

THE NEWSLETTER

Edited by Peter Fryer, 180 Clapham High St, London, SW4. Subscription 10s for 12 issues, post free.

a service to socialists

Vol. 1, No. 7

June 22, 1957

TROUBLE IS BREWING ONCE MORE ON THE DOCKS

By our Industrial Correspondent

A SERIOUS CRISIS is once again threatening Britain's Dockland. Increasing mechanization and new methods of shipping goods are being used by the employers, not to improve conditions, but to impose reductions in piecework rates.

The dock unions are unprepared to meet this attack on their members' working conditions.

It is estimated that on Merseyside there are now between 4,000 and 5,000 non-unionists working on the docks, together with at least 8,000 well in arrears.

Much of the responsibility for this state of affairs rests on the shoulders of the Trades Union Congress.

At the Brighton Congress last year delegates from the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers (the 'blue' union) proposed a resolution asking the TUC to arrange meetings between themselves and the Transport and General Workers' Union (the 'white' union) to organize a united campaign to clear up non-unionism in the ports. But 'next business' was carried and this motion was never discussed.

THE TUC'S DEMAND: WITHDRAW YOUR OFFICIALS

Since the reinstatement of the northern dockers into the NASD as a result of their successful legal action in March 1956 things have been at a standstill.

The TUC has asked the NASD to withdraw its officials from the north and allow the TGWU to service its members.

Spokesmen for the NASD point out that such a step would be impossible. It would leave their small union open to further legal action; already their funds are at rock bottom because of the heavy costs of last year's action.

Meanwhile the Tory Government sits on the fence in a situation which is obviously very much in the employers' favour.

Although the NASD has appealed to the Ministry of Labour to grant it recognition in the operation of the National Dock Labour Scheme in the north, nothing has been done.

MILITANTS ARE VICTIMIZED MONTH AFTER MONTH

Clearly the Tories, the TUC and the TGWU are determined to drive the NASD out of the northern ports—if they can. Hardly a month goes by without a case of flagrant victimization of militants, and, perhaps not accidentally, these are in the main members of the NASD.

This example of would-be monopoly unionism supported by the State is now leading to a dangerous situation. The men will not go back to the TGWU. They want to join the union of their choice, which is the NASD.

Many portworkers are once again discussing what action they can take to tackle this situation. If they are to meet the employers' attacks, they say, militancy and trade unionism must be strengthened.

There has been trouble before on this question. If there is further trouble, it should be made clear in advance where the real responsibility lies.

OXFORD STREET: A BUSMAN SPEAKS OUT

THE bus crash in Oxford Street has directed public attention to the conditions under which London's bus drivers serve the public.

What is a bus, anyway? No, I'm not joking. This is a useful question to ask if we are to find out exactly what responsibility is borne by the men—many of them in their sixties—who drive these vehicles.

A bus is in fact a moving glass-house, 27 feet 6 inches long, 8 feet wide and 14 feet 6 inches high. When it is full it contains 61 human beings, and it weighs anything up to 14 tons.

This is the vehicle a London bus driver must move around London for 7 hours 40 minutes each day—through narrow streets often choked with parked vehicles and traffic, and with a bell continually ringing in his ear.

What gets on bus drivers' nerves more than anything—more than the question of wages, even—is the question of running time. This is a key issue right through the fleet.

Obviously buses have to run to time. But for many years past London Transport have operated a systematic speed-up policy, reducing the running-time below that which enables a driver to get through comfortably on schedule.

Take the 31 route, which runs from Chelsea to Camden Town, a distance of seven and a half miles.

On this route there are no fewer than 43 stops, 26 of them compulsory stops, and 20 sets of traffic lights. If you're caught at only half of these traffic lights you're already ten minutes late!

Now the maximum running time on this route at peak hours is 44 minutes, which works out at an average of one minute to get to each stop, load and unload.

No wonder the conductor shouts out 'Hurry along please' to his passengers—950 of them in an average day's work on the 31 route.

(continued on back page)

NO CP NATIONAL CONGRESS NEXT YEAR?

By a Member of the Kent District Committee

AFTER the Hammersmith Congress of the Communist Party many of us said that the Executive Committee would now try to postpone the 1958 National Congress to 1959. We have been proved correct.

At the Kent District Committee meeting a letter from the national organizer was read, beginning: 'Some comrades believe the next Congress should be in 1959. What does your committee think?'

The district secretary recommended 1959. What chance did the minority have? One comrade pointed out that the 1957 Congress had not discussed rules amendments, which had been promised for 1958.

Another pointed out that—rightly or wrongly—it would be said that this is all part of the EC's manoeuvring to keep the minority unheard. A third warned that there would be requests for a 1958 special conference.

Suggestions that branches should be consulted were ignored because the answer had to be in to the Centre in time for the July EC meeting.

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CHINA

BUREAUCRACY CRITICIZED IN CHINA

MORE than a thousand intellectuals attended a forum summoned by the Communist Party leadership in Shanghai, at which the local chairman of the Democratic League attacked the rigid central control in educational, dramatic, publishing and medical matters.

The concentration of authority, he said, had become immense and complicated.

An old research scientist complained of party members' arrogance and extravagance. When he visited the seaport of Tsingtao, he said, he found all the villas occupied by high party officials.

Each of them had three servants who addressed them as 'Venerable master' or 'Great man'.

The editor-in-chief of a party newspaper complained that he had at one time been under the direction of his assistant, a party member, 'whose only talent was to change readable articles into unreadable ones'.

Many non-party members complained of being deprived of authority in their jobs.

Unable to hide their anger

At similar forums in the People's Bank employees have said that though they had hitherto lacked the courage to express their anger over repressions, 'now the people have lost the fear of vengeance and are unable to hide the anger in their hearts'.

Experts dealing with foreign markets for thirty years were without jobs, it was said, while 'newcomers who came from the villages only seven years ago pretend they know everything'.

In a speech to the People's Political Consultative Council, Dr. Lo Lung-chi, a leader of the Democratic League and a Minister under the State Council, spoke of:

Philosophers set to work writing library catalogues;

Lawyers working as book-keepers in State organizations;

Chemists and engineering students teaching history or languages in middle schools;

Returned students from Britain earning a living as drawers of carts; and

Graduates from the USA running cigarette stalls.

CEYLON

TWO LETTERS TO THE DAILY WORKER

The following letter was sent to the Daily Worker on June 16 as a comment on the article 'Focus on Ceylon', which appeared that day:

JOHN GRITTEN's article is one mass of inaccuracies. Whatever the interpretation one may give to them, the facts at least should be stated accurately.

For example, as regards Mr. Bandaranaike and his election pledges regarding the bases.

Mr. Bandaranaike has not kept his pledges. On the contrary he is already negotiating with the British Government to lease Trincomalee to them for five years. His excuse is that if he does not, there will be 10,000 unemployed at Trincomalee.

Next, as regards the parties. Your correspondent by listing the United National Party first among the opposition parties gives the impression that it is the largest party in opposition.

He omits to mention that the Lanka Samasamaja Party (there is no such thing as a Nava Lanka Samasamaja Party) is the largest in opposition and that one of its members is Leader of the Opposition.

Secondly, he is grossly inaccurate as to the language policy of the different parties. At present it is the LSSP which demands parity of status for Sinhalese (not pronounced Singalese, but as it is spelt) and Tamil.

The Communist Party also supported this policy right up to

the beginning of this year when they did an about turn and supported the government policy of 'Sinhalese only'.

This coincided, strangely enough, with the visit of Premier Chou En-lai to Ceylon.

The UNP is also committed to the policy of 'Sinhalese only' as decided by its congress held some time before the last election.

The Federal Party, as their name implies, are for a federal system of government with a Tamil state in the north of the island. Quite different, surely, from 'parity of status'.

He does not understand 'parity of status'

I am sorry for John Gritten that he does not understand what is meant by 'parity of status'. It means simply that the two languages will have an equal status (as, e.g., in Switzerland) but that they will be used where such use is necessary.

Although Tamils are in a majority in the north, thousands live and work in other parts of the country, forming a large part of the administrative apparatus.

Gritten also ignores the fact that about 600,000 plantation workers live in the south-east and central parts. They are of Indian origin, and their language is Tamil. It is a fine communist who ignores the proletarian backbone of a country!

If John Gritten wishes to make out a case for the Communist Party policy of support for a government which has so far kept only one of its election promises (on language) let him do so at least on the basis of an accurate reporting of facts. Articles such as his only show a contempt for the readers of the Daily Worker.

Kamini Meedeniya,
London, S.W.12.



The following letter was sent to the Daily Worker on June 13:

JOHN GRITTEN's analogy between the position of the Welsh in Britain and that of the Tamils in Ceylon is misleading.

It is not true that the Tamils live 'mainly in the north'; two-thirds of them live not in the Northern Province but in other parts of the country.

As workers on the plantations they are very widespread in Ceylon. There is a substantial Tamil community in Colombo itself. Hence their demand for parity of rights for their language throughout the country.

John Gritten, who has visited Ceylon, of course knows these facts. While appreciating that his task was to discredit the Ceylon Trotskyists by ridiculing their policy, I would urge that the same standards of accuracy and fairness should apply in controversy with the Trotskyists as with any other section of the working-class movement.

If not, why not?

Brian Pearce,
London, N.12.

FRANCE

IT'S REALLY THE LACOSTE GOVERNMENT

From our Paris Correspondent

THE formation of the Bourges-Maunoury government merely means that the war in Algeria is to go on, and that the French people are to go on paying for it.

In fact this is the same government as before, with a few more radicals and a few less socialists: its policy is exactly the same.

It is a government of fear and 'immobilisme'—for it embodies the refusal of most of France's politicians to take the risk of proposing the only sane solution to the Algerian war.

Though the Right, the Centre and the socialists pay lip service to the Bourges-Maunoury Cabinet, it is noticeable how many politicians refused to take part in it.

Pinay, Reynaud, Defferre, Mitterrand have kept their hands free so as to be able to denounce Bourges-Maunoury when the time comes.

In reality this is the government of the 'socialist' Robert

Lacoste. Minister Resident in Algeria. for it symbolizes the intention of the French capitalists to carry on the senseless repression in Algeria with still more 'determination'.

WHO SAID IT?

'First, to stop the lies; and not to repeat the errors of Indochina, Tunisia and Morocco.

'To protect the population, certainly, but to put an end to stupid and blind repression.

'To seek authentic representatives of the Algerians and no longer to leave to the administration the task of finding puppets to be "elected" on the morrow...'

(Guy Mollet, writing in L'Express, December 19, 1955, during the campaign preceding the French General Election of January 2, 1956.)

USA

500 AT FIRST US FORUM MEETING

From our New York Correspondent

OVER five hundred New York citizens attended the first public meeting of the newly organized American Forum—for Socialist Education.

There was vigorous applause for the Forum's chairman, the Rev. A. J. Muste, when he said the organization would not retreat before the 'undemocratic and evil' attack of the witch-hunters.

LETTERS Two More Views on the Labour Party

WHY WE SHOULD JOIN

MAY I ADD my voice to those who have expressed their gratitude for the appearance of The Newsletter, and the way in which news from all over the world, which we do not obtain anywhere else, is given to us?

While exposing the very tragic mistakes which the present Communist Party is making through its rigid dogmatism, The Newsletter must never resort to personal invective.*

The balance of articles is very good. I hope it will be possible to expand The Newsletter considerably.

Norman Tennant has answered Mary Vernon's distressed scepticism about the value of joining, or rejoining, the Labour Party. Many socialists joined the Communist Party because they were disillusioned about the corrupt Right-wing leadership of that party.

The argument ran something like this: 'The Communist Party stands for real socialism and shows the way to it. Therefore the mass of the organized workers must ultimately recognize the need for a Marxist leadership of the Labour Party.'

Many of us have now had to recognize that the Communist Party does not stand for what it professes to stand for and is therefore not showing the way because it is not trusted.

We should be inside, helping the Left

Since the Communist Party does not represent the organized workers in Britain it seems to me that Norman Tennant is right in saying that we should not ignore the Left-wing movement in the Labour Party, but that we should be inside the party, helping the Left-wing section to mobilize the mass of workers to replace the careerist Right-wing leadership by an honest socialist one.

This is not to say that we ignore the Right-wing leadership or its danger.

R. Grange is quite wrong in my opinion in asking for a new 'revolutionary' party. To try to set one up would be to

*The report on the ETU conference would have been much better if it had avoided such phrases as 'rout' of the 'Stalinists', ETU 'bosses'.

Dr. Stringfellow Barr said that although he was not a socialist he wanted to help build American Forum because 'I am sick of the political apathy in the country that makes it dangerous to even ask questions, no less search for answers'.

From the British socialist forum movement came a warm letter of greetings which declared: 'Now more than ever we need to forge links between all socialists, both nationally and internationally.' The message also expressed admiration at 'your courage in the face of persecution'.

The Socialist Workers' Party (Trotskyist) representative Farrell Dobbs said his party defended unconditionally the right of the US Communist Party to participate in the Forum.

While he did not consider the Communist Party's programme a contribution to a socialist solution, the collective process of discussing all points of view could advance the socialist movement as a whole.

US SCIENTIST WARNS OF TEST PERILS

From our New York Correspondent

According to University of Minnesota scientist Dr. William O. Caster the US Midwest is one of the most radioactive areas in the world.

'About 1955,' he said, 'according to my calculations, this area reached about ten per cent of the maximum safe strontium 90 concentration.

'In the next ten or fifteen years we will reach the maximum value compatible with public health and welfare, even without further bomb testing.

'After the Nevada bomb tests the wind blows from west to east, and the Midwest is the first area of reasonable rainfall you hit. The strontium is washed out of the atmosphere, gets in our soil and then gets in all foodstuffs and water.'

create a new small faction which would only help to increase the disunity within the broad Labour movement.

Time, at present, is not on our side. H-bombs are no longer a threat to humanity—they have already begun to destroy us. I think it is the duty of all socialists to be within the Labour Party, which alone can mobilize the working class to action.

We do need, however, centres of discussion where all socialist opinion can find expression in speech and writing. Only by constant debate and discussion can basic principles be established and confirmed by the test of reality.

The forums and The New Reasoner seem to be, at present, the best organs we have at our disposal to thrash out these principles.

They offer a common meeting-ground for all socialist viewpoints, particularly if we can persuade Labour Party members to join them.

Our socialist forums must become discussion centres for active trade unionists. How best can we achieve this end?

Beatrix Tudor-Hart,
London, N.2.

FIGHTING WITH THE ORGANIZED WORKERS

MARY VERNON's questions about the Labour Party must be echoed by many who, like myself, have recently left the Communist Party.

Many, indeed, are so bewildered that they have given up all political activities. I think this is a tragic mistake.

Because the communist leaders have lied about many things, it does not follow that they have lied about everything. There really is a great and urgent struggle on, against the hydrogen bomb. (And how much better we can fight, once we are free to denounce the Soviet H-bomb tests!)

There really is a Tory Government whose activities are a menace to the whole British people, and which will refuse to get out unless we push hard.

And there really is a need for good relations with the Soviet Union, not because everything the Soviet Union does is right, but because that's the only condition on which the human race can stay alive.

Now, in what organization can these necessary struggles be carried on? R. Grange wants 'a really democratic revolutionary party linked to the existing Labour movement'. In other words he'll form his Marxist Party, and then try to get affiliation with the Labour Party. Isn't this a rather tedious way round? Wouldn't it be simpler to join the Labour Party right away?

This is what I've done, I am not so self-confident as Norman Tennant, and I don't claim I am going to 'provide leadership'.

What has my leadership been worth?

What's my leadership been worth to the Labour movement, in the past ten years? Those who have merely talked may feel pleased with themselves; but I've written, and I've got my cuttings to remind me of what I thought, and said. I go hot all over when I read some of them.

The pompous way I've rebuked people who knew far more about the Soviet Union than I did! My airy dismissals of liberal arguments about free speech! My assured refutations of 'lies' which have turned out to be perfectly true!

No, I'm not going into the Labour Party as part of an organized fraction, telling people what they ought to think. My aim is simply to join in this great popular movement—the movement for staying alive, in the first place; and, in the second place, to make our children's lives better than our own.

It's true things would be harder for me, if my local Labour Party weren't a lively, progressive one, prepared to extend a very friendly hand to all ex-communists, and if the local Labour candidate weren't a vigorous campaigner against the H-bomb.

But if your candidate is a stinker, if your local Labour Party is stuck in the mud, haven't you all the more cause to join it?

Fighting for a better leadership in the Labour Party may seem just as hard as fighting for a better leadership in the Communist Party. But there's one important difference—you've got more company. Potentially, in fact, you've got the whole organized working class for company.

Every progressive thing frustrated

Whereas, if you stay in the Communist Party, you are permanently divided from them. You will find every good and progressive thing you do—even the rents fight, for example—frustrated by the suspicions of the people. I used to think these suspicions foolish; I now think them very sensible.

Anyone who reads the report of the Eighth Plenum of the Polish United Workers' Party can follow the record of the so-called communists who thought the best way to spread their beliefs was to rip people's fingernails off.

The potential fingernail-rippers aren't finished yet in Poland, despite Gomulka, and in the British Communist Party they are well in control. Is it any wonder that people would rather let their rents be raised than join in a fight organized by such leaders as these? After all, the Tories offer a fair alternative—pay five bob on the rent, but keep your fingernails.

We're lucky to have a third choice—a Labour Party which, however slow and cumbersome, can be induced to defend the people's immediate interests without demanding the right to set up torture-chambers.

Alison Macleod,
London, N.10.

LONDON BUSMAN (continued from front page)

Other routes are even more difficult, for the 31 shift is rather shorter than the average.

It's well known that the maximum speed permitted for public service vehicles is 30 miles per hour. But it's equally well known that in practice drivers frequently break the law and exceed this limit.

They have to—or they would never keep up to schedule.

It's not surprising, therefore, that accidents are not uncommon. In the past two months, for instance, over 40 per cent of the buses at a South London garage have each month had repairs done to them resulting from accidents.

Yet London Transport go on cutting running times, in a way that is causing us all a lot of concern. Every time they

JOURNAL

A warning to journalists

Czechoslovak journalists have been warned that they must keep strictly to the party line and avoid 'individualistic' ideas.

This warning was sent by the central committee of the Communist Party in a letter to the second congress of Czechoslovak journalists, who were told to give priority to 'ideological purity' and to eschew 'revisionism'.

Party secretary Novotny told the congress that the party rejected the conception of the freedom of the Press, 'because in capitalist countries freedom of the Press means unlimited freedom of lying. . . .'

Reading about this in The Times I remembered the party propagandist from Bratislava whom I met while on holiday at Lake Balaton last August.

Never, never, never

We had no language in common, but one day an English-speaking Czech girl arrived. Through her I asked him why the Czech Press had completely suppressed the famous Togliatti statement which asked if the Soviet Union had not perhaps 'degenerated' to some extent.

The propagandist's face went beetroot-red and he banged his fist on the table. The girl's voice was cool and—I thought—sardonic:

'He says Togliatti's statement was anti-Soviet, and the Czech Press will never, never, never print anything that is anti-Soviet.'

And that was that. It is just as well to have the existence of an intellectual strait-jacket in Czechoslovakia confirmed officially.

Fairy-tales versus harsh facts

The May 1957 issue of the Society for Cultural Relations' Soviet Education Bulletin quotes the following from Kornei Chukovsky's book 'Ot Dvukh do Pyati' ('From Two to Five'):

'The reign of the harsh-facts was short-lived. In Moscow, Leningrad and other towns a host of ardent defenders of fairy-tales sprang up. . . .'

'Years have passed; this wrong [harsh-fact] thinking has disappeared. . . . Articles on the great educational value of fairy-tales appear frequently. . . . No one is suspicious of fairy-tales in real life any more. . . .'

'All this happened some years ago.'

Change of address

Pre-1945: Andrassy Street.

1945: Stalin Street.

October 1956: Street of Hungarian Youth.

June 1957: Street of the People's Republic.

* * *

Pre-1950: Dunapentele.

1950: Sztalinvaros.

1956: Dunapentele.

1957: Sztalinvaros.

bring out a new schedule there is a tendency to introduce some new speed-up.

One device is to increase what we call 'head-ways'—i.e., the distance between vehicles—which means, of course, more passengers per vehicle.

The whole London fleet had a one per cent cut at the end of last year. Now they are drawing up proposals, so we hear, for a further cut.

The only way to reduce the danger of accidents is to stop this nonsense, so that drivers wouldn't have to speed to make up for lost time.

And one other thing: the police should be made to do their job and take action against motorists who park illegally in narrow streets.

That would help ease the strain on drivers, too.