

KEEP LEFT

★ A Paper for Socialist Youth ★



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EDITORIAL

The Swing to the Left

The results of the local government elections may provide the Parliamentary Labour Party with pleasant thoughts of a "walk-over" at the next General Election. Nevertheless, they must not be allowed to sit on their haunches and just hope that the wind keeps blowing in our direction; they must make the Government's seat too hot for the Tories to sit on.

We cannot help feeling that the Tories are having far too easy a time in office. Since Suez, the Government has pushed through the Rent Bill, introduced a vicious class Budget, ignoring old age pensioners, whilst handing out a bonus to surtax payers, and now has dropped the H-bomb. All we have heard from the Parliamentary Labour Party has been a few mild protests in the House of Commons. And on the question of the Hydrogen bomb the Parliamentary Labour Party did not seem to know which way it was going.

There are now protests in the House of Commons about M.Ps.' salaries. Perhaps now the Labour Party in the House of Commons will make life as difficult as possible for the Tories, as they did last time, after the Housing Rents and Repairs Act 1954 was on the Statute Book.

But if they could do this then for more money, why cannot they do it now to get repeal of the Rent Act, and to raise old age pensions and to stop the manufacture of the H-bomb?

Nation wide Demonstrations against the Tests

The working class and the youth despise these nuclear weapons and the spreading of bone cancer and leukaemia by their "testing". Let the Parliamentary Labour Party stand out clearly for the immediate cessation of the tests and let the National Council of Labour be asked to organise demonstrations, as in the Suez campaign, to back them up!

A "KEEP LEFT" READER WRITES.....

In the Editorial of your March issue you have made it quite clear that you believe that the United Nations Organisation can never free the colonial peoples from 'superialism'. Surely the aims of the Socialists in this country is to help the colonies to this end.

You maintain that the struggles of the peoples in various countries is the only solution, then we have witnessed how their aims have been achieved. Mass slaughter in Hungary with the people finally placed in further servitude to the Soviet Union, with Poland only just escaping a similar fate, but a further tightening up of security measures by the Russian tools and agents in Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Had we have had a United Nations Organisation this could have been avoided but unfortunately the sorry Government of this country chose to embark on the disastrous Suez venture which split the organisation wide open. But it was only the feeling at the Assembly of U.N.O. that prevented further bloodshed, even though it left behind a hatred of the English that will be as intense in a hundred years time as it is now by the Egyptian peoples.

You maintain that America has entered into the Middle East to safeguard her oil interest, the threat to them emanating from the Arab nationalist movement. What are the aims of this movement? To protect the interest of the slave owning sheiks whose people live in abject poverty whilst they amass huge fortunes from the oil.

The only answer to this is a strong United Nations Organisation who will be prepared to help educate the people of Asia, supply them with necessary medical equipment (not losing sight of the fact that there is only one doctor to every 81,000 people in the Sudan and only one for every 71,000 in Indonesia) and trained medical men and nurses.

Out of this will arise a people who are able to govern themselves, and by governing themselves be able to think for themselves which should eventually lead to a strong Socialist movement in these countries, the United Nations Organisation being used for the sowing of this seed.

THOMAS T. KENNEALLY
Luton Youth Section

NATIONAL LABOUR YOUTH RALLY, ON 13TH JULY, IN LONDON

We urge all "Keep Left" readers to support this Rally - further details can be obtained from Alan Williams. Get your Region to organise a coach for the Sections in your area, and bring your Youth Section banner!

Several hundred Scandinavian Socialists will be attending this meeting and we intend to have a special Scandinavian edition of "K.L." on sale. We need your assistance - if you know of a reliable Comrade in your locality who can speak Swedish please tell us at once!

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DEVONPORT YOUTH SECTION

Devonport, like all other branches of the Labour Party, has suffered from conscription and general unemployment among young people. But it has maintained some sort of continuity during the last ten years when it was known as the Labour Party Youth and combined both Sutton and Devonport Constituencies.

The Secretary of the Youth Section is Miss Barbara Congdon, who is a teacher. Other members are office workers, dockyard employees and some are still at school studying for Higher School Certificate.

Activities vary considerably and the branch has always planned its programme one or two months in advance. Politically the young people have always been active in the constituency and have been encouraged by the adult party. On the social side members run dances and coach trips, including an annual all-day outing to one or another of the many popular resorts in Devon or Cornwall.

One successful venture was the formation of an "Any Questions" panel which held a very successful session last Autumn and was invited to tour some of the Wards afterwards. The branch usually works very hard during election time and has earned a reputation which results in numerous requests for the Youth Section to work in practically every Ward in the City. This year the Secretary of the Youth Section is an election agent and most of the members will be working together in the St. Andrew's Ward.

Since last September, financially backed by the Division, the Youth Section have opened a social club which is naturally having to cope with many of the difficulties which will arise from any venture in its infancy but which has every hope of success. Members have made two table-tennis tables and there are facilities for darts, dancing, chess and other board games.

Membership of the club and section combined is now in the region of sixty young people.

Besides being members of the Labour Party most of the young people belong to the Movement for Colonial Freedom and five members are on the local committee of the M.C.F.

The Devonport team were third in the South West Regional round of the public speaking contest and the Chairman of the team reached the national semi-finals.

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HAS YOUR YOUTH SECTION BEEN "SPOTLIGHTED" YET? If not, send us details of your Youth Section's activities, to be included in future issues of "KEEP LEFT".

WHAT GOES ON INSIDE THE PARLIAMENTARY LABOUR PARTY

The eternal struggle between Left and Right goes on inside the Parliamentary Labour Party, just as inside the TUC and the LP. These are the three decisive sectors of the struggle for a Socialist policy.

The P.L.P. consists of 279 Labour M.Ps. plus a few Labour Lords. Within it are groups to consider special subjects, such as housing, foreign affairs, the colonies or regional matters. An M.P. can belong to several of these groups and play an active part in them. Then every Thursday night there is a brief meeting to deal with the next week's business in Parliament. About every three weeks there is a full scale meeting of all Labour Members to discuss one important topic. A Parliamentary Committee of 12 - sometimes referred to as the "Shadow Cabinet" - is elected annually by secret ballot. Hugh Gaitskell takes the Chair at these meetings and I must say that there is no attempt to gag any point of view. Here, decisions are taken which will govern how the Party acts in the Chamber of the House of Commons. They also tend to affect the Party's policy and conduct outside Parliament. Although, of course, the annual delegate conference of the Party is, rightly, the supreme policy making body, and between conferences, the National Executive.

How big is the Left?

How strong is the Left Wing in Parliament? If by Left Wing you mean those who want to see a more Socialist policy adopted, I'd say about 90. This is no small figure. These militants ought to be exerting a bigger influence than they do.

I am happy to tell you, however, that in the last year the P.L.P. has been acting more and more like a body of Socialists. At the three vital meetings on Suez, the H-bomb and the call-up the spirit has been magnificent. M.Ps. who by no stretch of the imagination could be called Leftists spoke with passion and sincerity, (Mind you, there's plenty of way to go yet).

My regret is that our Front Bench performance in the Chamber lately hasn't always expressed this strength of feeling, though even here there has been an improvement. The stand made over the Suez invasion, for instance, will have lasting results, particularly in attracting spirited youth into our ranks. A second criticism is, that having reached decisions about ending the call-up and suspending the Christmas Island explosions, the Party has not campaigned outside Westminster for these demands.

May I suggest to readers the most careful selection of Parliamentary candidates? A fifteen minute speech is not sufficient test for a man or woman to represent a constituency, maybe for a generation. Another suggestion is that General Management Committees should be told how their M.P. voted or spoke inside the P.L.P. particularly as some Members get out of touch - or even out of line - with the rank and file.

You can't change the policy of a huge movement as ours overnight. It takes time. But the Labour Party is ultimately democratic. If the rank and file want a more Socialist policy badly and determinedly enough, they can get it.

FRANK ALLAUN,
M.P. Salford East

WARRIOR-ARTISTS AND THE ANGRY YOUNG MEN

As a result of the past betrayals of the glib-tongued Ramsay MacDonalds, as a result of the witch-hunts in America and the Soviet Union, and as a result of the capitulation of the intellectuals before the witch-hunters, a developing anti-intellectual current - a current which is perhaps relatively weak at the moment - has taken root in the British Labour movement. At

At the same time, the Fabian theorists like C.A.R. Crossland have tended to speak down, to instruct, the workers, while the Colin Wilsons have put forward the rather "original" idea of "damn you all". But unless intellectuals are prepared to do a hand's turn with others in the Labour movement, it is high time that intellectuals were abolished and intelligence substituted. Conversely, unless workers are prepared to study the basic elements of Socialist theory, they are going to be led up the garden path by another Ramsay MacDonald or Harry Pollitt. The workers' suspicion of intellectuals, the intellectuals self-imposed isolation from society, the colour bar, the refusal of artists to grapple with reality and to bring art into a meaningful relationship to life - all of these are a reflection of the profound spiritual sickness of our cultural environment, that is, of capitalist society.

Of course, none of these developments are exactly new; they are in fact, as old as class society. What is new, is the sweeping and far-reaching effect (i.e. the intensification) of such trends. There is, for example, no expression of hatred for blacks as blacks in the writings of the ancient and feudal authors and artists. But it is not true that racial prejudices were totally unknown in those far-off times. The ancient and feudal - and even the early capitalist - thinkers and writers were men of public affairs, and they carried the conflicts and disputes of their time into the tribunals and market places. They recognised and encouraged the belief that man can and will make his own history.

At a time when "the angry young men" are "attacking" society and yet turning in on themselves, it is very refreshing to re-read the novels of Zola, Balzac, Gorky and France. Today, when the intellectuals are turning inwards and away from society, it is not, perhaps, out of place to recall the example of artists and intellectuals who, in the best humanist tradition, have fulfilled the dual role of warrior-artists. Such was Anatole France.

Up until the Dreyfus affair, Anatole France had not shown any

particular interest in politics. But once the facts of Dreyfus's victimisation were known, Anatole France threw his weight behind the progressive forces which were involved in the fight for justice. Whenever he found the Jews, Freemasons, and Socialists fighting against the racial prejudices of the anti-Semites he threw himself into the Dreyfus struggle, as other warrior-artists had done before. Clearly the Dreyfus case was the turning point in Anatole France's artistic and political life. For he turned towards Socialism and began to play an increasingly active part in the French Socialist Party. But more than that. He clearly and forcibly expressed his ideas on freethought, justice, anti-Semitism and internationalism in his novels and other writings. Thus he achieved a unity between his role as an artist and as a citizen. In 1901 when the raging Dreyfus controversy was at its height, France published his social and political satire, *A Chronicle of Our Own Time*, in which the anti-Dreyfusards were the victims of his barbed irony. He showed up every aspect of human nature, because he understood it so well. His characters were drawn from real life. They were the careerists, the snobs, the cowards and the heroes of the society he had known. But what he stressed, as an artist and as a Socialist was the revolutionary potential of man. The heroes of Anatole France's post-Dreyfus novels were not passive, helpless, Orwellian characters.

Anatole France, after the beginning of the Dreyfus case, was a warrior-artist who got down to the brass tacks of the class struggle and the realities of life. He rejected the bankrupt values of capitalist civilisation, and, through his artistic and political activity, tried to create the new social values of Socialism. So trade unionists and Socialists who have got time to read novels will find a truer picture and a deeper and more realistic understanding of human nature in the novels of Anatole France than in the novels of Colin Wilson, Kingsley Amis, or any of the other "angry young men".

JAMES D. YOUNG
Grangemouth Labour Party

AUSTRALIAN LABOUR AND MR. GAIR

The recent expulsion of the Premier of the Queensland State Government, Mr. Gair, has been jumped upon by the liberal press and spokesmen in an attempt to distract the Australian electorate from the bankruptcy and failure of the Menzies-Fadden Government both in the domestic and foreign front.

It is generally felt throughout the left-wing of the Labour movement that the expulsion itself was at the wrong time and over the wrong issue. Gair was known for a long that his days were numbered and like a rat in a corner he went down fighting by cleverly standing out as a man opposed to the oil combines, leading a "heroic" struggle against the monopolies. Thus, when the Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labour Party tackles him over the 3 weeks leave question (a plank in the A. L.P. election policy) the result is that the rank and file voter is utterly confused as to why they are expelling a man opposed to the monopolies, and not only that, but who is leading an effective

campaign against them. It must be remembered that the policy of the "Groupers" (Catholic Action) is one of anti-monopoly; not for Socialism, but for a return to "free enterprise" etc.

That this utopian fantasy is followed by Gair and his supporters need not have clouded the issue. The left wing should have rallied its forces to explain the real reason for opposition to the monopolies, exposed the reactionary stand of the "Groupers" as an attempt to turn back history and fought for the nationalisation of industry without compensation. It is unfortunate that the Q.C.E. did not wait until they had carried out this action before expelling Gair, although his expulsion was justified, and then they would have been able to face the electorate as a Party with a clear policy. As it is, the people are confused, there is every likelihood of an election and Labour's chances are slim. Once the Liberals get into power the electoral boundaries will be fiddled around with until we have a situation like South Australia where it is impossible to get the Liberals out!

On the industrial field, there has been a rise of 10/- awarded to all Federal workers by the Industrial Court. This award has been frozen since 1953 and has been kept between 10/- and 21/- below the State awards. (There are two wages awards in Australia: Federal award - all workers not on State awards, State award - applies to workers in that particular State.) The struggle of the Unions is now to get a return to the quarterly adjustments of wages, i.e. a wage based on the rise or fall of the cost of living.

It is with this background that the Australian Labour Party has to re-organise its forces and get a definite policy to combat the next General Election rumoured for next year, against both the "Liberal" County Party (Conservatives), and the defunct, but active Catholic Action forces, i.e. the anti-Communist Labour Party, the Democratic Labour Party (N.S.W.), and the "Gair" Labour Party (Queensland). The Federal Conference of the A.L.P. was a step in this direction, declaring the A.L.P. for a Socialist Australia. The Conference of the Women's Organising Committee which last year ended in a brawl this year ended in a complete victory for the left. Conference declared its solidarity with Dr. Evatt and the Federal Conference decisions. The June Conference of the N.S.W. Labour Party will finally decide just who the A.L.P. belongs to - the "feudalistic" ravings of Catholic Action, or the united working class of Australia.

G. KENNEDY,
Sydney, New South Wales.

Signed articles are the opinions of the writers only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board. News items and articles for publication in the July issue should be submitted not later than June 15th.

WHAT IS SOCIALISM? (6) Why Aren't We There Yet?

As we have shown in previous articles, the capitalist system of production has been out of date for some time. We live in an epoch of world war and economic crisis which began in 1914. The continued rule of the capitalist class threatens to destroy the world. Only the victory of the international working class and the establishing of a planned economy can ensure the utilization of modern science for production instead of destruction.

Why then is the profit system still going? The answer does not lie in the inability of the workers to run society. Only their failure in the past to build organizations whose leaders were really interested in fighting capitalism has held back the working class from victory. Capitalism is able to survive because of the treachery of the labour leaders.

Over and over again the workers have shown their willingness to fight and their ability to organise. Over and over again the leaders in whom they placed confidence have sold them out, betrayed them just when victory seemed certain. (Members of the A.E.U. will know just what I mean!)

Of course defeat was sometimes due to lack of experience and honest errors of judgement, and it is important to learn from mistakes of this kind. But most often the only explanation of failure is simply the cowardice and treachery of leaders who are only interested in keeping a job.

Why did they do it? Why do they do it still? Why do the labour leaders, some of whom start off as sincere socialists and militants, cease to fight against the powers that be and end up as the agents of capitalism inside the labour movement? It would be futile to try to answer these questions in terms of individual psychology, as if it were just a matter of good men and bad men.

The real explanation is that imperialism, using a few crumbs of the super-profits squeezed from the colonial people, has been able to grant concessions to some sections of the workers. It has thus been possible for T.U. and socialist leaders to find a niche inside capitalism. In return for a few reforms, which do not alter the basic social set-up, they have the job of keeping the workers satisfied. Of course the victory of socialism would make this occupation redundant, and so, consciously or unconsciously, they become the enemy of the workers winning a battle as the capitalists are. They want to enlarge their organisations, but every action they take undermines them.

In Russia in 1917, the workers and peasants found a set of leaders who were not like this. They were able to smash the ruling classes and set up workers' power, despite the efforts of imperialist armies to stop them. A new, communist, world organisation was started. But as we shall see next month, the leadership of this, too, degenerated and still the problem of leadership was not solved.

CYRIL SMITH
Wembley South C.L.P.

SOLD OUT!

The engineering wages settlement has completely confirmed Alan Stanley's contention ("K.L." May, 1957) that the Confed. leadership has perpetrated the biggest sell-out since the General Strike. One of the finest demonstrations of trade union solidarity ever seen in this country has ended in a wage increase ranging from 11/- for a skilled man to 8/- per week for a woman worker. In return for these sums, agreement has been reached for a 12 month wage freeze, and assurances given to end unofficial strikes, restrictive practices and to co-operate in the installation of new machinery.

Though it is absolutely correct to call the strike a sell-out, it would be wrong to regard it as a defeat. There is a difference between the manoeuvres of the union bureaucrats and the effects these manoeuvres have on the members they are supposed to represent. The sell-out of the General Strike resulted in a working class defeat. Thousands tore up their cards. In many areas the employers were able to pick and choose who returned to work. The recent sell-out has not had the same effects. The gains in membership have been maintained. Factory and district trade union organisations in most areas have been strengthened. At Firth Browns, in Sheffield, probably the only large factory in the country outside of ship repair, where an attempt was made to victimise militants, the management were forced to make a humiliating climbdown.

The infamous conditions brought forward by the Engineering Employers Federation are an indication that they intend to take the offensive in the factories, attempt to weaken shop stewards' committees, etc. The fact that they have obtained the signatures of a number of trade union officials doesn't necessarily mean they will succeed. This will be decided by the workers in the factories. By signing these conditions and by their handling of the other recent disputes, Standards, Nortons, B.A.C. and Briggs, the Confed. leaders weaken the workers by weakening local resistance to the employers. What they have not succeeded in doing is breaking this resistance. By refusing on all crucial issues to organise a serious fight against the employers they are forcing shop stewards and the rank and file to build local leaderships. Unconsciously they are helping to build the opposition that will eventually defeat them.

In concluding, I wish to say that I think "Keep Left" is doing a first class job in printing news of industrial struggles. I think the Sections should not only take a lively interest in these strikes but where possible should offer practical help. For example, Sections could offer to help and collect money for any strike committee in their area. Such actions will help build the unity that must be established between the industrial and political sides of the movement if the Tory government and the employing class are to be defeated.

NORMAN WINTHROP
East Ham, A.E.U.

"WALK THE PROUD ROAD"

"Black folk, walk!" Oh, that's the thing!

Listen to the voice of Luther King;

"Don't dare take the white folk's seat,

Well, we won't take any. On your feet!"

An' old John Brown

In lastin' grace

Sits lookin' down

With a smile on his face.

Alabama, Tennessee

(Meanest States in the land of the free)

Tom Paine's lan', Abe Lincoln's lan',

W.C.C. an' the Ku Klux Klan.

Must keep the negroes in their place

Think they belong to the human race,

Gentle Jesus, meek an' mild,

Throw a bottle at a black schoolchild.

Black-skin man in God's own shape,

Open your mouth an' you'll die for rape,

Black-skin woman, use your vote

An' you'll feel a lynch-rope round your throat.

Black-skin folk are no damn good.

They don't act civilised like they should

Think they're good as us by far,

Don't give 'em a chance, 'cos they sure

are.

Look at what they've done to us

Just because of Jim Crow on the bus.

Hated to fight, started to talk,

Said, "Brother and Sister, let us walk!"

Listen to those tramping feet

Sounding out for justice on the street

Broad backs straighten, shed their load

Negro people on the Glory Road.

An' old John Brown

In lastin' grace

Sits lookin' down

With a smile on his face.

With Acknowledgements to TOM MALCOLM. This poem is reproduced from his booklet "Poems of Political Passion". Copies of this booklet can be obtained from Tom Malcolm, 17 Auldearn Road, Balornock, Glasgow, N.1. price 1/6d each.

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Youth Sections

ALL ENQUIRIES TO: 1 Dehar Crescent, Hendon, N.W.4.