

International Bulletin

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INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE SHARPENS AND DEEPENS

Parallel with the widely publicized struggles, the P.O. workers' work to rule for example, a whole series of small conflicts are beginning. This process will be given an enormous fillip when the one-day strike by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering workers brings 3 million workers into action. Their action will be followed by the miners, railwaymen and other sectors. Even after the shocking betrayal by the leaders of the Civil Servants' Union, the C.S.C.A., this front is by no means quiet. The action of two of the leaders of the C.S.C.A. calling off the work-to-rule missed being censured by the executive of that union by only one vote and a whole series of conflicts are taking place within the union. The executive have refused to extend the term of office of the general secretary and many rank and file protests have been made. The union leadership now talks of the 'postponement' of the work-to-rule. It is difficult for bureaucrats to betray the struggle these days.

The strategy of marxists must be to push these struggles from ones designed to strengthen the social role of the trade union bureaucracy to a general political struggle against the Government. This presupposes that we inject into the struggles a socialist awareness. This is very easy to put down on paper but difficult to carry out in practice. It will not be done from a soap box but through the mass organisations of the working class. It means elaborating within these organisations a programme of action both general and particular, national and local. But first before such a programme will be listened to those struggling must be convinced that the marxists are not just lecturing them. Through the mass organisations we must show those in action that we are serious people interested in helping them in their actual struggles in the way they want us to. We should be to the forefront in collecting funds, pushing various acts of solidarity and seeking to link each struggle. We should do this through our organisations - each ward, young socialist group and trade union branch where we have influence should as an elementary step contact strikers and others in action. The latter should be invited to address meetings and asked what help they want in their endeavours. Parallel with this we should press that all other branches do the same, thus building a basis for insisting that similar steps are taken all levels. These are small and elementary steps but essential ones if we are to go forward to higher things.

KEY PIT WORKERS PLAN TO STRIKE

Key colliery craftsmen - mechanics and electricians - working underground in highly mechanised pits plan to bring the Yorkshire coalfield to a standstill for a week to press their claims for higher pay. A spokesman for the craftsmen said that the strike would focus attention on the need for increased craft representation in the N.U.M. as well as furthering their demand for a shift payment of 70/- to bring their earnings into line with outside industry.

DERBYSHIRE MINERS BACK MILITANT ACTION CALL

As previously reported in the Bulletin, Derbyshire miners have been having a series of meetings to discuss what action should be taken to back their wage claims. At all the meetings rank and file speakers assured the area leaders that the 32,000 miners are ready to take immediate industrial action to back their demands. At Alfreton only two hands were raised against a resolution calling for the national executive to take a strike ballot for a national stoppage if the coal board's offer was unsatisfactory (which it was).

JUTE WORKERS PRESS FOR ALL-OUT STRIKE

The one-day-a-week strike of the jute workers for more pay (the male rate is just over £7.10), due to start on February 7th, may become an all-out strike. Two of the smaller unions involved - the Dyers and Bleachers and the Power Loom workers - say that weekly strike action is too mild. The leaders of the biggest union concerned - the Jute and Flax Workers - have been won over to this point of view and are discussing the question. The strike will effect 12,000 workers mainly in the Dundee area.

Horsham Labour Party fights back

The Horsham Labour Party has sent a circular letter to all local Labour Parties throughout the country describing the refusal of the National Executive to endorse Ernie Roberts as candidate for Horsham as 'intolerable.' The letter is signed by the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and maintains that Ernie Roberts was chosen after the proper procedure had been carried out. It also says that they have been informed by the National Agent that the Executive 'is not required, under the constitution, to give any reason for its refusal of endorsement.' The letter ends by saying that it upholds the right of constituency parties to select their own candidates. Maximum support should be given to the Horsham Labour Party in its campaign which could very well become the spearhead of the fight for democracy in the Labour Party.

Lenton Labour Party opposes Morgan Phillips plan

At its last meeting, the A.G.M., the Lenton ward Labour Party passed a resolution opposing any attempt to interfere with the present system of having an annual Labour Party conference. It is of the opinion that such alteration would strike at the basis of Labour Party democracy. Comrades will remember that in an interview with the Observer, some weeks ago, Morgan Phillips pioneered the idea of replacing the annual conference with a biennial one. The resolution is to go to South Nottingham constituency Labour Party.

Central Nottingham Young Socialists for Labour Party democracy

At its last meeting the Central Nottingham Young Socialists adopted in principle a resolution for the annual conference of the Young Socialists calling for more democracy in relation to the approval of Parliamentary candidates. The exact text is to be formulated at its next meeting.

The Tribune article on the adoption of Price Jones and the rejection of Denis Hobden is to be duplicated and circulated.

ECONOMIC NOTES

Steel production down by 21 per cent

Figures released by the Iron and Steel Board reveal that production of steel in December, 1961 was no less than 21% down on the figure for December, 1960. Total steel production for 1961 was 9% down on that for 1960. More significantly, average utilisation of steel capacity was only 74½% in the fourth quarter of 1961 as against 94.8% for 1960. Low capacity working makes for higher prices so we get the paradox of pressure for price increase at a time when demand is going down. Actual consumption of steel has declined very little what has been happening is that firms have been using their stocks up. This cannot go on indefinitely so if no other factor intervenes production will level up. On the other hand the export market is expected to be much more competitive this year (export of steel was at a record of 4.2 million tons last year or nearly 20% of total production)

Unemployment increases in Australia

Unemployment at the end of December, last year reached a post-war record of 116,000 or 2.8% of labour force. The newly elected Government faced with this problem alongside a tiny majority is expected to re-introduce import controls to 'protect' home industry. This in turn will mainly hit British exports.

Profits up in 1961

Profits of nearly 2,000 manufacturing companies reporting their results in 1961 showed an average increase of over 7%. Their dividends rose by 12½%. Those industries which are more heavily monopolised showed far greater increase than average. The 1847 manufacturing companies tabulated in the Financial Times profits index made an overall profit of more than £2,000 million, an increase of £136 million on the year. The Tobacco industry increased its profits by 10.5%, chemicals by 9.5%, Iron and Steel by 21% and Finance, land and property by 11.5%

British reserves too dependent on short-term funds - Sir Harold Yarrow

In his annual statement as Chairman of Clydesdale and North of Scotland Bank, Sir Harold Yarrow said that the recent improvement in Britain's reserves owed "too much for comfort" to the attraction of short-term funds through a high interest rate. "These funds are notoriously volatile, and the level of the nation's reserveswill...be at the mercy of every rumour in the market place"

THE COMMUNIST PARTY HOLDS A MEETING ON THE COLOUR BAR

Two of our comrades decided to attend a ^{C.P.} meeting, advertised in the local press and the Daily Worker, opposing the Government's colour bar Bill. The meeting, held on the Wednesday 10th January at a school in an area with a very big concentration of West Indians, was to be addressed by John Peck, the East Midlands Organiser of the Communist Party.

Our comrades arrived at the exact time the meeting was due to begin - 7.30 - and the first to enter, a West Indian, got a big welcome from John Peck. However, when the second comrade entered the atmosphere changed and so did John Peck's face. Our comrades sat down and surveyed the room. Apart from John Peck and one C.P.er, who appeared to be the local secretary of the C.P., there was no one else at all. The ^{C.P.} comrades had done a lot of work, we had already noticed as we went through the school buildings that they had chalked arrows and notices, "Meeting this way" and stuck up leaflets along the route. Around the room there were various posters - "Oppose West German Militarism", "For a Britain Free and Independent", etc.

We had only been in the room a few minutes when John Peck cleared his throat and said, "I know its public meeting, but we could have done without you." to our comrades. Seeing that they provided 100% of the audience it is difficult to see how Peck could have done without them but they ignored the remark. After buying some literature from the other C.P. comrade who by no means adopted the same attitude as John Peck, our comrades sat and waited. They heard John Peck explaining to the comrade (behind the blackboard) that they are TROTSKYITES. The two C.P. comrades then went on to debate why no one had turned up. It appeared that hundreds of leaflets had been put out in addition to the adverts in the press. Despite all the work they had done, however, we sat and waited and ^{at} 8.00, no one else having turned up it was decided to pack the meeting up.

The comrades said good night as they left but only the rank and file C.P. member replied. And so ended a very interesting experience. Certain things emerge however. Firstly, despite all the revelations of the 22nd Congress, the C.P. bureaucrats haven't dropped their fanatical hatred of our movement. Indeed it is quite possible that hate us all the more because we have been vindicated and they now find us all the more formidable. Secondly, in Nottingham at least, despite the claims of the C.P. leadership to be gaining members, etc. morale must be low. To call a public meeting and not even get one's member there, this is an extraordinary thing. Our comrades know of C.P. members who live round the corner from where the meeting was held and yet they didn't bother to attend. It is difficult to believe that this is a Nottingham phenomena only. Thirdly, despite the fact that large numbers of West Indians living in the area knew about the meeting they didn't come - not even one. All in all the whole affair underlined the impotence of the British C.P. despite the successes of the workers' states.

NOTTINGHAM C.N.D. ACTIVITIES

"The Day the Earth Caught Fire", which is about a disastrous situation caused by the simultaneous explosion of two H.Bombs, is to be shown in Nottingham soon. The local C.N.D. is to distribute leaflets outside the cinema each day it is showing. 5,000 special leaflets have been ordered and arrangements are well in hand for their distribution. On January 23rd a meeting is being held on "The Politics of Civil Defence" and on February 20th, one on "The effects of C.N.D. Internationally. Organisation is being tightened and a questionnaire has gone to each supporter asking what activities they will undertake, what Unions and political parties they belong to, etc. An early start is to be made in the preparations for this year's Aldermaston march. The latter will be from Aldermaston to London this time; it is hoped to have several bus loads from Nottingham.

YOUTH DEMONSTRATION IN DERBY

The debate continues about the tactics of Civil Disobedience adopted by the Committee of 100 but one thing is certain, these methods of struggle have entered into the tradition of the British people, particularly the youth. A recent example of this is a case in Derby. There, on January 17th, over 100 teenagers, carrying banners and candles, tried to stop a public meeting. They lay in the road at the entrance to Darwin Secondary Modern School in Breadsall Hilltop Estate, and for two hours tried to stop cars and people going in. The meeting was called to discuss the building of a new club on the estate. The teenagers claim that this is unfair to their club, St. Phillip's Youth Club, especially as the new club will be subsidized by the N.A.B.C.. Eventually the police had to be called to disperse the teenagers, who then elected a delegation of 12 to represent them at the meeting.

One of the Communist Party's most important intellectuals, Maurice Dobb has written a letter to Labour Monthly, which was published in the January issue, in which he criticises Palme Dutt's assessment of the 22nd Congress. Dobb is a long-time Party member and is the author of many studies of political economy and numerous articles in the Communist Party press. There has been little overt effect on the British Communist Party by the events of the 22nd Congress and the Sino-Russian dispute, but it seems likely that letter is a symptom of a deep crisis, which as it comes to the surface may not be so spectacular as the 1956-1957 Communist Party crisis but will have greater long-term effect. The letter reads:

"May a wee David make so bold as to toss a pebble in the direction of Goliath (though NOT with a sling, and certainly not aimed at the temple!)? But there seem to be two respects in which the 'Notes of the Month' for December, in their summing-up of the 22nd Congress, are inadequate to the point of being misleading.

"Firstly, the impression is given (p.550 esp.) that the fact that 'emergency powers were distorted and misused' (a mild enough phrase to apply to the crimes of the Beria-regime) was due to personal quirks of Stalin's character and to the 'unique authority' that he came to enjoy from his 'outstanding ability and record of achievement'; while there is no mention of the fact that Stalin made major political errors (from 1934 onwards) or of what these errors were. This omission would be less surprising in a commentary that made no pretence of being a high-powered political summing-up. As has been frequently emphasised since the 20th Congress, Stalin's major political error in this context from which so much else flowed, was his theory that the class struggle became intensified in the degree to which socialism was being constructed. It was this which was used to justify the intensified use (instead of relaxation) of emergency powers after 1934. To appreciate this is, surely, essential ABC for any full political understanding of what occurred? As we now know, there were other political errors as well: for example in agriculture and also in the realm of theory where (as described by Ilyichov at the 22nd Congress) the notion of a single 'God of theory' led to stultification of Marxist theory especially in the social sciences for a whole period. (It was not accidental that for decades we had no works on political economy, philosophy or history of any worthwhile significance - Ilyichov.) Recognition of this latter point could perhaps be credited, however, to the paragraph, 'A Great Revival', on p.552 of 'Notes of the Month' (it was necessary to break through the straitjacket and rigidity derived from the conditions of the preceding period').

"Secondly, a rather curious attempt is made to draw a distinction between regular trial procedure and 'special procedures', and to attribute the injustices exposed ONLY to the latter. One can see that such a distinction might be a comforting one for ourselves if it were valid. But I suggest that the distinction has little or no validity, and if intended as an excuse is too lame to sound convincing to more than a handful. Take, for example, the case of Rudzutak, mentioned by Khrushchov at the 20th Congress. This case was heard before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court, similarly to other trials where the public were admitted; at the trial Rudzutak withdrew the 'confession' he had previously made but was nonetheless executed within less than an hour. The references made by Khrushchov to 'the practice of mass repression' in the 1935-8 period, applied 'first against the Trotskyites, Zinovievites, Bukharinites, long since politically defeated by the Party, and subsequently also against many honest Communists', leave no doubt, I think, that the accusations of CRIMINAL activities (as distinct from political errors) made at the public trials were as faked as those levelled at Rudzutak, Postyshev, Kossier, Mikhe, Krylenko, Bubnov, etc. Otherwise why bracket them all together as part of the same 'practice of mass repression'? (Later, in connection with the same period, there is explicit reference to 'fabricated COURT CASES' in which accused were charged with preparing 'terrorist acts'.)

"These points are emphasised - and I believe are IMPORTANT to emphasise frankly and openly - not just to revive old discussion of 1956-7, but because the 'battle for the new against the old' (of which the 'Notes of the Month' go on to speak) is NOT a matter concern only to the Soviet Union; and a realistic understanding of the past period is an essential part of such a battle. As R.P.D. well says, "the clearing of the old is the condition for the advance of the new'. (all emphasis as per original: Ed.)

HOSPITAL WAITING SCANDAL

Figures given by the Registrar General in his latest report show that 9% of all cancer cases have to wait over a month before admission to hospital, the figure for T.B is 8%, for breast cancer 10%. 10% of hernia cases have to wait over 6 months and another 40% over one month. The figures for cataract are 10% and 50% respectively. Only 30% suffering from breast cancer are admitted immediately.

We have to hand the latest issue of Free Algeria, the December 1961/January 1962 number, It is a very interesting and informative issue as well it might be seeing that John Baird, M.P. ^{and his wife} has just returned from North Africa where they have seen, at first hand, many things. Of note are articles on the Paris pogroms in October (a first hand account by a conscript soldier), impressions of a journey through Latin America by Benkeheda, the president of the C.P.R.A., anyone who wants to learn something of his political ideas should read this and an article by Mrs. Baird on the plight of Algerian children.

Many of the readers of the International Bulletin already read and sell Free Algeria, we would urge any who don't already to get copies in the future. In particular it is important that organisations of the labour movement should place orders. An assistant editor has been appointed, she is: Gertrude Elias, 8/29 Abercorn Place, London N.W. 8.

John Baird will be reporting on his recent trip to North Africa at the following meetings and schools:

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| Sunday, 21st January | South Nottingham Federation of Young Socialists school starting 10.30 at Co-op Education Centre, Heathcote St. |
| Thursday, 25th, January | Iraqi Students' Society, Panton St. London S.W. 1. at 7.30 p.m. |
| Friday, 2nd February | Jacari Society, Oxford University at 8.15pm |
| Monday, 12th February | Arab Students' Society, Sheffield University at 12.30 p.m. |
| Monday, 19th February | Afro-Asian Society, Leeds University (details locally) |

He has already spoken at the M.C.F. and at the Arab Students' Society Liverpool University, and would no doubt be prepared to speak at other organisations if the comrades can make the arrangements.

SOCIALIST REVIEW AND THE CONGO

by T.M.

A recent article in Socialist Review, January 1962, by its editor, Alisdair MacIntyre is a perfect example of the petty bourgeois nature of the State capitalist tendency. MacIntyre, in the conclusion to his article, strongly supports UNO intervention in the Congo. Some time your correspondent protested to the journal about a discussion article which had supported UNO intervention in the Congo and the Editorial Board condemned the article in question. However, now Alisdair MacIntyre, one of the leading lights of that tendency is now seriously putting forward this idea (which is incidentally much in vogue among centrists)

He does this by arguing that UNO supports a unitary state and a unitary state would be useful to the African socialist movement. He denies the existence of a Congo proletariat (true it is small, but there are so I am told miners in the Katanga region.) It is true that an effective leadership has not asserted itself, but socialists do not for that reason support an agency of imperialism. UNO was indirectly responsible for the death of Lumumba, and is interested in neutralising Gizenga - however unsatisfactory he is - and any possible aid from the workers states. MacIntyre cannot grasp the nature of the permanent revolution and would accept a unitary bourgeois government in the Congo, largely dependent on America. It is no coincidence that Adoula is meeting Kennedy.

MacIntyre's views are in line with the "critical" support given by the journal International Socialism to the Common Market. They add up to this - how to give support to imperialism without actually saying so.

COMMUNIST PARTY SUPPORTS NKRUMAH'S SUPPRESSION OF TRADE UNIONISTS

In the January issue of Labour Monthly, a Communist Party controlled journal edited by Palme Dutt, Kay Beauchamp, one the Communist Party's experts on African affairs writes:

"..The problems arising from the budget and the strikes were largely due to this inexperience and the lack of socialist understanding, both among the leaders and the people.....internal and foreign enemies of the government, including the United Party, which has always been a reactionary opposition, were able to fan the discontent of the workers, market women and farmers who were not convinced of the need for sacrifice.." These arguments are the same lines as those which explain all strikes in Britain as being due to 'Moscow inspired agitators' and cover up support for Nkrumah's actions of imprisoning trade unionists without trial and dissolving trade union branches.

The following article is reproduced from Colonial Freedom News, the journal of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, firstly because the facts are hardly known at all in this country, and secondly the attitude of British imperialism towards Oman is a good indication of the real face of British imperialism when it does not have to manoeuvre.

"The war in Oman began in 1954, the same year as Algeria launched her war of independence, and the Omanis throughout these seven years have displayed a resoluteness in defending their country, very similar to that shown by the Algerians. And yet, outside the confines of the Arab world, virtually nothing is known of the rights and wrongs of the question. In this country, the Government and most sections of the press have maintained a conspiracy of silence and have encouraged the spreading of many misconceptions.

"For example, British Government spokesmen, in particular Mr. Selwyn Lloyd and Mr. Edward Heath, have persistently maintained that Oman is a dependency of Muscat, and that Britain is fulfilling her obligations of alliance with the Sultan of Muscat by helping him against an internal rebellion. In fact Oman has for 1,200 years been an independent state, electing her own rulers, and is the only democracy in the Arabian peninsula. In 1920, after the Omanis had defeated one of the Sultan's many attempts to conquer them, the treaty of Sib was signed, recognising the two states as separate entities and pledging them to non-interference in each other's affairs. Capt. Eccles, the British commander of the Muscat forces, stated in 1927, that "the Sultan in reality has authority only in Muscat and a stretch of coast to the north and south, which can be intimidated by British gun-boats."

"A closer examination of history and of Mr. Lloyd's speeches shows that in fact Britain has no obligation to offer military aid to the Sultan. Let us examine the reasons for British participation with Muscat in a military adventure to conquer the independent state of Oman. In 1954, the Sultan of Muscat granted a concession for a British company to drill for oil on Omani territory outside his jurisdiction. The refusal of the Imam of Oman to recognise this concession, and the steps which he took to defend his country's independence constituted the "act of rebellion", by which the British Government justified the invasion.

"The military operations have continued unabated until now, with continuous and merciless bombing of civilian targets by the Royal Air Force. 17 villages in the Jebel Akhdar region have been obliterated and the five main cities of Oman almost destroyed. The British Government repeatedly claims that the "rebellion" has been suppressed, but your correspondent, on a tour of the Persian Gulf recently, found strong evidence that Omanis are holding out.

"There are far more tragic human issues than mere power politics involved in the issue, for the struggle on the battlefields of Oman is between the forces of democracy and human dignity, and those of mediaeval tyranny. The Sultan of Muscat, whom the Conservative leaders are pleased to call their staunch friend is one of history's cruellest slave owners. He possesses a harem of some 80 slave girls, and a male slave labour force of up to 300 men, according to a reliable source. The punishments and tortures used by the Sultan against his slaves have been described to your correspondent not only by Omani exiles but also by a British Army Officer in the Muscat forces.

"The record of the Imam of Oman is very different. From the time of his election in 1954 he made strenuous efforts to stamp out the slave trade in South Arabia, which is one reason for the Sultan's great hatred of him. When one remembers that Britain first intervened in the Gulf area to combat the slave trade, the hypocrisy of the Government and its betrayal of Britain's ideals becomes clear. In an interview with your correspondent the Imam affirmed his determination to continue working for the guarantee of his people's right to independence and for the eradication of the slave trade. He spoke of the heavy casualties Oman has suffered, but of their continued resistance. He expressed hope that his country would live at peace with Britain - the true Britain, which practised the democracy that she preached. His moderation and lack of bitterness permeated all that he said.

"...500 Omanis are imprisoned by the Sultan without trial in primitive and crowded dungeons. The Sultan has refused all aid from the Red Cross to Omani wounded, an almost unparalleled action. Britain must compel him to change his policy with regard to these matters, as well as slavery. And the world must be shown that the British nation has higher standards of conduct than those shown by the Conservative leaders in this affair." (very slightly shortened: Editor)