

# KEEP LEFT



ORGAN OF THE WEMBLEY NORTH & HENDON WEST LABOUR LEAGUES OF YOUTH

Vol.5 No.2

FEBRUARY 1956

Price 1½d.

## THE YOUTH SECTIONS GET-TOGETHER

One Saturday evening in January over 60 comrades from London, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Devon attended a New Year "get-together" held in South London and thus demonstrated that the Labour youth need and want to work together. It was organised by Streatham L. of Y. because we felt that now that Sections have no contact with each other, comrades must get tired of seeing the same faces at their meetings and tend to lose their enthusiasm for working in the Labour movement.

Most of the evening was taken up by social activities but at 9 o'clock there was a break for refreshments and a short discussion on the general position of youth in the Party. This was led off by Peter Gibson (ex N.C.C.) who said that our old organization was dead and we must recognize that we could neither resurrect it nor set up any new form of organization. Our job at present was to build up these Youth Sections both politically and numerically and we must get down to this at once. Comrades should not expect or rely upon much support from Transport House (since the Labour youth had shown by its history that it stood generally on the left in the Party) but would have to get down to the job themselves.

In the discussion that followed a member from Devon spoke of day schools as a means of explaining the basic ideas of socialism to new comrades and this was generally approved. Emphasis was put on the need for joint functions and it was thought essential that further "get-togethers" should be held by Youth Sections. One London comrade mentioned the likelihood of a slump in the near future and said this was one of the reasons why we must get on with building a strong youth movement that was independent of the Y.C.L. and capable of giving a lead to the working class youth. It was brought to the notice of comrades that "Tribune" would shortly be holding a young sellers Conference and we were urged to attend this since that paper needed our help just as we need the support of the Left-Wing.

In conclusion I urge all comrades to support any joint functions or day schools that various Youth Sections propose to organize and so help to educate and encourage the youth movement. I think the success of our evening showed that the Labour youth is still very much alive and kicking.

Janet Sutton.  
Streatham L. of Y.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

With the replacement of Atlee by Gaitskell, we are being told by certain sections of opinion that Labour's troubles are over! A senile leader has given way to a young one; a great revival is in store.

Such statements arise from a failure to understand why the Movement stagnates. The failure of Labour is the failure of its leaders to provide an alternative to Toryism. They fail in this because basically they agree with the Tories. A reactionary policy does not become progressive because it is vigorously pursued. Gaitskell, like Atlee has been closely associated with the right-wing. Hence, we are not likely to see the major policy changes necessary to a "great revival".

A major difference does however, occur in the attitude shown by each toward the left-wing. Atlee in general favours compromise, Gaitskell, repression. Gaitskell's election must then be seen as part of the general right-wing policy to strengthen their hold on the party machine and smash the left. Always the bureaucracy has dominated the party. In the past, however, party institutions have been responsive to the voice of the rank and file. Growing disgust with right-wing leadership now makes it necessary to strangle democracy. Thus the bureaucrats are being forced to govern nakedly.

Yet the right-wing is confronted by a dilemma. Hating Socialism, it can only survive as a political force by the efforts of Socialists. On one hand it must repress Socialists, on the other tolerate them. As a way out it seeks to rebuild the party as purely an election machine. At all levels, right-wingers rail against the discussion of policy rather than election business. The Wilson Report endorses their complaints and seeks to streamline the bureaucracy.

What of the Left? Conference showed a falling apart of the progressive forces for which the Bevanites must take a large share of the blame. From the announcement of the General Election until the eve of Conference, compromise was the order of the day. With an obliteration of the differences between Bevanism and Beviskellism, it is little wonder that the left wing vote dropped back.

It must also be realized that up to now the left-wing movement has been a movement of protest rather than a grouping around any particular policy. It has been action of the right-wing which has brought the left into action:- S.E.A.T.O., German Rearmament, Attack on Tribune, expulsion of Bevan, etc. Without such a stimulus to unity the left disintegrates. This lack of policy must be remedied before the party can hope to achieve Socialist leadership.

The left must therefore plan its tactics with a view to carrying its campaigns against the bureaucracy to a higher level. It must give a fighting lead on all matters in order to increase its support inside the party and among the electorate. By stimulating policy discussion it will assist the emergence of a Socialist policy. Its bid for support will be greatly aided by the fact that right-wing bankruptcy stands revealed as never before. In a period of intensifying class struggle, the right has abandoned all attempts to

lead the workers and bleats "back to the classroom", a phrase which serves the dual purpose of delaying the presentation of policy and as a cloak for "re-educating" the party in the ways of the "fresh-thinkers".

Attitude towards the Bevanites must also be determined. Their leadership has always been weak and vacillating, prepared to make terms at the least opportunity. Despite this, they are spokesmen of the left. As such it is necessary to support them while at the same time making a vigorous fight against their weaknesses. "Tribune" now intends to make a serious attempt to provide left-wing policy statements on the N.E.C.'s proposed ten reports. Bevanism will, in the last analysis, stand or fall on its ability to do this, dependent on whether or not any more than a rehash of "Challenge to Britain" is provided.

Many attempts will undoubtedly be made to atomise and split the left in order to divide and rule. To counter this it is essential to maintain the maximum possible organisation and coordination. In this, the left-wing press will play an important part, disseminating ideas, serving as a forum for discussion and countering slanders and lies. Contacts must be built and maintained, between progressive sections of the movement. It would be useful to build some sort of inter-constituency party associations which could possibly link up with progressive sections of the Trades Union movement.

Most important of all, the left must remain an independent force. We are often told that in the interests of unity we should sink our differences with the right. This merely advocates dropping all resistance to reactionary policies. In other words it calls for a sell-out. Such tactics perpetuate right-wing dominance, would ultimately destroy the party. Far from relaxing the struggle, it must be intensified as only by such means will Socialism prevail inside the party.

ALAN W. STANLEY  
Leicester

\* \* \*

### FRANCE AFTER THE ELECTIONS

The rapid succession of Prime Ministers of the Fourth French Republic, is now a rather stale music-hall joke. After the elections, the chaotic state of French politics is even worse than before, but it would be foolish to attribute this situation to some peculiarity of the Gallic Temperament. For the instability of the French government can be only understood as a symptom of the disintegration of French capitalism.

After the war, the capitalist regime in France was re-established only with the help of U.S. economic aid. But even Mr. Marshal could not have succeeded if the French working class had not been misled by the Communist Party, which at that time was intent on helping West European Capitalism to survive. By joining de Gaulle's government, the Communist Party enabled Big Business to get back into the saddle, and French imperialism to regain its foothold in Asia and North Africa.

The recent elections showed that the situation today is not very different. By voting for the Communist Party and the Socialists, the French workers show that they want to end the power of the profiteers. At the same time, the

inability of French capital to find a way out of its crisis is shown by the hundreds of splinters into which the right-wing is split. The ruling class has no confidence in its own capacity to run the country.

The rise of the Poujade movement is another indication of the break-up of French society. It is supported by the "little man" of French economy, the small shop-keepers and farmers. These people see that the established parties of Big Business cannot offer a way out but at the same time they are anti-socialist. And so they turn to the demagogy and gangsterism of Poujade. He, of course, can offer them nothing. His political policy is still to be announced and he hides its absence in a mass of antisemitic nonsense. In the end, he will expose his real backers - Big Business itself. (It is interesting to note that while he shouts for a cut in taxes, he also demands the sending of more troops to Algeria which would cost the Government many millions of francs.)

The only section of the capitalist politicians which holds out any hope for the French ruling class is the "left" Radical Movement led by Mendes-France. Mendes is the most far-sighted representative of the interest of French capital. He sees that his class must try to compromise with its enemies until it is strong enough to deal with them. And so he tries to buy off the workers and the North African nationalists with a few concessions.

The situation in North Africa becomes more and more hopeless for French imperialism. In Tunisia and Morocco the French stooges may hold back the movement for a while, but in Algeria there is a grave shortage of stooges. The mockery of pretending that Algeria is a part of France was brought to an abrupt end when the French were forced to postpone the elections there. Meanwhile the heroic struggle of the North African people against the most brutal oppression continues.

The only solution to France's problems lies with the French Labour Movement. But the leadership of that movement is in the hands of people, who so far from trying to smash the remains of French imperialism, only want a deal with it. The Socialist Party clings lovingly to Mendes-France on his "liberal" hand-wagon, while the "Communists" run along behind, begging for a lift.

A government representing the organizations of French Labour, with a socialist programme (not the miserable, milk-and-water stuff put up by the Communist Party last month) could put a stop to the nauseating farce of French parliamentary fiddling. By bringing home the troops from North Africa and by breaking the power of the Bourse, such a government could start to tackle the problems facing the French economy. It would get the support, not only from the French workers, but also from the middle class, and it could give a tremendous impetus to the Labour movement of the entire world. This is the only answer to France's difficulties.

But this is not only a solution to France's difficulties, For, although the French political situation does differ from, say, the British, the solution is the same.

CYRIL SMITH  
Tokyngton Ward

## CLASS STRUGGLE OR CLASS COLLABORATION

Something like seven million workers are now in the battle being waged for higher pay to counter-balance the ever-rising cost of living. While the railwaymen have now accepted the 7% offered by the Transport Commission, the 15% claim on behalf of the engineers awaits the employers' reply on 17th February. Meanwhile the bankers push their Tory Government to give them the pool of unemployment which will enable the employers to dig their heels in.

The employers concerned in the higher wage war tell us to remember the "grave danger" of inflation. We cannot forget it! We feel it more than the bankers. Inflation is their problem; it is caused by their system of society, not ours. We could solve it, but they will never let us, because in a socialist planned economy they would lose their privileged positions.

These parasites then tell us that we must cooperate with them to increase production and work harder so that they can sell more abroad at a "cheaper price". American, German, Australian, Japanese and Italian capitalists are all going to do exactly the same: Cut production costs by either installing new machinery and methods, or cutting the workers' wages. Export more and more and import less and less; by decreasing the price of goods to knock out any competition. Where they are going to export to if all of them are going to cut imports, is quite a problem!

They are going to have to keep cutting production costs and increasing the efficiency of labour, buying new machinery and factories. A vast surplus is going to be made this way which the people cannot buy up because their wages have been cut. The capitalists, to postpone the inevitable crisis, are going to have to increase the arms drive and open up new markets (if there are any) by force. They then turn round to us and say that there is no class struggle, we must cooperate and settle our differences. And some people believe them!

All this talk of full employment, the welfare state and the higher standard of living the workers "enjoy" does not, as certain members of the Labour Movement believe, prove that there is not a class struggle.

Full employment under capitalism is about as secure as a sinking ship, and it cannot last. The crisis of over-production and under-consumption will see to that. This crisis is becoming apparent in the American automobile and farming industries. Once the giant monopolies of America move in on the export market, the workers of Britain and the rest of Europe are going to be hit hard.

The Tories, with the help of the class collaboration policies of the right-wing labour and Trade Union leaders have sacrificed the welfare state for the armaments drive. Total arms expenditure is about £1,608 million, while the social services receive £737 million per year (1964). The higher standard of living we workers enjoy is based on excessive overtime and the various bonus rackets. By doing overtime the workers are only helping the capitalist system to get rich and quickening their redundancy. Last year, trading profits rose by 11.7% to £1,780 million, while dividends rose to £197,528, increasing 21%

The struggle between the working class and the capitalist class can only end by the establishment of a classless society, a socialist society and the distribution of the power of the capitalists. There is a direct opposition of

(continued on next page)

interests and there can be no compromise or "co-existence". The workers want a better standard of living and higher wages - Big Business wants more profits.

The class struggle is the key to all the workers' problems and it is important to the world socialist movement that every serious worker should educate himself or herself in the theories of socialism and their application to the world economy.

G. KENNEDY  
West Hendon L. of Y.

---

## HOUSING - THE PROBLEM AND THE ANSWER (Part I)

### THE PROBLEM

Ever since man lived in caves, housing has been one of his biggest problems. He began solving it by erecting shelters for his family and himself out of the forests and on the land - all without paying anybody. Now, civilization has progressed so far that this is impossible today.

As society has changed from one phase to another, the housing problem has intensified. The industrial revolution brought millions of people to the towns and overcrowding of the already appalling houses grew worse. Filth and squalor worsened alongside prosperity. Not only were insufficient houses built to absorb these immigrants, but since then, the further development of civilization has brought wars which have resulted in the loss of many of the available homes. All this extra want has arisen as a result of capitalism, the exploitation of the producers of wealth.

The housing question was only brought to light in the 19th Century because bugs, fleas and germs are no respecters of class. They refused to keep to the houses of the workers, and began spreading to the upper class districts taking disease with them. Towards the end of the last century, local authorities were given power to replace houses and maintain more sanitary conditions. Of course, local authority housing has never been more than to meet the minimum needs of the workers, usually determined by the purse, and just to avoid creating further slums.

Capitalism did not bring about this legislation for anyone's good but its own. The work was placed in the hands of their friends, the building contractors. Various trusts (e.g. Peabody and Guinness) backed housing schemes, but we may be sure that the pockets of these philanthropic gentlemen were not much affected. One has only to look at these "trust" buildings to see that the standards are the lowest possible and most don't contain bathrooms.

Private enterprise was encouraged to tackle this problem and whole areas of terraced houses grew up on the outskirts of London (like the "manor homes" in Ruislip). These provided inferior and low standard dwellings for which the building societies were willing to advance loans to that section of the working class who would rather be known as "middle class", or who were forced to buy their homes because of the shortage of rented dwellings. Between 1919 and 1944 the assets of building societies increased from £65 m. to £773 m.

As Nye Bevan has pointed out, socialists are not against people owning their own homes, but against people owning other people's homes. However, under present

day conditions, the ownership of houses by the workers cannot be considered as a solution of the housing problem. Apart from anything else the owner-occupier is forced to remain in the same part of the country and so to take work at the wages available there.

### THE PROBLEM REMAINS

People often talk about solving our housing difficulties by building a few hundred thousand houses a year. A recent survey (P.E.P. "How Many Houses?"), shows how wrong this is. There are between four and five million people who require adequate accommodation. At present they are living in overcrowded conditions, in houses built 75 years ago or more, in slum areas or in dwellings which lack both stove and sink (These figures were taken in 1951 and apply to England and Wales only).

Taking an average of four persons in a family, this means that at least one million homes are required at once.

### BUILDING AND PROFIT

As I have said before (and Engels said in 1872), the problem has not just cropped up. What then have the politicians been doing to solve it?

True, both parties campaigned in 1945, 1950 and 1951 to build more houses. Each tried to outdo the other with higher targets. However, problems cannot be solved by slogans - unless they are followed by actions. To build, whether flats, houses or anything else, you first need something to build on. Land, cannot just be fenced off, it has to be bought. In London this can cost as much as £20,000 per acre.

Contractors' rings ensure that the highest tenders possible are submitted. Building materials, also controlled by manufacturers' associations to maintain high profits and inflated prices, all add to the cost which any local authority must pay for its housing. For example, new designs in wall paper are only permitted every other year - quantity production is of course cheaper, and if the market is continually flooded with new designs, profits would be affected.

As if this were not enough, all building, whether private or by a local authority, means borrowing money. A large part of the cost of houses goes in payment to the money-lenders in the form of interest. On a typical council house the interest charges make up 65% of the rent. Until recently the local authorities were able to borrow from the Public Works Loans Board. Now, the Tories have put up the interest rates and forced the councils on to the open money market. (Incidentally, in all this argument about who should get the housing subsidy, it is seldom mentioned that the subsidy on a council house does not even cover the interest charges. In other words, it is the money-lender who is being subsidised. Now, how about a means test for him?)

Some trading profits for building firms for the year 1954 are: Wimpey £4,007,000 (Div: 15%); John Laing £1,525,000 (Div: 10%); Trollope and Colls £875,000 (Div: 14%); Richard Costain £471,000 (Div: 10%); On the building materials side we have Ideal Boilers £835,000 (Div: 52½%); Associated Portland Cement £4,654,000 (Div: 20%); Limmer and Trinidad Lake Asphalt £179,000 (Div: 15% and 1 for 18 bonus share issue); Wallpaper-Manufacturers £1,540,000 (Div: 15% and 50% share bonus).

(to be continued next issue)

UNA MOUNTSTEPHEN  
Westminster C. L. P.

## LEFT OR RIGHT

That is the biggest problem on the Labour Party today. Which is the correct road to take. to direct all of the enormous power of the Labour Movement into making Capitalism work efficiently, or to carry on with the aim of creating a Socialist society? If the recent Labour Party Conference is anything to go by, the Party is slowly swinging to the Right, and I am sure that our Party leaders would like to see the phrase "Common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange" removed from the Constitution.

If this swing to the Right is maintained, there will soon be little to distinguish us from the Tories, which would be disastrous. No, in my opinion the Labour Party should finally break with the Capitalist class, and adapt a militant Socialist policy. Then the electorate would be able to see clearly our aims, for the first time. I believe that if the Labour Leaders had carried out a really Socialist programme in 1945 they would still be in power. Instead, they carried through a limited programme and then sat back and wondered what to do next, and today they are still wondering.

I would like to suggest the following programme.-

1. Withdrawal of British troops from Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus.
2. Cut the call-up to a year, and eventually scrap it altogether.
3. Nationalisation of all basic industries
4. Press for the admittance of the Chinese People's Republic to the United Nations.
5. Ban the manufacture and testing of all atomic weapons
6. Withdrawal from the Bagdad Pact, and all other anti-Communist groupings.

These are just a few suggestions, but with this kind of programme the rank and file members of the Labour Party would have something to fight for, and the next General Election could be won.

Then the road to Socialism would be opened, and the dreams of the early pioneers become realities.

GEORGE ANDREWS.

WEST HENDON L.ofY.

---

TRANSPORT HOUSE ON THE MARCH: No one can say that the Labour Party does not take an interest in its youth. In the past two months, secretaries of League of Youth branches have received from Transport House a copy of a political document entitled "Town and Gentry Post" and an invitation to a service at Westminster Abbey. No wonder they are advertising for a new National Youth Officer; the last one must have got worn out.

All articles are the personal opinions of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Board.

ALL ENQUIRIES TO: Miss B. Newbery, 7 Kinross Close, Kenton, Harrow

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY: Wembley N. & Hendon W. Leagues of Youth