

The Week

A NEWS ANALYSIS FOR SOCIALISTS
Volume 9 No. 9 February 28th 1968

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GROWING SUPPORT

for **MAR 17th**

RACISM IS NOW OFFICIAL

71 Cnelow Gardens, London N.10. Subscription: £2 per annum & pro rata

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A NEWS AND VIEWS FOR SOCIALISTS
Volume 1, No. 2, February 1968

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RACISM NOW OFFICIAL

Even the Bishop of Woolwich finds it difficult to remain inside the Labour Party. Mr. Callaghan's capitulation to Powell and Sandys has put him to the right of Iain Macleod and the Archbishop of Canterbury. We have to be honest and say that the Tory Party has had a better position on the recent issue of Kenyan Asian immigration than that of Mr. Wilson's Cabinet. Such is the extent to which the Labour Government has travelled to the right. There can be no compromise on this question because what is involved is not just one particular issue of racialism. By this act the Labour Government has jerked the whole political structure in Britain to the right. Every bigoted Tory will be encouraged/make further demands for the restriction of immigration. The fascists have received the most encouraging news since the end of the war. Callaghan's measure will not placate them; on the contrary it will make them more aggressive and ambitious. The vicious piece of racialism that this Government has forced through will push the whole of ^{the} immigrant community in this country away from the Labour movement. As usual the so-called democratic socialists have shown themselves to be completely undemocratic and revealed themselves as being a danger to democracy.

VOTING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT

Left wingers have voted against the Government at least three times this week. This is a very welcome development. If the left wing M.P.s stick to their guns and refuse to be intimidated by the Government they have the chance of performing a valuable service to the whole Labour movement. If they at the same time present a complete programme of opposition to the Government and seek to organise struggle against the Government's right wing policies they can act as the public conscience of the Labour Party. The emergence of a well-defined left in Parliament would help to reverse the trend for the left to leave the party. That is the only way the rightward evolution of the party can be reversed.

SUPPORT GROWING FOR MARCH 17

We are informed by the organisers of the March 17th Ad Hoc Committee that support for their demonstrations is growing by leaps and bounds. The flow of letters requesting information and offering support has grown to a flood. Supporting groups are springing up all over the country and especially at the universities. Coachloads of demonstrators have been organised from over 20 towns ranging from Newcastle in the north to Bristol in the west. Scarcely a major town is without some group of people working to get people along. The two factors which have led to this are the stepping up of the Vietnam war (especially the heroic actions of the N.L.F.) and the militancy of the October demonstration. All of this should make ^{us} all the more determined to work for a strong solidarity movement based upon militant action. We must ensure that March 17th will be a day which ^{will} help to create the mass basis for this.

If Transport House has its way, the Fifty-fourth Annual Conference of the London Labour Party, which meets in Camden Town Hall on Saturday, March 30, will be its last. The Interim Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Party Organisation has put forward proposals which would transform the London Labour Party into a Greater London Regional Council. Under this scheme, the London Party will lose the autonomy which it has enjoyed since the days of Herbert Morrison - an arrangement which was not without benefit for Labour as the London Labour Party succeeded in holding London while the Party fared badly in the country as a whole. Significantly, last year's disastrous G.L.C. campaign was organised from Transport House.

The Interim Report was presented to the Scarborough Conference as a document for discussion and it was promised that there would be ample time for consultation. As far as London is concerned, this consultation consisted of a two-hour meeting at Congress House on January 27th. It is important, therefore, that all London parties and trade unions should instruct their delegates to give their support to the resolution standing in the name of the Association of Supervisory Staffs, Executives and Technicians (London District). This reads as follows:

"This Annual Conference of the London Labour Party notes the Interim Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Party Organisation insofar as it concerns the Greater London Council area. It notes the recommendation within that Report, but urges the National Executive Committee of the Party not to implement any proposals without the endorsement of a specially convened Conference of elected representatives of all Constituency Labour Parties, Trade Unions and Affiliated bodies within the Greater London Council area."

There is a similar resolution from the Political Committee of the London Co-operative Society. As is only to be expected, most of the general resolutions reflect the anger at the savage rent increases imposed by the Tory GLC. Unfortunately, the Labour Party is in a very vulnerable position on this issue. Many of the Labour-controlled councils operate differential rents schemes, with the blessing of the NEC. Once this is accepted, the principle of housing as a social service goes by the board. Furthermore, most London Boroughs have also introduced steep rent increases, in one case, at least, even harsher than that of the GLC - and these boroughs are Labour controlled. All this because of a dictat from the Ministry of Housing that local housing accounts must be balanced.

Conference will also be considering resolutions on the closing of factories in the London area, throwing thousands out of work; improvement in public transport; education; health services and other issues. In view of the fact that this year's Conference is confined to one day instead of the traditional two, delegates will be hard pressed to deal with all these problems adequately.

The Week: some big changes continued/

technical and space limitations have been a serious limitation. For us, the new journal will mark an important step forward. We feel that through this journal and our participation in those listed above, we can play an important role in solving the ideological problems which must be dealt with before we can make a significant advance towards socialism.

THE WEEK: SOME BIG CHANGES

For some time now the people who produce The Week - who are active members of the Labour Party, Young Socialists, Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, trade unions, workers control campaign, etc. - have been considering its future. It has been felt that the original aim of the journal, that of becoming the expression of an organised left inside the Labour Party and trade unions, is unlikely to be achieved in the near future. The main reason being that the mass left wing opposition to right wing policies of the Labour leaders - which we all expected in 1964, when The Week was launched - has not materialised. On the other hand, the failure of the left to stop Wilson's evolution to the right has raised many problems of theory, strategy and tactics.

The balance sheet since 1964 shows many successes, in which The Week has played a vital role. The workers' control movement has grown up to become a national presence. There has been the remarkable growth of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign which has brought about structural changes in the anti-war movement in Britain. There is the growing influence of the Cuban revolution upon the left which is inspiring an increasing number of young people and attracting them to socialism. Most important of all we can note that more and more young people are being attracted towards revolutionary politics, especially in the universities.

We must also note that a number of other journals have come on the scene and are now doing much of the work that The Week sought to do in its early days. In the field of international reporting, World Outlook is doing an extraordinarily good job of presenting the British left with news about the "third world" and other radical movements. The Vietnam Solidarity Bulletin is giving excellent coverage to the war in Vietnam and the international movement of solidarity with the Vietnamese people. Later this year, London Labour's Voice will be launched and will provide a focus of expression for the most lively and dynamic left wing forces inside the Labour Party. Other Voice editions - local and industrial - are doing good consistent work. One can never forget the work of Engineering Voice in helping to reverse the right wing's domination of the A.E.U., or the work done by such papers as Nottingham and Humberside Voices in building solidarity with the busmen and other trade unionists.

Taking all these considerations into account the group of people who bring out The Week have decided to change the frequency and the general approach of the journal. We shall cease to bring it out as a weekly on March 31st and we will replace it with a printed monthly, entitled International. The new journal will concentrate on the examination of politics in depth. We will discuss such questions as the strategy of the "left" in face of the continued evolution to the right by the Labour Government; the new political problems posed by the rise of nationalism and the black power movement; the tactics of the anti-Vietnam war movement and its corollary: the solidarity movement with national liberation movements; and, of course, as internationalists we will endeavour to examine the implications for British socialists of important political developments abroad, in particular, the development of the Cuban revolution and the world-wide national liberation struggle. As partisans of socialist democracy we will devote attention to the movements struggling against bureaucracy in the communist world.

We still feel that there is a need for a substantial printed weekly to act as an organiser for the left and we are sure that the International will help to lay the basis for a movement which will be capable of this considerable journalist undertaking. The Week has had an honorable history but its

continued on page 2

ECONOMIC NOTES

by an economics correspondent

Two recent articles in journals specialising in economic affairs need drawing to the attention of Week readers. The first, concerning the drastic decline in the number of shops, is yet another very clear indication of the growing structural monopolisation of Britain. The other, making a prediction of a slowing down in the growth of world trade, shows that the next period will be one very unfavourable for Mr. Wilson's attempt to salvage British capitalism.

Sharp drop in number of shops: The traditional picture of Britain as a nation of shopkeepers is fading fast. Preliminary results of a census published in this month's Board of Trade Journal show that in 1966 there were about 8% fewer shops than five years earlier, but they sold about 7% more goods between them. The decline is greatest among grocers and other food retailers, clothing shops and general stores while the booming retail businesses are radio and television hire shops, mail order, laundrettes and automatic vending. In all, there were 498 000 establishments in 1966, 80 000 fewer than in 1961, with a total turnover up by about a quarter to £10 950m. The impact of supermarkets is seen by the reduction in the number of grocers from 151 154 to 122 336. Confectioners, tobacconists and newsagents were down from 70 662 to 63 015 and clothing and footwear shops from 96 612 to 81 544.

Slower growth in world trade predicted: A warning of slower growth in domestic expansion and international trade is given in this month's issue of Barclays Bank Review. 'Throughout the coming year great care will clearly be taken in all countries to ensure that whatever degree of domestic expansion may be generated does not in any circumstances exceed the rate of growth which the economy can sustain,' says the leading article. 'For the moment therefore it would be as well to regard the days of a better than 5% growth rate as over for most countries; for the developed countries these are more likely to be the days of 3 per centers. So far as the practicalities of business are concerned, this means that the buoyancy of world trade is going to be less than in the past 10 or 15 years,' the Review says. The article states that no western country is likely to start a consumer-orientated boom hoping that a subsequent rise in exports will restore the external balance of the economy. One good result that might spring from these cautious feelings might be the encouragement of a collective approach to these problems.

Some of the underdeveloped countries are apparently unable to handle their problems even when help is forthcoming, the Review says. 'Undoubtedly, the frustration felt by many individuals and institutions who have desired to help is one of the most disturbing elements in this complex situation,' it goes on. 'There is foreboding in a state of affairs which compels both sides to regard the 1960s not as the decade of development as was once hoped but as a decade of disillusionment'. The outlook for underdeveloped countries is far from bright in 1968 and 1969, the Review warns.

ALMOST TWO-THIRDS OF A MILLION WORKERS STILL UNEMPLOYED by a Hull reader

Unemployment through out Great Britain and Northern Ireland totalled 657 832 on February 12th. This figure which represents a drop of 13 125 on the January figures, is being hailed by many newspapers and Labour Government officials as a sign of 'brighter prospects'. It is important to emphasise that there are 13 495 more people out of work now, compared with the same month in 1967, the percentage jobless is still 2.6. Examples from two cities illustrate the point:

Birmingham: Nearly 13 000 men are out of work in Birmingham, the highest figures since the Ministry of Labour began keeping records in 1945. The Ministry's figures for February show an increase of 317 in the number of men wholly unemployed to 12 955, higher than the previous peaks in the harsh winters of 1947 and 1963. Ministry officials also expect the upward trend in unemployment to be checked by the spring, although the jobless level is likely to remain above average. A fall in the number of workers on short time working counteracted the rise in the wholly unemployed in Birmingham and the city's unemployment percentage figures remain at 2.9 per cent. One union comment on the figure came from the general secretary of the National Society of Metal Mechanics, Frank Briggs, who commented: 'It is getting to be a worrying situation and we deplore the general situation in the Midlands.' He said he would be having consultations with other unions about the situation and they might have to look very closely at overtime working. If the men were to work normally it would mean extra work and more employment, he said. The car industry is a seasonable one, however, and there is 'a glimmer of hope' that figures for that section should improve. David Ferris, secretary of Birmingham Trades Council and of the Midland regional advisory committee of the TUC said: 'These are very distressing figures. They will lend impetus to the campaign which the trades council is about to launch against the Government measures which have resulted in this level of unemployment.' He said that the executive of the trades council would shortly be considering the lobbying of MPs and other forms of protest against the situation.

Hull: Unemployment in the Hull area is now 3.8 per cent. The Hull figures which include Hessle and Beverley show that a total of 5 242 people were unemployed in February 1967. The unemployment total for February 1968 is 6 787, which is also an increase of 417 on January 1968. There are ten unemployed men for every vacancy (low paid jobs). The overwhelming majority of the unemployed are men.

The Hull Unemployed Workers Committee is keeping up its fight against any complacency on unemployment. There is to be an emergency meeting of the Hull and district Trades Council this Thursday on unemployment to plan some action.

PROTEST AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT'S RACIALIST IMMIGRATION POLICIES

There will be a demonstration on Thursday 29th February to protest against the Government's racialist immigration policies, as exemplified by the latest immigration Bill. The demonstration is sponsored by a variety of organisations including Rebel, The Week, the L.S.E. Socialist Society, and numerous Young Socialist branches. It will commence from the London School of Economics, Houghton St., off Aldwych at 7.00 p.m. and go to the House of Commons.

85% of wage-earners too poor to get a mortgage based upon Daily Mail report

House prices have shot so high that 85% of the people in Britain no longer earn enough to get a mortgage. Price increases have been biggest where it hurts most - among lower-priced houses. The heartbreak for home-buyers is revealed in statistics published by the Co-operative Permanent Building Society on 21st February. Most people now have to buy a house at much below the average price of £4 311 or have to save longer for a bigger deposit. In the South-East, where prices have soared most, 94% of the people have found that prices have risen beyond their income qualification for a mortgage. The average price of an existing house in the South-East, normally a modern three-bedroom semi, is £5 584. In the North-East, the cheapest area in England, it is £3 588. The figures show a 6½% increase in the price of an average existing house, and 7% on a new house. The comparisons are for 1967 over 1966 and do not include present prices, now starting to rise because of devaluation. For a £5 500 mortgage a buyer must earn £2 200 a year. He has to pay back £9 3s. 2d a week over 25 years. For a £3 500 mortgage he must earn £1 400 a year and has to pay back £5 16s 7d a week. For £4 300, he must earn £1 724 and pay back £7 3s 2d a week. Inland Revenue statistics show how difficult this is. Out of 21 582 000 people assessed for income tax, only about 15%, or 3 183 600, have incomes above £1 500 - enough for a £4 300 house. Only 6% about 1 300 000, have incomes above £2 000. And only 9 173 600, or under 50%, earn above £1 000 a year to qualify for the cheapest average house.

Dock nationalisation may be called off

There is growing confidence among port employers that the Government will drop or at least postpone plans to nationalise the industry by January 1970 despite ministerial declarations to the contrary. People involved in recent talks at the Ministry of Transport say it is now conceded that nationalisation on the planned date is virtually impossible on practical grounds. A start has yet to be made on negotiating the massive compensation bill (the £400m total disclosed in November is now thought to be an underestimate) and a host of related issues. Lord Caldecote, chairman of the exports 'Little Neddy', added his 'voice' to the chorus of opposition to port nationalisation. Speaking at the annual luncheon of the Dock and Harbour Authorities Association in London (where ironically enough, he had taken Mrs. Castle's place as chief guest) he disclosed that the exports Neddy had decided to take up with the Ministry of Transport all aspects of the Transport Bill which is passing through Parliament at the moment, which might damage export prospects. 'It is very disappointing to those who are devoting much work and energy to improving the economic situation both through their primary work and through the Neddies, to find the Government putting forward so much legislation which seems to be more concerned with doctrinaire policies than with efficient operations', Lord Caldecote said.

A CONFERENCE ON IMPERIALISM

All Manchester readers should go to a conference on imperialism, which is to be held at Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, Manchester, on Saturday 2nd March, commencing at 10.30 a.m. Speakers include Tony Cliff (I.S.), Johnny James (CARD) and representatives of the sponsoring organisations: the United West Indian Association, the Pakistan Progressive Movement, Manchester I.S. Group, and Manchester University Socialist Society.

LETTERS ON THAT "COMMENT" ARTICLE

We have received many letters on the question of the Comment article by Betty Reid (February 17 issue). We are publishing a selection with an eye to avoiding repetition (some of the letters have been edited for this reason, too).

FROM H.M. LESLIE

"The February 17 issue of 'Comment' a Communist Party journal carries a rather unfortunate, not to say untimely article entitled "Diversions in the fight for peace", by Betty Reid.

The article is, in the main a frontal attack on the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, while also containing sundry snipings at 'The Week', 'International Socialism', 'Solidarity' and the Maoists. Betty Reid's main point seems to be that Vietnam demonstrations organised on a non-solidarity position would attract larger crowds and the consequence would be that Wilson would be forced to disassociate from U.S. policy.

"I propose to quote some of the assertions and statements contained in the article, and then to answer them.

Throughout the article we are assured that the C.P.G.B. supports the N.L.F. and Hanoi, (Surely nobody doubted this anyway) apparently it is just not politic for demonstrations to let Wilson and Co know this. So the argument goes- we must make minimal demands, and then thousands of Liberals, clerics and even confused imperialists will come pouring into the streets.

"We are told that "the attitude and activities of V.S.C. are obstacles to the building of such a (mass) movement..." The article continues by calling attempts to turn Peace in Vietnam Committees into Solidarity Committees "disruption".

At this point in her article Betty Reid launches an attack on the Fourth International. While it is easy to criticise aspects of the Fourth International - though for different reasons than those of Betty Reid - this should not be used as an excuse for sectarian refusal to work with its supporters on areas of agreement, such as Vietnam.

"On returning to the question of Vietnam demonstrations we are advised that whatever the differences "this would not cause us to create divisions in any genuine united effort for Vietnam. "The issue is too immediate, too important, too central for that".

The article even challenges the concept that the only lasting thing that can be done by the British Socialist movement, to assist in the fight against imperialism, is the overthrow of Imperialist Government. This section continues by advising that it is not the peace movement's task to fight for a socialist solution, but should concentrate on bringing people together on a clear platform of immediate demands.

"In answer to the point about attracting larger crowds, it should be noted that the October 22 demonstration was the largest yet on the Vietnam

issue, and that on the previous day one called under the 'peace' slogan attracted derisory support."

"Then one should consider what the minimum demands of the C.P.G.B. and others have led to in the past, for every time the movement has called for peace on U. Thant's proposals' Johnson and Wilson have made similar noises to Hanoi, and when Hanoi has quite justifiably rejected the aggressors terms, then Johnson and his lapdog have pointed an accusing finger at Hanoi. The result being a considerable number of very confused people.

"We now come to the question of attacking U. Thant, this point has been generally covered in the last paragraph, but I would add that Betty Reid might do well to consider his background.

"With regard to "division in any united effort for Vietnam". It is indeed regrettable that the C.P.G.B. should find it easier to form alliances with Liberals and vicars etc., than with Socialists. Although we are advised that "The issue is too immediate, too central, too important" for divisions, it is infact the C.P.G.B. who have continually stood aside when faced with a demonstration which would have forced them into the open.

"On the question of lasting help for the Vietnamese and other revolutions, I am sure that Betty Reid will agree with me when I say that a British Government of the present ilk is certain to align itself against any people likely to challenge imperialism. (Guyana, Vietnam and the Yenen are examples). It is therefore true to say that the only lasting thing we can do to assist such movements is to smash the present and replace it with a socialist one.

"To even suggest that the peace movement should limit itself to "bringing people together on a clear platform of immediate demands", is ludicrous. I wonder what Betty Reid would say if it were suggested that the Trade Unions limit themselves to economic demands."

From a Yorkshire reader

"....I think Betty Reid has a nerve! She never criticised the Communist Party when it was giving full support to the British Council for Peace in Vietnam when that organisation's line was "we do not seek to apportion blame." The Vietnamese had occasion to criticise Lord Fenner Brockway last year for as they put it "misrepresenting their views." Betty Reid was conspicuous by her silence in that matter. She fails to mention the War Crimes Tribunal and the Free Speech Campaign, both of which were staffed by V.S.C. supporters. Would she describe those campaigns as diversions and splitting activities? The Tribunal - never supported by the B.C.P.V. - had the active support of the Vietnamese, both North and N.L.F. The Free Speech Campaign united nearly 80 Labour Parties and 60 M.P.s, the Morning Star could scarcely bring itself to report it! If there is sectarianism in the anti-Vietnam movement Comment should look at itself. In the same issue as Betty Reid's article appeared in there was a list of activities concerning the Vietnam war. There was one notable absence - guess which. Yes! you are right, there was no mention of the March 17th demonstration. I doubt very much whether any Communist Party members or sympathisers will be deterred from taking part....."

SIXTEEN INTELLECTUALS SAY: "THE TURNING POINT HAS COME"

For the first time, racism is to be written into British law. British citizens are to be excluded because their skins are dark, or their grand-fathers foreign. But for our specific promise of British citizenship, many more Kenyan Asians would have become Kenyan citizens. A fraudulent insurance company can treat a claim, when it is presented, as 'a scrap of paper'; can the British Government? The reasons for this proposal are obscure. A settlement grant of £500 per immigrant family could have been made instead on the condition that the immigrants avoided a handful of named racial trouble spots. But appeasement of racists apparently means more than the honour of the British Government or the rights of British citizens. In the past we have voted and worked for the Labour Party. This is the turning point. We cannot see ourselves voting for a party that goes through with this policy. Peter Calvocoressi; Patrick Corbett; David Daiches; Len Joy; Andrzej Krassowski; Brian Lapping; Colin Leys; Michael Lipton; Anthony Low; Bernard Schaffer; Dudley Seers; Martin Staniland; Barry Suple; Richard M. Titmuss; Peter Townsend; John White.

! DENIS HORDEN ASKED TO EXPLAIN UNITY SPEECH

Mr. Denis Horden, MP for Brighton, Kemptown, is to be hauled before the Labour Party's disciplinary machinery. He is to be asked to explain a speech he made at a British Soviet Friendship Society dinner in November. The dinner was part of the society's celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Three national papers reported him as calling for the unity of Labour and Communist supporters. He has agreed that he made a call for unity across the whole political front between the Communist and Labour Parties. The Conservative candidate for Kemptown, Mr. Andrew Bowden, delivered a letter to No 10 Downing Street over the speech and there were calls locally for the Labour Party to disassociate itself from Mr. Hobden's views. The national executive has now decided that he should be questioned about the speech. Mr. Hobden held his seat with a majority of 831 over Mr. Bowden at the last election. Mr. Hobden left the Labour Party over German rearmament and joined the Communist Party in 1950. After a year he left to return to the Labour Party. It is to be hoped that all Labour Party supporters will oppose this latest piece of witch-hunting.

HORNSEY YOUNG SOCIALISTS CALL FOR DISAFFILIATION

Young Socialists in Hornsey, angry with the Government's 'repeated betrayal' of Labour policies, are to demand that the local party withdraws all financial and electoral support from the national Labour Party. They feel they must make a stand against the Government's policy over Vietnam, the reintroduction of prescription charges, and cuts in housing and education. Michael Caffoor, Chairman of the Young Socialists, and secretary, Philip Hinchliff, issued a statement saying: 'The time has come when Labour Party members must stand and fight for democracy inside the Labour movement. This will not be done by passing anaemic resolutions, but only by the constituency Labour Parties organising collectively against the repeated betrayal by the Labour Government of specific electoral policies of the Labour Party, and fighting for the implementation of these policies. It is not thought that this rather negative action will get much support.'

DRAGGING OUR FEET INTO THE THIRD WORLD

E.J.Hobsbawm in his "Assessment of the Cultural Congress of Havana" ('World Outlook' Feb.16) draws our attention to so many important points in our present-day chaos, that I hope I may be permitted to quote him. He says, "One of the ablest men at the Congress, Rene Depestre of Haiti, praised Cuba precisely because "here art and literature are not confined to the direct support of ideology and politics" and one of the most spontaneously applauded speeches (by a Uruguayan) defended the revolutionary 'intellectual' against excessive encroachment by the 'man of action.'

In complete contrast to this, Hobsbawm points out, in the fifties intellectuals holding such views would have been tempted to see intellectual freedom as the key question and the Communist regime as the main danger. This mood has changed, "In the 1960s it has become evident, at least in large parts of the world, that the defence of intellectual freedom can be combined with resistance to another, and at present greater, danger. As fascism united the intellectuals in the 1930s, so the United States united them at Havana, though one notes with relief that nobody even tried to pretend that the two were or are analogous."

To Hobsbawm, the "most interesting fact" about the Congress was the demonstration, "That an extraordinarily wide and heterogeneous collection of intellectuals can today be mobilized on the common ground of support for the Vietnamese, for Cuba, for the movements of liberation in the 'third world' and not least, for the Negro and anti-war movements in North America against the government of the United States. The situation of the 1950s has been reversed."

Since Britain is one of the powers where a great deal of control and prestige still rests in the hands of elderly lords and statesmen and still older captains of industry (in this country when you are between 60 and 70 you are in your prime !) much of the inability of our countrymen to see things as they really are is due to the propaganda put across by this senile section of the community. Those who listen regularly to the B.B.C. News and read the schizophrenic Leaders of the National Dailies, desperately trying to sort out the truth from the wishful thinking, must wearily conclude that the situation of the 1950s as outlined by Hobsbawm has not been reversed.

Our trouble is that these elderly statesmen, "progressive" politicians, leaders of pacifist and religious organisations, "see intellectual freedom as the key question and the Communist regimes as the main danger." Due to their all-pervading influence on our educational system (which is still middle-class) their pernicious and infectious arrogance and conspicuous display, used as a means of intimidating the lower paid workers and the working classes generally, so that men engaged in the effective

functioning of trades unions are treated with utter contempt; they have used all the subtleties of their privileged positions to see that this country still shudders at the word "Communism" and is hell-bent to burn and butcher (by proxy) the Vietnamese people so that it won't taint these shores.

It is interesting that Hobsbawm makes this comment later in the article "except perhaps in Britain, the common denominator of all the possible cultural and political avant-gardes" (whose 500 delegates representing 70 countries were gathered in Cuba) "was hostility to the American War in Vietnam."

Marjorie Holt.

LETTERS ON THE COMMENT ARTICLE CONTINUED

From a Communist Party member (London) (much shortened because it repeated many points made our Nottingham reader)

"It is to be hoped that the article does not represent official party opinion. Whilst talking of preserving unity, Betty Reid seeks to split the movement against the war in Vietnam. I am a member of both the V.S.C. and the B.C.P.V. (although more active in the former) but have never felt any contradiction in this. The B.C.P.V. has altered its position a lot from when started. I felt that it did this partly as a result of pressure from members who also supported the V.S.C. My party branch is helping to form a local VSC branch notwithstanding the article in Comment. I cannot understand the attacks on Pat Jordan's speech. He went out of his way to try to include the Communist Party in his proposed united front. Many on the left are cowardly on this point. The party should welcome someone (even if he is an ex-member) who stands firm against the anti-Communist bogey....."

From A.H. (West Middlesex)

".....I had never heard of Comment until you mentioned it in your editorial so I went and bought a copy from Colletts and advise other readers to do the same. I don't think your editorial dealt with the questions raised by Mrs. Reid (although I must add that I am a member of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign). Surely it is possible to organise more people for a call to support U Thant? The flaw in the argument, though, is that this support can be easily confused by the subsequent refusal of the Vietnamese to agree to U Thant's proposals, so one is back at square one. I think that the size and militancy of the March 17 demonstration will settle the question....."

From an A.E.U. shop steward

"...It is to be regretted that the old red herring of outside influences has been dragged into this argument. When ever workers go on strike someone comes along and says that it is all the result of a plot, cooked up by some sinister organisation. Instead of Betty Reid going into the politics of the differences between the B.C.P.V, which she supports, and the V.S.C., which The Week supports - she surely exaggerates the journal's influence, though - she drags in the Fourth International, just as Ray Gunter dragged in the Communist Party when he made his famous speech. People aren't going to be kidded by this. How can an organisation which hasn't even got a journal organise a demonstration like the October 22nd one? The Communist Party would do well to forget about this article, they are going to look pretty foolish next month when people compare the size of the various demonstrations...."

CIA GLOOMY OVER VIETNAM

from Dave Windsor

The Sunday Telegraph of February 25 had an extremely interesting article from its Washington correspondent, Stephen Barber, which gave a real insight into the demoralising effect of recent events in Vietnam on the US administration: 'The CIA it is learned, is getting much gloomier information from its men about the situation than that relayed by the State Department to the White House from Saigon. Mr. Richard Helms, the CIA's director, is reported to have said that the war 'could last 100 years the way it is going now'. CIA chiefs are said to have given repeated warnings against over-Americanising the war. They say too little pressure has been put on the Saigon authorities to clean up the more outrageous forms of corruption in which officials have been involved.

'Bickering has broken out in the capital with a new vehemence. It is not just between the hawks and doves, but among people who have hitherto kept cooler. In the Senate, the Foreign Relations Committee, headed by the anti-Vietnam dove, Senator Fulbright, has voiced serious doubts as to whether it and the public were told the full truth about the Tonkin Bay naval incidents in August 1964. The incidents served as Mr. Johnson's pretext for calling for a congressional resolution. He has treated this as carte blanche for escalating the war ever since. The doves charge that the American destroyer Maddox was on a spy mission and provoked attack by the North Vietnamese gunboats. In turn this led to Mr. Johnson's ordering naval air strikes. Some hawks also feel that while the President may have been justified, he acted too hastily. Significant rumblings of discontent have appeared in sections of the American Press. On February 23, the Wall Street Journal had an outright defeatist editorial. It said the American people should be getting ready to accept the prospect that the whole Vietnam effort was doomed. 'It may be falling apart beneath our feet', the article went on. It dismissed the idea that the Communists were at their last gasp. The newspaper added: 'Let no one blink the fact that it will be a disaster .. a stunning blow to the US and the West in the larger struggle with international Communism.' Life magazine said in its editorial: 'Wherever we look, something's wrong.' The magazine referred to humiliating doubts as to the usefulness of America's military might as an instrument of Asian policy. Considerable attention was paid, too, in the Life article and elsewhere to the remarks that week of America's former Ambassador to Japan, Prof Edwin O. Reischauer. He made them in a television discussion. Prof Reischauer said it was time for America's policy makers to realise we have lost this war in terms of what was our original objective. The objective had been to prove that 'so-called wars of national liberation do not pay'. The speaker had hitherto argued in favour of resisting Communist guerilla infiltration tactics in Asia. He now feels this policy failed because the wrong methods were adopted.

'Hardly less gloomy have been the utterances of such hardheaded academic hawks as Dr Zbigniew Brzezinski, until recently a leading Johnsonian in the State Department's Policy Planning Council. He told the US News and World Report that there would be no 'clearcut victory' in Vietnam. He declared that 'for the rest of the century' America would be involved."