

THE NEWSLETTER

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HALT THE RETREAT FROM SOCIALISM

End the Bans and Proscriptions

The delegates to the special conference of the Labour Party assemble at Blackpool, the shadow of Bad Godesburg hangs over the assembly. It was in this German town on November 15th that the German Social Democratic Party decided to drop all references to socialism from their party programme.

The German Social Democratic Party has decided that from now on it is no longer to be known as a working class party but a party that protects the welfare of the entire 'nation.' It has declared that it has abandoned the nationalization of industry for a vague form of regulation of capitalism called 'public ownership.' It is pledged to support economic freedom, including the free initiative of employers. Needless to say, in matters of foreign policy the party is allied to Wall Street imperialism with all its treaties such as N.A.T.O.

During the last few weeks the voices of Right-wingers such as Douglas Jay, who advocate a similiar treatment for the British Labour Party, have become louder. Mr. Gaitskell's silence is a tacit admission that he has fundamental agreement with these people. Of course the deliberations at Blackpool will not be as open and above board as at Bad Godesberg. Herr Ollenhauer submitted his proposition to a vote. Mr. Gaitskell will not allow a vote. This small example of German thoroughness versus British hypocrisy is not much to cheer the delegates, but at least they should be warned about what is going on.

Why no decisions at Blackpool?

The reason that no resolutions and votes are to be taken at Blackpool is because the Right-wing are simply angling for a free-for-all discussion and, irrespective of what is said, they have already laid their plans to strangle any vestige of socialism in the Labour Party. 'Let the delegates talk their heads off and then we will get down to work,' say the cynical administrators of Transport House as they travel to Blackpool.

The Right-wing are in retreat and they are determined to whittle away what socialism there may be remaining in the programme of the Labour Party to a point where there will be nothing to distinguish them from the Tories and Liberals.

This retreat from socialism is taking place at a time when the working class in Britain have shown over and over again that they are determined to fight back at the Tories. Far from preparing the working class to help Labour win the next election, the retreat now on the agenda of Transport House has already conceded a Tory victory.

The Right-wing German Social Democratic Party and the Right-wing leaders of the British Labour Party are completely incapable of winning a single victory over the employing class. But neither will the Left-wing win a victory unless they are prepared to struggle for a policy that is based upon the requirements of the working class.

A socialist policy for the Labour Party today must take into account the problems in front of the working class, especially those that have already become the policy of large trade unions.

The great success of the National Assembly of Labour which met on November 15th lies in the policy unanimously adopted at the conference. This five-point policy says:

An end to the manufacture and testing of the H-bomb, as

London Assembly Campaign Forges Ahead

The fight to extend and popularize the five-point programme of the National Assembly of Labour will take a big step forward in the London area following the decision of the London Area Committee of the Socialist Labour League to hold a London Assembly of Labour on Sunday, March 6, 1960.

London members of the Socialist Labour League will now begin a campaign to take the policy of the National Assembly to the maximum number of union branches, stewards' committees, local Labour parties, etc. Reports back of the Assembly will also be held outside factories, building sites and in the works' canteens. The aim will be to secure the largest possible number of organizations to endorse the Assembly resolution and to sponsor the London Assembly on March 6.

The London Area Committee of the League makes a particular appeal to sympathizers of the League and readers of The Newsletter to help in this work by: sending a donation to the League, getting their organization to accept a speaker from the League to give a report back of the National Assembly, working now, for delegations to the London Assembly.

The London Assembly will be in Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W.1.

well as the destruction of all existing stockpiles of atomic weapons.

The strengthening of the fight for the 40-hour week, higher wages, defence of jobs and defence of shop stewards, against rent increases.

A fight for the extension of nationalization.

A fight against oppression in the colonies and against racialism in Britain.

A fight against the bans and proscriptions inside the entire Labour movement and the trade unions.

Discussion without decision is useless. The National Committee of the Socialist Labour League appeals to all delegates and visitors to this conference of the Labour Party to unite to fight for this policy.

Public Meeting

● BLACKPOOL ●

Saturday 28 November

7.30 p.m. RAILWAY HOTEL, TALBOT ROAD, BLACKPOOL

Subject: Prospects for Left Unity

Speakers: Gerry Healy Vivienne Mendelson

THE NEWSLETTER186 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4
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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1959

HANDS OFF THE E.T.U.

THE Trades Union Congress has now publicly castigated the Electrical Trades Union who have, in their opinion, not answered two questions:

1. Why have the E.T.U. not considered instituting proceedings against newspapers and journals which have accused the union's principal officers of malpractice?

2. Why have the E.T.U. not issued an official and precise denial of charges that some of the union's principal officers are associated with a committee set up by the Communist Party to influence or direct the union's affairs?

Behind this action is a well thought out plan for extending the witch-hunt against militant trade unionists. This decision of the T.U.C. is in line with the plans they made a short time ago to enquire into the origin of so-called 'wildcat strikes.' Slowly but surely the Right-wing are getting ready to do the dirty work for the Tory government inside the trade unions.

It must be said that the actions of the Right-wing are facilitated by the Stalinists who occupy leading position in the trade unions. As members of the Communist Party they are bound hand and foot to the Moscow policy of peaceful co-existence. This means that they are unable to unite the working class and develop a struggle against the employers. It is only through such a struggle that the Right-wing can be exposed. Stalinist union officials administer their union positions in just the same bureaucratic fashion as the Right-wing. Instead of preparing for a real struggle, they in fact accommodate themselves to the Right-wing trade union leaders.

One of the accusations which Stalinists such as George Matthews, editor of the Daily Worker, level against the Trotskyists is that we seek to divide the rank and file from their leaders.* Our answer to Matthews is that there is already a division between the Right-wing of the unions and the rank and file. The task of Marxists is to assist the working class to exploit this division and replace the Right-wingers with people

*There is at present a strike of E.T.U. members at McAlpine's South Bank site which threatens to become a deadlock. This is reported on Page 3 of last Tuesday's Daily Worker. On the same page an attack is made on the Trotskyists who, it is said, are trying to split the trade union rank and file from the leaders of the other building unions engaged on the site. But it is precisely the leaders of these unions who are isolating the E.T.U. members. Instead of exposing them the Daily Worker attacks the Socialist Labour League.

LIVERPOOL SHOWS THE WAY

Despite the cries of Bessie Bradcock, M.P., that "You've lost us the Municipal elections," delegates to the Liverpool Trades and Labour Council, last Thursday, passed a resolution declaring that any future programme of the Labour Party must include the 'socialisation of the basic industries under workers' control' and the 'unilateral ending of the manufacture of nuclear weapons.'

from the ranks who can be trusted.

There is a deep split in the trade unions at the present time which cannot be concealed. As the employers' offensive gets under way, the more the Right-wing will hasten to discipline the ranks by witch-hunting the militants. A witch-hunt by the Right-wing in the trade unions is a reflexion of the requirements of the employing class.

The Communist Party finds itself in a strait-jacket. It gained control in the Electrical Trades Union under boom conditions, but now that the economic compass is set for squalls in industry the Stalinist E.T.U. leadership cannot maintain the status quo because they have all along followed similar policies to those of the Right-wing itself.

Marxists approach the trade union movement as one which will assist them in the development of the class struggle towards the preparation of the working class to take power. That is why we are against collaboration either with employers or their Right-wing agents in the movement. Marxists can only fight the Right-wing and strengthen their position inside the unions provided they prepare the membership for struggle. This can be done by striving to unite workers around a programme of action such as adopted by the National Assembly of Labour, which will not only improve their living conditions, but teach them political lessons as well.

The policy of the Communist Party leadership can do none of these things because being tied to Moscow its activities are strictly limited to the furtherance of maintaining the status quo with capitalist Britain. That is why they often join hands with the employers and the trade union leaders against the Marxists of the Socialist Labour League. The E.T.U. leadership is now isolated because of the policies of Stalinism. In point of fact its pathetic evasion of the attack levelled by the T.U.C. discloses an unparalleled bankruptcy of leadership. Instead of waging an industrial and political struggle against the gentlemen of the T.U.C. they adopt a policy of petty manoeuvring which prepares nobody and certainly cannot halt the witch-hunters.

The Socialist Labour League has always made it clear that it will unite with all forces in the Labour movement against witch-hunting. In the case of the E.T.U. it unhesitatingly supports all members of the Communist Party and other militants who are prepared to resist this latest attack. It will critically support Haxell against Catholic Action nominee Byrne. But we warn here and now that the urgent task before all members of the E.T.U. is to stop being used as pawns in Moscow's game of peaceful co-existence. More and more the rank and file, whilst building a united front against Catholic Action and the Right-wing, must demand and fight for a real struggle on the part of the Stalinists who at present lead the E.T.U.

At a meeting in Liverpool last Sunday which heard delegates report back from the National Assembly of Labour, it was decided to hold a Merseyside Assembly on Sunday, February 21st, 1960.

Among other speakers, militants from the docks, building industry and mines expressed their confidence that such a local conference could mark a big step forward in the development of a militant socialist rank and file movement on Merseyside.

An Open Letter to Peter Fryer

Dear Peter,

As a journalist you are one of the most careful people I know. On many occasions you have been known to check your facts over and over again before finally completing whatever it was you were writing. Imagine my surprise, therefore, on reading your letter to the Guardian on Tuesday, November 10:

'The expulsion of Peter Cadogan from the Socialist Labour League last week-end for holding heterodox views and communicating them to fellow-members is all too reminiscent of the practices he and I objected to in the Communist Party and in Stalinist Hungary. The League's general secretary has made it clear that he will not tolerate free discussion any any more than John Gollan will; and his methods of silencing dissenters and critics are odious.'

Where did you get your information for this amazing statement?

Some years ago you were writing articles on the Works of J. V. Stalin for the Daily Worker. As a good Party member, you would then doubtless have called me a Trotskyist paid agent of Wall Street imperialism. Now, nearly four years after the famous 20th Congress speech of Khrushchev, I am, according to you, in the same boat as John Gollan.

It is true that in the lifetime of the 'wise one' facts were relatively unimportant to those associated with the Daily Worker. One might reasonably have expected, however, that your grim experiences in Hungary would have taught you to probe matters very carefully before rushing into print with extraordinary allegations.

Does the truth apply to the Socialist Labour League?

Remember, Peter, what you wrote about the British Communist Party after Hungary? :

'For decades our leaders have fed us on lies and half-truths. We gave them our loyalty and devotion and faith and asked in return for the bread of truth—and they nurtured us on lies and fables.'

'Many of us have had enough. We are not going to be accomplices any longer, especially now that nine million Hungarians have stepped forward like the child in the fairy story and shouted with one voice: "The Emperor is naked." We joined the Party to help emancipate mankind, not only from exploitation, but from its concomitant as long as class society exists: ignorance . . . We joined because we wanted to contribute to the enlightenment of our fellow-men, to bring them the richest and most precious gift of all gifts: the truth.' (Hungary and the Communist Party, pp. 47-48.)

How hollow these words ring today when you have nothing better to do than to run to the capitalist Press to denounce those of us who have been fighting Stalinism for 30 years as being no better . . . than the Stalinists.

Doesn't the 'truth' apply to us, or are we a category of political un-persons who can be maligned whenever the occasion arises, by people such as yourself?

Why did you resign from the Socialist Labour League?

Why did you not consider it necessary to find out the 'truth' about Cadogan's expulsion from some of your ex-Communist Party colleagues in the Socialist Labour League, before you rushed to the Guardian? Did you not deem this essential, particularly in view of the constant witch-hunt waged against the Socialist Labour League and of the gross misrepresentations emanating from the capitalist press and similar sources?

Only a year ago, you and I worked together day after day replying to such attacks. Yet within a few months I find myself having to answer a hostile press, who are using your own statements against us.

In what political direction are you now going to travel, Peter? When you resigned from the Daily Worker you wrote:

'Many people have asked me why, when I resigned from

the Daily Worker, I did not also resign from the Communist Party. Such a step, they tell me, would be consistent with the horror and revulsion I felt at what I saw in Hungary. To this my reply is that the Hungarian Revolution, for all the evil and rottenness it revealed has not made any difference to the need for a working-class party in Britain based on Marxist principles.'

Now you resign from the Socialist Labour League because . . . Peter Cadogan has been expelled. Your views on the Socialist Labour League are well-known; there is a whole book in your name explaining and defending its policy, constitution and organizational methods . . . a book whose copyright you vested, on your own initiative and of your own free will, in the Socialist Labour League.

Even if we were to accept for a moment the fact that Peter Cadogan was expelled in the most bureaucratic manner possible (which he certainly was not), how come you can resign from the Socialist Labour League on this issue, when the horrors of the Hungarian Revolution could not induce you to resign from the Communist Party?

Your evolution is truly remarkable when one considers the circumstances under which you asked to be relieved of the editorship of The Newsletter. On August 26 you wrote me a letter in which you said :

'I am writing this because it will save a lot of time when I see you if you have the position set out clearly on paper.'

'I'm very much afraid that this job is beginning to have a bad effect on my health. I mean mental health—I wouldn't admit that to anyone else, but you ought to know where we stand. I have started to wake up in the night and worry about the job. In addition to that there is a rather alarming return of an old trouble I had in the first few months after Hungary: I have really appalling dreams about the dead people I saw at Magyarovar and about Rajk; in the latter I have either sentenced him to death or have myself been sentenced to death. Worst of all, I have noticed myself acting more and more irrationally, both here and at home. In short, the strain and responsibility, which I have always found distasteful, are telling on me.'

'You have been aware for some considerable time of the degree to which I was unhappy in the job. The fact that there are differences between us on the character of the paper is really completely secondary—frankly, I think that it would be better if someone better equipped politically than I, and with a stronger and better-balanced personality, were to do the job. This would enable me to get a part-time job and devote my time to writing, which is what I have always wanted to do. It was really an accident that I happened to become editor of The Newsletter! I am a round peg in a square hole, so to say; and this causes moods of the most intense depression and resentment. Now I am just about at the end of my tether.'

'You know I would not throw this additional worry on you, and this additional difficulty on the movement, if I felt there were any practical alternative. You asked me last February to grit my teeth and stick it. It has only been by grinding my teeth and exercising a lot of self-control that I have managed to last this long. But it can go on no longer.'

'I am proposing to go away and rest and see if I feel any better. If not, I shall ask for medical treatment. It is rather ironical to admit that the Stalinists were right about one after all!'

'Whatever contribution I may be able to make in the future, you can be sure I'll make it to the utmost of my energies. But if I am to make any contribution at all, I must get my balance back.

**'Yours ever,
Peter.'**

Despite the fact that we were pressed on all sides for an explanation of your sudden defection a few weeks before the National Assembly of Labour, we withheld publication of your letter. We did so, at that time, because it concerned no one but the National Committee of the Socialist Labour League and yourself. This in spite of the fact that all attempts on our part to communicate with you were ignored and even rebuffed. And although we learnt that on September 13th you had been in sufficiently good health to attend a so-called 'faction meeting' at Stamford.

We had no wish irreparably to widen any breach there might be between us. We wished to keep the door open. But since then you have chosen to write to the capitalist press. Our comrades have had to wade against a constant stream of filth, gossip and misrepresentation from hostile elements. They have faced the glee of the gutter press and the sophisticated sneers of the 'New Left', who all talk learnedly about Fryer's 'differences' and scream about the way he was bureaucratically dealt with by the Socialist Labour League. Are not our own members and sympathizers now due to be told the truth about these 'differences'? And who is better equipped to tell them than yourself?

Explain please

You use the pretext of Cadogan's expulsion to justify your resignation. Cadogan was expelled for having violated our constitution, a constitution of which you yourself were one of the chief architects. On the Standing Orders Committee of our Inaugural Conference you were intimately concerned with amendments to this constitution. You were the main reporter to the conference, requesting the delegates either to accept or to reject various amendments. You later told me in personal conversation that you felt very happy in being able to do a good job of work in this connexion.

Writing about the Conference in the July-August issue of the Labour Review you said: 'Examine for instance the report of the credentials committee for some idea of the movement's attractive power and of the tempo of its growth. Two-thirds of the delegates had declared for Marxism in the past year; one-fifth had done so since the launching of the League at the end of February, 1959.'

In your own words the present leadership (which you now allege to be operating in a Stalinist manner) was elected at a conference in which the overwhelming majority of delegates were newcomers. In what other movement is there anything to compare with this? The organizational features of Stalinism are such that rigged conferences are the rule. In this atmosphere full-time party officials and permanent bureaucratic committee-men are continuously returned to the leading bodies. This can only happen in organizations where there has been a long period of degeneration. It is obvious from your own words that the Socialist Labour League is a young and new organization with two-thirds of its conference delegates being in the movement only one year.

A feature of Stalinist conferences is the lack of discussion. But you record in this same article in Labour Review that 'to the draft of the political resolution' there were '75 amendments,' and that 'to the draft of the constitution' there were '47 amendments.'

You are well aware that it was after some argument with members of the Standing Orders Committee that special arrangements were made for Peter Cadogan to move a large number of amendments at our Inaugural Conference, although he was not a delegate from a Branch. You are also aware that

when some of the delegates got a little tired of hearing him speak and showed their impatience by frequent interjections, the leadership intervened and called the delegates to order to listen to this comrade who was not a delegate but who, because of the democratic nature of the conference, was being granted a special privilege.

Where did Stalinism express itself at this conference? Your description was that 'the platform and delegates alike (were) often feeling their way in deciding new and unexpected problems of procedure; nevertheless the debates were distinguished at once by their smoothness, by the lack of any platform domination whatever, and by the high level of the majority of contributions.' Do you retract any of these comments?

Peter Cadogan

After the conference, Peter Cadogan submitted, as was his right, a long article to the internal bulletin of the League and this was published. He spent a fortnight at our summer school arguing with comrades from all over the country about his opinions and points of view. He had the fullest facilities to say what he liked inside the League and he took full advantage of these facilities. Indeed the transcript of the session of the National Committee which expelled him shows very clearly that he, himself, admitted that he had received every facility for discussion. The reason for his expulsion was quite simple. You could have ascertained it had you wished. Despite repeated warnings that he should abide by our constitution he continued to act in a way which could only seriously damage the authority of the League. He circulated factional documents **outside** the organization which could and should have been sent to the National Committee for distribution, through that channel, to the membership. In your book 'The Battle for Socialism' you argue that such conduct must invoke disciplinary action.

What is the basis of your claim that Cadogan had no rights to circulate his opinions amongst members? There is no substance whatsoever for this statement and had you attended the meetings of the National Committee to which the Conference elected you, I venture to predict that you would have been among the first to propose his expulsion. The decision was unanimous. Not a single ex-member of the Communist Party, and there are a number of such in leading positions, could find any justification for Cadogan's actions.

Stalinism

In your letter to the Guardian you imply that I am a Stalinist. This accusation of Stalinism is not new. It is an attempt to create an amalgam between the authority of the Marxist Party and the bureaucratic discipline of the Stalinists.

Your letter to me of August 26th, however, discloses a different state of affairs. During the entire period when you worked with me on the day to day organization of the Socialist Labour League, we enjoyed the closest collaboration. Not once did you raise anything to suggest that in your mind there was little to choose between Gollan and myself.

This bandying about of the label Stalinism is typical of the method of a person who is politically disorientated. Stalinism, as we know it in the Soviet Union, did not arise because of the personal characteristics of Stalin or because of his organizational intrigues, but out of the backwardness, war weariness and isolation of the Soviet Union in the early 1920's. The conscious retreat which was made by the Bolshevik Party in the New Economic Policy contributed to the growth of bureaucracy in the State and in the unions. In Volume 9 of Lenin's Selected Works we can read of the very great struggle which he was preparing to wage against these developments.

In Lenin's testament we read:

'Our party relies on two classes, and therefore its instability would be possible and its downfall inevitable were there no agreement between those two classes.'

These factors created the environment for the growth of the bureaucracy, which more and more began to reflect the pressure

of alien classes. When Lenin talked about Stalin's personal characteristics, such as rudeness and disloyalty, he was not dealing with Stalin in a vacuum but was referring to the growth of bureaucracy which brought to the forefront the weaknesses in Stalin and transformed this one-time devoted member of the Bolshevik Party into its bloodiest executioner.

There is a constant refusal on the part of impressionists to examine Stalinism as a social phenomenon. The result is that when they join the Marxist movement and are sometimes called to order for not carrying out the policy or obeying the discipline of that movement they immediately jump to superficial conclusions and equate such requests with Stalinism. Cadogan, for instance, considers that the National Committee of the Socialist Labour League is Stalinist-minded. Like those who believe in original sin, Cadogan holds that there is 'a bit of Stalinism in all of us,' as he put it at the National Committee meeting which decided on his expulsion.

This unscientific use of terminology was carefully analysed and explained by Marxists such as Trotsky and shown to amount to nothing more than the crudest form of demagoguery, with anarchist and liberal ideas substituted for Marxism. You are guilty of this when you set out to equate me with Gollan and Cadogan's expulsion with what went on in Hungary.

What the real reason for your break with the Socialist Labour League may be we have yet to discover. Certain consequences of it are, however, already apparent.

Where are you going now?

When you left the Socialist Labour League all sorts of refugees from Marxism immediately rallied to your 'defence.' They had one thing in common: they hated our organization because of its devotion to theory, its serious tradition of struggle and the requirements of its discipline. You and Cadogan have become the heroes of the coffee-shop politicians who sit around and gossip, but who are conspicuous by their

absence in the long-drawn-out fight against the employers and their agents in the Labour movement.

Not all who left the Communist Party after Hungary did so for socialist reasons. A good number left bowing before the pressure of capitalist public opinion, and anxious to lay bare their liberal souls in the most nauseating manner. Some of the finest militant workers remained inside the C.P., not because they followed Gollan, but because they had no trust in this type of individual.

Some people may have joined the Socialist Labour League as a misunderstanding, believing it to be some sort of cleverly-concealed anti-Communist organization. You were not one of these, Peter. You joined the Socialist Labour League to fight for Communism. Your work inside the League bears testimony to this fact. No matter what you may do in the future the positive features of your work will remain.

You are now in your most serious crisis. But you can still, as a Communist, transcend this crisis and turn it to great advantage in relation to your development in the future. The history of the Marxist movement, contrary to Stalinist mythology, is not a history of people neatly divided into saints and sinners. It is a history of struggle in which individuals have repeatedly confronted serious personal and political crises . . . and where the best amongst them have overcome such crises.

Marxists can overcome mistakes and learn in the process. The Marxist makes no spurious claims to infallibility. His education proceeds through his ability to correct his errors and thereby any errors that the party as a whole may make.

The National Committee of the Socialist Labour League has invited you to return to the organization and discuss your opinions within its ranks. Your future as a Marxist will depend upon how you answer this challenge.

G. Healy

(National Secretary, Socialist Labour League)

Power Workers take Action

SPECIAL NEWSLETTER INTERVIEW

After months of waiting for the negotiations between their unions and the Central Electricity Authority to show some results, the electricity supply workers in London's power stations have taken things into their own hands. The men at Battersea Power Station, largest in London, took action on Monday, and one of their shop stewards has given the following interview to The Newsletter, outlining the power workers' case.

1.—What action has Battersea taken?

We have started a work-to-rule and have put a complete ban on overtime which will culminate in a 24-hour stoppage on November 30.

2.—Why have they decided to take this action?

We don't reckon that the way the negotiations over our claims have been carried out that we are going to get anything. We don't just want the negotiations speeded up, we want a definite promise. And we certainly don't intend to be insulted over this holiday thing.

3.—What was the holiday agreement?

Well, I think the whole aim is to split the workers. After 12 years a man gets three weeks' holiday, after seven years a couple of days, but for the rest, nothing.

4.—What are your demands now?

A £10 a week minimum for a 40-hour week and three weeks' holiday with pay for all electricity supply workers.

5.—You are asking for a new wage claim?

Yes. In over 2½ years we have received only 2½d. an hour increase in our wages. These were years of unprecedented prosperity in our industry. Last year the Authority made a clear profit of £27 million after the payment of over £60 million in interest. Last year our negotiators withdrew a wage claim for 4½d. without cause or explanation.

6. What do you think the unions are going to do?

We asked the unions to call for a ban on overtime in support of the claim for the 40-hour week. As they did not do it we had to rely on our own National Committee of shop stewards to call this ban. Therefore it isn't the unions' job to tell us to go back when they didn't act on our request.

7.—Have all the unions refused to support you?

Well, one hides behind the other. The beauty of having five unions concerned from their point of view is that each can blame the other four.

8.—Aren't you afraid of being expelled from the union for this action?

We have considered being expelled from the union. None of us want to be expelled, but the point is that action has got to be taken and if the union doesn't act then we have got to do it ourselves. After all we are recognised shop stewards, but when we get together we are called unofficial. As I said, nobody wants to be expelled from the union, and if we were we would fight like the devil to get back.

9.—Have you thought that you might be jailed for this action?

All our leaders have considered the fact that there is a chance of being jailed, but taking into consideration the fact that if they were jailed it would cause more trouble, we think the Government would probably think the same. We haven't gone into it with our eyes shut, there is always that chance.

10.—How many are supporting Battersea?

At the moment we have support from Kingston, Barking and Deptford, but we expect more stations to follow us.

11.—What do you plan to do after Monday's 'holiday'?

On Tuesday we will go back to normal working, certain that we have proved to our unions that the power is there if they want to call on it. After that our National Committee will meet to make other suggestions.

12.—Such as?

At Battersea we have told the superintendent that if nothing comes out of it we might need another 'holiday.' Other stations might decide they want a strike.

13.—Do you hope to gain something?

Yes, we hope to win something through our action this week.

14.—Are you making approaches to any other nationalized industries?

We did have an observer from the miners at the Birmingham conference, but we haven't yet made plans to ask them for support.

15.—Is everybody at Battersea observing the work to rule?

As far as we can tell, yes. We have already secured the removal of two temporary charge-hands.

LIVERPOOL DOCK STRIKE

By Bill Hunter

Four hundred Liverpool dockers—all the men available for work in No. 8 control—stopped work last Saturday morning. According to many dockers this was the first time since 1945 that the men in this area had been 100 per cent united in struggle.

They struck in protest against an action of Scruttons Ltd., which the men declared was in breach of the Dock Labour Scheme.

The firm had employed men on night shift on one ship, finishing Saturday morning. It then ordered them to work Sunday on another ship, although there were dockers in the control available for work.

In accordance with the Dock Labour Scheme the firm should have given these men their books, and then applied for labour in the hiring 'pen.'

At a meeting of the men on the following Monday, officials of the Transport and General Workers' Union denied the truth of a statement alleged to have been made by the firm that they had been given permission by the union.

The dockers decided to return to work after assurances from P. J. O'Hare—district secretary of the TGWU—that the procedure adopted by Scruttons would not be allowed again.

But, so far, there has been no indication that union officials intend to press for disciplinary action against the firm although there is a clause in the Dock Labour Scheme which provides for the punishment of employers who fail to carry out the 'provisions of the Scheme,' and up and down the line of Mersey docks, dockers are continually being disciplined for the most trifling offences.

NOTTS MINERS TAKE ACTION

By G. Stone

It is obvious that the National Coal Board is stepping up its attacks on the miners. This is particularly true in the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfields which the N.C.B. hope to make into a really profitable concern.

At Morton Colliery, Derbyshire, the men on 62's face have just received a wage cut. These men are contract workers, that is they are paid in accordance with how much coal their power-loader gets. However, at this pit they had a 'fallback rate' of 64s. 11d. The agreed minimum rate for the rest of the county is 60s. yet the N.C.B. started to pay less than both these rates: 59s. 1d. Seeing this as the thin end of the wedge, the whole pit came out against it.

Some papers have tried to make out that these men were

on strike for 11d. This is not so. These miners realized that if the N.C.B. were allowed to break the agreement then soon they would have the men working for the bare face minimum of 38s. This obviously could not be allowed.

On November 22 a meeting was called in the Morton Miners' Welfare Hall to discuss the strike. This meeting was addressed by Bert Wynn, Derbyshire Area N.U.M. Secretary, who asked, almost pleaded with, the men to return. He said that they should have patience and follow procedure. This means a pit meeting, followed by disputes court and finally an 'independent' arbitrator (usually a lawyer!). Miners are fed up with this long drawn-out procedure and this was one reason for the strike.

Wynn said that a fair rate for these men would be £5 per day—yet says he will negotiate a compromise!

On November 19 the strikers had passed a resolution calling for the sacking of the Manager and Under-Manager for their complete refusal to meet the men. Bert Wynn said this was wrong, the men to blame were 'higher up,' but he made no suggestion on how to move them. The men were adamant in their desire to remove the management but it was not clear what they will do about this.

After a long discussion, the men voted to return to work—making it clear that they will soon be out again if need be. The miners realized that alone they cannot defeat the National Coal Board—and of course they were not too keen on fighting a lone, drawn-out battle just before Christmas.

SOUTH BANK ELECTRICIANS NEED HELP

By our Industrial Correspondent

No settlement has been reached in the five-week-old strike of the electricians employed by F. J. Wheelers at South Bank. Negotiations begun after the intervention of the Ministry of Labour broke down last Monday.

Both the Financial Times and the Guardian in reporting this predicted further sackings by the main contractor, Mc-Alpine, if the strike continued.

Other sites are giving their financial support and the men at the Unit Construction site at Abbey Wood have collected £16.

Much more financial help is needed, but at the same time many building workers are pointing out that money alone cannot win the strike.

The principle for which the men have struck is for an average site payment to bring their earnings in line with those of other trades.

The men feel that they are fighting the whole of the electrical contractors' federation, who are resisting the demand on the grounds that if Wheelers give way then a precedent will be created for all contracting electricians.

The Brixton labourers' branch of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers has demanded that their divisional council withdraw all labour from the site in support of the electricians. These trade unionists are disgusted at the attitude of their leaders in compelling them to cross a picket line.

At the moment the union's excuse is that the E.T.U. hasn't asked them to withdraw their labour, and they point to the men still on the site who are employed in the key capacity of maintenance electricians.

With such a serious issue involved in this dispute, only the withdrawal of all labour from the site can bring the electricians victory.

PETER FRYER explains the programme and organization of the Socialist Labour League. Read:

THE BATTLE FOR SOCIALISM

Peter Fryer

192 pages, 3s. 6d.

order from: The Socialist Labour League,
186 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.

CURLY OWEN

Curly Owen is a Yorkshire miner employed at Brodsworth Colliery. Several weeks ago he wrote a letter to "The Miner," a rank-and-file paper published by the Bradford branch of the N.U.M. In his letter he made certain allegations concerning the breaking of safety rules down the pit, and attacked the local union officials for lack of initiative in dealing with complaints. As a result of this letter an enquiry was held at Brodsworth, and following the enquiry large posters were put up all over the pit. The posters claimed that there was no truth in the allegations made, and accused Curly of being "Anti-social" and "Malicious trouble-maker." The posters were signed by all the branch officials—except three committee men who refused to sign—and the group manager, agent, and under-manager.

When the local officials joined forces with the management to prepare the chopper for Curly's neck they neglected to take into account the opinions and feelings of the Brodsworth men.

On Saturday, November 21, at the Miners' Welfare Institute, they were called to account by 400 angry Brodsworth miners. For 3½ hours they faced a continual barrage of heckling and abuse, and when the local Stalinist on the committee who had put his name to the poster apologized, and said that he "Would never do it again" he was howled down. The President was finally compelled to accept a resolution calling for a ballot vote in the pit. The men will be asked to vote whether the action of the committee was right or wrong. If the feeling of these men is anything to go by, there can be no doubt whatever which way the vote will go.

Constant Reader | A Revealing Burp!

To those of us who know the Communist Party from the inside, old Walter Holmes' hiccup of joy in the Daily Worker over Peter Fryer's defection from the Socialist Labour League has a rather pleasing significance. It shows that we are really making ourselves felt in that quarter.

So far as the 'mass media' are concerned, the Stalinist line has been for many years never even to mention the Trotskyist organizations except in such (so to speak) abstract terms as 'fiends and mad dogs.' The formula is: 'not to give these people the pleasure they derive from seeing themselves in print.' The real point is, of course, not to offer any not-completely-monolithic reader the opportunity of getting to know of a truly Marxist movement. Therefore, when Holmes breaks the rule it may well mean that he and his pals recognize that 'we have developed beyond the stage where the 'conspiracy of silence' can be effective.

I specify 'mass media', by the way, because those Stalinist journals which are not widely read by the masses, such as World News, have been used from time to time to hit at our movement. In 1954, for example, a couple of articles there on 'the people behind Socialist Outlook' were gratefully received and used by Transport House in connexion with its moves to ban that paper.

Pressure Politics—or Independent Class Action

The brief discussion which we had at the National Assembly of Labour about the terms of the resolution on the French nuclear weapon tests epitomized a dispute which has gone on in the working-class movement for many years and which is of deep significance, both theoretical and practical.

Should the resolution call on the capitalist Government to take action, or should it call on the working-class movement to take action? It was finally agreed that the latter line should be followed and that the resolution should be sent not to Downing Street but to the two great world groupings of trade unions, the I.C.F.T.U. and the W.F.T.U.

Trotskyists have always opposed resolutions and declarations which foster confidence in capitalist governments and concentrate popular attention on what capitalist politicians and diplomats will or will not do. They have always striven to get action by the workers themselves, and wherever possible through their mass organizations—to concentrate attention on developing and using the workers' own power.

A classical example of a clash between these different approaches was the debate in the British Labour movement over 'sanctions' in 1935-1936. Fascist Italy had attacked semi-colonial Abyssinia. The leaders of the Independent Labour Party and the Socialist League, the two main centrist organizations of that time, adopted a do-nothing, semi-pacifist attitude. Some of them even excused themselves by talking of 'a clash between two dictators' (i.e., Mussolini and the Emperor of Abyssinia) and the main need of the movement being for 'the Abyssinian workers' to 'seize power'! Many of the rank and file, however, wanted something to be done to defend Abyssinia

and hit at Fascism.

The Stalinists called for pressure on the Government to apply 'sanctions,' i.e., to take economic and military measures against Italy. The Trotskyists pointed out that this would mean either an imperialistic conflict or, as actually happened, a sell-out, and they pressed for 'workers' sanctions,' i.e., for independent action by the workers' organizations to stop war material going to Italy. For this they were, of course, called 'Fascist agents' by the Stalinists and 'crypto-Stalinists' by the lunatic fringe.

VFS and Bashing the Trots

What a pity Victory for Socialism did not see fit to include in its statement on the election results a declaration for raising Transport House's ban on the Socialist Labour League. This is hardly surprising, however, when one realizes that some of its leaders—not all, of course—have carried over from their Communist Party and fellow-travelling days that attitude towards Trotskyists which is, after all, of the very essence of Stalinism.

Take, for instance, Stephen Swingler. So far as I know, he has never withdrawn or apologized for the following (in which the nonsensical first paragraph leads to the nasty second one), from his 'Outline of Political Thought since the French Revolution' (1939).

'The whole task of the Soviet Government [said Trotsky, according to Swingler,] must be to stir up insurrections abroad whilst pursuing a standstill policy at home. This issue was fully discussed in the USSR, and after a period of suspense and discussions it was decided to adopt the course of trying to establish a socialist system in Russia as the primary aim, whilst pursuing naturally an internationalist policy.

'The idea that socialism could be built in one country has been proved correct in practice and has thus shown Trotsky's theoretical diagnosis to be wrong. Thus, to demand freedom for Trotskyism in the USSR, or further discussion of the issue, is merely stupid if we regard political ideas as a guide to action, as a means to practical achievement. The controversy over theory has been settled in practice and further discussion can in no way aid action; therefore, to demand the right to "free discussion" of the issues [here a footnote: As people have done over the Moscow trials] is to demand the right to obstruct and to constrain, the right to negate freedom.'

I am not in a position to say whether this particular passage helped to inspire George Orwell's conception of Doublethink, in '1984' ('Freedom is Slavery', etc.), but it may well have done.

Unpublished M.s.

To the Editor of Tribune, October 31.

Dear Comrade: Your readers should not be left in ignorance of the fact that Comrade Foskett, who writes to Tribune to jeer at Aldermaston marchers as persons 'dedicated to the

proposition: "Anything for a giggle"; is himself dedicated to the proposition: 'Get the Reds out of the Labour Party at all costs.'

He was one of the foremost promoters of my expulsion from Finchley Labour Party on account of my association with The Newsletter.

May I suggest that it is to no small extent the purging activities of such as Comrade Foskett, which create the image of a party increasingly strait-jacketed by Right-wingers who want to keep the H-bomb, that drive young people of the Aldermaston generation away from Labour.

Banned Book

Soviet Prose: A Reader, edited by Ronald Hingley (Allen and Unwin, 12s. 6d.) has received publicity, soon after publication, in an unexpected way. It is one of the 30 books which the Soviet authorities have insisted on removing from the British book exhibition in Moscow. Mr Hingley, lecturer in Russian at Oxford, and now well known through the BBC's Russian classes, will not sell any fewer copies of his book because of that, one may be sure.

What is interesting, though, is to consider why Soviet officialdom does not want the book placed where it can be looked

through by Moscow citizens. After all, it consists merely of a number of extracts, in the original Russian, from works by well-known Soviet writers of fiction, with Mr Hingley's explanatory notes. My guess is that they object most of all to the second extract given from Boris Pilnyak's novel 'Mahogany' which got the writer into serious trouble when it appeared in 1929 and is presumably quite unavailable in Russia now.

In this passage some old Bolsheviks who fought in the civil war reminisce bitterly over the changes in the party which took place in the early 1920s.

For English readers who are learning Russian perhaps the extract of greatest interest, from the standpoint of content, is the one taken from a fairly recent novel, 'Battle on the Way', by Galina Nikolayeva, which came out in 1957. It describes the crowd scenes in Moscow when Stalin's death became known, and depicts very subtly the different reactions to this event by different sections of the people. When I was on the selecting committee of the 'Russia Today Book Club', which advises Moscow's Foreign Languages Publishing House on what Russian novels to translate into English, I repeatedly urged that 'Battle on the Way' be included in the list, but came up against an immovable though unexplained resistance.

BRIAN PEARCE.

LETTER

I believe that Comrades Cliff Slaughter, D. Prynne and D. Gilligan mistook the task that my article, printed in The Newsletter, October 3, was supposed to perform. Perhaps I should have made my purpose clear by a few prefacing remarks. At any rate, I did not and do not consider that the job of my article was to give a rounded analysis of the Khrushchev-Eisenhower diplomacy. Khrushchev's visit was a minor international event involving basic programmatic positions of the socialist movement. The Newsletter is a tendency journal—voicing the opinions of the Socialist Labour League. The full assessment of such an event as the Khrushchev-Eisenhower talks, therefore, is the responsibility not of a foreign contributor but of The Newsletter's editorial board—who, it should be added, ably discharged their responsibility in editorials from August 15 to September 26.

I am a member of the editorial staff of the U.S. revolutionary-socialist weekly, The Militant, and as such helped prepare a rounded analysis of the Khrushchev visit for American readers—essentially along the lines pursued by The Newsletter in its editorials. In writing for The Newsletter, however, I deliberately limited myself to a special aspect of the Khrushchev tour—namely its impact on the political thinking of the American people—since this aspect was not one that The Newsletter's editorial board could analyse as accurately as an American contributor.

Just the same, American public reaction to the visit was no mere sidelight, but an aspect of Khrushchev's trip which in the long run may turn out to be the most consequential of all. For the tour helped sharpen the American people's hopes for achieving peace and also helped undermine their anti-Sovietism, preparing the ground for a better appraisal on their part of the Soviet Union. Of course, this is still a far cry from their accepting a revolutionary viewpoint. But it is a development in working-class political thinking that gives socialists wider scope for promoting revolutionary ideas. That this includes exposing the reactionary role of Eisenhower—and of Khrushchev as well—goes without saying.

In their criticism of my article, Comrades Prynne and Gilligan take me to task for reporting that the American people's hopes of attaining peace were aroused by the Khrushchev-Eisenhower programme to exchange visits. 'While

this is probably true,' they write in The Newsletter, October 17, 'he [Roberts] fails to point out that this is precisely what Khrushchev and Eisenhower want.'

In the first place, I did indicate that this is what Eisenhower wanted. I said he was manoeuvring with the peace issue to mask big business' long-term preparations for war. This obviously means that he wants the American people to be fooled by these manoeuvres.

In the second place, it is one-sided to attach significance only to what Khrushchev and Eisenhower want. The hopes of the masses often do lead to illusions that the Khrushchevs and Eisenhowers all too eagerly exploit for their own reactionary purposes. But the hopes of the masses have independent weight as well. They can lead to aspirations, then to demands, and then to mass struggles for the realization of these demands. On the other hand, the masses do not generally struggle when they lack hope. The task of the socialists is to recognise the progressive potential of the working people's hopes for peace, remain ideologically firm themselves as to how peace will be won and go through the experiences with the masses while patiently explaining that only independent working-class struggles can defeat the imperialist warmakers. That is what I indicated in my article.

Finally, lest some of your readers might have got the impression from my article that we socialists in the U.S. propose to let the Stalinists go scot free on their 'peaceful coexistence' line while we concentrate on the Republicans and Democrats, allow me to elaborate the last paragraph of my article. When I wrote that 'Revolutionary socialists will explain . . . the necessity for working people to develop their own independent struggle in opposition to the Republican and Democratic Parties,' I implied a polemic against the Communist Party as well. To the CP in this country, 'peaceful coexistence' means in the first place keeping the radical movement tied to the big business parties—especially to the Democrats. The CP leaders have sought to prove that now, more than ever, socialist-minded workers must act within the Democratic Party to bring about the nomination of a 'peaceful coexistence' presidential ticket in 1960.

Revolutionary socialists on the other hand insist on the necessity for independent socialist electoral action in 1960 and denounce the Stalinist scheme as the most treacherous sort of class collaboration.

Dan Roberts