

International Bulletin

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CLASS 'JUSTICE' IN ACTION

The legal system of any country rests not on eternal principles but evolves over a long period into an instrument for preserving and protecting the existing property relations and their corresponding social, economic and political institutions. Capitalist property relations demand a high degree of 'security', freedom of movement, personal protection, etc., and in the fight to achieve these and against feudal privilege, arbitrariness, etc. the British legal system acquired many 'democratic' features. We should use these features to their fullest and wage a struggle against any encroachment on them. However, the highest principle of British legal system, as of any other, is the preservation of the security of the state. This in turn is most understandable, because the legal system has no meaning at all other than that which the power of the state standing behind it gives to it. Without the authority of the police, the armed forces, the jails, etc. - in a phrase, the apparatus of the state - the legal system would be merely a set of rules on paper.

It is in this context we must see the recent Old Bailey trial of members of the Committee of 100. The savage sentences are not the quirk of the judge or of the 'gravity' of the offence but ^{arise from} Government policy. The Government cannot allow within its boundaries a challenge to the authority of the state and has decided to smash the Committee of 100, maybe not at this stage as an organisation, but by hitting at individuals. That is why it used all its big guns, that is why prosecution was made under an act which would involve a heavy sentence.

But the very viciousness of the sentences can in their turn lay the basis for a campaign for their revision. Some very surprising people signed the order paper of the House of Commons protest against them. Most British people have deep illusions about British justice, political freedom, etc. and we must use these illusions to build the widest campaign. By so doing we will not only be helping the actual campaign but also we will be helping to destroy these illusions. We can teach many people a very simple lesson - that despite the Government's assertion that nuclear weapons are necessary to preserve freedom, the real state of affairs is that freedom will have to be destroyed to preserve nuclear weapons.

We cannot determine the form which the protest movement will take but we must give maximum support and seek to influence it in such a way that the class implications become apparent. We must realise that this is only the start of a process - as British capitalism declines the state will more and more be compelled to be more authoritarian. Concretely, entry into the Common Market means linking up with Germany, for instance, where unofficial strikers can be fined hundreds of pounds. We venture to suggest that British bosses will complain of 'unfair competition' if they have not the same machinery to deal with their 'trouble-makers.'

By working hard on these lines we will, too, earn the respect of the members and supporters of the Committee of 100. We may have differences with these people, especially their attitude towards the Labour Party, but of their sincerity we can have no doubt. More important we must see the way they are moving. It is of tremendous political significance that thousands of people have broken with Parliamentary democracy in Britain. This is the first that this has occurred since since the days of the first world war shop stewards' movement or the pre 1914 war syndicalist movement. This important fact is not by any means always grasped by many on the left.

P.J. Feb. 24th.

YOUNG SOCIALISTS PROTEST AGAINST OLD BAILEY SENTENCES.

Two Nottingham Young Socialist branches were quick off the mark in protesting against the Old Bailey sentences. The Nottingham West and North branches. Both have made their protests widely known and the West resolution was published in the local press. Nottingham's only Labour M.P. Whitlock for North, wrote back to the Young Socialists saying that he had signed the House of Commons protest.

NEW LEFT OFF TO GOOD START IN NOTTINGHAM - DESPITE MANY OBSTACLES

The inaugural meeting of the New Left Club in Nottingham, held jointly with East Midlands Regional Committee of 100, was attended by some fifty people despite a chain of events which almost amounted to a saga. Originally the meeting was to have been held in a small room in a pub but when it was learnt that George Clark was in the region it was decided to move to a bigger meeting place.

It is no easy task to get a meeting place at a day or so's notice all the more when one is booking it in the name of an organisation like the Committee of 100. Numerous places were tried and either were not available or not willing. Eventually, Nottingham's poshest (or poshest but one) hotel the Blackboy agreed to let the organisers have a room. Circulars were sent out, the grapevine was set in motion, members of the trade council, young socialist branches, etc. received the circulars. Then the comrade who had booked the room received a telegram saying that the room was no longer available. He immediately contacted the management and was told that they were not prepared to have the meeting there, there was no political bias, but....blah, blah, blah. The manager also mentioned that he had ^{had} an opinion from the C.I.D. that the meeting should not be held there. As the meeting had been advertised in one of the papers the Blackboy management felt obliged to put in adverts saying that no meeting would be held and that they had nothing to do with the Committee of 100. They also issued a statement to the press. Our comrades also issued a statement to the press which received plenty of publicity.

Fortunately, a room at the Friends Meeting House was available but it required all the resources and ingenuity of the comrades at this late hours to ensure that everyone knew of the new meeting place and how to get there. The next step was to picket the Blackboy Hotel on the night of the meeting again, the press were informed and there was a big write up in one of the papers.

When after all this, the meeting finally took place, George Clark, a leading member of the Committee of 100 who had been sentenced to 9 months for organising a demonstration to the American embassy (the sentence was later squashed but another of three months confirmed), spoke on the implications of the trial and the next steps in the anti-nuclear fight. He outlined three plans of action, all of which were favourably received by the audience. However some of his remarks provoked some controversial discussion on the question of the Labour Party. However, as the chairman remarked the discussion had demonstrated the need for the New Left Club. Officers were elected and initial proposals worked out for the Club's activities. All in all, the reforming of the Nottingham New Left Club had a much publicised and vigorous kick-off. That it will not be merely a debating club was also demonstrated.

ANTI COLOUR BAR IMMIGRATION BILL DEMONSTRATION IN NOTTINGHAM

As part of the week-end of activity against the Government's colour-bar Immigration Bill being organised by the Young Socialists and Labour Students up and down the country, there was a march through the centre of town Saturday 24th February and a meeting in the Old Market Square, Nottingham. Some 30 to 35 people took part in the march, but more people were picked up on the way and when the demonstrators arrived in the city centre. Nearly 2,000 of the M.C.F. leaflets on the Bill were distributed on the way and during the meeting. Young Socialists, Labour students, Labour Party members, Y.C.L.ers and members of the Afro-Asian West Indian Union took part. The Trade Council which had promised support was unable to send a speaker owing to another conference. The Communist Party which had promised to send two speakers failed to show up but a Y.C.L. speaker was fixed up at the meeting itself. Although there were some opposing elements in the Square, generally speaking the audience (small because of the bitterly cold weather) was sympathetic and people were contacted who wanted copies of the leaflet and more information about the Young Socialists and Afro-Asian West Indian Union. Although some people were disappointed about what they called the small turn out, considering the nature of the issue, the weather and other factors the affair was a success and thousands of Nottingham's citizens will have been made to think about the implications of the Immigration Bill.

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION AGAINST OLD BAILLY SENTENCES

At its meeting on Wednesday the 21st of February, the Nottingham Trades Council passed an emergency resolution against the sentences. It took this action after a local supporter of the Committee of 100 had discussed the matter with the chairman. Other actions against the sentences have included: a march by 200 Leeds University students on Thursday, Feb 22nd; a resolution by the Park Royal Vehicles, Shop Stewards' Committee; one by the Kings X N.U.R. No.1 branch; and one by the Shardlow engineering works C.N.D. group.

The following item has been extracted from the February issue of "Labour News from the United States" a handout of the U.S.I.S.

Road builders ordered to end intimidation

The National Labour Relations Board has found Florida's biggest road-building firm - Cone Brothers Contracting Co. - guilty of acts constituting "naked intimidation" and "conduct of the most flagrant type" against employees who went on strike in 1960.

A three-member panel voted unanimously to affirm the findings of Trial Examiner George A. Downing that Cone supervisors had committed unfair labour practices by arming non-strikers with guns, threatening to run down strikers with cars or shoot them "like a covey of birds" and other unlawful acts including a threat to blacklist workings who refused to cross an Operating Engineers picket line in Tampa, Florida.

The decision was signed by NLRB Members Philip Ray Rodgers, John H. Fanning and Gerald A. Brown. The upholding of union charges was noteworthy for the participation of Rodgers, who frequently votes on the dissenting side in cases involving majority decisions.

The board order - third of the kind since 1955 - directs Cone Brothers to cease and desist from these acts:

Using shotguns or other weapons in a threatening manner towards pickets and threatening to shoot strikers.

Arming supervisors and guards for passage through the picket line set up by Operating Engineers Local 925.

Directing employees to run over strikers.

Characterising as "quits" employees who refuse to carry, or to work with employees who carry, weapons.

Threatening to handle strikers "like shooting at a covey of birds."

Other actions were prohibited - threatening to blackmail or blacklist all over Florida supporters of the union; questioning employees about union meetings and activities; informing employees that strikers might as well "leave the picket line and the state."

The Board order in addition directed the big roadbuilding firm to stop threatening that it will "starve out" the strikers, threatening to discharge and arrest employees because of their union activities, threatening to go out of business rather than "go union" and promising benefits to employees for "going along" with the company.

A similar order was directed against a Cone Brothers subsidiary, Tampa Sand and Material Co., which was told to reinstate three drivers fired on May 26th, 1960, and to reinstate all members of Local 79 of the unaffiliated Teamsters who went on strike the following day in protest against the firings.

COMMENT: This order is all well and good but is nearly two years late anyone who has experience of industrial struggle will know that this is worse than useless. If anything the existence of this machinery to bring forward such charges will function only as a get out and a diversion from more militant action. It should be noted too, that the firm concerned is the largest in Florida. All industry in the States is highly monopolised; it is almost certain that the firm is part of a large national corporation.

UNITED STATES DEMOCRACY IN ACTION (2)

Two-thirds of the world's population is underfed according to United Nations figures. The leadership of the United States Government which is so concerned about the "freedom" of mankind that it pursues policies which could lead to the extermination of mankind, would, one might think, be doing everything in its power to solve this problem. One would be mistaken! It is true that the U.S. authorities are very concerned about the agricultural situation. Kennedy in his ^{latest} "farm message" said:

"our two goals - improving (farm) income and reducing (government) costs - can both be achieved only if farm output can be reduced below needs for several years and then allowed to increase at a rate equal to the growth in demand."

With these two aims in mind he has put to Congress a program which includes: (1) fixes maximum planting acreage for food grains; (2) limits the amount of wheat which can be sold for export and human consumption at home; (3) forcibly reduces the production and sale of dairy products, farmers who sell more milk than their quota will be subject to heavy penalties; (4) institutes ^a pilot schemes which will ultimately lead to the conversion of 68 million acres of land now used for crops into grazing areas, forests and recreational lands.

Thus, while millions are starving, farmers in the U.S. will be fined for producing too much milk. There is nothing peculiarly American in all this - this type of thing is an integral part of dying decadent capitalism. It expresses itself so sharply in the U.S. because the U.S. is the most highly developed capitalist country.

Scottish miners' one-day strike called off

The one-day strike of Scotland's 69,000 miners against the pit closures is off. This was decided unanimously by a meeting with delegates from all the Scottish pits, after hearing that the national executive of the National Union of Mineworkers had refused to sanction the strike. The meeting decided to redouble the efforts around the miners' no closure lobby of Parliament on Mar. 8th. 330 delegates having already been elected.

The resolution embodying the decision of the delegate conference spoke of 'Unity' being '... the trade unions' greatest need...to fight ...the Tory Government's policy on wages, ". The Daily Worker report of the decision seemed to be justifying the action when it said that 'the Right Wing majority on the executive would not have hesitated to take the most extreme disruptive measures against the Scottish area if the strike had gone on.' The Scottish N.U.M. is dominated by the Communist Party and it is reasonable to suppose that this is the line put by the C.P. officials at the conference.

As reported in the Bulletin before, this is the second attempt to stop the one-day strike. When the decision was taken at a previous delegate conference it was argued that the majority was 'too small' and a pit by pit ballot was organised. This produced an overwhelming vote for the strike. The Communist Party have along record of heading off militant action in the coalfields. They have obtained positions in the N.U.M. and then allowed their men to become prisoners of the right-wing majority. Arthur Horner as secretary for a number of years of the N.U.M. played a very dubious role in many strikes. The decision to back down can only have a demoralising effect in the coalfield. One is amazed at the reasoning of the C.P. argument. What 'extreme disruptive measures' would have destroyed the unity of the miners if the decision to strike had the wholehearted support of the Scottish miners? Perhaps the 'measures' would have involved the loss of union positions and that maybe the real explanation of the C.P. line.

An accompaniment to the 'line of 'peaceful coexistence' is the concentrating on winning union positions, etc. instead of waging industrial struggles. The C.P. which has a reputation of militancy thus does a great deal of harm when it resorts to manoeuvres. In a period of industrial struggle the danger from the C.P. in this respect can be, in some situations, more pernicious than that from the right wing.

March 5th - D.A.T.A. says strike, C.A.W.U. says work

As reported in the last issue of the Bulletin, the claim of the Staff side of the Engineering industry has been turned down flat. This has led the leaderships of the unions to discuss the stand their members should take when the manual workers strike on March 5th. The Draughtsmen's Union, D.A.T.A., has decided to urge its members to support the strike. The Clerical and Administrative Workers' Union has advised its members to report for work. The other big staff union, the Association of Scientific Workers, has not issued a public statement at time of writing.

Engineering - drive for 100% unionism goes on

As reported before, the aftermath of the February 5th one day strike brought many struggles to impose 100% trade unionism. At Corby, 25 non-unionists at Lamp Metals Ltd. have been sent to 'coventry' by their 175 workmates (the 25 worked during the one day strike), and at British Field Beams Ltd., 300 women workers have threatened to strike because of five non-unionists. An overtime ban has been enforced at A.E.I., Trafford Park, Manchester, to ensure that "staff" are in their appropriate trade union. Already 500 non-manual workers in this category have applied to join their union. The management have retaliated by ending the overtime agreement, the struggle continues and the local Confed. have pledged full support to A.E.I. shop stewards, who took the decision to end overtime at a meeting attended by 110 shop stewards. At English Electric, Preston, 60 electricians have returned to work after winning their demand that an inspector should join the E.T.U. Four drawing office workers who had been sacked at McKenna Construction Ltd., Liverpool, for joining the Feb. 5th strike have got their jobs back after the boilermakers threatened to strike. At the two Ferranti factories at Moston and West Gorton overtime bans were imposed in protest against non-unionists working on Feb. 5th. Shop Stewards now report that all eligible have applied to join a union. A man who worked on Feb. 5th at de Havilland, Hatfield has been transferred to a lower paid job since the 3,000 manual workers sent him to 'coventry'.

N.A.L.G.O. increases membership by 11,000

The National and Local Government Officers' Association increased its membership by 11,140 to 284,784 during 1961. The union which is the largest not affiliated to the T.U.C. is to discuss affiliation at its conference in June. The union's executive supports affiliation and proposes a membership ballot on the question. Last year the union's rules were altered to introduce a 'strike clause'

Strike threat by laboratory and workshop technicians

125 members of the Nottingham University branch of the A.S.W. are threatening to go on strike to support their claim for a five day week. After negotiations lasting a year without any result dissatisfaction is growing. At other universities concessions have been won and the administrative side of the university are on a five day week already.

ECONOMIC NOTES

Steel production again down

As noted previously in the Bulletin, the December figures for steel production were 20% down on those of December, 1960. It had been thought that this was mainly due to firms giving longer Xmas holidays than the previous year. However, now the trend has continued into 1962 with the January figure being 20% down on that of January 1961. Speaking about the position in the last three months of 1961, the Iron and Steel Board in its latest bulletin says that there was "a continued and substantial reduction of stocks in the fourth quarter of the year." It is estimated that this was of the figure of 300,000 to 400,000 ingot tons. Consumption of finished steel in the home market in the period was 7½% down on the previous quarter and 10% down on the same quarter 1960. The board says that the reasons for this are not clear but suggests that the steel consumers are not only reducing their stocks of unfinished steel but also those of components. If this is the case there will probably be some recovery because such reduction can only be of a 'one-time' case. Moreover, car production is going up and there will be a build up of steel and component stocks.

Despite the latter points, the effects of the steel slump in production are making themselves felt. The Steel Company of Wales have announced that the Melting shop at their huge Margram works will close in the summer of 1963 making some 500 men out of work. Other closures have taken place at Middlesborough and in Scotland.

January trade figures show huge deficit

The trade figures for Brit in in January were the worst since May 1961, that is, before all the Government's measures which were supposed to deal with the economic situation were put into force. Imports rose sharply by £30 millions and this combined with an levelling off of exports gave a deficit of £68 millions (all figures are seasonally adjusted) Exports at £300 million were below the average figure for any quarter of 1961. The increase in exports that the Government has been hoping for is a long time coming, indeed the figures for the three months November, December and January shown a decline of 3% as compared with the previous three months. Of course, the figures for any particular month are likely to be influenced by 'accidental' features, but thing is certain, these figures indicate that even on their assumptions the job the the Tories set themselves to do is no nearer success. Despite the wages pause, the credit squeeze, the high bank rate, etc., no fundamental improvement in the capitalist economy has taken place.

F.B.I. inquiry reveals more pessimistic outlook

The latest inquiry conducted by the Federation of British Industries shows that 28% of businessmen feel less optimistic about the general business situation than they did four months ago. This was against only 13% who felt more optimistic despite the fact that 26% said they now found it more easy to get the labour they want. 48% said they expected to authorise less expenditure in the next 12 months on buildings and 41% less on plant and machinery, as against 19% and 25% who expected to authorise more. 36% had had less new orders in the last 4 months as against 22% who had had more; 41% now had shorter order books and only 14% longer. On the exports side however, the businessmen were more optimistic (29% as against 16% who were less). Of their experience over the last four months no less than 54% said that they had had lower profit margins.

THE SOCIALIST REVIEW AND THE LABOUR PARTY

At a recent meeting of supporters of the journal Socialist Review, the question of the attitude to be adopted towards the Labour Party was discussed. A proposition that supporters must be members of the Labour Party was defeated by one vote. Many of the people around Socialist Review are young people who find the routine work in the Labour Party irksome and seemingly unprofitable.

It is important to point out that there was no formal decision to pull out of the Labour Party a la the formation of the Socialist Labour League. However the danger of such an attitude is that it will give all those who do not like Labour Party work and who find Committee of 100^{etc} work more attractive a blank cheque to individually pull out of the Labour Party.

Fortunately owing to recent developments and the consolidation of Young Guard, there is not much likelihood of this paper being disorientated by the above tendency. However it will be necessary for comrades to be very clear on this question and to work out their ideas.

POSTSCRIPT ON THE SOCIALIST REVIEW AND THE CONGO

Comrades will remember an article by T.M. on the above question in issue number 9 of the Bulletin. Additional weight to comrade T.M.'s criticism of the Socialist Review position was given by the quotation from Waterhouse in the last issue of the Bulletin. From the latest issue of the journal it emerges that among the supporters of Socialist Review there are critics of Macintyre's line. Comrade Tony Young has written in expressing his disagreement with the article's conclusion. He bases his arguments on the proposition that 'becausethe ingredients of a human, socialist solution are lacking from some situations' one should not adopt the "realistic" view of history and politics, which is quite foreign to the marxist's concern for increasing the consciousness of the working people of the world' and concludes that MacIntyre 'would do better to concentrate his main fire on exposing the motives of the U.N. operation' because there are more illusions in the labour movement about this.

One can agree with the conclusion of the argument but not the method of its arrival. Marxists have the duty of supporting whatever movement, no matter confused, ^{that} expresses the aspiration and the future development of the revolution in any colonial country. Lumumba and his successors express in a very elementary way the future of the Congo revolution. Marxists can intervene in the Congo affair in this way. Concretely this means supporting the campaign now being waged to save Gizenga from suffering the fate of Lumumba.

THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE AND THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

For some time we have been aware of differences between the two above organisations over Cuba and some other questions. Now the differences have come out in the open, although not in a straightforward manner. Interestingly enough it is not on the question of Cuba that things have come to light but on a very different subject. In the latest issue of Labour Review, the journal of the S.L.L., it says:

".....The SWP works in an environment which has many features which can debilitate and discourage individuals and movements" after outlining some of these features it goes on ".....The revolutionaries in the SWP need periodically to check over their own political work against these dangers. In a position of relative political isolation, of constant battle against the current, a diversion from true course can creep up unsuspectedly. A search for a shorter way, for alliances which may impose accomodation to alien trends, for regroupments without solid theoretical bases, for programmatic adaptations to suit what are assumed to be American peculiarities - these have constantly derailed American socialists in the period since 1917. The attention of the leaders of the SWP must be constantly directed to such dangers, as they may affect their own policy and thinking"

It is indeed a funny way to direct the attention of the leaders of the SWP to such dangers in British theoretical journal. A more likely explanation is that the remarks are for the benefit of the members of the S.L.L. to 'explain' why the leaders of the SWP have 'deviated' on the question of Cuba and unity of the world Trotskyist movement. Far from accomodating themselves to their environment on the question of Cuba, American Trotskyists in the SWP have shown a most heroic attitude, in the face of all the hysteria raised by U.S. imperialism in its hatred of the Cuban Revolution. We may indeed be proud of the stand of the SWP on Cuba.