

POLITICS

The Situation in the C. P. of Great Britain.

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The Eleventh Congress of the **British Communist Party** is due to meet at **Leeds** on November 30 — December 3rd.

The character of the situation in Britain, and the situation within the Party, gives to this Congress a critical character. The present stage of the British working class movement is essentially the stage of a tremendous **turning-point**. The bourgeoisie has temporarily strengthened its forces by the full incorporation of the Labour-trade union machine as an ever more openly social-fascist apparatus. The workers are having to advance to new forms and methods of struggle, and to a far wider and deeper revolutionary outlook. This transformation cannot take place overnight. The inner struggle within the Communist Party, and the temporary weakening of the Communist Party owing to its inability quickly enough to adapt itself to the changed situation, is only a reflection of this tremendous process of transformation in the British working class. The coming Congress will have to be a decisive point in this transformation, and in clearing the way forward for the new stage of class struggle in Britain.

What is the special character of the present situation in

Britain, and the consequent tasks confronting the Congress?

The Labour Government has now been in office some six months. The eight million voters who gave their support to the Labour promises in May are now experiencing the fruits. After having voted for the Labour Party essentially as an alternative to the hated Baldwin regime, and to turn out the Baldwin Government, they are now experiencing in the Labour Government a complete continuity with the Baldwin Government — not only a continuation, but even a sharpening of the essential features of the Baldwin Government's policy.

The main work of the Labour Government during the past six months has been as the instrument of imperialist policy in the world field, especially with reference to a) inter-imperialist rivalry (the Hague and the MacDonald-Hoover Conferences), b) relations with the Soviet Union, and c) colonial policy, and, in particular, India.

What is the perspective opened out in these issues?

The Five-Power Conference in January will mark an enormous increase of armaments by the two most powerful armed states in the world. Under cover of the talk of "parity" and "limitation of armaments", British and American Imperialism are seeking: first, to impose a statutory inferior position on all other Powers, while making their own level too high for competition by any others (Japan has already sent in officially a plea that parity may be fixed at a lower level, and that within that lower level she may receive a higher percentage, 70%; both requests have been refused); second, on this basis, to establish effective world domination or the "peace of the Anglo-Saxons", which means in particular to unite the world imperialist front against the Soviet Union; third, in this way to clear the field for their own ultimate conflict for world hegemony, for which conflict neither is yet ready without further preparation.

The significance of the Labour Government as a government of the drive to war is thus powerfully brought out by its acts.

With regard to relations with the Soviet Union, the offensive policy of the Labour Government is even more open. After all the election propaganda of the immediate establishment of full and friendly relations with the Soviet Union, the actual negotiations have shown a very different character. The character of the negotiations has shown throughout, under formal cover of a move for the resumption of relations, a continuous manoeuvring for position on the basis of hostility. The original pledges to Chamberlain and his associates in Parliament; the breaking off of the negotiations on the point that the full demands of the creditors and the counter-revolutionaries must first be satisfied; the reluctant resumption of negotiations and renewed pledges to Parliament that the activities of the Communist International will be regarded as activities of the Soviet Government; and, above all, the sending of a professional agent of the Foreign Office anti-Soviet policy, Drey, as Ambassador to Moscow, who until recently was acting as second under the notorious Gregory of the "Northern Department" of the Foreign Office — all these are signs clear to see for those who care to read them. The Labour Government is being used to prepare the ground for a renewed break with the Soviet Union — this time under Labour auspices, and therefore with a "united" country to enter on the campaign against the Workers' Republic.

Finally, with regard to India. Here already a gigantic conflict between the Labour Government and the rising mass movement has opened, which is likely to reach decisive stages in the near future. The manoeuvre of the Viceroy's Declaration and the proposed conference is the obvious building of a bridge for the bourgeois nationalists to enable them to throw over their previous pledges of launching a revolutionary struggle for independence by January 1st, and line up with the Government against the mass movement. The tactics of imperialism is to concentrate all forces against the first beginnings of an independent movement of the workers and peasants, as the real deadly enemy to its power. This is the significance of the Meerut trial. It has thus fallen to a Labour Government to seek to strangle the first beginnings of socialism among the three hundred millions of India. A campaign of intensified judicial terrorism is in full swing. The Labour Government is sentencing Indians to years of imprisonment, forced labour etc., for a speech, an article, or even for reprinting books and pamphlets which were freely permitted under the Baldwin Go-

vernment. Nothing could show more clearly the sharpening of the issues. **The bourgeoisie has set for the British Labour Government the role of hangman of the Indian Revolution.** This is an issue which confronts the British workers with ever growing urgency.

If we turn to the field of domestic policy, the continuity with the Baldwin Government stands out strongly. The economic situation shows no sign of improving, but rather of worsening. Exports for the first ten months of 1929 are at almost the same level as for 1928, and exports of manufactured goods have fallen. The adverse balance of trade has increased. Unemployment is rising. The relative position of Britain in the world market, and especially in relation to its leading industrial competitors, goes steadily backward. The financial crisis, reflected from America, is adversely affecting the situation. **The Labour Government is showing the same impotence as the Baldwin Government to stay the economic decline.** In no country are the signals pointing more strongly for the workers than in Britain to the socialist revolution as the only way out of their worsening plight.

The Labour Government came to power largely on the basis of its wholesale denunciation of the economic policy of the Baldwin Government, of its policy of "economic defeatism" as it was termed (actually of ruthless class struggle to re-establish British capitalist efficiency at the expense of the workers), and its failure to solve the unemployment crisis. The Labour Party and Liberal Party vied with one another in their promises of large-scale schemes of industrial reconstruction with state aid to overcome unemployment and bring back prosperity. The Labour and Liberal Parties have their majority; but the schemes have vanished into thin air. The critical financial situation makes any large-scale schemes impossible. The fiasco of Thomas is visible to all. **The failure of the Labour Government to undertake any large-scale industrial reconstruction is of decisive importance in the progress of the British capitalist decline.** The Labour Government is forced to tread the path of the Baldwin Government — the path of slow and painful rationalisation at the expense of the workers, of maintenance of the gold standard as its primary anxiety, of ever renewed attacks upon the workers.

The economic policy of the Labour Government thus turns essentially into attacks upon the workers. The Labour Government has the role of the spearhead of the capitalist offensive against the workers. The pledges of re-establishing the miners' seven hours "in the first session of parliament" have had to be thrown overboard. Instead, the Labour Government has to undertake the task of enforcing wage-cuts, as in the imposing of the 6 1/4% wage-cut on the half million cotton workers by the Labour Government's Court of Arbitration. In this task the trade union bureaucracy busily assists it. But in this way a wedge is driven between the workers on the one side and the Labour Government and trade union bureaucracy on the other.

The Labour Members of Parliament, growingly disturbed at the turn of events and the signs of alienation of the workers, are now raising a howl for increased social benefits, unemployment pay etc., to hide their failure. But even here the financial situation is against them; and Snowden presents a "strong" front to resist them on behalf of his City masters, no less than he did at the Hague. These loudly heralded "revolts" in the Parliamentary Labour Party should not be mistaken for the growth of a genuine "left opposition"; they are nothing but the largely stage clamour of opportunist Labour politicians, who fear to meet their constituents without something more tangible to show; but this very fear and anxiety betrays the movement of working class feeling towards disillusionment and distrust.

The real development of working class opposition is to be found, not in these manoeuvres of Labour politicians, but in the growing wave of independent strikes. The strike curve shows a steady upward tendency during the past year. These strikes are essentially of a new type. They are fought almost invariably against the intensest opposition of the trade union bureaucracy; they are spontaneous movements of the workers, at present largely local in character; they unite the unorganised with the organised workers, the former often showing the strongest fighting character. This gathering movement is still weak and in its early stages; it is still local and sporadic, limited in outlook and often uncertain in its aims. But the whole character of the situation makes certain its growth and deepening. **To reach its full strength, however, it requires**

leadership, a network of organisation, contact between the local centres and common expression, concerted action, a common fighting programme, and interweaving of the economic and political struggle. Here, in the development of this wider mass movement, is the tremendous field of the **Communist Party** in the present period, to realise its independent leadership, to build up the revolutionary working class opposition to the Labour Government and trade union bureaucracy, to build up the mass Communist Party.

The basic task of the Communist Party in the present period is to lead the new wave of struggle, the rising opposition to the Labour Government and its policy of rationalisation and war.

For the realisation of this task, the essential requirements are:

1. a correct political line of independent leadership in action, and final wiping out of the remains of the right, conciliatory or vacillating tendencies;

2. the establishment of the **Workers' Daily** as the agitator and organiser of the new revolutionary mass movement under Communist leadership;

3. the united front from below, especially through the forms of Committees of Action, Factory Committees, etc., and around programmes of fighting demands, both economic and political; leadership in mass economic struggles, and also in mass political agitations and actions (war issue, colonial issues, against the Labour Government, etc.);

4. the turning of the face of the Party to the factories as the basis of its strength against the Labour-trade union machine, the capitalist campaign of repression etc., and the sole possibility of its growth as a revolutionary workers' party leading the working class.

These are the biggest issues and tasks confronting the coming Congress of the Communist Party. The most hopeful sign that has shown itself in the pre-Congress discussions is the strong spirit of fight throughout the membership, the determination to end the old confusions and incorrect tendencies that have held back the Party during the past two years, and the enthusiasm to go forward and realise in action the international line, and to elect a leadership which will fight strongly on this basis. This spirit of fight is a reflection of the growing militant spirit in the working class. If this spirit succeeds in translating itself into positive results at the Congress, and marking out clearly the path forward, then this Congress will prove a decisive point in the new revolutionary wave in the British working class.