

The Week

A NEWS ANALYSIS FOR SOCIALISTS
Vol. 4, No. 17. 4th November, 1965

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A GREAT STEP FORWARD

WELCOME TO THE CENTRE FOR SOCIALIST EDUCATION

Sponsors: Frank Allaun, M.P. - Perry Anderson - Chris Arthur - Julian Atkinson - Michael Barratt Brown - Norman Buchan, M.P. - Neil Carmichael, M.P. - Raymond Challinor - Henry Collins - Lawrence Daly - John Daniels - Peggy Duff - Ray Gosling - Richard Fletcher - Trevor Griffiths - Eric Heffer, M.P. - Ellis Hillman - Dave Lambert - Ralph Miliband - Stan Mills - Jim Mortimer - Tom Nairn - Dick Nettleton - Stan Newens, M.P. - John Rex - Ernie Roberts - Alan Rooney - David Steele - Professor E. A. Thompson - E. P. Thompson - Tony Topham - William Warbey, M.P. - Raymond Williams - Bert Wynn - Konni Zilliacus, M.P. - Robin Blackburn - Ken Coates - Chris Farley Ralph Schoenman - Eric Varley, M.P. - Earl Russell, O.M. - Malcolm Caldwell

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WELCOME TO THE CENTRE FOR SOCIALIST EDUCATION

There is a report on page two about the launching of this organisation. We think that event is a very important step forward for the British socialist movement - it is timely and, we are convinced, viable. The ferment of ideas created by the evolution of the Labour Government makes it an absolute necessity to have such a forum - which should also be a workshop - for discussion. Structurally the Labour movement has a place for such an organisation since the demise of the NCLC; among other things there is no place where Labour Party members, other socialist and trade unionist may take part in common educational activity at present. The scheme will work because of the ever-increasing number of socialists who feel the need for it and are willing to be active in such a venture.

For our part we will give the Centre for Socialist Education all the support we can. We intend to carry week-by-week news of its activities, details of its publications, etc. As a first step we would urge all our readers to join in the venture. Write to C.S.E. 19, Greenfield St., Dunkirk, Nottingham.

FROM BAD TO WORSE

It must be difficult for many people to believe that the evidence put before Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations by Sir James Dunnett was the work of a Ministry under a Labour Government. We seem to have turned the full cycle: the Labour Party which was created by the trade unions to give them political protection now spawns forth schemes for tying the unions up legally. The idea of "making procedure agreements for the settlement of disputes legally enforceable" was the property of the extreme right wing of the Tory Party and Edward Martell until recently. We are told that the Ministry advises against legal action against unofficial strikers, not on principle, but, because it wouldn't work! What the people who voted against the emergency resolution on trade union legislation think now? Surely the time has come for all sections of the trade union movement to tell the Government that enough is enough, and that the present disastrous course must be reversed. Every union branch should call on its union leaders to make this absolutely clear.

On Saturday, 30th October, just over 40 socialists met to launch the Centre for Socialist Education at the ACTT Hall, Soho Square. The meeting came about as the result of many discussions which had been stimulated by several articles on the need for socialist education, notably one by Ralph Miliband in the Socialist Register. The meeting had been confined to a fairly small number of representative people who had taken part in these discussions. The attendance was representative of a large number of trends and sections of the academic world and Labour movement. It is sufficient to say that the following journals and organisations were represented: New Left Review, NALSO, Views, Labour's Voice, Bristol Left Club, Humberside Voice, Campaign for Socialism, the "Manchester" Group, Voice of the Unions and the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. Among the noted academics present were: Ruth and David Glass, K.W. Wedderburn and Ralph Miliband. There were activists from CND and MCF in attendance, and members of Labour Parties in the Midlands, Scotland, London, Surrey, Bristol, Manchester, Essex, and elsewhere.

Ralph Miliband, who was in the chair, opened the meeting by stressing the need for socialists to find ways to promote co-ordinated discussion and research. He outlined a scheme for the formation of a national centre for socialist education, which would initiate and service a network of local socialist educational enterprises, which would convene seminars and study groups, and publish papers, articles, books and pamphlets. Such a Centre would have to create the necessary ^{administrative} machinery to underpin such activity, he added. Ken Coates then outlined a number of specific proposals for the establishment of such a Centre.

Discussion on these proposals was lively. Some speakers laying stress on the need for a patient and not too ambitious approach to the project, others concentrating on the problems of forming such a Centre and made various suggestions for overcoming them. Notable among the contributions were ones from Stan Mills, who emphasised the need for involving workers in the scheme, among other questions; Tony Topham, who outlined the experience of a group in Hull, which carried out similar activity to that envisaged; and Ruth Glass, who stressed the need for a firm ideological basis for such a venture. The discussion lasted for several hours and when the a vote for taken on the project, there was unanimous approval.

The meeting then got down to consider practical steps. Ken Coates was elected as convener of a steering committee to explore the possibilities of immediate action. The following people were elected to serve: Perry Anderson, Robin Blackburn, Rosalind Delmar, Richard Fletcher, Charles van Gelderen, Ruth Glass, Bob Gregory, Pat Jordan, Walter Kendall, Russell Kerr, Ralph Miliband, Stan Mills, John Palmer, Alan Rooney, Mike Rustin, Peter Sedgewick, Ken Tarbuck and Tony Topham. Mary Klopper (Aberdeen) and Tom Nicholls (Bristol) were elected as corresponding members. Several people at the meeting expressed their support for the venture but were obliged to decline nomination because of heavy existing commitments.

Other decisions taken included: the organisation of a number of regional conferences (Scotland, Yorkshire, Midlands, South West, Newcastle, and London) where the proposal could be discussed and membership solicited; that a national conference be held before February 1st in order to approve proposals for a scheme of work and a constitution; that membership would be open to all socialists; that the London members of the committee should be responsible establishing a London Centre; and a press statement was approved.

NO ARBITRATION FOR N.U.I.W.

from a special correspondent

A ballot of the 4,300 members of the National Union of Insurance Workers at Pearl Assurance "overwhelmingly rejects" the idea of calling off their guns and submitting their wage claim to arbitration. The union is seeking a three year agreement and a 15s. a week pay increase this year for Pearl agents. Since late August the agents have been limiting industrial branch - door-to-door - collections to £50 a week instead of the usual £120. And for the last month they have refused to present their cash books to local company offices.

On 28th October the Prudential Assurance section of the N.U.I.W. made a new offer to the management in an effort to solve a dispute about forfeited earnings. At present agents have to refund commission to the company when policies in force for more than 2 years are discontinued. The N.U.I.W. have suggested that the refunding system be suspended for a trial period. If the company agrees the two sides will discuss implementation and criteria for a settlement at the Ministry of Labour on November 4th. If no settlement is reached by December 14th the union will instruct its members to refuse to accept any new industrial branch business. Agents working for other major insurance companies have agreed not to handle business refused by Prudential agents.

HOW TO AVOID REDUNDANCY PAYMENTS

from a Middlesex reader

600 men came out on strike at the High Duty Alloys factory in Slough in another dispute involving the Redundancy Payments Act. The company, which is part of the Hawker Siddeley Group, gave redundancy notices to 71 men and stated: "Reduction of the labour force is necessary to increase efficiency and the standard of productivity and quality and, therefore, competitiveness."

Many employees, however, took the view that it was acting precipitately to avoid giving severance pay under the Redundancy Payments Act which comes into force on December 6th. Mr. David McCartney, divisional organiser of the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers, said he was not attributing this motive to the company, but added: "We can get our men back to work as soon as the management gets back on the procedural rails". The strikers, members of seven unions, complain that when the two sides registered failure to agree on the issue of redundancies, the management started issuing notices instead of re-starting negotiations.

LINER TRAINS - N.U.R. MEMBERS DEMAND CONFERENCE

from a rails correspondent

The demand for a special recalled annual conference to discuss the liner train issue is growing within the N.U.R. The North Midland District Council has added its voice to that of the West Midlands in demanding a delegate meeting. The district council resolutions to this effect are unconstitutional since an emergency general conference can only be called for by the Executive or at the request of one-third of the N.U.R.'s 1,000 branches, but it indicates the strong opposition to the liner trains which the British Railways Board will meet when it tries to implement its first service to Glasgow at the turn of the year.

This demand reflects the concern among those opposed to the service that the N.U.R. Executive might change its mind. Last time it discussed liner trains a proposal to accept the service on the terms proposed by the Board was defeated by a very narrow margin.

A NEW FORM OF COMPANY UNIONISM?

from a special correspondent

A new agreement between the photographic suppliers' firm Ilford and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers has disturbing features. Ilford has agreed to the gradual establishment of 100% trade unionism among its process workers. In return, the NUGMW is to get employees to sign individual statements "unreservedly agreeing" to abide by union rules and agreements reached by the union and the company. The NUGMW is the only union concerned and over 2,000 of the 2,500 workers covered by the agreement are already members of it.

All new Ilford process workers will have to join the NUGMW but existing employees will be advised by the management to join, not compelled. At a press conference on October 28th in London both representatives of the management and the union said that the aim of the agreement "was to avoid both unofficial strikes and threats of unofficial strikes." The proposals have so far been agreed in principle by both sides. Now the union is busy on the job of getting individual employees at the firms four plants, in Ilford, Basildon, Brentwood and Mobberley, Cheshire, to sign the "good behaviour" notices.

The London district secretary of the NUGMW, Mr. L. G. Wright, said at the press conference that Ilford employees had already been consulted and he anticipated they would be persuaded to sign. He thought the agreement could well act as an example to other companies. "A greater degree of self-control is needed and members must be taught to honour agreements," he added. The statement which the workers are being asked to sign makes it clear that, should any undertaking be broken by individual members, Ilford can terminate the agreement. Thus, if there is an unofficial strike and the union fails to discipline its members it could lose its right to 100% organisation.

Should the NUGMW decide to expel any of its members, the management agrees not to withhold "unreasonably" its assent to the expulsion and the person concerned would get the sack. If anyone is expelled from the union without the management's agreement, they will not get the sack. The agreement boils down to the process workers giving up their right to strike unless their union instructs them to do so. It seems to a lot of people that a very dangerous precedent has been established which, in the present atmosphere of violent press attacks against trade unionism, aided and abetted by Labour leaders, could rationalise joint union-management action against "troublemakers", i.e., militant trade unionists. It is to be hoped that members of the NUGMW resist this policy and prevent its spread.

MILITANCY PAYS OFF AT THE AIRFIELDS

Despite the opposition of George Brown's Department of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Aviation has conceded in full a wage claim for 2,000 State airport employees. The workers, backed by their union, the TGWU, has thus won parity in pay between state airport employees and men working for the nationalised airlines who won substantial increases in April. The union based its claim on an agreement for "parity" between the two groups reached in 1957 with the Ministry of Aviation. This victory, which for some workers is worth up to £3 per week and is back-dated to March 1st, follows a threat of a strike earlier this month. Heathrow, Gatwick and Prestwick are among the airfields involved. Other sections of workers will no doubt take note.

A LETTER FROM A NATIONAL ASSISTANCE BOARD WORKER

As a socialist who earns his wages by working for the National Assistance Board, I read with interest the recent articles on the N.A.B.

I am sorry that your first contributor had the misfortune to meet a living fossil from the means-test at his first contact with the Board. This species, I am happy to say, is rapidly becoming extinct. The vast majority of N.A.B. staff try to approach their job with intelligence and understanding; a task which is not eased by chronic overwork, low pay, and poor working conditions. The blame for the strain on staff and poor service to the public thus caused must be laid squarely on the administrative heads of the department, not on individual clerks. It is sufficient to say that N.A.B. staff are rapidly becoming the most militant section of organised civil servants.

Margaret Croucher appears to miss the (socialist) point about the "wage stop". We can take it as axiomatic that no capitalist-based society will ever accept the principle that a worker should be better off on social benefits than when working. The appalling fact is that hundreds of thousands of workers are taking home pay which is below the subsistence level of the NAB. This of course is one of the basic contradictions of capitalism, and in terms of capitalist economics, inevitable. It is naive to expect the assistance Board to solve this question.

Merging NAB with MPNI in a super ministry of Social Security will not solve the problems of workers who now have to apply to the Board. Certainly, "benefits-related-to-earnings" is an acceptable principle-provided the earnings are high enough. This indicates the correct socialist solution to this problem (as to many others), namely, a massive advance on the wages front, pending the establishment of a society where "to each according to his needs" is the invincible principle.

THE MANCHESTER SOCIALISTS' CONFERENCE

A brochure has been produced to explain ideas behind the decision to call a conference of Manchester socialists on November 14th. It says: "this brochure is presented by some Manchester socialists who are concerned about the present drift away from socialism by the Labour Party and the Government. We have called a discussion conference to give socialists the opportunity to discuss this situation and set about correcting it. We hope that the papers in this brochure will help to stimulate the discussion. We invite contributions. These will be duplicated and circulated at the conference."

Among these papers are "Restoring socialism to the Labour movement" by Dick Nettleton, North West Organiser for CND; "Which way for socialism?" by Alan G. Rooney, editor, Labour's Northern Voice; "Pressure Group for socialism" by Rosalind Delmar, former chairman of Colleges and Universities CND; and the two articles from the last issue of Blackpool Briefing by Ken Coates and Walter Kendall which assess the Blackpool Conference.

The conference is described as being open to all socialists and one can obtain credentials by sending 2/6 to: Manchester Socialists Conference, 63, Coniston Ave., Little Hulton, Manchester, or by paying at the door. The conference is to start at 2.30 p.m. and will be held at the AEU Offices, 120, Rusholme Rd., Manchester 13. Professor Peter Worsley will be in the chair.

U.S. INVESTMENT IN SCOTLAND

by an economics correspondent

Scotland is very popular with U.S. investors and to find out why one has merely to study an article which appeared in the Financial Times of November 1st. Part of a special 20-page insert on Scotland, the article explained that "On average American firms coming to Scotland since 1945 have trebled their original planned capacity. U.S. companies (excluding those set up as joint Scottish ventures) now employ 48,000 people, or 7% of the labour force in manufacturing industry north of the border. Investment in these companies is worth £106 million. Annual output reached nearly £165 million last year....." It is also very profitable because "for every dollar North American companies have invested in Scotland they have earned nearly another dollar or its equivalent in overseas currency last year."

Why is there this high rate of profit? "Low costs were one reason for this growth. The latest figures produced by the National Industrial Conference Board of New York from an international survey of American firms with manufacturing plant overseas indicate that their total unit costs in Britain were 15% lower than in the U.S. Unit costs in the Common Market were only 4% lower than in the U.S.....While Government pressure may have had a bearing on the choice of a Scottish site rather than elsewhere in Britain, no American companies have pulled out once the plunge has been taken...."

REGIONAL IMBALANCE IN BRITAIN

by a special correspondent.

The current issue of the Economist contains an article: "Britain's unplanned regions," Whilst the main point of the exercise is to stress that the less prosperous regions of Britain hold the key to getting extra manpower to carry out the National Plan, the article gives an insight into the consequences for workers of British capitalism's inability to deal with regional imbalance. It is not merely a question of higher rates of unemployment, these themselves mask huge internal movements of workers, but of a variety of social consequences.

To take housing, for instance, as a direct consequence of the imbalance: whereas only 20% of houses in the South-East are over 80 years old, in Northern Ireland the figures is 40%, in Wales 32% and Scotland 30%. Wages are higher in the growth regions. After allowing for extra costs, e.g., more expensive housing and travel, incomes per head were on average 10% above the national level in South-East and West Midlands but 9% lower in Wales, 15% lower in Scotland and 16% lower in the North. These figures are substantially more than the differences in productivity. In the case of Wales we have the anomaly that whilst the Welsh workers produces on average 18% more than the national level his average earnings are only the same as the national level. Northern workers also produce well above the average (over 8% above) but receive some 3% less.

The regional immigration - caused mainly by people going after higher wages and jobs - has reached large proportions. Whereas in the 10 years 1951 to 1960 272,000 workers moved into the South-east (this is a net gain and is spreading up, 75,000 moved in during the next two years) over the same period Scotland lost 130,000 workers. The immigration is not evenly spread throughout the age groups, moreover, and this leads to a higher rate of natural increase in the growth regions. This is because younger workers are much more likely to move. Nor it is a question of only the less prosperous regions suffering: overcrowding, congestion on the roads soaring land prices, etc., are all intensified by this internal immigration.

Ray Gunter in his Chairman's address to the Labour Party Conference, made special reference to the difference in outlook, constitution, character and functions between the National Executive Committee and the Party Conference; and the Cabinet and a Labour Government. He claimed one body could not dictate to the other and he would not have it otherwise. He then proceeded to use his position as Chairman of the Conference to, in collaboration with Chairman of the Conference Arrangements Committee, use every possible artifice to ensure Conference gave an uncritical endorsement to every action and decision of the Labour Government. Moreover, Cabinet Ministers on the Executive Committee completely abrogated their responsibilities to the E.C. of the Labour Party and, in some instances, their own individual convictions to their responsibilities as Ministers of the Crown.

Herein lies the key to most of the conflicts over policy between the supporters of socialist principles and those who accept responsibility for the administration of a capitalist state. Over the centuries, in the development of the capitalist system, the state has built up an elaborate machine to defend and further the basic principles on which our capitalist society has been established. These basic principles are in direct conflict with the basic principles of a socialist system of society outlined in Clause Four of the Constitution of the Labour Party.

Ray Gunter then went on to claim: "The Labour Party exists as a Party so that we may progress towards a socialist society - and for that we must have a Labour Government." This claim is very much open to question. It is my opinion that the Labour Party has been built up by people who supported this claim and this principle has been embodied in the rules of most trade unions, but precept and practice are very much at variance in this matter. We have reached a stage in the history of the people of this country when socialists must carefully and coolly examine for what purpose the Labour Party is being used today.

Spontaneous reaction to frustration and individual "last ditch" stands provide no solution to the very real problems confronting socialists in the Labour Party today. On the other hand, unless the "left" - which I prefer to call socialists - can translate abstract principles into action based on common ground and provide a leadership which will give inspiration and hope to the great number of frustrated and despondent rank and filers in the Labour Movement, the Labour Party will exist to facilitate conditions favourable to the development of a capitalist Corporate state.

As a first step towards a revival and a socialist Labour Party, all the people who collaborated in the production of Briefing at the Labour Party Conference should again get together to initiate a wider campaign for unity and action in a socialist crusade to develop real socialist leaven inside the Labour Party. * Chairman, Hillsborough (Sheffield) C.L.P.

IAN MIKARDO ON INCOMES POLICY

by Tom Nicholls

Government measures have done nothing to bite into the inequality between high and low incomes, Ian Mikardo said at a conference at Croesyceiliog (near Pontypool) on Saturday October 30th. Mr. Mikardo said profits credited to the holders of ordinary shares were running at an increase of more than 20% over last year. "These shareholders are therefore getting increases about 6 times as large as the norm which the Government has laid down for wage increase.... George Brown has no hope of getting widespread support for his incomes policy until the Chancellor has succeeded in reversing this process," he added.

NO FREEDOM FOR STUDENTS IN PORTUGAL

The Portuguese Government has struck against the students of Lisbon University. Not content with arresting over 100 students in January of this year and torturing them to the extent that three had to be committed to mental hospitals, it continued its work of "cleaning up" the university by dismissing the elected executive of the Faculty of Science Students Association and replacing it by one directly appointed by the Minister of Education.

Last week it was announced that 200 more students were being suspended from Lisbon University for their union activities, and prevented from studying in any Portuguese university for periods ranging from 5 days to 8 years. This latest effort to wreck the lives of those who try to keep the torch of freedom alight should not be allowed to succeed. Efforts are being made to enable these students to continue their courses in various European countries. British Universities would get nothing but credit if they admitted them, and every attempt should be made to see that they do.

MORE F.B.I. AGENTS IN LATIN AMERICA

A New York Herald Tribune despatch from Washington on October 25th reported that more agents of the F.B.I. have been sent to the Latin American countries to augment the U.S. intelligence activities there. Sources in Washington confirmed that "Johnson has directed the F.B.I. into at least eight key Latin American cities and that agents of the C.I.A. "will continue to operate" as they have done in the past. The C.I.A. has been "authorised to carry out covert operations - invasions, armed infiltration, secret support of opposition to regimes", the report stated. It pointed out that Johnson's decision to despatch more F.B.I. agents there was aimed at augmenting the activities of the C.I.A. "More than a score of F.B.I. agents were ordered into Santo Domingo by Mr. Johnson during the crisis last May", it added.

FOREIGN MERCENARIES TO REMAIN IN CONGO

Evariste Kimba, premier of the new Leopoldville government of the Congo, stated on October 25th that his government would not expel the foreign mercenaries recruited by Tshombe. In addition the Commander-in-Chief of the army, Mr. Mobutu, said that "under the present circumstances, it is out of the question for the Congolese Government to fire the mercenaries who are serving in the National Army. The number of mercenaries in the Congo now amounts to seven hundred.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Correction: a serious mistake occurred in the article: "N.A.B. Who Decides", which appeared in our last issue. On page 7, in the last paragraph of the article, line 4, the word "neurotic" should have read "eneuretic". It has been pointed out to us that the mistake created the impression that the writer had a rather oversimplified attitude towards mental illness, which is, of course, not the case. Many apologies to the author. The mistake will be corrected when the article is reproduced for the pamphlet on N.A.B.

Mr. Dave Windsor's article: this will be completed in the next issue - we ran out of space in this one.

MR. SMITH'S RHODESIA*

The Rhodesia government is on a campaign to evict and prosecute all Africans who are renting and operating offices in cities in Rhodesia. Trades Union Congress offices have been closed and Africans who were renting offices and flats in the cities are being evicted and prosecuted. All this is being done to enforce the R.F. policy and the Land Apportionment Act which reserves the use of all facilities in cities exclusively for whites.

All missionary schools which have been operating multi-racially have been warned and told to remove all Africans from their schools by the beginning of next year. The reason is that multi-racial schools violate the sacred R.F. policy of white supremacy and no equality between the elect white settlers and the Africans.

The settler Minister of Education, Arthur Smith, has banned every form of political activity by holders of government scholarship. New applicants for government scholarships and bursaries are now required to sign a declaration of political castration before the award. Severe penalties will be imposed for a breach of the ban. This ban is intended to cut political activities by Africans who usually can only go to colleges and universities through winning a government scholarship on merits alone. White students will not be affected by the ban because there is no need for them to indulge in politics since they are part and parcel of the privileged establishment and government.

The Rhodesian army has been on a guerrilla warfare combat practice called 'Long drag' against a possible uprising by African revolutionaries now, and in the event of a U.D.I., Z.A.P.U., the implacable enemy of white minority rule, would be their target.

Answering the motion by Chad Chipunza on the independence issue, Ian Smith said: "We have no intention of changing our old policy of master and servant relation. We have long since passed that stage...we may accept apartheid in 20 years from now."

An African M.P., Mr. Chad Chipunza, a junior minister in Roy Welensky's cabinet, moving a motion for negotiated independence, said, inter alia, "There was a time when many of us could see a bright future in peace and prosperity for all people, irrespective of colour or creed. Today I think it is fair to say that to those of us who have a dark complexion, the lights of freedom and the lights of self-determination, which is every human being's desire to have in the land of his birth, are beginning to flicker to extinction. Negotiations to determine our future are being made over our heads. Very soon decisions will be made without any reference or consultation with us - as if we did not exist." This was not the correct way to go about public affairs.

"But there are millions of people with every right to regard themselves as Rhodesian citizens whose opinion cannot be consulted in such a way." They might be ignorant but they are not stupid. "But if we are to enjoy government by consent....we cannot ignore their attitude entirely."

The Rhodesian policy and army are being increased for any eventuality. The intensified reign of terror, intimidation, arrests, detentions and restrictions continues. More than 5,600 Z.A.P.U. supporters are still under restriction.

*From the Zimbabwe Review monthly bulletin of Z.A.P.U., 374, Grays Inn Rd., London, W.C.1.

The editorial staff of Le Drapeau Rouge (Red Flag), the official daily newspaper of the Belgian Communist Party, have been out on strike since the 3rd week in October. The typographical workers decided to go out in solidarity with them. The strike was all the more embarrassing to the C.P. leadership in view of the national congress which happened to have been scheduled for the same time. The congress thus remains unreported to the members and sympathisers of the Communist Party.

The editorial staff is seeking the union wage level. The response of the C.P. leadership to this is that editorial staff members cannot be considered to be professional journalists. They are party professionals and therefore should receive the same pay as other full-time workers for the party. The argument would have been more convincing if (1) some of the party leaders did not obviously enjoy a much higher income than the editorial staff; (2) the editors of Le Drapeau Rouge had not appealed to the newspaper employers association - to which they belong! - in order to bring pressure to bear against the strikers.

The strike was touched off by a decision of the editors - the political bureau of the Communist Party, in fact - to fire the secretary of the editorial board. He was guilty of organising the campaign for higher wages. He is not a newcomer to the party, having worked on Le Drapeau Rouge for 15 years.

THE BRUSSELS VIETNAM DEMONSTRATION

Some 3,000 persons marched in Brussels on October 16th in observation of the "International Day of Protest" against U.S. military intervention in Vietnam called for by the "Vietnam Day Committee" of Berkeley, California. It proved to be the biggest demonstration in Europe. It was a united front demonstration that included all the left wingers of the Brussels regions - members of the new Socialist Workers Confederation, the pro-Moscow C.P., pro-Peking C.P. and left-wing Social Democrats still inside the Socialist party, all marching together. The parade was headed by Pierre Le Greve, MP, of the Socialist Workers Confederation; the Liege member of parliament, Francois Perin; two senators of the C.P.; Ernest Mandel, editor of the weekly La Gauche; Jean Godin; and leading representatives of the youth movements supporting the march.

The main slogan of the march was "U.S., Get Out of Vietnam!" and its mood was one of solidarity with the Vietnam revolution and hostility to the policies of American imperialism and the support it has been receiving from the Belgian Government.

The march has already had a very significant and important result. The congress of the Liege regional federation of the Belgian trade union movement, which met October 23-24, passed a resolution extending fraternal greetings to the Vietnam Day Committee and expressing its solidarity with all demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. The regional federation represents 100,000 workers.

The stand taken by the congress is of tremendous importance. This is the first time that a large trade-union body in Western Europe has solidarized with the appeal issued by the Vietnam Day Committee.

SHOWDOWN IN BIRMINGHAM HAULAGE DISPUTE

from a Transport correspondent

In a bid to break the six-week strike over the Birmingham differential claim by the TGWU for drivers, Millichamp Haulage Ltd, of Stechford last week handed letters to its 22 drivers telling them that, if they did not report for work within 24 hours, they would be regarded as having dismissed themselves. None of the drivers reported for duty, and two days later they were sent their cards. The firm is trying to recruit new staff, but the TGWU is expected to "black" the firm.

It in explaining the firm's action, Mr. R. Millichamp, managing director, told the Birmingham Mail, "At a meeting some weeks ago 11 Midland haulage firms heard Mr. A.D. Law (the TGWU Birmingham regional trade group secretary) demand £2 per week on the basic rate. He intimated that if this was not agreed he would ask for £3 instead, and did so. This would have meant increases of £4 per week because of the increase in overtime. The firms rejected the claim but said they would accept the decision of national negotiations. Mr. Law insisted that the claim should be dealt with locally. The drivers employed by five or six of the firms came out. All except those employed by us came back eventually....Our London manager was told by a shop steward that the strike would continue at one firm and unless the claim was met they would break the firm. That firm was presumably us."

In a letter to the journal of the Road Haulage Association, Motor Transport, the secretary of the West Midland area of the RHA bitterly accused Mr. Law of encouraging the continuation of the strike "by the collection of money for distribution to the strikers." Mr. Law's activities and "agitation" are a "betrayal of the principles of the organisation of which he is a servant" this representative of the employers adds.

For me it is highly refreshing to hear employers' representatives talk like this about a union official. It shows that he must be doing his job!

Editorial note: in next week's issue we will be carrying material by Mr. Law arguing the case for higher wages for drivers.

Planning and workers' control in Yugoslavia continued from page 12/

One specific factor aiding the overcoming of alienation and strengthening workers' control is the right to autonomous income distribution urged by one Mr. M. Drenjamin in another article in the same journal. The author, after examining some of the organisational problems connected with workers in individual enterprises determining their own incomes, suggests bringing existing statutory regulations into line in order to reach that situation in which "enterprises...would be free to keep their books in the way that suits their needs."

The two article referred to above are illustrative of the searching for new forms through which the demands for greater workers' control can be exercised that make up the continually shifting nature of Yugoslavia's planning system. Not all the problems can be solved, nor all the demands met within the present socio-political framework of Yugoslav society, but that gains are being made and that even the bureaucracy is searching for new methods in a progressive direction, cannot be denied. These are promising signs for the future.

Attempts in recent years to utilise market mechanisms in determining resource allocations, volume of production, wages, prices, etc., within the framework of a planned economy based upon some measure of "workers' self-management", together with problems of inflation and under-utilisation of resources which recent measures of currency reform and attempts at a closer association with the Common Market tried to solve, have focussed attention on the current developments in the Yugoslav planning system. A recent issue of the Yugoslav quarterly, Socialist Thought and Practice, contains several articles on the problems of economic and social development which not only raise issues of interest to students of Yugoslav affairs but also reflect current concerns of socialists here in Britain.

"Some Observations on Planning" by the Vice-President of the Federal Assembly, Mijalko Todorovic attempts to grapple with one of the major problems common to all planned economies: the search for a decentralised, yet articulated planning; the maintenance of a coherently planned system of development while realising to the full the initiative of the workers in production. His main concern is to reach a position where the central plan is no longer an "inflexible programme, a lid that covers everything, based on force" but where "all economic responsibilities in production, distribution and exchange are directly in the hands of immediate producers." His central aim is to "change the balance of forces between social democratic and bureaucratic tendencies." In seeking to do this he specifically rejects proposals regarding co-operation and consultation between the national planning agencies and the lower bodies as being "utterly insufficient", turning into only a "purely formal democracy (in which) planning would still retain its administrative-centralist character" and instead is concerned to see how "self-planning" by the workers themselves, "without leaders or followers", is to be achieved.

In reviewing the evolution of Yugoslavia's planning system, Todorovic points out that even with the changes that have taken place "we find in our consciousness the remnants of certain elements of Stalinism, a monstrous bureaucratic-technocratic approach...(where)..form becomes absolute and takes the place of content...(and)...the cult of bureaucratic centralism takes over." He goes on to specifically condemn that bureaucratism where "in the name of future reality, in the name of ideals, the material interests and the position of the working man are neglected."

Todorovic goes on to consider the relationships between the various levels of the planning system and to delineate to each their sphere of responsibility with regard to prices, the market, the credit system, resource allocation, output, income distribution, etc. As the necessary alternative to centralised control, he stresses the great need for the development of co-operation among all the agents of economic activity for efficient planning on the basis of generalised social and economic objectives. The theme that he constantly stresses in the discussion of these problems is that centralisation and statism must be rejected by a socialist society seeking to base itself on self-government, since it is the negation of this and must lead in its absence to "bureaucratic-administrative despotism."

In view of the seemingly intractable problems with which the Yugoslav economy is faced, disparity of levels of development between regions, persistent inflationary pressures, its weaknesses on the world markets, etc., one can only admire the brave words (presumably semi-official at least) of Mijalko Todorovic and hope that these aspirations are capable of being translated into practice, that a planning system can be evolved which, as Todorovic says, "will not alienate the workers but will help towards the liquidation of his alienation."