needs to provide a medical certificate. This, says the Dock Labour Board, will save the docker a shilling.

However, the notice has aroused angry comments. The reasons why are explained in the latest issue of the Northern Broadsheet (the paper of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers, the 'blue union'):

'Events have proved the hypocrisy of this kind-hearted "concession" extended to the docker by the local Board.

'Instead of previously clearing himself with a medical certificate (one shilling) we find that when a docker presents himself for work after an absence of less than two days . . . he is denied his rights to seek work.

'Instead of his labour being made full use of, he is sent down to Sefton House [headquarters of the Dock Labour Board] and interrogated about his absence.

Half a day's work

'Thus, under the pretence of saving one shilling, we find the docker concerned losing half a day's work (it could be more), and if he questions the validity of his unnecessary trip to Sefton House it will cost him another day's work to put his case to the local Board.'

Dockers I have discussed it with see this recent regulation as one of a series of moves to increase the power of the Board and the employers over the dockworker.

The opinion is widely expressed that over the past few months the Dock Labour Board has been steadily increasing 'discipline' and seeking to prune the register of dockers by imposing penalties, including dismissals, for the smallest offences.

These activities, added to the conditions of near-poverty into which a great number of dockers are being driven because of the shortage of work, are raising the fighting spirit along the Mersey docks to a level not seen for many years.

As one seasoned militant put it: 'The six-week strike for recognition of the "blue" in 1955 took a hell of a lot out of our fellows.

'A year or two ago when militants were victimized dockers were sympathetic, and sometimes there was action. But the militants were well in front. But now, everybody feels his neck is near the chopper.'

They got a whiff

There is a good deal of explosive material on the Mersey waterfront. The Dock Labour Board got a whiff of it three weeks ago when it altered the method of paying wages.

A completely spontaneous walk-out of 1,000 men in Birkenhead caused them to withdraw a new regulation. The walk-out began when men were informed that no docker could collect his wages before 5 p.m., when the day's work ended. This would have meant that the last man paid would not have got away before 6 p.m.

Under the threat of a stoppage every Thursday while this rule was enforced, the Dock Labour Board agreed to open the pay office from 3.15 p.m., an hour earlier than before.

NOT WHAT HE MEANT?

'One sight that is always annoying to me is deserted road works on major routes out of London, and I asked the Minister if he could not persuade the men to work 24 hours a day. He said that on the London-Birmingham road this has been done.'

(Stirling Moss, in the Sunday Times, November 9)

HULL DOCKERS STRIKE FOR A FULL WEEK'S WORK

By Our Industrial Correspondent

LACK of work is causing unrest on the Hull docks. Last week there was a short stoppage by men who said if they were put on a certain ship there would be no work for them this week.

On Monday 240 men stopped work at the Albert Dock, claiming a bigger share of work. The stoppage lasted throughout the morning, bringing six ships to a standstill.

The men said that jobs on the weekly ships they were manning deprived them of the chance of a full week's work. Union officials arranged to meet the port employers to discuss the men's complaint, and they went back to work on that understanding.

Another 660 dockers at other docks went home because there was no work for them.

FOOTNOTE. Figures issued last week by the National Dock Labour Board showed that the previous week 18.6 per cent. of the total labour force in the docks were without work—a surplus of 13,600 men in a register of 73,000.

300 STRIKE TO PROTECT WAR INVALID

By Our Industrial Correspondent

A mass meeting on Monday of about 300 strikers at the Otis Elevator Company, Southwark (London), decided to continue their strike.

They are demanding that the firm make a special exception to timekeeping rules for a man who lost a leg in an air raid during the war.

On Wednesday the workers agreed to go back, on the understanding that punctuality rules will be discussed between union officials and the management.

POWER STATION WORKERS DOWN TOOLS WHEN STEWARD IS SACKED

About 500 workers at the Drakelow power station, near Burton on Trent, downed tools on Tuesday in protest at the sacking of a shop steward.

The steward had refused to connect up a portable appliance because it was not properly earthed.

About 300 went back on Wednesday, but Electrical Trades Union members are staying out.

BELVEDERE MEN ARE REFUSED DOLE

Locked-out workers at the Belvedere (Kent) power station site are angry at the shabby treatment they are receiving at the Labour Exchange.

Although Sir William Arrol's and John Brown's sacked 240 men four weeks ago both firms are insisting there is a dispute. The men are therefore disqualified from dole.

Men who have applied for National Assistance receive money only for their wives and dependants. On Tuesday they lobbied MPs at the House of Commons.

MINERS HAVE WON FIRST ROUND—BUT THE OFFENSIVE WILL GO ON

By Ted Woolley (Sandhole colliery, Walkden, Lancs.)

REJECTION by a majority of over 100,000 of the National Coal Board's offer of 7s. 6d. with strings shows the determination of the British miner to resist Tory government attempts to drive down living standards.

The crisis which threatens the nationalized coal industry is not a purely national question. The U.S. coal industry, in a state of almost permanent crisis since the end of the last war, is squeezing into European markets.

The miners of the Ruhr, where unsold stocks of coal at the pit-head total over 11 million tons, are demanding the introduction of a five-day week.

Number one problem of the British coal industry is that coal is being superseded by other forms of fuel—oil and nuclear power—which means that industry will have to undergo radical changes.

The industry is bankrupt

Secondly, in this capitalist economy there seems to be developing once again a slump which, if the workers permit, will result in mass unemployment.

Demand for British coal this last year is already down by some 12½ per cent., while stocks in hand total over 34 million tons and are increasing by over 500,000 tons a week.

The industry is bankrupt, though the Board does not say that the main reason for this bankruptcy lies in the deliberate 'weighting' of the books, and the colossal amounts of interest and compensation payments.

The NCB's accounts show a cumulative loss over eleven years of £24,600,000. Losses on importing American coal have been over £70 million. Interest paid to the Ministry over eleven years is no less than £189,500,000.

From the point of view of the Board the position is clear. It has borrowed its statutory maximum of £75 million for this year.

Has will and energy

And so any wage increase must be paid for either by 'economies' inside the industry, or by the government's introducing legislation to allow extended credit (against its declared intention).

One wonders what those who argue for the separation of industrial and political questions will think of this.

The Board is forced therefore to cut back living standards. But in doing this it faces a section of the working class that has been nurtured in bitter struggles, that is tightly organized, that has the will and energy to strike back effectively.

That the first attack has failed is a victory for the whole working-class movement. But the capitalist offensive will continue—and the miners must strengthen their defences and join with other sections that may come under attack.

ECONOMICS

IN SPITE OF TORY OPTIMISM, THE OUTLOOK IS BLACK

By Our Economic Correspondent

HIRE purchase controls removed. Cheaper credit. A lower Bank Rate. And now a decision to increase investment in the public sector of industry in 1959-60 by approximately 8 to 10 per cent., or by £125 to £150 million.

According to the Press these moves will stop the fall in production and bring about a new expansion. Will they?

There is no doubt that there has been a fall in production. Here are the percentage changes in production this year

compared with last, as published in the Financial Times on Saturday:

Commodity	Percentage change
Refrigerators	+37.5
Private cars	+29.5
Washing machines	+17.8
Commercial vehicles	+12
Coal	-3.7
Cement	-5.5
Bricks	-7.9
Television sets	-7.9
Pig iron	-8.5
Steel	-8.6
Houses	-9.9
Machine tools	-10.4
Radio sets	-13.9
Bicycles	-14.2
Motor cycles	-34.6
Radiograms	-35.2

The increase in refrigerators and washing machines is offset by the fall in radiograms, television sets and radio sets, while the fall in motor cycles and bicycles to some extent offsets the increase in motor cars.

Right down the list

There is left the fall in every basic commodity right down the list: coal, steel, iron, cement, bricks, houses and, most significantly, machine tools.

Quite clearly the easing of credit restrictions and the reduction of interest rates has come too late to do any more than slow down the rate of decline in production.

There is enough short time and under-employment in industry to take up all the additional production that these measures will ensure, without adding a single man to the pay roll. And this is well understood by economists.

As for the additional investment in 1959-60 in the public sector giving an extra 150,000 jobs, as Heathcoat Amory stated in last week's economic debate in the Commons, that is also extremely doubtful.

Most of this investment could be absorbed by industry without additional labour; certainly any part of it expended on the railways will only reduce the existing number of redundant railway employees.

Amory 'impressed by resilience'

The most surprising statement made in the debate—aside from Hugh Gaitskell's agreement with the government that the crisis would be over by the spring—was this from Heathcoat Amory:

'Some people detect signs that the present record level of private industrial investment may not be maintained next year. I have been impressed by the resilience which it has shown so far, which seems to me to illustrate a fundamental confidence in the future.'

Two of the 'signs that the present record level of private industrial investment will not be maintained next year' are:

1) The fall in the production of machine tools by 10.4 per cent.; and

2) 'New factory approvals in the third quarter were just over 30 per cent. less than a year ago' (Financial Times, November 7).

Another sign is the fall of 15 per cent. in private investment next year, as shown by the Board of Trade's inquiry into manufacturers' investment intentions.

There is clearly not the slightest ground for optimism on anyone's part next year—least of all on the part of the 514,000 unemployed.

On the contrary, with investment being cut all over western Europe, and in the primary producer countries as well, the

economic outlook is black.

The November issue of the Treasury Bulletin for Industry reports:

'The volume of goods exported in the first five months [of 1958] was 3 per cent. lower than a year earlier, but in June-August the decline was 7 per cent.

'So the rate of fall is accelerating—a consequence of a marked change of trend in exports to primary producing markets and particularly to the Sterling Area.

'These last were 7 per cent. lower than 1957 in June-August compared with 2 per cent. higher in the first five months.'

That is the true picture—an 'accelerating' decline. The spurious optimism of interested government politicians in an election year should be ignored.

And this decline will not be halted by cheapened hire purchase or by increasing public investment by 8 to 10 per cent. next year.

The reality is a declining economy, declining export markets, overproduction, rising unemployment—and the prospect of a steeper decline before long.

LABOUR

NATIONALIZATION: LET'S LEARN THE LESSONS OF 1945-51

By George Cunvin

NATIONALIZATION is an essential first step toward socialism. But to socialists nationalization has never been an end in itself.

This elementary axiom is not necessarily accepted by those who have led the Labour Party during the last half-century.

These thoughts are prompted by an article in the Sunday Times recently by economist George Schwartz. He uses a review of 'Nationalization in Britain' by R. Kelf-Cohen as a basis for a reactionary attack on the whole idea of nationalization.

It is not difficult for any socialist to pull Schwartz's arguments to pieces. For he stands the whole issue on its head.

Unfortunately, a great deal of what he writes about the Labour leaders is only too apposite. Scorning a theoretical approach to the problems of capitalism and socialism, these 'practical' men and women thought they only had to reach Cabinet rank and introduce the necessary parliamentary legislation and, hey presto, the deed would be done.

Capitalism would be no more and socialism would reign in its place.

No blue print for Manny

Take, for example, this quotation from the autobiography of Emmanuel Shinwell:

'For the whole of my political life I had listened to the party speakers advocating State ownership and control of the coal-mines, and I had myself spoken of it as a primary task once the Labour Party was in power. I had believed, as other members had, that in the party archives a blue print was ready.

'Now, as Minister of Fuel and Power, I found that

nothing practical and tangible existed. There were some pamphlets, some memoranda produced for private circulation and nothing else. I had to start on a clear desk.'

Who did Shinwell think had drawn up the blueprint he vainly sought? Was he not one of the leaders of the party, a leader of many years' standing?

Herbert's 'competent' business people

Or listen to Herbert Morrison, steering the Iron and Steel Bill through Parliament:

'It really is a preposterous suggestion that before the industry has been socialized, before the Act of Parliament has been brought in, and before any powers have been obtained at all, my Right Honourable friend [Mr Strauss], a politician, should work out in detail the specific technical future of the industry down to considerable detail, embody it in the Bill, and thereby deprive the scheme of all fluidity.

'Surely the wise thing, if the industry is to be socialized, is to provide for it to be taken over, to let the shares vest in the Iron and Steel Corporation and then let the Corporation, composed of competent business people, be responsible for the management of the industry, subject to such general directions as the Minister of Supply may give them.'

Well might George Schwartz ask: 'Isn't that a corker?' Socialists will echo that, but for entirely different reasons.

'Fluid' enough for Tories

We all know that Morrison achieved the 'fluidity' in the iron and steel industry he was seeking—so much so, in fact, that the Tories were able to return it to private ownership without any difficulty.

What Shinwell should have done when he found no blue print on his Ministerial desk, what Strauss should have done when he was drawing up his Bill to nationalize steel, was call regional and national conferences of the workers in the industries concerned and learn from the man at the coal-face and the man in the blast-furnace what was expected of a socialist industry.

The Iron and Steel Corporation should not have been manned with 'competent business people' but with efficient and socialist-minded steelworkers.

That was the road to socialism. Morrison chose the road back to Tory rule and denationalization.

It is no accident that of all the nationalization measures introduced by the Labour government only the National Health Service bears some resemblance to a socialist way of running things.

Many years of research

The Health Service as originally conceived was the result of many years of research, discussion and planning by doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other health workers, who were also socialists.

They knew what they wanted from a socialist health service and planned accordingly.

The lesson for Labour is not that nationalization has failed but that the existing nationalization schemes were drawn up by people who, because of their scorn for political theory, had not the slightest conception of what socialism really meant. We must not make the same mistake again.

Constant Reader | Rank-and-file Movements of the Thirties

AMONG the delegates to our industrial rank-and-file Conference there will undoubtedly be some who participated in the remarkable rank-and-file movements of 1933-35 on the London buses, on the railways, in the aircraft industry and elsewhere.

And it is to be hoped that they will pass on what seem to them the lessons of that experience.

There was a period when it looked as though rank-and-file movements would spread from industry to industry until the whole field was covered, and would begin to come together to co-ordinate their efforts.

Though these movements in the main began independently of the Communist Party (and at first the communists were taken by surprise and even put out by these spontaneous developments), members of that party soon began to play

an active part in them.

That was why the trade union bureaucracy issued its 'Black Circulars', in an attempt to disrupt and weaken the rank-and-file movements.

The attempt was a failure, and its principal effect was to give added kudos to the communists.

During 1936 and 1937 the drive behind these movements somehow flagged. They ceased to expand and consolidate. No national link-up took place. It proved possible for Bevin to isolate and break up the militants among the London busmen.

The whole industrial scene changed for the worse.

Had developments continued as they were beginning in 1933-35 perhaps there need never have been the war that broke out in 1939.

Why this change, and what can we learn from it for today?

Ted Hill speaks up for us

'The continued attempts to isolate militants and rank-and-file committees are difficult to understand. From a trade union standpoint they are the very bulwark of organization, and without them trade unionism would be a fiasco.

'The very existence of rank-and-file committees indicates the bureaucratic domination within a trade union, and such domination can only be removed by the revision of union rules permitting the organization of such committees . . .

'Militants and rank-and-file committees are the very essence of success, and personally I would not be without them.

'Whenever the opportunity presents itself most trade union officials relate with pride the history of the Tolpuddle martyrs—they inspire the worker to emulate the class consciousness of these grand old warriors; but when the worker responds and becomes a militant, he is persecuted by his very tutor.'

—Ted Hill, then London district organizer of the Boilermakers' Society, in Labour Monthly, July 1936.

Limited outlook

'THE most hopeful, indeed the only, political development on the Left has been the entry of the former Bevanites into what was until then a small propagandist group, Victory for Socialism.'

Thus wrote John Saville in his London Letter for the September 1958 issue of the Australian socialist review Outlook.

Whether the co-editor of the New Reasoner regards the developments in connexion with The Newsletter which are now getting so much publicity as being 'hopeful' is perhaps questionable, but nobody can deny that they are 'political'.

Many would argue that they are at least as significant as Victory for Socialism, which has hardly justified some early enthusiasms.

I wonder if my old friend Saville would 'agree' that he slipped up in his estimate of forces worth mentioning in the British Labour movement when he wrote that London Letter—in which, though the New Reasoner and Universities and Left Review are duly and properly featured, The Newsletter doesn't get so much as a mention?

Prouder than thou

IN 'The Brothers Yershov', which I mentioned last week, we are shown how some fine, hard-headed, disciplined Workers rout some nasty, spineless, tortuous-minded Intellectuals who try to draw too many conclusions from the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel,' said Dr Johnson. What the French call 'ouvriérisme'—the Cult of the Manual Worker—is always the first refuge of the bureaucracy in the Labour movement, whether Stalinist or reformist, the Bevin type or the Pollitt type: 'Out with your spanners, lads, and get bashing those egg-heads.'

This tactic served the leaders of the British Communist Party fairly well in 1956-57.

It has the disadvantage in the long run, however, of stirring up the class consciousness of the workers; in a period like the one we are in now, this means that the Pollitts and Gollans are digging a pit for themselves into which those who today are their most loyal supporters may soon be disgustedly kicking them.

More Marx for Russians

As Stalin's foreign policy came increasingly to resemble that of the tsars, he grew intolerant of those among the writings of Marx and Engels which critically analysed and combated tsarism in the sphere of international relations.

After about 1934, publication of these works in Russian ceased.

This is the background to the announcement that vol. x of the new edition of the collected works of Marx and Engels, which recently appeared in Moscow, and deals with the period on the eve of the Crimean War, includes twenty-five items which are published in Russian for the first time.

Old and true

'The position of privilege, irrespective of capacity—a position occupied by many trade union officials—is becoming the most scandalous circumstance of the Labour movement.'

—Beatrice Webb, 1918 ('Diaries, 1912-24', p. 109).

Old and—?

'The trade union movement has become, like the hereditary peerage, an avenue of political power through which stupid untrained persons may pass up to the highest office if only they have secured the suffrages of the members of a large union. One wonders when able rascals will discover this open door to remunerative power.'

—Same writer, 1917 (same book, p. 89).

BRIAN PEARCE

LETTERS

GLASGOW PLUMBERS WISH SUCCESS TO RANK-AND-FILE CONFERENCE

At our last meeting a circular on the rank-and-file Conference to be held in London on November 16 was read.

It was agreed we write you and inform you that while we support the idea of a rank-and-file movement and agree with the urgent need for action in the industrial field to meet the growing threat of unemployment and the attacks of the employers, it is not a practical proposal for us to be in attendance.

However, we wish to inform you that our branch welcomes the invitation and wishes your Conference every success in its deliberations.

Glasgow, W.3

James Robertson (Glasgow East Lodge, Plumbing Trades Union)

NOW IS THE TIME TO SAY 'NEVER AGAIN' AND FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT

As an Irishman, and an unemployed one at that, I wish to add my support to the rank-and-file Conference which has been called by THE NEWSLETTER.

Your Conference will be of great interest to me because it intends to rally active opposition and struggle among the rank-and-file trade unionists against the spread of unemployment.

Some of the workers in this country have forgotten, or do not know, what it means to be unemployed. As far as I can see, if they do not begin to act now they are in for a rude shock.

I know what I am talking about, having been forced to give up my house in Dublin because of unemployment there.

I well remember some of my mates in the Army during the war telling how never again would they put up with mass unemployment, ragged children and families living on the border of starvation.

Now is the time to say 'Never again' and to act with united strength to make sure that it never does happen again.

London, S.W.2.

John Byrne

THESE LEADERS DO NOT WANT SOCIALISM

THE Labour Party conference did one good act: it opposed war over Quemoy. And, less important, but still something, it showed its contempt for jingo appeals by electing Barbara Castle chairman in spite of the capitalist Press attacks on her over her stand on Cyprus.

Otherwise the conference was feeble. It rejected nationalization of the land and showed a general funk of socialism.

The trouble with the Labour Party is that it does not understand the class struggle, and is led by men who came from the owner class and have the owner class mentality. It does not live up to its name; it is not a party of Labour.

Even so, we Marxists are not opposed to the Labour Party. As the great John McLean put it in Forward in 1910:

FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY (Continued from front page)

Mr Sear announced that because of this interference by Communist Party officials in the society's affairs, which had gravely harmed it, he was resigning from the party.

A former Daily Worker music critic, he joined the Young Communist League at the age of 13 and the Communist Party seventeen years ago. He is 37.

The outcome of the meeting was that Mr Sear will continue as secretary, though the cutting off of the society's funds means that he will no longer be able to do the job full-time.

The overwhelming feeling of the meeting was that the society should continue and not close down.

A resolution was passed instructing the executive to examine the possibility of holding a conference to discuss British-Polish friendship. This suggestion had been put forward by Mr Alfred Dressler of Leeds.

Mr Sear told the meeting that he was instructed not to tell anyone—not even the members of the executive—that he had been ordered to dismiss his typist and to take the membership lists to King Street.

'I had no intention of finding an excuse to sack a loyal worker,' he declared.

'This sort of thing must end for ever. The representatives of the Polish people in Britain must realize that any sort of advice from the Communist Party is against the interests of British-Polish friendship.

'In this room are two secretaries of this society who were victims of just such "advice" within the last eighteen months. There is a well-known journalist here who lost his job as a result of such "advice".'

'We always took "advice"'

Mr Sear was strongly supported by Mr W. J. Ellerby, who was forced to resign from the secretaryship of the BPFS soon after his resignation from the Communist Party in May 1957.

Mr Ellerby said the society had never grown because of its proscription by the Labour Party. It was regarded as a communist front organization. That was precisely what it had been.

'I am as responsible as anyone for having been secretary of a communist front organization,' he said. 'Within the knowledge of the EC, the Communist Party played a very large part in the line of our society in various ways.

'For delegations we always took "advice" and the EC was told we had been "advised" as to how this or that delegation should be made up.'

'We Marxists are in favour of the Labour Party because it is working class; but we oppose the conduct of its MPs because it is . . . reactionary and tends to lead the masses to Liberal petty-patch-work rather than to the class struggle ending in the revolution of property-ownership which must inaugurate socialism.'

You are right of course about the reactionary politicians and trade union leaders in the movement. They are mainly careerists who use the movement as a ladder to climb out of the working class. The one thing they do not want is socialism.

We can hit back at them only by following the day-to-day struggle in industry and pointing out the moral. Now that unemployment has returned, there is plenty of material.

Hence the obvious need for a genuine rank-and-file workers' movement, that will really wage war on capitalism. Hence our whole-hearted support for The Newsletter's industrial conference.

James D. Young (former secretary of Grangemouth Trades Council); Peter Young (Transport and General Workers' Union, dockers' group, Grangemouth); James Dick, Amalgamated Engineering Union, Airth)

The Communist Party were interested in elections within the society and approved appointments.

Mr Ellerby pointed out that the society had not now enough money to pay for postage and had only a couple of hundred active members.

Describing how he wrote the foreword to the annual report for 1956, he said it had to be passed by the Polish Embassy. They rejected it, and the EC rewrote it.

The Poles would still not accept it, because the Soviet Embassy would not approve the reference to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

Mrs Pritt led deputation

The EC then rewrote the foreword again, quoting throughout from Gomulka's own Eighth Plenum speech, and sent a deputation to the Embassy under the chairmanship of Mrs Pritt. Under this pressure the Poles gave way.

'If our work is to continue we must continue on a new basis,' Mr Ellerby added. 'Whatever you do or whatever you say the name BPFS will carry that stigma. I think therefore we ought to consider whether we should use the name or change it.'

Miss Raya Levin said she approved of the secretary not having shown the membership lists to King Street officials; but she thought it was wrong of him to suggest, without more evidence, that the Polish authorities had acted on the advice of the British Communist Party leaders.

Mrs Minna Samuel, a former employe of the society, recalled how New Poland, a monthly, had been suppressed when it began to tell the truth about Poland and the October events of 1956.

The staff of the society had been reduced, and the Polish Embassy caused the move from Portland Place (where premises were shared with such official bodies as the Polish Institute) to Regent's Park Road, though this was when for the first time the BPFS was gaining in influence and support.

Mrs Samuel said she had no doubt that the moves now revealed by Mr Sear were a continuation of the same process; that the excuses always given about lack of money and the need for retrenchment were incorrect; and that all these incidents together were convincing.

FOOTNOTE. Last March, at the society's annual general meeting, three prominent critics of Stalinism—Professor Levy, Dr Len Crome and Mr Gordon Cruickshank—topped the poll in the elections to the executive.

The AGM carried unanimously a resolution stating that the main task of the new executive was to 'redirect and broaden the work of the society, involving individuals representative of wider sections of the British people'.