

THE NEWSLETTER

180 Clapham High Street, London, S.W. 4.

Registered at the G.P.O. as a newspaper

Vol. 2, No. 54

Sixpence

May 24, 1958

'LEFT' LEADERS HOLD BACK FRANCE'S WORKERS

From Our Paris Correspondent, SEYMOUR PAPERT

IF General de Gaulle does become dictator of a France whose bourgeoisie has capitulated to its most backward section—the Algerian settlers and brass hats—a heavy share of the responsibility must rest on the leaders of the Socialist Party and Communist Party.

The settlers have won their essential demands: war credits are increased, military service has been lengthened, the military authorities have been given full powers, the 'Committees of Public Safety' are tacitly recognized by the Pflimlin Government.

In such a naked situation there can be no dilly-dallying by the so-called Left parties.

EITHER they say to the workers: 'The farce of the bourgeois republic is exposed. Parliament is the prisoner of the most reactionary elements. The only solution lies with the workers.'

OR they go along with the bourgeois parties.

Both the socialist and communist leaders have chosen the latter course. The socialists have entered the Government; the communist deputies helped Pflimlin by abstaining in the Assembly, and they voted for the emergency powers.

Anyone can be arrested

These emergency powers have already been used to ban ALL public meetings and demonstrations, and they allow the Government to put anybody under arbitrary house arrest.

They will undoubtedly be used against workers' actions, which are bound to come as the Algerian war intensifies and the burden of its cost increases. They will obviously be used against the Algerian nationalist organizations, too.

By not choosing to base their position on workers' action the communist leaders in practice take a stand directly against such action.

They justify their position by the slogan 'Defend the Republic'. But what republic? The emergency powers dissolve all 'republican liberties'.

And defence against whom? The Government has capitulated to the settlers and the generals.

The Right-wing demonstrations in Paris have been tiny, and are treated much more gently by the police than a progressive students' demonstration—where nearly 100 were arrested—and a demonstration by the Communist Party (which took place although it had been officially cancelled and the party organizers did their best to persuade the participants to go home).

Corruption, impotence and bankruptcy

At the very moment when the corruption, impotence and bankruptcy of the bourgeois republic becomes obvious to all the communist leaders have only one slogan—defence of the same republic by giving totalitarian powers to a government whose declared policy is to smash the Algerian people and make the workers pay the bill.

How do the workers react? At a CGT meeting called at the Renault factory before the ban 350 turned up, out of 40,000 workers.

But the workers are not indifferent to the attempt to shift the Government to the Right, to the military coup and de Gaulle's bid for power. What they lack is a leadership that will bring the workers' power to bear against the Right-wing threat.

One aspect of the situation which can become important in the long run is the increased activity now visible around independent Left-wing groups

EX-COMMUNIST LAWRENCE DALY TOPS POLL —WINS COUNTY COUNCIL SEAT

MINERS' delegate Lawrence Daly, independent socialist candidate, topped the poll in the Fife County Council election in Ballingry, winning the seat from the sitting councillor. In a 71 per cent. poll the figures were:

Lawrence Daly (Fife Socialist League)	1,085
Mrs. M. Blair (Labour—the sitting councillor)	525
John Stewart (Communist)	197

In the 1955 election Mrs Blair polled 833 votes and Daly—then standing as Communist Party candidate—polled 764.

'The Labour Party and Communist Party are thunderstruck,' writes Daly of last week's result.

The Communist Party had put out a leaflet claiming that 'the vast majority of the electors who voted for Daly in 1955 voted for the communist candidate—not personally for Lawrence Daly' and calling his attitude 'stupid and unprincipled'.

Their feelings about Hungary

In his election address Daly declared: 'By voting for me, you can tell the local Communist Party exactly how you felt about Hungary; and you can tell the local Labour Party that it's time Labour "leaders" started leading!'

Daly, who is 33, is a workmen's safety inspector at the local Glenraig colliery.

FOOTNOTE: William Gallacher sat as communist MP for West Fife from 1935 to 1950.

CAWU BRANCH ACTS ON MELLORS CASE

London City and Central General branch of the Clerical and Administrative Workers' Union has unanimously passed a resolution calling on the CAWU executive to withdraw all union labour from the offices of the Amalgamated Engineering Union until Joan Mellors is reinstated.

After 19½ years' work for the AEU's Manchester district, Joan Mellors was sacked for writing a letter to the Press DEFENDING the union against witch-hunt attacks and signing it in her capacity as vice-chairman of Manchester Trades Council. She was given a week's money in lieu of notice.

Her letter pointed out that the methods of election complained of in the Press witch-hunt had been in force for many years in the AEU without objection to them.

The CAWU members feel that the AEU leaders should defend the rights of trade unionists, not attack them.

LABOUR**WORKERS' CONTROL IN OUR PROGRAMME
WILL ANSWER THE TORY WHISPERS**

By George Cunvin

WHAT is at stake in the London bus strike is not just 10s. 6d. a week, but the whole character of Labour's programme when it enters the next election.

A Tory government is making direct use of the nationalized industries for an assault on the workers' living standards.

The employers and their Government seek to break the trade unions' power:

BY abolishing full employment and creating that reserve army of unemployed which is essential to the normal functioning of capitalism; and

BY using the Government's control over the finances of the nationalized industries to try to call a halt to the demands for wage increases from all sections of organized Labour.

This is the meaning of the Government's policy in both the bus and rail disputes. The capitalist Press is demanding that the pattern of settlement of the railway dispute should be

STEWARDS WANT BASES BLACKED

Vigorous demand that the National Union of Vehicle Builders urge the Trades Union Congress to black all work on rocket sites was heard by over 100 shop steward and branch delegates at the NUVB national shop stewards' conference.

Ken Snelson (Salford) moved an addendum to an executive motion, and C. Mills (Manchester), supporting it, said: 'We must strike against the H-bomb. We must refuse to handle it.'

Conference secretary W. A. G. Roberts, on behalf of the platform, asked delegates to reject the addendum. Yet over one-third of the delegates supported the addendum, including a number of rank-and-file Communist Party members.

applied to other sectors of nationalized industries and—with special emphasis—to the miners.

The workers must agree to dismissals, speed-ups and other 'economies' before they will be granted a microscopic increase in pay.

Once the nationalized industries are lined up behind this manoeuvre of the Government's, privately-owned enterprises will step into line, with the full knowledge that they have the backing of the Government—and perhaps also of the Right-wing trade union leaders.

But Tory policy has a deeper aim. The bosses hope to undermine completely working-class support for further acts of nationalization.

Already the whispering campaigns are under way.

For socialists the lesson is clear: we must impress upon the workers that nationalization without direct participation by the working class in control and management, and without working-class control of the State, can be a trap for them.

Workers' control must be firmly written into the Labour Party's programme, and working committees from the trade unions should now be discussing the best way to make this control effective.

This, linked with a real campaign to end Tory rule, will restore faith in nationalization and prepare the ground for a real advance towards socialism.

SCIENCE**SPUTNIK III HERALDS PLANET ROCKET I**

By Our Scientific Correspondent, J. H. Bradley

THE third Soviet Sputnik is intended to study many questions of importance in space travel, radio communication and the structure of the earth, as well as purely scientific matters.

It gives several fine examples of the modern close relation of seemingly far-apart sciences.

Measurements are being sent back on atmospheric pressure and composition, concentration of charged atoms and molecules (ions), electric charge on the Sputnik, the earth's electric field, the earth's magnetic field, particles from the sun, the primary cosmic rays, photons (light) and heavy nuclear particles, the temperatures inside and outside the Sputnik, numbers of micrometeors, and, most important, the trajectory it is following.

Measurements on the earth's magnetic field can help settle arguments about the structure of the centre of the earth—a matter of great importance in theoretical and practical geology and in the detection of surface and underground nuclear explosions.

The composition of the high atmosphere will help show how fast light gases (hydrogen, water and helium, chiefly) are lost from the earth into space, about which there is great uncertainty.

Hot gas or cold lumps?

This is of considerable significance in deciding whether the earth started as a hot gas or a collection of cold lumps, which again is important in discussing the possible origins of life on earth.

All the observations on electric and magnetic fields will help improve radio communications on earth, and are essential in thinking about communication with future spaceships.

Radio waves are affected by electrically conducting layers high in the atmosphere (ionosphere), without which they would travel only in straight lines. Some frequencies cannot get away from the earth because of this.

Since there are several such conducting layers, the lower ones hinder studies of the higher ones, which must be known about for space communications.

Cosmic rays are of great importance in assessing the radiation dangers to space travellers, since they have similar effects to radio-activity on earth. Micrometeors—and not-so-micro meteors—could punch a hole and let all the air out of a spaceship.

Photocells pointed at sun

Devices for measuring the orbit—presumably by photocells pointed at the sun or stars, or both—open the way for space navigation, and show a high skill in both electronic computers and automatic control. The necessary equipment cannot be light, and may be a fair part of the weight.

Uncertainty about the orbit was a limiting factor on accuracy in measuring the density of the high atmosphere with Sputniks I and II, as the radio frequencies were best for studies on the ionosphere, and so automatically not the best for measurements on the exact orbit.

There is no reference to automatic recorders, return of instruments to earth (not a very rewarding stunt unless masses of observations are photographed on one film, as in aeroplane tests) or studies on visible and ultra-violet light from the sun.

All this says nothing of remoter scientific uses, only of things important in the next five years. Rockets to the planets may well be less than three years away.

How different is all this peaceful work from frenzied cries for television transmitters for a reconnaissance satellite!

Constant Reader | Black Friday and Red Friday

THE full-employment phase after the first world war was much shorter than this time, but it saw some tremendous struggles by the British workers to make the most of their opportunities.

Greatest of these was the railwaymen's fight in 1919, and it is worth recalling today how they won.

An attempt to bribe the loco-men to leave the rest in the lurch proved a failure. 'Vigilance committees' arose among the National Union of Railwaymen rank and file, and the union secretary, J. H. Thomas, complained that they were breathing down his neck all the time.

Other unions were asked to show active solidarity, and when a general conference of trade unions was convened it was understood that a general strike would be the outcome.

Two days before the conference was due to take place the Government gave in.

W. H. Crook tells us, in his valuable study of international labour history 'The General Strike' (1931), that 'the union executives had experienced greatest difficulty in keeping many other transport groups from joining the railwaymen.'

The boom burst

Towards the end of 1920 the boom burst, and in a few months unemployment rose to a million.

This was the background to 'Black Friday', the day in 1921 when the railway and transport unions refused to come to the aid of the miners, and opened a new period in which lock-outs, wage-cuts and mass dismissals were the dominant themes in industry.

Only towards the middle of 1923, after the trade unions had lost two million members in two years, did the workers, led by the Minority Movement, begin to turn the tide against the employers. The new phase culminated in 'Red Friday' (1925), when the solidarity of all sections with the miners forced the Tory Government to retreat and wiped out the evil memory of 'Black Friday'.

How the splendid promise of 'Red Friday' was dashed in the betrayal of the General Strike less than a year later is another story.

Recall the lessons

Never was it more important than now for the workers to recall the lessons of the years 1919 to 1926, so as to learn from the experiences of that period instead of having to undergo the same setbacks a second time.

We may be sure that the employers and their Government have deeply studied those years and are consciously applying the lessons of history so far as they are concerned.



Summit or struggle?

'ACT now, don't await Summit.' Seeing this headline in the Daily Worker of May 15 gave me quite a shock. Then I noticed the 'strap-line' in smaller type: 'Moscow pleads with Mac.'

The appeal was directed not by the communist paper to the British workers but by the Soviet Government to the British Government, the Daily Worker's role being to applaud and 'rally support'.

Before it had finally emerged that this was the standard Stalinist method in the fight for peace, Tom Wintringham wrote in his useful book 'The Coming World War', published in 1935:

'The essential thing about most of the work of our friends the pacifists . . . is that it consists of an endeavour "to convince the bourgeois State". The essential thing about the work of those who want peace must be the attempt to convince the working class of their power to end the bourgeois State, thereby ending war.'

This passage was omitted (with a number of others) from the 1936 edition. The line of the Communist Party had meanwhile become what it has substantially remained ever since: to substitute for the independent struggle of the working class the organization of pressure on the ruling class to come into alignment with the current schemes of Soviet diplomacy.

Today many pacifists are in practice closer to the Marxist position on war than the Communist Party is!

BRIAN PEARCE

FIDDLING? NOT A BIT OF IT—JUST FAIR SHARES FOR BUILDER JOE

By PAUL SIMON

READERS may remember the builder friend of Joe Smith, the property developer, and how he got a bank overdraft to build the shop [see THE NEWSLETTER, April 26, 1958, pp. 127-8].

Since I may have given the impression that builders have it easy, I ought perhaps to describe the tough struggle Joe Builder had when times weren't so good.

Just after the war Joe Builder Ltd was doing council houses. Under the rules of local government the local authority has to get in tenders for its work from whichever builder wants to quote.

Joe's ever-recurring problem

To save the ratepayers money the local authority is obliged to accept the lowest tender. Under the rules of the capitalist jungle all the local builders capable of undertaking local authority work meet regularly to sort out who is to get what job at what price, and arrange their quotations accordingly,

commonly known as 'fair shares for all'.

Joe Builder got his just and fair proportion of the council work.

When work began, Joe had an ever-recurring problem—money. Money to pay for his materials and money to pay the wages. The problem was pressing for roughly the first month, because after that time he started getting monthly payments from the council equal to about 90 per cent. of the value of the work done.

Joe solved the problem of money to pay for the materials fairly easily—he got them on tick. This was a fairly simple matter to arrange.

In every locality there is a substantial firm of builders' merchants. Originally the idea was that the merchant kept a stock of goods, bought from the manufacturer at a considerable discount and readily available for anyone who wanted them.

The discount paid for his rent, wages and so forth, and provided a just and reasonable profit. Capitalist rationaliza-

tion has smoothed this cumbersome process in the course of years.

Joe is obliged, on the fair shares basis, to order all his bricks, cement etc. through the merchant, although they are all delivered direct from the manufacturer.

The merchant still gets his discounts and, being a generous sort of cove, and delighted with the sheer artistry of this arrangement, he lets Joe have some credit.

Gives him two invoices

He also, incidentally, lets Joe have two invoices, one to show to the council's accountant and one for Joe personally (Note: this is not the definition of the term 'double entry book-keeping').

Joe, of course, reciprocates by doing all his business with this merchant. To say that he has no choice in the matter is of course true—but uncharitable.

On the question of wages, we have to face the fact that Joe actually has to pay them. No scheme has yet been devised to overcome this tedious business, but no doubt one soon will.

On the strength of the council contract he might be able to touch the bank manager, but not necessarily.

For the bulk of the work however, Joe has a certain room for manoeuvre. Some jobs are carried out by sub-contractors nominated by the council's architect. Nearly all the other jobs are carried out by 'labour only' gangs.

This is a very subtle process. The brickwork, plastering, plumbing, electricity and tiling will almost certainly be done by a team of skilled and unskilled men who travel from job to job.

Work themselves to death

Rather than work for a weekly wage, they undertake to do the work for a fixed sum, they providing the labour, Joe the materials. The quicker they work themselves to death, the sooner they get their money.

In this way there is no bother with rates of pay, bonuses, incentives, unions, conditions of work or what have you.

Joe's real headaches are trying to get things past the council's representatives, either the clerk of works, the building surveyor or the architect.

When the job is finished there is the final account to be settled, which for Joe's part consists in exaggerating the cost of any extras incurred in the course of the work, and dismissing as trifling inconsequential any savings.

When the labour only gangs have moved on, when the men he was forced to take on from the Labour Exchange have been sacked, usually with two hours' notice on the Friday, when the scaffolding and equipment have been returned to the hire yard and the tenants are moving in, Joe goes back to the little shed in his yard and has a reckoning-up.

If he has been a good lad, giving service to the community, he will be up on the deal.

Most under-capitalized industry

His profit might be only 3 to 5 per cent. on every £1,000 involved, but he will have turned over every £1,000 three or four times in a year, giving him something like 12 to 15 per cent. or more.

If he has been a bad lad, he will realize he is operating in the most under-capitalized industry in the country. Starting with a shade more than nothing, he will finish with a shade less. More builders go bankrupt every year than any other category.

About a quarter of the total labour force of over a million in the building industry is in firms employing fewer than ten workers each. Excluding one-man firms, over a third are sub-contractors or specialists.

Joe, however, is very definitely on the side of the angels. As his one and only foreman will tell you, he once fell in a bucket of whitewash and came up smelling of—well, you know the story.

LETTERS

GUTHRIE'S ANALYSIS IS SUPERFICIAL

FRIENDS of Poland have had good reason for anxiety and doubts about some of the things that have happened in Poland since October 1956:

The handling of the Lodz strike and of Po Prostu, the recent threat of 'sanctions' by Loga-Sowinski (chairman of the Polish Trades Union Congress) against 'instigators and organizers of unofficial strikes', the political and social instability and insecurity created by the conflicts and contradictions of opposed and interlocking internal and external forces and pressures, the hooliganism, drunkenness and corruption born of disillusionment and the economic difficulties that are a hangover of Stalinism etc.

But socialists and true friends of Poland must not allow their attitude to be distorted by superficial analyses, misunderstandings and sweeping generalizations unsupported by careful documentation.

What precisely does Tony Guthrie mean by saying in The Newsletter on May 3 [p. 135] that the PUWP leadership 'have at last given way to intensive pressure from the Soviet Union' and 'have pulled the Polish party very much into line with the worst form of Soviet dogmatism in recent months' (My emphasis—A.D.)?

If his claim is based on the recent proposals made by Gomulka for the reorganization of workers' self-government in Polish industry, then he ought to look again at what was actually said at the trade union congress (Gomulka's speech is reported in Trybuna Ludu of April 15, Loga-Sowinski's on April 16).

No proposal to 'fuse'

No proposal was made to 'fuse the workers' councils with the management and PUWP committees in each factory'.

The proposal was that workers' councils, trade union committees and party branches in each factory should form themselves into a joint standing conference which would meet quarterly.

The decisions of the conference would be binding on the workers' councils, the 'presidium' of which would become the executive organ of the joint standing conference.

The party and trade union branches would be represented on the 'presidium' of the workers' councils and the factory director also would be a member ex officio (as far as I know this has been the position in the past, in any case).

The formation of new workers' councils is to be encouraged, and Loga-Sowinski pledged the trade unions to work for an increase in manual workers' participation in the councils—at present (1957 figures) only 55 per cent. of the 81,000 members of the 5,600 existing councils are workers.

Finally, both Gomulka and Loga-Sowinski echo accurately and insistently Waclawek's statements about the aims of the workers' councils quoted by Tony Guthrie with approval.

Leeds 8.

Alfred Dressler

[Tony Guthrie will reply to Alfred Dressler's criticisms next week.—Editors.]

CANADIAN READER CONGRATULATES US

I wish to congratulate you on the excellence of your newspaper. The Montreal Press, being staunchly conservative, is very unreliable. The newspapers have not even bothered to mention the possibility of industrial action against the H-bomb in both Germany and Great Britain.

As a result very few people have any idea of what is happening overseas.

Montreal (Quebec)

Charles P. Kinghorn