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The Margate
Agenda
Reviewed
(See page 3)

Whither The Unions?

TRADE Unions, says the Chairman of the T.U.C., exist to defend and improve the living standards of their members.

Nobody can quarrel with that—although millions of workers would wish that the Unions would get on with the job. But what is challenged is the "New Look" methods now being outlined by various Trade Union leaders by which the Unions are in future to defend the workers interests.

Politics is to be abandoned in favour of an "independent" drive for more production "under whatever Government". Not Socialism, not nationalisation, not workers control, but "efficiency" is now presented as the way to salvation for the working class. To which profundity all the employers will breath a fervent hear, hear!

Mr. Deakin, Will Lawther, Tom O'Brien and all the rest of them don't bother to explain, of course,

Editorial

that although production has steadily increased since the end of the war—the standard of living of most Trade Unionists has almost as steadily declined. All this tremendous effort by the workers has had the result, not of improving their own lives, but of making vast profits for their employers.

Neither do the "New Lookers" explain that in the United States of America—where efficiency has reached its highest ever level in the capitalist world—there are still bad working conditions for masses of workers and the Unions must periodically strike in order to keep wages up with the ever-rising cost of living.

Finally, they don't bother to explain—these devotees of "facing the hard facts", these "realistic" men—that confronting the American workers, despite all the industrial "efficiency", is not a new era of better living standards but... either a catastrophic slump

or a new and bloodier world war.

The big guns don't try to explain these things because if they did they would have to admit that capitalism is a completely bankrupt system. It can offer nothing to the working class except war and the preparations for wars.

Trade Unions are indeed a vital necessity. Without them we should be an unorganised mob at the mercy of the employers and their State machine. But under today's conditions the Trade Unions haven't a hope in hell of defending (leave alone improving!) working class living standards unless they stand four square for the transformation of the present method of production into a Socialist method based on need and not on profit.

The vast majority of Trade Unionists accept that fact. That is why they vote for and support the Labour Party. That is why the A.E.U. has put down a motion at this year's Trade Union Congress calling for a united campaign to remove the Tories and establish a new Labour Government.

It is a recognition of the need to supplement Trade Union activity. But the General Council won't have it. To them all things will be solved by more production.

It is this conflict which constitutes the crisis in the Trade Union Movement. The rank and file want the Unions to ally themselves with the Socialist wing of the Labour Party to fight for a new Labour Government which will nationalise the economy, plan it with the aid of the workers themselves, and thus make possible production for the people's needs. The leaders—or certain of the biggest of them—want on the other hand to "work amicably" with the Tories, they are against any more nationalisation, they are against any anti-Tory campaigns, and they are against any workers control of production.

The resolution of this conflict in favour of the Socialist rank and file is now, in our opinion, the chief task of the Labour Movement.

The Landlord's Are Seeking Concessions!

Labour Councils Must Stand Firm

IT is well known that new building is not keeping pace with the loss of housing due to deterioration. It is also well known that millions of houses are sadly lacking in even the most elementary amenities. A basic problem therefore arises. Shall these properties be improved through public monies—or shall the landlords themselves be responsible?

Section 20 of the Housing Act

(1949) makes provision for financial assistance to improve property and Local Authorities may make grants for this purpose. Exchequer contributions are to be made towards Local Authority grants, and annual rents, after the improvements have been done, may be raised by 6 per cent. of the expense of the improvements.

The 1949 Act is not only generous to the landlords in the way of grants but also allows him to get back over a period of years the whole amount he has paid out. Then, after the improvements have

says Lambeth Councillor
David Finch

been paid for by council and tenants, the landlord can continue to collect the higher rent allowed.

LOCAL COUNCIL PROBLEM

Labour Councils appear to be considering this question from different points of view. The London Borough of St. Pancras, for example, is circularising all property owners reminding them of the appropriate section of the Housing Act and informing them of the Council's willingness to consider sympathetically all applications for improvement grants.

Lambeth, on the other hand, although they have agreed to a few individual applications, draw the line at aiding the large house property owners. A vigorous debate recently took place on the Lambeth Borough Council because the Housing Committee had refused a grant to the Church Commissioners. This debate is, I am sure, of great interest to all working people.

The Church Commissioners wanted a grant of approximately £2,000 for the improvement of their premises known as Cornwall Flats. The amount to be borne by the Council would have been about £700. The Committee recognised the lack of amenities in Cornwall Flats and therefore offered the Church Commissioners a loan to be repaid in full over 20 years. This the landlords refused and insisted on an improvement grant.

At the following Council debate on the question, the Tories argued that the tenants would suffer by loss of amenities or, if the landlords accepted a loan, they would increase their rents by 8 per cent. (permitted under these conditions) instead of the 6 per cent. permitted in the case of an improvement grant. They argued finally that the annual burden on the rates would be small.

Labour spokesmen effectively destroyed these "arguments". They pointed out that the Tories had previously argued that a grant was required because the Rent Restrictions Act prevented property

owners from affording big improvements. Their present concern for working class tenants was in sharp contrast to their continual attacks on housing subsidies! Indeed, their Tory colleagues on the Carshalton Urban Council had actually (July 1) requested the Government to reduce the housing subsidy paid to that Council!

CAN THEY AFFORD IT?

The Church Commissioners held government and other securities (on March 31, 1952) totalling more than £146 million—the nominal value of the total holding. In the last financial year they netted £4,500,000 in interest and dividend on securities . . . and nearly £2,000,000 in rentals.

Most of their property is in London and gives them an annual income of £1,100,000 in ground and other rents.

By rejecting the proffered loan the onus for leaving their property without decent improvements was on the Commissioners who, it seemed, placed their financial interests before the living conditions of their tenants.

A SOLUTION

I am sure that all Labour people will agree with the Labour-controlled Lambeth Borough Council in this question. It is the landlord's responsibility to improve his property—but, because these landlords will not undertake such improvements, the question remains of what to do about the millions of houses without bathrooms, toilets, even water, gas and electricity—houses which are literally rotting away.

It is a national problem and must be tackled nationally by a new Labour Government which will not be afraid to offend the vested interests.

Emergency powers must be granted to Local Authorities to take over slum property without a penny compensation; powers to requisition; and powers to take over land without the present cumbersome procedure which sometimes takes years. Finally, Local Authorities must have powers to house those in need of accommodation . . . in under-occupied houses, hotel and even palaces.

These measures, plus measures to nationalise the building industry and the building supplies industry, would bring a real solution to the present appalling housing problem in sight.

In my opinion, Labour Councils must make no concessions to the great landlords. They must continue to use their limited powers against the Tories, locally and nationally, while at the same time they defend the interests of the tenants against the landlords.

When Councillors Dared Go To Jail!

George Lansbury leaving the Law Courts during the investigation into the events which led to the jailing of Lansbury and the Poplar Borough Councillors.

● See story on page 4 ●



The Painful Dilemma of Bro. O'Brien

To Be or Not To Be . . . a Socialist!

TRADE Unions are in a dilemma. So said Tom O'Brien when giving his Presidential address to this year's Trade Union Congress which opened at Douglas on the Isle of Man last Monday.

The dilemma is how to protect the interest of their members. "If", said Bro. O'Brien, "they (the Trade Unions) take steps to increase wages, it is a virtual certainty that the increased cost will be passed along to the consumer by way of price increases; and most of the consumers are wage earners."

This argument has a familiar ring. Bro. O'Brien and his co-thinkers on the T.U.C. General Council have been putting it forward consistently for a long time as a justification for their policy of "wage restraint". It can also be noted that Bro. O'Brien does not doubt that if the T.U.C. did "take steps to increase wages" they would be successful. In other words, it is only the Trade Union leaders who are holding back the struggle for higher wages.

Be that as it may, every worker knows—and so does Bro. O'Brien, that prices have risen much faster than have wages. So he now needs to find a more formidable argument to justify keeping wages low. He makes a gallant attempt, for he continues . . . "So every Trade Union today accepts the principle that protection of their members does not lie wholly in securing an increase in money wages."

Why, we may ask Bro. O'Brien, make a point about "today". This principle has been accepted for many, many years. If Bro. O'Brien thinks this is a new principle, recently discovered by the wise men of the T.U.C., he should refresh his memory by reading a few rule books.

Practically every Union has long ago written into its rules the aim of controlling industry in the interests of society. What is more; Bro. O'Brien himself sits in Parliament, and has done so for a number of years now, because of this principle.

Bro. O'Brien however, then pro-

ceeds to tell us exactly what his trouble is. . . . "It also necessitates" he continued, "a close and careful scrutiny of economic policy and trends in order to safeguard their members employment. A reasonable rate for the job is only a part of the test. It is equally important that there shall not only be a good rate for the job, flexibly adjusted to price movements, but there shall be a job available to which the rate applies."

So Bro. O'Brien's dilemma becomes a little clearer. Translated

By
Fred Emmett

into everyday language—and Bro. O'Brien had earlier said that simpler talk was needed—it amounts to this.

Trade Unions can get higher wages for their members. But, employers will thereupon try to increase prices in order to main-

tain their profits. If they can't increase their prices their profits will fall. If their profits fall they will stop producing and unemployment will result. Therefore you can't have good wages and full employment. But Trade Union members want both!

Bro. O'Brien can't solve that one. He hasn't a clue. Luckily however, the members have. Fourteen million of them voted, at the last election, for the Labour Party in an attempt to solve this "dilemma". To solve it by doing away with the private profit system which creates such a state of affairs—to replace "capitalism" by "Socialism".

The T.U.C. at its last Congress instructed Bro. O'Brien and the other members of the General Council, to draw up a list of industries which should be immediately nationalised. The General Council replies by a report, the adoption of which will effectively nullify that instruction.

This year, one of the largest Unions in the country, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, has

tabled a motion for the T.U.C. to initiate a "united national campaign of Trade Unions, Labour Party and Co-operative Movement, for the early defeat and removal of the Tory Government".

But Bro. O'Brien and his friends on the General Council reject this too. Yet herein lies the only answer to their "dilemma".

What a B Cheek!

IPSWICH has a Tory Council which evidently does not believe in economy. They believe in prying officials, jobs for the bureaucrats, and above all they have changed their minds about an Englishman's home being his castle.

These two-faced Tories are inspecting Ipswich Council houses, an insult to working class people who occupy them.

These parasites who are always wailing about not being able to get women to do their housework for them—who even import labour from abroad for

this purpose—these workshys, who in some cases need help even to put their clothes on, have the brazen cheek to order Council Houses to be inspected.

I advise the tenants to get in

★ Star Letter ★

touch with the Labour Party on this matter. As a Council tenant I intend to tell anyone who may call "You can inspect my house IF I CAN INSPECT YOURS".
G. Brown. Ipswich.

The Sins of the Fathers...

I stood shivering and stamping my feet at the street corner waiting for Jim. Although it was early afternoon the shops across the road were all lit up, brighter than usual and gaily decorated with all the art of modern psychological advertisement calculated to induce the proper Christmas buying spirit.

Even on the south-west coast of Ireland our shopkeepers are well abreast of each new development to dispel man's ignorance of hitherto unrecognised but nevertheless vital necessities. The shop directly across from me was a sweetshop which, from being a halfpenny - stick - of - Peggy's - leg - across - a - rough - deal - counter shop, had developed into a miniature edition of Woolworth's confectionery counter since the building of the new cinema nearby. Running through the multi-coloured boxes of chocolates and gaily wrapped sweets were strands of flickering fairy lights which helped to scatter the heavy greyness of this bleak and biting December afternoon.

I saw that I was not the only one caught by the new glamour of Mary Ann's. A little barefoot creature, with unkempt, tousled hair and tiny pinched face was gazing up at the wonders of the world. The wind sweeping down the street threw her torn flimsy dress up round her little thighs blue with cold. It was obvious that this was her only garment.

I knew her well, one of a family of 12. Her father, Sean Bawn Connor, had done his bit for the oul' country. He fought against the Black-and-Tans and the Free-Staters who took on where the

Irish Incident by Timothy Enright

Tans left off. Up to his death he marched in every procession with his petrol-drenched sod-of-turf torch to welcome the periodic visits of "Ireland's Uncrowned King". The times of course were bad. They will be bad until we get the north. They were worse before the Republic when Mother Ireland was the despised mistress of John Bull. Now, thank God, Ireland is free—at least three of her four green fields are—and Eamonn de Valera has a major share for it. Mind you, with all his other commitments he wasn't able to provide employment for Sean. Even the "coffin-box", our nick-name for the local sanatorium in which Sean died, isn't up to much but it is our own, and not the result of John Bull's charity as Sean himself would be the first to say.

It was a pity though about his wife. A year after Sean's death the soldiers were stationed in the town and she... well it isn't any wonder the priest denounced her from the altar and for the example she was to her children. Indeed it was to the credit of the good women from St. Vincent de Paul that they still kept visiting the house with little parcels of this and that.

The little girl who had been gazing in at the window now turned her attention towards a little boy of about her own age who had just emerged from the shop. His face too I knew.

His father, Dan Bill Buckley, kept a pub down the road. A fine upstanding man who worked all hours, especially on Saturday nights and into the late hours of Sunday mornings too, and never known to turn anyone out no matter how many guards were on the streets.

Mind you, the wives of the few employed workers had no good word for Dan. But he did well for his family. The oldest boy was now going for the priesthood. And look at this little nipper with his chubby face, strong boots and good coat with its little velvet collar and even little knitted gloves.

It was obvious that he never knew the want of a bite or sup. And there he was now with a big chocolate drumstick in his hand which he sucked intently.

I crossed the road to the sweetshop. The purchase of a chocolate drumstick served one immediate and pressing need of the class struggle.

On-the-spot report by one of the leaders of... Ceylon's Biggest Mass Upheaval

The author was one of the signatories to the declaration which called on the Ceylon people to observe August 12 as a Day of National Protest (a hartal) against the Government's removal of the rice subsidy, abolition of the free midday meal for school children, wage cuts, unemployment and the increasing restrictions on the democratic rights of the people by the ban on demonstrations, etc.

The Declaration was signed by Leslie Goonewardine (the author of this report) on behalf of the Trotskyist organisation, Lanka Sama Samaj, which is the biggest opposition party in Ceylon—also by the Communist Party, and a number of important Trade Unions.

THE morning of August 12 found the streets of the principal towns, and particularly Colombo, deserted. This was caused principally by the biggest breakdown of transport seen in Ceylon. Following the strike at midnight on August 11 of the workers in the running sheds of the railway all over Ceylon, railway transport was completely disrupted. The biggest bus company (the South Western) had a complete strike, while a number of smaller companies had strikes too. The clerks who turned up for work had to walk miles to their places of work.

There was a practically complete strike in the harbour, the Government factory, the Way and Works Department, the Railway Workshops, and in a number of private firms.

In the plantations, where the All Ceylon Plantation Workers Union (the L.S.S.P. led union) had a base, tens of thousands of workers struck work. Exact figures are not available, but in one district alone (Ratnapura) it is estimated that 30,000 workers struck work on that day. The total number of plantation workers who struck would certainly exceed 50,000.

The hartal (i.e., closure of shops, boycott of schools, etc.) was a great success in most of the towns, and an even greater success in the villages.

However, the most significant feature of the movement was that the masses went further than they were called upon to do by the hartal and strike committee.

In practically all areas road blockades (by the felling of trees across the road, the building of obstructions resembling barricades, and even human obstructions caused by a large number lying across the road) was the order of the day. In a large number of places transport was obstructed by the cutting of telegraph wires, the destruction of small bridges, etc. Buses were forcibly prevented from plying by stone throwing and sometimes by the masses stopping the buses on the road, and sending them back. The few buses plying in Colombo had disappeared from the streets by noon.

In order to make the breakdown of railway transport doubly certain, the masses cut signal wires, removed rails, and in certain cases forcibly stopped the few trains

the courage not to retreat in the face of bullets.

In Colombo, a worker by name Edwin, a sympathiser of the L.S.S.P., bared his chest and advanced step by step on the military, daring them to shoot. He was shot, and fell riddled with bullets.

He was given a party funeral (even though no procession or speeches were permitted by the regulations now in force, according to which no funeral may take place without the special permission of the police!)

It is a point of note that the ranks of the police were on the whole sympathetic and did not do much shooting. The shooting was done principally by the police officers and by the military.

GOVERNMENT REPRESSION

It is clear that the success of the strike and hartal, as well as the militancy of the masses, came as the greatest surprise to the Government and the bourgeoisie, who had perhaps been themselves deceived by their own propaganda before August 12th.

On the afternoon of August 12 the Governor General declared a State of Emergency all over Ceylon, and ordered a curfew in the Western and Southern Pro-

vinces, where the most militant actions had taken place.

Under these special powers, regulations have been promulgated which ban meetings or processions, permit the requisitioning of private property, make strikes in essential services offences punishable with 20 years' imprisonment, make any attempt to bring pressure to bear on the Government by word, action or symbol, punishable with the same sentence, make looting, arson, trespass (on prohibited areas) punishable by death, etc. etc.

The printing presses of the L.S.S.P. and C.P. have been sealed, offices have been raided, and widespread arrests have been made.

Over a thousand are being held on remand (without bail), and among them are L.S.S.P. leaders like Cholmondeley Goonewardena (ex-M.P. of the L.S.S.P.), K. P. Nair (District representative of the All Ceylon Estate Workers Union, Kandy Branch) and Merrill Fernando (Member of Moratuwa Urban Council).

The arrests are still continuing, as well as police beatings. Some C.P.'ers have also been arrested.

In some villages which went into militant action on August 12, the entire male population is hiding in the jungles to avoid the police terror which is now being unleashed through indiscriminate beatings and arrests.

The Colombo Municipal Council which passed a resolution supporting the hartal, and which hoisted a black flag (symbol of the hartal) on the Town Hall, has been suspended by the Government. So also the Moratuwa Urban Council which is Samasamajist controlled, and actually participated in the hartal by closing its office and suspending work on that day. Commissioners have been appointed to carry on the work in these local bodies.

REPRESSION A COVER TO BOLSTER UP THE GOVERNMENT

On August 18 the House of Representatives in an all night sitting passed a new Public Security Act giving even wider powers to the Government, principally to detain people without trial, to have the power to utilise all special powers if even an emergency is apprehended (without waiting till an emergency arises), abolishing the clause which says Parliament must ratify such action within 10 days, etc.

Up to now, the national leaders have not been arrested. This is no doubt due to the fear of the consequences that might follow if such an action is taken. However, it is possible that this will follow the passing of the new law referred to above.

It is perfectly clear, that what-

ever may have been the motives of the Government at the time it declared the emergency, today the continuation of the emergency and the assumption of even wider powers which stamp out every expression of opinion and institute a police-military regime, is being done by the Government because it realises that it has lost the confidence of the people and can continue to be safely in power only through such means. Although there were sporadic disturbances spreading on August 13 also, by August 14 things were on the whole quite normal and are perfectly normal today apart from the curfew and other emergency measures of the Government.

After the action of August 12 the popular support for the U.N.P. Government has declined disastrously, and the prestige and popularity of the Left, and of the L.S.S.P. most particularly, has risen higher than ever before.

In this situation the party is pursuing the policy of dissuading the masses from further action at this time, pointing out that our preparations were for a one day struggle, that further preparation is necessary for a struggle to overthrow the Government, and that in this period sporadic and isolated actions will only provide the Government with the excuse to continue the Emergency. A removal of the emergency regulations and return even to semi-normal conditions will provide the most favourable conditions for the next stage of the struggle.

The struggle of August 12 is a landmark in the history of Ceylon. It is undoubtedly the biggest mass upheaval that has taken place in this country in this century (excluding perhaps only the racial riots of 1915).

A most important aspect of the struggle was that it was not confined to the workers, but brought in the rural and urban lower petty bourgeois masses. In fact, it would not be incorrect to say that in this particular action the militancy of the rural masses was greater than that of the urban workers.

The struggle arose principally as an effort to restore the rice subsidy. It has today developed to a higher level—into a struggle to replace the U.N.P. Government!

To all practical intents and purposes this struggle was conducted by the Left working class parties, that is, the L.S.S.P. and the C.P.-L.S.S.P. United Front. Thus, in action, the correctness of the basic position of the L.S.S.P. on the question of the United Front was demonstrated—that what is needed is not agreement by the working class parties on programme, but on the real and concrete questions of the mass struggle in Ceylon.

NOT ENDORSED John Lawrence's case to come Before Annual Conference

Last April, the Woodford Constituency Labour Party selected our editor as their Parliamentary Candidate to oppose Sir Winston Churchill in the next General Election. The National Executive Committee, however, refused to endorse this selection.

The Woodford C.L.P. and the Holborn and South St. Pancras C.L.P. (of which John Lawrence is an Executive Committee member) both appealed to the N.E.C. to reconsider its decision, but at its July meeting the N.E.C. re-affirmed its previous decision not to endorse John Lawrence as the Labour Candidate for Woodford.

Both the above-mentioned Labour Parties are dissatisfied with the N.E.C. decision and have decided to appeal against it to this month's Annual Conference at Margate. We reserve any further comment on this extraordinary decision of the N.E.C. until after the Party Conference has heard the case.



John Lawrence

Selected to fight Churchill in Woodford but not endorsed by the N.E.C. A St. Pancras Borough Councillor John Lawrence has been Editor of "Socialist Outlook" since its first number in December, 1948

Malan Attacks the Labour Movement

Johannesburg, August 8, 1953.

WITH its "Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Bill", the Malan government has launched a full-scale attack against the organised Labour Movement in South Africa. Ostensibly aimed at rendering African Trade Unions innocuous, the Bill is also a direct threat to the Trade Unions of the white, Coloured and Asiatic workers.

The purpose of the Bill is to substitute a Nazi-type Labour Front for African workers to take the place of genuine Trade Unions.

The Bill (which has now become law), deprives African workers of the legal right to negotiate and settle disputes with their bosses through Trade Unions. Instead, a complicated machinery has been set up. When a dispute arises it will be referred, in the first instance, to a Native Trades Official (a white employee of the Department of Native Affairs), then to a Regional Committee, from there to an Industrial Council, thence to a Central Native Trades Council and then to the Wage Board. After this merry-go-round, the Minister may publish an "Order" which would then become law. By this time, as a Memorandum issued by the South African Trades and Labour Council states, the workers will have lost thousands of pounds.

Section 13 of the Act makes it

impossible for the Minister to extend that Order to white, Coloured and Indian workers in the industry concerned. No wonder the Trade Unions are taking alarm. As the Memorandum says, this Section "can be disastrous for the conditions of workers for whom such an Order is issued."

TRADE UNION UNITY ATTACKED

The workers thus lose the power to extend their protection to Africans in their own industries. Where they have reason to fear that these Africans will be exploited to undermine the existing wage structure, they will no longer be able to act freely to prevent this.

If the Minister does not agree with existing conditions as determined by the Industrial Councils, he can request the Wage Board to make an order and if he approves of the order he can use his discretion to publish it and make it law. In this way he can destroy the entire wage structure in particular industries.

And it is not only African workers who are affected.

Section 13 of the Act makes it

regarded as skilled, re-classified as unskilled. In this way they will be able to replace the highly-paid white workers with lower-paid African workers. Thus does the industrial colour bar boomerang against the privileged white workers.

The Bill makes strikes illegal for Africans under pain of harsh penalties. When a Ministerial "Order" becomes part of an agreement, the workers to whom it applies, whether white, Coloured, Asiatic or African, are immediately prohibited from taking strike action.

Thus the Bill deals a death-blow to the most powerful weapon in the possession of the workers—the right to strike. It makes the State the supreme arbiter in fixing working conditions and wages.

Letter From South Africa

want to reduce wages in a particular industry, all they would have to do would be to bring pressure on the Minister of Labour to reduce the wages of African workers. The reduced wage-scales would then be automatically applied also to white, Coloured and Asiatic workers.

Under existing South African industrial legislation, certain trades, classified as skilled, are closed to Africans. This new Act will give the employers the opportunity to have certain trades, today

office-bearers in Trade Unions, giving them the right to representation at Industrial Council and Conciliation Board meetings and the right to inspect work where Europeans were employed. This would mean the end of all industrial colour bars.

Cynically, the Minister added that the Bill did not prohibit Native Trade Unions, so the question of freedom of association did not arise. It would only render such Unions powerless.

This Act is the red light to the entire Labour Movement in South Africa. If it is not resisted it is only a matter of time before the "Labour Front" is extended to all races and colours and the Trade Union movement becomes a thing of the past.

CYNICAL MINISTER

Well aware of this, the South African Trades and Labour Council has called on all workers to oppose this new slave act, but the breakaway, segregationist South African Federation of Trade Unions have stated that they accept the Bill "in principle".

South Africa's workers will know how to deal with these mealy-mouthed sycophants when the hour strikes. Neither Malan, nor the traitors in the ranks of Labour will be able to prevent the workers from organising and fighting for the right to live as human beings and not as serfs, bound to the state and to capital.

CLARNICO'S Women Strikers Mean Business

ON Thursday, September 3, a new clocking system installed in Clarnico's sweet factory in East London caused such a scrimmage among the girls that two of them fainted and others lost nearly 20 out of their 45 minutes dinner break.

This incident sparked off a strike for Trade Union recognition which had been long-prepared by a host of grievances, both large and small. Some of these grievances were explained to me by women strikers.

The biggest is probably the "bonus" system which they consider to be grossly unfair.

Bonus is calculated on the whole week; and it often happens that, through no fault of the girls they get periods of waiting time—because of shortages, breakdowns, etc. Thus they can have worked hard and fast for four days and then lose all hope of earning bonus through a period of waiting on the fifth day.

Another issue, and it is linked up with "bonus", is having to walk up five flights of stairs to get packing boxes. Apart from the feeling that this could be obviated by efficient organisation, they lose bonus through this wasting of time.

Then the girls like to keep their machines clean. They find it impossible with the limited cleaning materials the firm provide. So they have to fetch in their own rags and brushes. "Is that right?" they ask.

They tell me that, in their opinion, first aid and welfare arrangements are far from satisfactory. Although they have been put to work in a new building, the rest room is not yet completed.

Now they have struck work and have all joined up in the Transport and General Workers Union. And they intend to do the job properly. They recognise that the firm could, and probably would, go a long way to meet these grievances. But they have also realised that to keep a firm up to scratch requires constant vigilance and above all Trade Union organisation.

So they refuse to go back to work until the management agree to give full recognition to the Union, including recognition of the right of shop stewards to negotiate on behalf of the members, and the right of Union collectors on each floor to have one

Why the French Strikes Failed

★ From a Correspondent in Paris ★

THE most powerful strike movement that France has seen since 1936 was stopped following the betrayal cooked up in the night of Thursday, August 20, by the leaders of the Force Ouvriere (Socialist Unions) and the C.F.T.C. (Confederation of Christian Unions).

The public employees strike was at its zenith, with more than 4,000,000 on strike, and despite the difficulties of the holiday period, with factories closed and money short, the private sector was entering the strike.

At this moment the Government played its trump card. It ordered the F.O. and C.F.T.C. leaders to break the unity which had been imposed on them by the rank and file. The blow thus given to the movement, however, is far from fatal.

The postmen, the miners, the railwaymen, the R.A.T.P. workers, who returned together "en bloc" on Wednesday at the appeal of their strike committee, knew they had not been beaten. They had been betrayed.

Even as Jouhaux was the traitor of the railway strike of 1920 to a past generation of workers, so, today, for thousands of workers, the F.O. and C.F.T.C. leaders are the traitors of this strike of public employees.

hour a week in which to collect the members' contributions.

The firm is hedging on this recognition. They are trying to persuade the strikers to return and give the management more time to consider various methods of Union recognition operating in other factories.

But a mass meeting on Monday last decided to stay out—and not one vote was cast for a return. Meanwhile, the Management have approached the Ministry of Labour, who have asked a Union official to meet the management at the offices of the Ministry.

Judging from the mass meeting to which this was reported, the Ministry of Labour will have to advise the management to recognise the Union if the strike is to be settled quickly.

The strikers will find ready support for their actions among other Trade Unionists. Already the Hackney Trades Council has unanimously agreed to support them. If the strike is prolonged that support will be reproduced far and wide.

The capitalist press is far from following such advice. To follow their imperialist policy and their war of oppression against Vietnam, they must make the workers and "little men" pay. For that the Government needs a free hand, full powers, and a continual Parliamentary recess so as to elaborate and apply the "decree laws of misery", the first of which we have just seen. They don't want to abandon this policy. They want to intensify it.

AND NOW?

The fear in the hearts of the capitalists, already seen during the March-April agitation, returned and increased tenfold before the hurricane of 4,000,000 public employees on strike. The capitalists' advice to the Government is "throw them a bone or the next time they will swallow us up."

But the capitalists and their Government do not find it easy to

follow such advice. To follow their imperialist policy and their war of oppression against Vietnam, they must make the workers and "little men" pay. For that the Government needs a free hand, full powers, and a continual Parliamentary recess so as to elaborate and apply the "decree laws of misery", the first of which we have just seen. They don't want to abandon this policy. They want to intensify it.

For the workers and "small men" will also have to pay for the increased expenditure in Morocco, where the Army and Police are being greatly reinforced to prop up the puppet Sultan against the

growing forces of national liberation.

The objective towards which these great strikes were aimed, and towards which they will aim again when struggles are renewed, was explained by a militant of Socialist F.O. who attacked the betrayal of the leaders at a meeting of the strike committees at the Bourse de Travail. It must, he said, have three steps. . . . First—under the pressure of the workers united in struggle, the calling together of Parliament.

Second—the joint struggle of Socialist and Communist M.P.'s against the decree laws.

Third—the defeat of this capitalist Government and its replacement by a government in the interest of the workers.

The applause of 20,000 postmen showed that, over and above the demand for living wages, the millions of workers who were watching their struggle and preparing to enter it, wanted this fundamental change.

Not a single workers' leader worthy of the name could doubt this desire for an instant and yet the great parties of the working class have not expressed this aim.

THE DEMAND FOR UNITY

True, the C.G.T. puts forward the slogans of unity, of democracy at the bottom, of fighting for the common programme of all the organisations participating in the struggle. But a Trade Union leadership and a political leadership are two different things.

Millions of French workers recognise the C.P. as their leadership. During the 20 days of strikes, that leadership failed to give to the movement the perspective which it needed in order to grow stronger, to harden itself and to conquer—namely, a Socialist/Communist Government. Nor has it shown clearly the road to take to obtain this radical change—the road of unity in action from top to bottom between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party.

PREPARE THE SECOND STAGE

Certain articles in "L'Humanite" showed that the pressure for unity was making itself felt. Even at the beginning of the movement, we may note the initiative taken by the secretariat of the Communist Party in appealing to the leading committee of the Socialist Party to demand together the recall of Parliament.

In its editorial of August 27, it

shows clearly that the key to the whole situation is the "Socialist-Communist united front" which in 1934 "gave birth to a unity of action pact between the Socialist and Communist parties".

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the hesitations which have characterised the position of the C.P. since the time when the workers' pressure began to show itself, springs from its waverings between this pressure and its uncertainties about the diplomacy of the Kremlin.

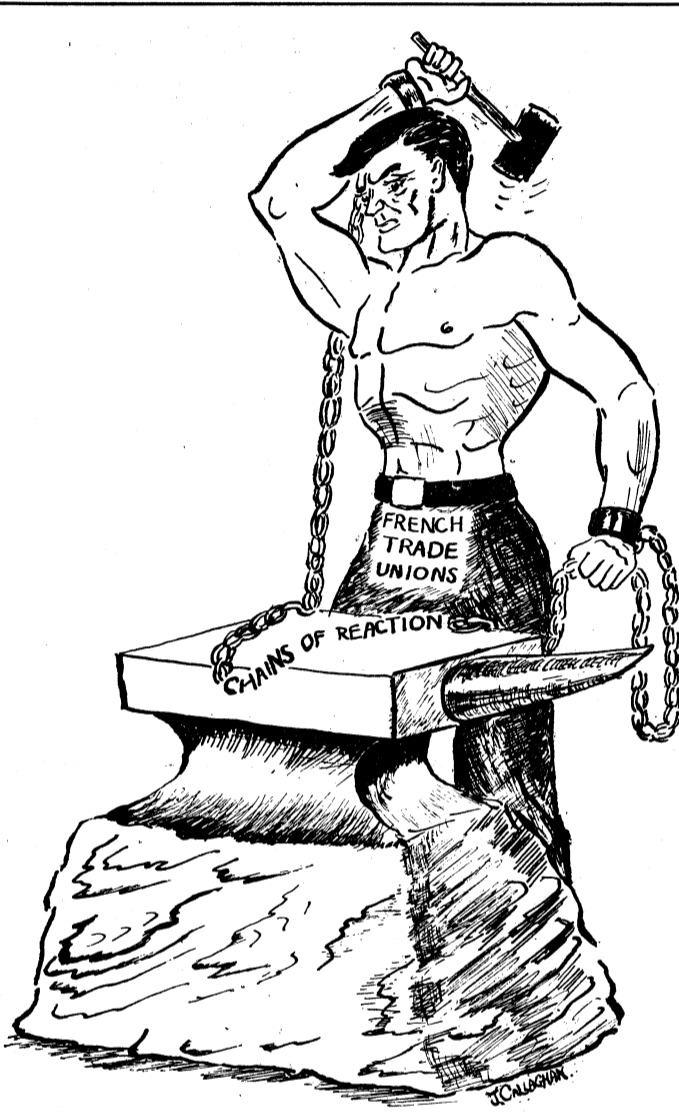
The C.P. militants who rightly applaud the revolts of the militants of the F.O. and C.F.T.C. must understand that they also have to speak up in their own party; to impose there a firm line that will inspire the will of the working class for renewed struggle.

THE PROGRAMME NEEDED

They must not accept arguments about a so-called "bad relationship of forces". They must not evade their own responsibilities by hiding behind the betrayal of the others; the betrayal of the F.O. and the C.F.T.C. has only played a rôle to the extent that the workers in both the public and private sectors have not found a leadership to give them the slogans and perspectives on which the movement could progress favourably.

The foundations for the united front are all there:—United front of the C.P. and S.P. in order to mobilise the workers with the aim of imposing:

The recall of Parliament, the defeat of the capitalist Government and the constitution of an S.P. and C.P. Government which will: nationalise the banks and big industries under the control of the workers, tax the rich and cut military expenditure, carry out an economic plan of development of all the resources of the country elaborated by the workers' organisations for the workers, set free the colonies and associate with them on a democratic basis of full equality with a French Worker's Republic, make peace with Vietnam and maintain peaceful relations with all nations.



In its editorial of August 27, it

Electricians Call Bosses Bluff

THE official strike of electricians for a cost of living increase is still widening—as the E.T.U. said it would. Unless the employers, organised in their Federated Association, stop manoeuvring and make a genuine offer to meet the fully justified E.T.U. demand, electrical contracting by these "federated" employers may soon be brought to a complete standstill.

Following the lead of Earls Court Ltd., employers outside the "ring" are agreeing to pay the increase and electricians employed by such firms are returning to work.

The "ring" employers have tried to show what sweetly reasonable men they are by offering to send the case to arbitration. It is significant that, although they had a month's notice of strike action, it was not until after the strike had been called that they made this proposal.

Workers have had a long experience of such manoeuvres. The electricians will undoubtedly support the stand taken by their Union when it says: "O.K. Put it to arbitration. BUT first show willing to grant an interim increase and let arbitration decide on the balance".

It is a proposal that calls the employers bluff.

Socialism a'plenty on this Agenda

A STUDY of the Final Agenda for this year's Annual Conference makes it clear that the Socialist spirit manifested by the rank and file of the Labour Party at Morecambe has in no way declined during the past 12 months.

The amendments to the N.E.C.'s "Challenge to Britain" all improve that document and the local parties—and even some important Unions—have done their best to embody into the new Party Programme the decisions taken at last year's Conference. In some respects, the amendments go even further to the Left.

There are 27 amendments to the section dealing with the Cold War which makes it clear enough that the membership wants an end to this American-inspired cold war and all trade restrictions between East and West.

Typical of this very progressive attitude is the following amend-

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★ Left versus Right on Nationalisation ★

ment from Birmingham (Edgbaston):

"It is not the intention of the Labour Party to assist any 'crusade' against Communism on behalf of imperialism. Neither do we intend to change, by economic or military pressure, the national boundaries or the social system of the countries of the Soviet bloc. We deplore the economic blockade imposed by the United States in an endeavour to halt all East-West trade, and we pledge ourselves to increase trading between Britain, Eastern Europe and China.

"We will, upon being returned to power, immediately reduce the crippling burden of armaments which shackles our economy, prevents our economic independence and blocks any improvement in the standard of living and social services of our people."

Amendments to the section headed "Overseas Responsibilities" aim to commit the Party very definitely to opposition to the colour bar and to stand foursquare for colonial freedom. It is good to see local parties facing up to their Socialist duties in regard to our fellow workers in the countries oppressed by British Imperialism.

The next flood of amendments are concerned with the vital question of nationalisation. These amendments are scattered over various sections of the document but they are all asking for the same thing—the nationalisation of much more of the economy so as

Preview of the Margate Conference by Hilda Lane

to make possible the Socialist planning of the country.

Powerful Unions associated with this demand are the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Foundry Workers, the Draughtsmen and the National Union of Railwaymen. This is obviously going to be one of the big battles between Left and Right at Margate—especially in view of the hopelessly right wing statements coming from some of the Trade Union leaders now in session at the T.U.C. at Douglas.

The amendment which seems to me to sum up excellently the general desires of the Party rank and file on this issue comes from the Birmingham (Borough) Labour Party. It reads:

"The general case for nationalisation is compelling, and we therefore advocate nationalisation of the land and the following basic industries: the entire engineering industry; aircraft; shipbuilding; chemicals; and building materials.

"Learning from the past that the present methods of compensation weigh very heavily on the workers in the nationalised industries, and also on the consumers, and that Britain can no longer afford millions of pounds of hard-earned money being handed over to ex-owners, Labour will compensate the ex-

owners of the newly nationalised industries on the grounds of proved hardship only.

"In order to ensure the smooth functioning of our nationalised industries, Labour will give, by legislation, to the workers and technicians and to the Consumer Councils, a major control in the management of our nationalised concerns."

There is certainly no slackening in the desire for a more democratic structure for the nationalised industries and many amendments demand some form or other of control for the workers. The significance here is that although the members of the Party are all for extending nationalisation—

they also want it very much improved. There are, in fact, 23 amendments dealing with "industrial democracy".

Many years of propaganda about the better use of our land has had a result which many of our leaders can't be very happy about. The rank and file is now demanding . . . the complete nationalisation of the land!

This feeling is put very well in an amendment from Ogmere which states with absolute truth that "Great ends are not realised by timid means. Traditional and conventional methods have failed us," so, says Ogmere, "we must make ourselves masters of our own land . . . Labour must nationalise the land as Labour promised to do in "Let Us Face The Future in 1945."

Unemployment in Tory Strongholds

BANG goes another Tory fallacy. This time its Conservative slogan that there is less unemployment in the country under their rule.

But if you are one of those people who likes repeating what the Tories say, don't repeat the "less unemployment" slogan in the West Country. If you do you will be asking for trouble.

Even in the Tory strongholds of Devon and Cornwall unemployment is rife and abundant. Neither is it confined to any particular area or industry. For example there are 325 unemployed fishermen in the little Cornish town of Penzance.

The employment situation in the South West deteriorated in July and August. Unemployment figures increased by nearly 1,000!

Regional (South West) unemployment was 13,527 which is much below the corresponding period last year.

There are 402 boys under 18 years of age unemployed at the moment. In July there were 162 unemployed and this number was eclipsed in August when the incredible number of 564 youngsters were unemployed.

Although the figures for girls are not quite so big as those for boys, they represent 230 cases in July and 481 in the following month of August!

During July the aggregate figures of unemployed men and women over the age of 18 years was 12,192. In August the number again rose to 12,482 people unemployed. The total unemployment in the West Country and the South West was 12,584 in July and 13,527 in August of 1953.

What rot it is for the Tories to say that they are reducing unemployment.

There is a saying in Daniel of the Bible which says "Mene, Mene Tekel Upharsin". In case any Tory doesn't know what it means let me inform him. Quite simply it is "You have been weighed in the balances and you have been found wanting". P.J.

Magistrates and Conscription

THE introduction of conscription by the Labour Government was a great betrayal of Socialism.

There is no need to pursue the general issue of conscription any further as it has been given a great deal of publicity in "Socialist Outlook".

There are, however, one or two aspects of conscription which should be of very serious concern for every member of the Labour Movement.

Firstly, a great social injustice has been taking place almost unnoticed in this country for the past few years and is still taking place today. Almost every week some unfortunate young man is being "sent down" for his anti-war opinions. (Yes, in the "free world").

These men have not been able to convince Tribunals, which are in many cases biased, of the sincerity of their views: so they are left with no option but to refuse military service, and this can only be done by going to prison. The fact is that such men are sincere—very sincere. What man would suffer the hardships of imprisonment were he not?

The real purpose in offering the "little grey home in the west" as the only alternative to uniformed slavery is to wear down the resistance of the individual. There is no difference between the principles underlying this method and the methods used by fascist governments to enforce their views on persons who are unwilling to accept them.

Secondly, there is the question of the National Serviceman who decides that he has developed a conscientious objection to performing his reserve service. No facilities are provided for him to appear before a Tribunal. The only way in which he may eventually have his case heard by a Tribunal is by either refusing to report, or by reporting and then disobeying orders. Both courses mean a period of detention or imprisonment or both. More capitalist state authority!

Lastly, there have been several cases of magistrates making downright ignorant remarks both at the Tribunals and in the Police Courts.

Quite recently, a Methodist who, having been given conditional exemption still refused service as he believed that conscription was wrong, was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment. On passing the sentence the judge remarked: "You are a very foolish young man". He was not foolish at all. He was merely standing by his ideals.

Even worse than this was the case of ex-Sergeant Simmons who, after appealing unsuccessfully to two Tribunals against his 15 days "Z" training in June 1951, refused to report and was sentenced to one month's imprisonment. On hearing the sentence Simmons remarked "I thought the last war was fought to end Fascism". "Who told you that?" retorted the judge. Simmons had served six years in the army. (Quite a nice reward!)

If more publicity were given to these facts, then the case against conscription would be strengthened.

M. Evans.

Keighley.

Our Readers Write . . .

This Letter is our Reward

I would like to express my warmest appreciation for the able manner in which you have presented the facts to your readers from time to time. Especially on subjects like Democracy, Socialism and Imperialism—that ugly monster which is sapping the vitality of countless millions of people.

These are subjects not even understood by some of the political and Trade Union leaders, much less the uneducated masses. Your criticisms of the monarchy are not only reasonable and constructive, but they are educative. Some people are quite satisfied to live in a world half free. It is full time for a change.

God save our "Socialist Outlook"

Long live our noble editor
Long may this paper live
Let it be victorious in
enlightening our darkness
Brave "Socialist Outlook".

An oppressed Negro.

Birmingham.

'White' Slavery in Birmingham

A young man (I will call him Johnny), 29 years old, came to my Councillor's Advice Bureau the other day.

His was not a case concerning housing or any of the usual bureau queries. Yet his story was of human misery equal to any of the suffering of overcrowded working class families.

Labour's History

When Councillors Dared Go To Jail!

THE nineteen-twenties were years of black depression. Tens of thousands of ex-soldiers, who had come home to "a land fit for heroes to live in", found themselves on the dole and Poor Relief. By 1921, the number of unemployed totalled over a million and was still going up.

In those days, outdoor relief was administered by the Poor Law Guardians, whose expenditure was a charge on the local rates. There was no equalization of rates between the various Boroughs and, as the great majority of the unemployed were to be found in the working class Boroughs this meant that these latter, with their low rateable values, had to shoulder a tremendous financial burden, while the wealthy Boroughs of the West End got off practically scot free.

Poplar, which had a Labour majority on its Borough Council

Subject to epilepsy, he was registered as disabled, although his fits are now as infrequent as two a year.

For four years he has been working at a small Birmingham engineering firm on testing and maintenance. Four years ago his wage was £5 3s. 2d. per week. Today his wage is still . . . £5 3s. 2d. per week. And for this he has to work 45 hours!

The firm employs some 20 workers, mostly women. Johnny has asked many times for a raise—only to be met with abuse and obscenity from his foreman. Machines were unguarded, overtime was worked at flat rate—including single time even for Saturday work.

The girls were getting 1s. 9d. per hour plus a payment of from 1½d. to 3d. on each particular job, which made a total of less than £4 for a 44 hour week, even with a Saturday morning included.

In engineering the minimum rate of a labourer is £6 0s. 6d., yet here was Johnny, doing engineering work, and receiving only £5 3s. 2d. The minimum day rate for a woman is £4 1s. 6d. and yet these girls on so-called piece work were not even receiving £4.

Johnny asked for my help. The first move was to try and get him in the appropriate Trade Union, which may be difficult because of the discrepancy between his rate and the minimum Union rate is so large. It should be realised that Johnny is not a chap who can just walk out of this place into another—his disability bars such an easy course.

If his membership is accepted, the road will be clear for the Union to get in and expose this firm to the public. Failing this it

may be possible to find Johnny another job.

Members of the Union branch were disgusted to learn that such conditions still exist. But back alley factories like this one are dotted all over Birmingham. This is merely one that has come to light. Obviously a big job lies ahead for the Movement to clean them up. Such monstrosities belong to the Victorian era.

If anyone scoffs at white slavery in Britain, let them take note of this case. It's here in Birmingham in the year 1953.

Clr. Finch.

Birmingham.

Jack London—Prophet

I was most interested to note your quotations from that pioneer American Socialist—Jack London. All the more so as my holiday reading this summer included his "The Iron Heel"; a most prophetic book whose early chapters give as concise and lucid a summary of Socialist economics as you can find anywhere. Your readers may find this quotation of some topicality:

"It was shortly after this day that Ernest told me, as a good story, the offer he had received from the Government namely, an appointment as U.S. Commissioner of Labour. I was overjoyed. The salary was comparatively large and would make safe our marriage. And then it surely was congenial work for Ernest; and furthermore, my jealous pride in him made me hail the proffered appointment

as a recognition of his abilities.

"Then I noticed the twinkle in his eyes. He was laughing at me.

"You are not going to . . . decline?" I quavered.

"It is a bribe" he said. "Behind it is the fine hand of Wickson, and behind him the hands of greater men than he. It is an old trick, old as the class struggle is old—stealing the captains from the army of labour. Poor betrayed labour! If you but knew how many of its leaders have been bought out in similar ways in the past. It is cheaper, so much cheaper, to buy a general than to fight him and his whole army. There was—but I'll not call any names. I'm bitter enough over it as it is."

Readers should remember this was written before 1914—nearly 30 years before 1931. The Ernest is not Bevin of course!

A. Acheson.

Leicester.

No War with China

Mr. Dulles, U.S. Secretary of State, is threatening China that if she commits further aggression in Korea or Indo-China she will face invasion.

But Mr. Dulles knows perfectly well that China did not come into the Korean war until General MacArthur made his fateful march up to the Chinese frontier.

And there are no Chinese troops in Indo-China.

It seems that the American leaders and their puppet, Syngman Rhee, are not over-anxious

to maintain peace. The British government should make it clear—right away—that we have no intention of being dragged into war with China.

Frank Allauin.

Manchester.

He Forgot—Toryism!

According to Mr. A. G. Rose, Senior Probation Officer for East Suffolk, too many boys and girls build up habits of luxury and, because they have no moral standards, they cannot keep them honest.

What utter nonsense. This man Rose must be viewing juvenile employment through rose coloured spectacles which have become clouded by hot air. Or doesn't he realise there is a Tory government which means very few of us have any wages to spend after the weekly food bills etc., are paid.

Also in many places, particularly private firms, junior clerks and office workers especially are incredibly underpaid because they are invariably unable to join a Trade Union for fear of losing their jobs.

Plebeian.

Exeter.

HAVE YOU READ Michael Pablo's "The Coming World Showdown"? A Marxist analysis of today's complex world situation. Price 2s. New Park Publications, 266 Lavender Hill, S.W.11.

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No. 15. 'Poplarism'

since 1919, took particularly action in Court, but the law was against them.

"Suppose every other council did as you do", asked one of the judges. "What would be the result?" The accused answered: "Why, of course, we should get our way."

They stood firm and refused to obey the Court Order to carry out the law and were committed to prison for contempt of court. The men went to Brixton, the six women to Holloway.

"It was very amusing for us", wrote George Lansbury, "to be told we were in prison 'sine die' which meant we might be there for ever. Lawyers came in and told us that until we purged our offence we would never be let out. . . ."

To Lansbury and his fellow-councillors, prison was but another place in which to carry on the struggle for improved conditions. They played up the prison authorities no end. When the Chief Warden came to inspect them, they asked him: "Where's your union card?" They refused to do any work, demanded footballs, the right to have their cell doors open and to have newspapers. After a struggle lasting two or three days, the authorities gave way and they spent most of their time in the open air.

Prison food is notoriously unpalatable. In those days it was much worse than it is today. Lansbury and his comrades found it revolting and refused to eat it. Rather than have the possibility of a hunger strike on their hands, the prison authorities gave way and arranged that they always had tea freshly made and meals specially prepared.

The granting of so many privileges to George Lansbury and the other councillors, brought similar demands from the rest of the prisoners. The Governor asked Lansbury to help him persuade a deputation of prisoners that while the councillors were entitled to this they were not. Lansbury waited till they met the deputation, then he said: "Well, Governor, if you allow me to sit

in your chair and give me your authority I will settle this business for you, because we think these people should have exactly what we are having. We have committed a breach of the law and that is all they have done, and we have no right to have better treatment than them."

Throughout the six weeks that the councillors were in prison, the workers and unemployed used to gather outside the walls and sing Socialist songs, in which the prisoners joined. Every evening the whole prison used to ring with the strains of the Red Flag. Lansbury would make speeches to the crowds outside through a window. The authorities were powerless to stop this. No wonder they were pleased to see the last of them.

The 30 councillors were eventually released after they had sent a petition to the judges, expressing their regret at breaking the law and promising to attend a conference which would go into the whole question of poor relief. This was the first time in English law that prisoners who had been sent to prison for contempt of court were released before they had purged their contempt.

As a direct result of the militant stand of Lansbury and his fellow-councillors from Poplar and the great surge of working class support behind them, it was decided that the cost of outdoor

relief and the major part of indoor relief of the poor should be levied over the whole of London. Poplar now received 9½d. per day for each person relieved outside an institution where before they were only allowed 5d.; and 1s. 3d. per day for every person relieved inside an institution where before nothing at all was allowed.

This immediately relieved the rates of Poplar by 6s. in the £ while that of Westminster went up by 1s. in the £. It was a great victory and "Poplarism" served as an inspiration to the whole Labour Movement.

The official leadership, however, did not share the rank-and-file's enthusiastic admiration for the militant Poplar councillors. J. H. (Jimmy) Thomas, at that time General Secretary of the N.U.R. and one of the most powerful men in the movement called the councillors "wastrels". To this, Lansbury replied that while Thomas went about the country talking about the Party's policy which called for "work or maintenance", the Poplar councillors acted.

They certainly wrote an unforgettable page into Labour's history.

C. Van Gelderen

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