

# THE NEWSLETTER

Weekly Journal of the Socialist Labour League

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## NO, SOCIALISM IS NOT A 'NAUGHTY WORD' Victory for printworkers would help election fight

By GERRY HEALY

**T**HIS is a time for alarm and action in the Labour movement. Labour's net loss of 322 seats in the municipal elections cannot be laughed off by Morgan Phillips or the smart alocs of Transport House.

Though the Tory government is imposing burden after burden on the shoulders of the working class the Labour Party is defeated at the polls. Why? Because Labour's policy is more and more indistinguishable from that of the Tories.

Read what the Sunday Times says about it:

'We have Mr Morgan Phillips . . . recoiling in horror at the very thought that socialists remain even on speaking terms with nationalization . . . Even the latest models of Gaitskellism . . . are already being drastically restyled; the rough edges are being sandpapered down . . .

'Everybody is getting into the chameleon act: at this rate socialism and nationalization will soon be on Labour's list of naughty words . . .

'Was it pure coincidence that [Morgan Phillips] issued his

### SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE CONFERENCE MEETS THIS WEEK-END

THE inaugural conference of the Socialist Labour League will be held in London this Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

The political report will be given by the League's provisional national secretary, Gerry Healy. Seven hours have been set aside for discussion of the report, the reply to which will be made by Brian Behan.

At an open session on Sunday afternoon, to which observers from other working-class organizations are being specially invited, there will be a full discussion on the fight against bans, proscriptions and expulsions in the Labour movement.

Other business of the conference includes the adoption of the League's constitution, a draft of which will be presented by Peter Fryer, Editor of The Newsletter; a discussion on the League's international relations, to be opened by William Hunter; and the election of a national committee.

The conference will be followed by a series of public meetings in major centres, beginning with one in Leeds on May 24.

(Marxists in conference: page 140)

### AIRCRAFT STEEL CONVENER THANKS THE NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter has received the following letter from the convener of the shop stewards' committee at Aircraft Steel Structures, Park Royal, London:

Dear Brother,

I am instructed by the above committee to write and thank you for the support that was consistently given to us in the columns of your journal during our recent strike.

Your reports were fair and objective and therefore helped us towards the victory we achieved in compelling the management to conform to our agreements concluded with the previous management.

Sending you our best wishes,

Yours fraternally,  
D. EDWARDS (Convener)

pronouncement from Transport House that "we do not intend to nationalize the large firms"?

'The Left-wingers are now written off as difficult lads who played truant and neglected their homework on the new socialist glossary of political terms.'

### 'SOCIALISM' AND 'NATIONALIZATION'

For leaders: **dirty words**

'The new glossary of political terms.' According to that glossary 'socialism' and 'nationalization' have become dirty words in the Labour Party.

Yet as a political trend the municipal election results are only a flea-bite compared with the continued retreat of the leaders in the industrial field.

Sixty thousand more coal-miners are in danger of losing  
(Continued overleaf)

### HOBART HOUSE HITS THE NAIL—BANG ON THE THUMB

MINERS have been using hammers and shovels for several years. They're getting quite used to them now. In fact they think these tools have probably come to stay.

But the National Coal Board want to make quite sure that these new-fangled things are being used properly. So they have sent a pamphlet from their Hobart House headquarters to pit instructors. One part says that this is the way to use a hammer:

1. Examine the hammer.
2. Grasp the shaft.
3. Approach the object.
4. Strike the object.

With a shovel, it seems that you examine the shovel, approach the pile of stone or coal to be removed, grasp the shovel, make a forward stroke, raise the load, then—wait for it!—swing shovel in the direction in which load is to be thrown.

There are 46 pages in this pamphlet. The only thing that's missing is a section for miners' grandmothers on how to get the most out of an egg.

'Not so silly as it sounds,' says a Coal Board spokesman. But the miners think it's the NCB's heads that want examining, not the colliers' hammers.

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SATURDAY, MAY 16, 1959

**MARXISTS IN CONFERENCE**

**T**HE NEWSLETTER welcomes delegates and visitors who this week-end are coming from branches all over the country to the inaugural conference of the Socialist Labour League. We welcome, too, observers from other working-class organizations who will be attending the open session on Sunday afternoon to discuss with us the furtherance of a united campaign against bans, proscriptions and expulsions in the Labour movement.

For six solid months British Marxists have been the butt of a sustained and vehement offensive in the capitalist Press and in witch-hunting statements by Right-wing Labour and trade union leaders. 'No mercy for the Trotskyists', screams the banner headline in this month's issue of London News, the organ of the London Labour Party—echoing the exhortations of prosecutor Vyshinsky during the Moscow trials of the thirties. The Manchester Guardian calls it an 'indecorous' witch-hunt: it would have preferred a gentlemanly one—'individual expulsion rather than blanket proscription'! From this stronghold of 'liberalism' to Communist Party headquarters; from Transport House to Jack Tanner's witch-hunting outfit IRIS, now revealed to have been receiving money from industrialists via the anti-communist organization Common Cause Ltd (one of whose two rival sections has just dissolved itself after a heated faction fight): all have denounced the Socialist Labour League and done their best to strangle it. They have failed; and our con-

**GERRY HEALY (Continued from front page)**

their jobs because the National Union of Mineworkers refused to fight the initial sackings. Engineering workers are going ahead for higher wages and shorter hours with their re-elected president's attack on militancy ringing in their ears.

The railwaymen face a fight in which they will be hampered by their secretary's refusal last summer to lead them into action in support of the London busmen, and by his failure to evolve any kind of strategy.

The hosiery workers have suffered two wage cuts, and are threatened with a third.

The printworkers are preparing for action on the 40-hour week while many other sections retreat on this issue. The Trades Union Congress does not even pretend to be evolving a concerted strategy on this or any other issue.

**SYSTEMATIC AND THOROUGH****Employers preparing their attacks**

Instead Alan Birch, chairman of the TUC economic committee, preaches a sermon at the Institute of Personnel Management about good relations, wider horizons, a good atmosphere and higher production.

Meanwhile unemployment remains at over 500,000, with an ominous rise in juvenile unemployment. Systematically and thoroughly, the employers are preparing their attacks.

This shameful lack of leadership on the industrial field is largely responsible for the stagnation in the political field, which may well cost Labour the general election.

The Right-wing leaders are damaging the party by banning, proscribing and expelling people. It was no accident that the Tories seized on the witch-hunt in the Labour Party for their

ference this week-end will establish the League on a granite foundation and plan a massive extension of its work and activity.

Above all the conference will confirm that feature of the Socialist Labour League's programme and policy which stands in the sharpest contradistinction to the thinking and the practice of every other Left-wing group, even groups that call themselves Marxist: that our League alone seeks to bring home to workers their own enormous strength, and to prepare them to use that strength. That we do this, week after week in our paper, day after day in the activity of our members, is the fundamental reason for the witch-hunt. But it is also the source of our growing influence and attractive power. Our conference will be a gathering of active workers who have found in Marxist ideas a genuine alternative to reformism's failure to wage any kind of fight against capitalism. The rank and file are searching for fighting socialist policies. The task of the conference will be to find ways of bringing our League's message to militant workers and winning them to our ranks.

The future historian will decide what place this conference will have in the tortuous story of the Marxist movement in Britain. At the very least, it will be a milestone; there are signs that it may even be a watershed, dividing a period of widespread confusion, disappointments and weary uphill fighting from a period of ideological clarity, working-class victories and permanent achievements in the construction of a world-wide revolutionary movement. For the significance of the conference is not confined to Britain. In welcoming visitors from Marxist organizations in other countries, we look forward to a valuable exchange of experiences and to the cementing of close fraternal ties in the spirit of working-class internationalism.

municipal election television propaganda.

If Morgan Phillips and Len Williams devoted a fraction of the time they spent in 'rooting out' Marxists from local Labour Parties to the production of serious political statements attacking the Tories and rousing Labour in the battle against them, what a different state of affairs there would be!

But these gentleman's activities are not determined by the interests of the Labour movement, but by the requirements of the employing class. They are more afraid of socialists in their own party than they are of the Tories.

**BEVAN SHARES RESPONSIBILITY****Labour reaps Brighton harvest**

Like Guy Mollet in France, they would choose the extreme Right wing of the Tory Party if they were faced with a choice between a genuine struggle for socialism and the maintenance of capitalism in Britain.

The Right-wing Labour leaders, aided by Bevan, have helped the Tory Party to consolidate itself. From the Suez fiasco in 1956 to the present time there has been a gradual stabilization of the Tory Party's position.

Now Labour is reaping the harvest sown at the Brighton conference of 1957. In The Newsletter's analysis of that conference this warning was contained:

'This entire conception of watering down socialism and cramping militancy in order to attract the middle-class voter . . . is riddled with flaws . . .

'A party which takes such steps runs grave risks of losing the support of industrial workers . . . Weakness, vacillations and hesitancy will never attract more than an insignificant section of the petty bourgeoisie.'

This warning appeared on October 12, 1957. For the results of the policy of 'watering down socialism and cramping militancy' Bevan must share the responsibility.

## NO EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

### New round of struggles

Where does the working class stand today? It is faced with a great new round of industrial struggles—yet it faces these struggles without effective industrial or political leadership.

Only Marxists can provide the leadership that is lacking, for they alone base themselves on the class struggle, instead of looking for ways of avoiding it.

We repeat the warning we have given again and again in these columns in the past two years: the movement needs a strike strategy, and if the leaders will not provide it, then the rank and file must do so.

All unions which have gone on record for the 40-hour week should rally to support the printworkers in their struggle.

The forging of firm rank-and-file links among these unions can provide a powerful base for solidarity action on a local, area and national scale.

The object of such solidarity action must be the prevention of scabbing and of 'black' printing. The Transport and General Workers' Union must take steps to seal off all supplies of paper, ink and the import of printed matter from west Germany, Holland, Belgium and other foreign countries.

## RANK-AND-FILE STRATEGY

### Put heart into movement

Only resolute action of this kind will bring the printing employers to their knees.

The miners—for whom the only alternative to unemployment is shorter hours—should rally behind the printworkers. The railwaymen, too, who face similar problems, should be drawn into the movement.

A rank-and-file strategy of this kind would put new heart into the whole Labour movement, and enable the working class to sweep forward to victory, both in industrial struggles and in the general election.

The Socialist Labour League believes that if a start is made by the setting up of rank-and-file organizations in the industrial field, this will help to generate a political movement that will sweep the Tories out of power.

It is in their experiences of industrial struggle that workers learn most directly the need for nationalization of basic industries, the need for workers' control, the need for an end to compensation payments to parasites if the industries are to be modernized.

Resolute leadership in the trade unions will lead to resolute leadership in the Labour Party. The Socialist Labour League was formed to fight for this.

## BOLD AND ENTERPRISING

### Not hole-and-corner

The job cannot be done by keeping one's mouth shut, or by waging some hole-and-corner fight. Socialists must be bold and enterprising if they are to hack away the Right-wing 'glossary'—the vocabulary and practice of class betrayal—that is trammelling the movement today.

The course of the employers' offensive confirms to the hilt everything the Marxist movement and The Newsletter have said.

Now more than ever our message to shop stewards, militants and active socialists in the Labour Party is urgent: 'Prepare now for class battles. Prepare now for victory.'

## IN MIDLANDS, NORTH AND LONDON, THE WITCH-HUNTERS ARE WOBBLING

The witch-hunt in the Birmingham, Leeds and Norwood Labour Parties is not going according to Right-wing plans.

In BIRMINGHAM, Harry Finch and Councillor A. Taylor

walked out of an inquiry into their appeal against expulsion because they were refused a two weeks' adjournment.

A few minutes before the meeting began they were given copies of the nine-page report on which their expulsion on February 11 had been based—a document which they asked for when they were expelled, so that they could prepare their case for the appeal, but which they were then refused.

Finch and Taylor had also expected that J. G. Walsh, who was said to have suffered 'severe strain' because of the 'constant pressure' they had brought to bear on him, would have been at the meeting. They wanted to question him about these allegations. But he was not there.

## Turned inquiry into farce

Said Finch and Taylor after their walk-out:

'We asked for a two weeks' adjournment to study the nine pages of accusations, so that we could prepare answers, and above all demanded the right to question Mr Walsh.

'These elementary requests were refused. This turned the inquiry into a farce.

It is impossible for anyone to defend himself against charges when the person who has made accusations is not present to be examined.

'We are fully prepared to meet the national executive committee or sub-committee, as originally suggested.'

The meeting was conducted by two national executive delegates, regional organizer H. R. Underhill and assistant national agent Sarah Baker.

In LEEDS the witch-hunters have retreated slightly from their original position that expelled members could not put their case.

Walter Preston, the secretary of Leeds City Labour Party, has written saying that the party officers have 'reviewed the situation', since 'it has been suggested that although the executive committee were satisfied that their decision was justified it would have been advisable to have given you the opportunity of appearing before the committee'.

The expelled members are invited to an executive meeting to state why the constitution (sic) and the national executive's decision should not be applied to them.

They are refusing to go before the executive, on the ground that their expulsion was unconstitutional anyway, and that they insist on their right to present their case to a full city party meeting.

In NORWOOD, London regional organizer L. Simms demanded that three alleged supporters of the Socialist Labour League—W. Bowkes, Vivienne Mendelson and Celia Behan—leave a meeting of the general management committee.

Backed up by the majority, the three sat tight. The chairman suspended the meeting, and asked 'loyal' members to follow him out.

Twenty-seven people—the majority—remained seated, supporting the anti-witch-hunt stand of the Norwood executive.

In LEICESTER, Alan Stanley and John Cox have been expelled from the Labour Party as members of the Socialist Labour League on the basis of a newspaper report, with only 24 hours' notice of the meeting that was to expel them, and without the opportunity of putting their case.

## THERE'LL BE TRADE UNION BANNERS AT THE MAY 27 LOBBY

Trade union branches are being asked to send representatives carrying branch banners to the lobby at Transport House on Wednesday, May 27, at 9.15 a.m.

The lobby has been called by the Socialist Labour League, which is asking all Labour Party members and trade unionists who value democratic rights and free speech in the Labour movement to interview members of the party's national executive as they go into the next NEC meeting.

The object of the lobby is to ask NEC members to reverse the proscription of the Socialist Labour League and the banning of The Newsletter.

## INDUSTRY

### PRINTWORKERS KNOW THEY MUST FIGHT OR BE BROKEN

From a Special Correspondent

By 108,116 votes to 25,926 in an 80 per cent. ballot—much higher than usual—the printworkers have decided to fight. They now face a bitter and prolonged struggle.

The employers have tried to use the conciliation machinery for their own purposes. The trade union side pointed out that the employers' desire for conciliation is hypocritical since in the first place they refused to negotiate.

It is interesting to see how employers who have consistently argued that greater profits due to increased productivity were no concern of the unions are now arguing that any increase in wages or shortening of the working week must be accompanied by greater efficiency and productivity—on the part of the workers!

#### Utmost solidarity and support

There is no doubt at all that the printworkers will need the utmost solidarity and support from the rank and file of all unions. The whole might of the trade union movement will be needed to win the demand for the 40-hour week.

Why is this struggle such an important one?

First, because it has helped to expose the leaders of the big industrial unions, such as the National Union of Mine-workers, who have evaded the question of a strike ballot on the pit closures, and instead have paraded their members up and down the country in fruitless marches and counter-marches.

Secondly, by securing the support of the International Graphical Federation and of continental unions not affiliated to that body, the British printworkers have raised in a very striking way the question of international working-class solidarity.

#### Lesson to other unions

Thirdly, the employers' stubborn attitude is a lesson to all other unions with claims pending, who now have spelled out for them the fact that there is no substitute for strike action. Either the workers break the employers or the employers will smash the unions.

The fact that a great number of non-federated and federated firms have agreed to observe a 40-hour week and to abide by the ultimate terms of any settlement arrived at between the contending parties shows what can be done when the workers mean business.

#### Fought to a finish

But printworkers should not rely on their leaders' leading them resolutely and quickly to victory. The London bus strike is too fresh in people's minds for that illusion to gain ground.

Any behind-the-scenes negotiations and manoeuvres should be fought and exposed. The print unions have large assets, and the members should see to it that the struggle is fought out to a finish.

### SACKINGS BROUGHT 600 BUILDING WORKERS OUT AT PETRO-CHEMICALS

By Our Industrial Correspondent

HIGH-HANDED action of Kellogg International Corporation, the civil engineering contractors, led to a strike of 600 building workers last week on the Petrochemicals site at Partington (Cheshire).

On May 6 Kelloggs issued notices to seventeen joiners without any consultation with the stewards, and in breach of a

verbal agreement that a full week's notice be given and the 'last in, first out' principle be applied.

Among the sacked men were one shop steward and a former senior joiners' steward. One of them had been on the site ten months. Joiners with only a few weeks' service were retained.

'It's a direct attack on the trade union organization on the job,' declared Ben Grundy, a joiner from Wigan.

'What is involved is whether we can get a stabilized site agreement,' said Bro. Abrahams, the joiners' steward.

#### They spoke out openly

George Bottomley, former senior joiners' steward, told me: 'Having been here since August last year, it is clear to me that the bulk of the seventeen—who should not have been on the redundancy list if the "last in, first out" principle had been applied—are those who have spoken out most openly about the site conditions.'

The day after the stoppage began, the strikers were joined by the rest of the Kellogg workers. On Friday the whole of the Wimpey workers downed tools, bringing practically the whole of the civil engineering side of this huge site to a standstill.

A mass meeting on Monday morning heard Bro. Rothwell, Federation steward, declare:

'We downed tools for two things: a week's notice and the "last in, first out" principle. Kelloggs have now agreed to extend the notices until Tuesday so that negotiations can take place. But they still will not commit themselves on the "last out, first in" principle.'

Full-time officials Hughes of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers and Hanson of the plasterers urged a return to work.

#### Shown strength and solidarity

Despite misgivings and a strong feeling on the part of many workers for staying out until a full victory had been won, they decided to go back on the understanding that if negotiations broke down a further mass meeting would be called.

Said Bro. Abrahams: 'We are making it clear to Kelloggs that our decision to return to work is not weakness. If the talks break down we will be out again in a body.'

Another steward added: 'We have shown our strength and solidarity by coming out and forcing an extension of the notices. We must keep this unity.'

### WORKERS FIGHT REDUNDANCY SACKINGS

By Our Industrial Correspondent

Nearly fifty workers at British Gear Grinding, Park Royal, London, are in dispute over the redundancy of four men. The workers feel that enough work is available.

At Rootes Mouldings, Slough (Bucks.) there has been a dispute for the past seven weeks over the sacking of a steward and seven men and the firm's refusal to recognize the trade union.

### SOUTH BANK WORKERS HEAR BEHAN

Over 300 building workers heard the policies of the Socialist Labour League put forward by Brian Behan at a lunch-hour meeting outside the McAlpine site on London's South Bank on Tuesday.

### LAST TRIBUTE TO ALBERT TIMOTHY

Dockers and other trade unionists turned out in force to pay their final tribute to Albert Timothy when he was buried last week.

When the funeral procession reached the entrance to the Royal group of docks it was met by hundreds of 'Timmo's'

workmates and the red, maroon and gold banner of no. 5 branch of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers (the 'blue union').

Symbolic of the unity at rank-and-file level that Albert Timothy always fought for was a massive wreath in blue and white collected for by portworkers of both dock unions.

## ECONOMICS

### CHANCELLOR'S OPTIMISM DOES NOT SQUARE WITH THE FACTS

By Tom Mercer

LAST week Heathcoat Amory addressed the American Bankers' Conference and painted a rosy picture of the future. He had no hesitations or doubts at all.

Commodities are rising in price. The American economy is going from strength to strength. Britain's balance of payments position is excellent. In fact there were no clouds to be seen at all.

What is the reality?

Trade barriers are growing. The USA is imposing quotas and refusing to accept bids by English Electric and others who undercut American firms.

There are—or will be soon—three Europes instead of two, all three cutting each other's throats. For an Anglo-Scandinavian free trade area is to be set up, with Switzerland, Austria and Portugal attached.

So much for the west's economic harmony.

### Growing competition for markets

Amory also laid stress on the growing balance of gold and dollars in the United Kingdom, and on the rising prosperity of the commodity producing areas, due to the rise in commodity prices.

Amory ought to know that if the latter does take place the level of gold and dollar holdings is almost certain to fall.

The terms of trade will move against Britain. In other words, the prices of imports will go up, but with the growing competition for markets exports will very likely fall in price.

We must remember, of course, that Amory's optimism is conditioned by the fact that this is almost certainly an election year.

## Why Marwood Could Not Be Reprieved

By BOB PENNINGTON

RONALD MARWOOD was accused of killing a policeman. That was why he had no chance of a reprieve. He was convicted primarily on the basis of a police station confession. Like Bentley six years ago he had to be legally murdered to demonstrate that in capitalist society policemen are sacred.

On the eve of the execution prisoners inside Pentonville jail demonstrated against the sentence, more fiercely than ever before. A former prisoner in this jail explained to me what caused the outburst:

**ON EDGE.** 'I did my time just after the war. Two years in Pentonville—and a hell of a place it was, too.

'In the two years I was there they must have "topped" (hanged) at least ten men.

'I still shudder when I think of those last few days and particularly the last few hours. Everybody's nerves get on edge. You get a dull, sick feeling in your guts and you could cut the whole atmosphere with a knife.

'Some of the "screws" (warders) are jumpy, too. Some—the

bastards—seem to enjoy it. Of course, that makes it worse. You feel like breaking their necks.

**DEAD QUIET.** 'Then comes the worst part. The time of the sentence. Everything goes dead quiet. You know what that does to you? It upsets you so much you're glad when it's all over.

'Fancy being relieved that a man is dead.

'That's what caused the blow-up. The men in the "nick" became so oppressed by it all, and not believing he was guilty they just had to protest.'

**BRUTALIZING EFFECT.** Capitalism has given its police force an assurance that it will deal swiftly with anyone who offends the enforcers of capitalist law and the protectors of capitalist property.

The ruling class does not care about individuals. Least of all does it worry about the brutalizing effect that hangings have on prisoners, warders and public alike.

## CENTRAL AFRICA

### NEITHER JAILS NOR BULLETS WILL HALT THE AFRICANS' FREEDOM STRUGGLE

By G. Gale

I WENT to a meeting on 'The Crisis in Central Africa' very reluctantly, expecting to hear a few dozen more platitudes about 'tolerance', 'gradualism' and how to be kind to 'our poor coloured brothers'.

It was a refreshing change to hear Mr Joshua Nkomo, president of the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress.

Five hundred of Mr Nkomo's countrymen have been imprisoned without trial by the white supremacists. After they were imprisoned, laws were introduced legalizing their imprisonment.

And when their five years are up they can be jailed for

a further five years if they are still considered 'dangerous Africans'.

### Jail for 'insolent behaviour'

Other new laws make Africans liable for imprisonment without trial for 'insolent behaviour' to government officials. They can also be put away without trial if it is considered that they 'might be likely' to cause trouble.

Mr Nkomo himself is liable to a total of twenty-five years' imprisonment without trial if he returns to Southern Rhodesia.

The Africans have been accused of 'subversive behaviour'. Mr Nkomo explained what this meant.

For an African to want land was 'subversive'; to want the vote was 'subversive'; and to suggest that Africans were just as human as the whites was the most 'subversive' of all.

Africans were accused of using undemocratic methods. But the vote was confined to those who owned £1,000-worth of movable property, or who had a minimum income of £60 per month.

The minimum wage for a white man was £65 per month; for an African it was £6 10s. per month.

The only way to raise wages was by trade union activity. But Africans were not allowed to form trade unions.

Africans were not impressed by talk of 'partnership'. The Africans were always very much the junior partner in all these schemes.

'Partnership' was another way of saying 'apartheid'. They did not want 'generosity'. They were prepared to accept Europeans in their land, but as equals.

Nor would they be satisfied with 'gradualism'. Africans wanted freedom, and they wanted it now.

Lord Perth had said that the European settlers 'are us'. Another noble lord had said that all Africans were liars. It was up to the British people, and especially the British workers, to decide whose side they were on.

Neither bullets nor imprisonment without trial would deter the Africans. The future of Britain was tied up with their struggle.

## IRAQ

### CHINESE EVENTS OF THIRTY YEARS AGO POINT DANGERS FOR IRAQ'S WORKERS

By Cliff Slaughter

THE Communist Party's wrong estimate of Nasser was not just a 'mistake' that can be corrected like a wrong addition in the accounts; it has involved the temporary defeat of the working-class movement in the United Arab Republic, and it has thrown away the initiative that is so vital in revolutionary periods.

It is the task of working-class parties to alert their class to its needs and to mobilize it for action against all enemies.

By sacrificing independent working-class demands and organization to the 'national struggle' the communist parties have set the movement back for years.

#### Strength of armed people

In Iraq the situation is different in many ways. The Labour movement has a longer standing and continuity than in the United Arab Republic and the popular forces aroused in the revolution of 1958 are still extremely powerful.

So far all attempts by the Right to settle down to peaceful exploitation under the cover of peaceful parliamentary politics have been beaten back.

Despite several decrees saying the popular militias in the towns must be disarmed, these forces have remained in being.

And recently they were strengthened in their claim to

This is the conclusion of an article whose first part appeared in The Newsletter of April 25, p. 124.

protect the revolution by the strength of the armed people; the treachery of many army officers and the failure of their conspiracy at Mosul emphasized the need for the workers to protect their gains themselves.

More and more the Right will concentrate around a 'Nasserite' movement, and unless the workers and peasants insist on independent armed organization and political leadership, they are in danger of being rolled back.

Kassem has been forced to oppose the Nasser supporters because there was no other way for him to remain in power.

It is not enough for the communist parties and the Iraqi people to trust Kassem as the defender of the revolution and of democracy. There is no evidence that he is a socialist of any kind.

He has come to the top in politics through the school of

military intrigue against the old semi-feudal régime.

The most dangerous line for the immediate future will be if the workers' parties say: 'The Nasser supporters in Iraq, together with western imperialism, are the immediate enemy; therefore we must above all not embarrass our allies, Kassem and his friends.'

If this is done, the same sort of tears will be shed over Kassem's 'ingratitude' next year as are falling on account of Nasser in 1959.

In China in 1927 events unfolded in almost exactly the same way. Chiang Kai-shek led the nationalist (Kuomintang) armies against the foreign imperialists. In order to preserve 'unity' the Communist Party discouraged the demands of the rank and file for land reform, the arming of picket squads and the setting up of workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils to run the country and the factories.

Eventually, in Shanghai and Canton, the 'national hero' Chiang Kai-shek turned on the working class in one of the bloodiest massacres of revolutionary history.

Later still of course he fought—and still fights—for the return of foreign imperialism against the Chinese people. If he cannot have Chinese capitalism, he will have American capitalism, not Chinese socialism.

#### Betrayal of 'ungrateful' allies

After Chiang's betrayal, the Communist Party found other 'Left-wingers' or 'democrats' among the middle-class politicians.

Again it told the peasants to hold back on the expropriation of all landlords who were 'sympathetic' to its new-found revolutionary allies, or who were fighting as commanders in the regiments which might swing against Chiang. These allies turned in just the same way as Chiang had done.

Instead of recognizing before the disaster that people will behave according to class interests, the Chinese communists, under Stalin's influence, waited until afterwards, and then complained about being betrayed by their 'ungrateful' allies.

Chinese histories still portray Chiang as the traitor who went over to the enemy, and make no proper estimate of the responsibility of Stalinism.

Did they expect a party of business men and officers to be delighted at the prospect of armed workers' councils?

Before the defeat of the reactionary officers at Mosul, Kassem in Iraq had called into his government various ministers who had been prominent in the régime of Britain's puppet, Nuri-es-Said.

#### Resurgence of mass movement

Reports from Iraq in January said that the popular militia was everywhere being replaced by army units in controlling the towns. Since the attempted coup by the generals there appears to have been a great resurgence of the mass movement.

But if the leadership of the Iraqi workers and peasants remains in the hands of leaders who put Soviet foreign policy requirements before the workers' needs, this mass movement will be defeated.

It is to be hoped that the Marxists in Iraq can guide the movement to a sustained struggle for workers' power.

This will require the shedding of all illusions about Kassem and the routing of Stalinist ideas inside the Communist Party and outside it.

The Times of March 14 of this year—no doubt trying to raise a Red scare—saw the situation more clearly than many a socialist in this country:

'It was the temporary control of the streets in Baghdad by these "popular resistance groups" in December which gave the régime a serious shock, and led General Kassem to lay down the rules for their future conduct . . .

'If these embryonic soviets are consolidated, and if their urban backers are armed, Iraq would be approaching the penultimate stage of a revolution along the October model.'

## Constant Reader Workers in Uniform

THE Shepton Mallet 'glasshouse' scandal brings to the fore the need for trade union rights for soldiers, as Bob Pennington pointed out in The Newsletter last week.

There was a time when the Communist Party interested itself in this important question.

A 'soldiers', sailors' and airmen's charter' printed in the pamphlet 'The Soldier's Conscience', by Robert Dunstan (1925), included demands for the right to join and to form trade unions, as well as a number of points for immediate improvements in servicemen's conditions—and provisions that no troops be used against workers on strike.

There was even a time when that last matter was taken up by official Labour.

### 'Severed from society'

When British soldiers were being used at a Baltic port to unload arms, for use against Soviet Russia, which the local workers had refused to touch, Ernest Bevin himself declared:

'It is the view of the whole Council of Action that it is an abuse of the undertaking given by a soldier when he enlists to turn him from a soldier into a blackleg.

'Military discipline has no right to be used to outrage the conscience of a soldier' (Central Hall, Westminster, August 13, 1920).

It is just because the ruling class needs to use the armed forces against the working people that it tries to keep them isolated organizationally from the latter.

The more the soldier is cut off from the masses of the people, the better—this ruling-class principle goes back to the war against the French revolution, when soldiers were first systematically taken out of billets in pubs and private houses and put into barracks.

With the frankness of those days, prime minister William Pitt explained that 'the soldier must be severed from society'.

### Who are 'parasites'?

A reader asks whether it is the view of the Socialist Labour League that everyone whose work does not directly produce a palpable object, such as a house or a heap of coal, is a parasite?

If so, he says, 'railwaymen, let alone clerical workers, must be out of place in your movement'.

Well, the idea is certainly not a Marxist one. The category of 'socially-useful' work is a great deal wider than that of 'productive' work.

Take book-keeping, for instance, a thoroughly 'unproductive' activity: in a well-known passage in volume ii of 'Capital' Marx pointed out that it will be still more necessary under socialism than it is already under capitalism!

### What is 'workers' control'?

This reader asks also if by 'workers' control' we mean that everybody in a position of authority must be chosen by those immediately under him.

That was one of the ideas of the so-called 'Workers' Opposition' which came out against Lenin and Trotsky in 1921.

In an article written then, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Paris Commune, Trotsky argued that 'the methods of shapeless democracy (simple electibility) must be supplemented and to a certain extent replaced by measures of selection from above.

'The revolution must create an organ composed of experienced, reliable organizers, in which one can have absolute confidence, give it full powers to choose, designate and educate the command . . .

'Electibility, democratic methods are but one of the instruments in the hands of the proletariat and its party.

Electibility can in no wise be a fetish, a remedy for all evils. The methods of electibility must be combined with those of appointment.'

What is essential is, as our own National Workers' Committee put it in its policy statement on 'Consolidation and Control', also issued in 1921, that 'any tendency to bureaucracy' be 'curbed by giving the workers collectively a power over those who direct the industry'.

### Gaitskell and the printers

What are we to make of the placing of the banners of the printworkers' unions at the head of the Labour Party's May Day procession, immediately behind Gaitskell himself?

Can it be that all the resources of Her Majesty's Opposition are to be thrown behind these workers in their dispute; the sacred distinction between the 'industrial' and 'political' sides of the movement being scrapped?

Perhaps this is not exactly what Gaitskell has in mind. Though he certainly knows as well as anyone what methods get results with the British working class.

In the little book he wrote on Chartism for the Workers' Educational Association, thirty years ago, Gaitskell referred to the existence of 'two nations' in Britain in the early nineteenth century, and to the concessions made by the capitalists in the second half of the century.

'Without going so far as some historians, who are apt to put down to the credit of Chartism the greater part of the social legislation in the latter part of the century,' he went on, 'we can agree that the attitude of one "nation" towards the other was considerably softened after the events of the early forties.'

BRIAN PEARCE

## LETTERS

### THANK YOU FOR THAT FINE ARTICLE

On behalf of the fine gauge section of the hosiery industry we would like to thank you and Robert Shaw for the fine article printed in The Newsletter of April 25.

Langley Mill (Notts)

J. A. Shrewsbury

### DOES 'DIRECT ACTION' AGAINST H-BOMB MEAN 'NON-VIOLENCE'?

Soon after this year's Aldermaston march, The Newsletter invited Miss Pat Arrowsmith, field organizer of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War, to write an article for us on the campaign for nuclear disarmament. We have now received an article from the chairman of the committee, Michael Randle, but it is far too long for our small paper to give in full. We have therefore selected those passages in which he criticizes the views of the Socialist Labour League on the fight against the H-bomb. We invite our readers' comments.

THE view held by The Newsletter and forcibly expressed by Mr Peter Fryer at the meeting in Slough during the Aldermaston march is that the bomb is in essence a capitalist weapon and the direct outcome of the capitalist system; our task therefore is to secure the overthrow of capitalism and replace it with a government of the workers—by whatever means necessary.

This analysis ignores the facts that it was a British Labour government (whose political machine in the country is still supported by the Socialist Labour League) that first decided

that Britain should produce her own nuclear weapons; and that the non-capitalist Soviet Union is one of the major nuclear powers.

The results of this analysis are serious. Firstly the bomb as such no longer figures as the issue of outstanding importance—its place has been usurped by the immediate battle against capitalism.

It is significant that in the Socialist Labour League programme, published in the April 11 issue of The Newsletter, the slashing of the arms programme and the ending of British manufacture of the H-bomb figure as number eight in the eleven-point programme. The fight for higher wages and a third week's holiday takes pride of place to them.

Another result could be the neglect of the most urgent task of spreading the campaign among workers. Nothing would be more misleading than to assume that they are already on our side.

### Not confined to capitalists

Most serious of all, it could lead to methods of action that would undermine the whole campaign. If we are aiming to get across new ideas and new values we cannot use methods that are a contradiction of them.

This means eschewing violence, deceit and secrecy at least for the purposes of the campaign. The Socialist Labour League, however, is apparently prepared to use violence.

The draft political statement says: 'Marxists do not believe that it is possible to reform capitalism out of existence or to change it into socialism by peaceful means.'

Since socialism is seen as a prerequisite of the abolition of nuclear weapons, the Socialist Labour League presumably believes that the aims of the campaign will not be achieved by peaceful means.

I believe the H-bomb to be the product of assumptions and attitudes that are by no means confined to capitalists or capitalist societies.

It is firstly fear, in this country fear of Russian domination, and secondly the reliance on traditional methods of meeting any real or supposed threat, that lead people of all classes, bricklayers as well as bank managers, to support the manufacture of the bomb.

We have to get people to see the danger of Russian attack in perspective but above all to get them to realize that however real the danger, the H-bomb is no way of meeting it.

We must go on to suggest new ways of meeting such dangers, and it is because I believe that these new ways are to be found within the framework of non-violence that I think it essential to refrain from violence in the campaign and where possible to give practical demonstrations of non-violence in action.

North Pickenham type demonstrations present the moral challenge of nuclear disarmament in a way that cannot be ignored and are a practical illustration of a technique of non-violent resistance that could be developed as a safeguard against any threat to human rights, such as we would be faced with, for instance, under a dictatorship.

More people are needed for these demonstrations.

They are not, as The Newsletter seems to think, an attempt to substitute action by a few committed individuals for mass action. A few individuals may have to give the lead but it is hoped that many people will eventually take part.

**Michael Randle sums up the argument of his letter in the following way:**

We must first ask ourselves whether our methods are in keeping with our aims. Within this framework we must make every effort to spread the ideas of the campaign, particularly among the trade unions and in the Labour movement generally.

We must be prepared to act in ways that run counter to our established loyalties or which involve hardship and perhaps imprisonment, and we must urge others to take what action they can. In this way the campaign will be won.

London, N.4

Michael Randle

### HERALD'S ATTACK ON CAMELL LAIRD

On May Day 1959 Mr Gaitskell in the Daily Herald sounded the clarion call to the nation, reminding us of past struggles and of the 'pioneers'.

But on the same page, above Gaitskell's message, appeared a scurrilous attack on the Boilermakers' Society, who are engaged in struggle against the might of Cammell Laird's in Birkenhead.

They are striking in defence of their principle: that no one shall be victimized for upholding and obeying union calls.

The Herald calls it a crazy strike. Let us, for a moment take the Herald seriously. Let us pretend that the strike is over a piece of string and it doesn't matter who pulls it.

The Herald argues that in the highly complex industry of shipbuilding any one man on a skilled rate should automatically do everything required.

The welder would install the engines, the shell would be riveted by platers, caulkers would naturally launch the ship. But who would salvage her after she was launched?

Taking the argument of the Herald into the newspaper industry, I suggest that one of the copy boys should do the editor's job. And if the shortage of a copy boy brings about a crisis on that paper, then let the eminent editor do that job!

Birkenhead

M. Atkins

### 'REASONABLE' PROFITS FOR INDUSTRIALISTS IN KERALA

THE column by Brian Pearce [May 2, p. 130] about the Kerala communists' compromise with the capitalists and landlords is specially interesting.

May I add what Mr Namboodiripad said soon after he got into power?

The Hindu (Madras) of March 29, 1957, reported him as saying that 'the policy of his government would not be averse to industrialists' making reasonable profits'.

The point was again emphasized in a speech at the Delhi Chamber of Commerce by Mr K. P. Gopalan, Minister of Industries in the Kerala State Cabinet.

He stated that 'industrialists should take reasonable profits, not only to sustain industry but also to develop it. The taxation and price policies of the government will be so devised as to allow reasonable profits' (Hindu, October 4, 1957).

Now the Kerala communists are trying to impress the workers and peasants that strikes are no longer necessary to improve their conditions, and that the leaders will look after their interests.

London, N.W.1

M. J. Panikkar

### SHOULD THEY LEARN A WORLD LANGUAGE?

DOES Tom Kemp really think it is a bad thing for Uzbeks and other central Asian peoples to have the opportunity of learning a world language in addition to their native tongue?

Lenin in his time was keen on all the nations of the old Russian empire mastering what, in his doubtless chauvinist way, he referred to as 'the language of Turgenev and Tolstoy'.

The learning of Russian enlarges the horizon of the central Asians and provides a 'lingua franca' shared with the other nations of the Soviet Union.

What does Tom Kemp think about the various peoples of the Chinese People's Republic learning Chinese in addition to their native Tibetan etc.?

And does he think English should cease to be taught in the liberated countries of Africa—or that it should be taught to even more people than had the chance to learn it before?

London, N.6

Student