

THE NEWSLETTER

Edited by Peter Fryer, 180 Clapham High St, London, SW4. Subscription 9s. for 12 issues, post free.

a service to socialists

Vol. I, No. 16

August 24, 1957

NOW LET'S LEARN THE LESSONS OF THIS DEFEAT

Says HARRY CONSTABLE

FOUR THOUSAND workers at London's fruit and vegetable markets returned to work on Monday morning having sustained a defeat at the hands of the employers, assisted by the Tory Government, the trade union leaders and the Stalinists. It is a partial, not a definitive defeat. But it is none the less bitter—and instructive—for that. And the employers have lost no time in taking advantage of it to strike a new blow at trade unionism.

The Covent Garden dispute marks a new stage in the offensive of the British capitalist class against trade union rights and labour conditions. It is imperative that it should also mark a new stage in the British workers' awareness of the attack being levelled against them and of the need, above all, for *leadership* in meeting and beating back that attack.

Sackings at the Standards, BMC and Nortons vehicle factories; the strike of three million engineers and shipbuilding workers last April, sold out by Mr. William Carron and his fellow-leaders of the engineering unions; the recent strike of municipal busmen; the Covent Garden strike: these are the stages in the bosses' offensive.

In each case there has been, in one shape or another, an attack on trade unionism and trade union principles, a Press onslaught against pickets, a glorification of blacklegs. And all too often the employers have won.

The offensive is uneven. There are cases where the bosses have given way—only to press forward in some other sector of industry. There is no mistaking the concerted, deliberate nature of their drive.

They are rehearsing for a powerful, all-out attempt to alter decisively the balance of forces between the classes, to beat back the workers, quench their militancy, thrash them, exhaust them and weaken them by every means, before the Tory Government is ousted in the General Election that in the normal course of events will fall due in 1960.

This is their answer to the obstinacy with which the workers, aware of the mammoth profits currently being squeezed

This analysis of the Covent Garden and Port of London stoppages is contributed by one of the best-known rank-and-file leaders of the London portworkers.

Harry Constable was one of the seven strike leaders charged with conspiracy in 1951. He has played an active part in every struggle since the 1945 strike.

This article is written in his individual capacity, and expresses his own views.

out of their labour, press forward cycle after cycle of wage demands, angering such magnates as John Gibson Jarvie, boss of the £75 million United Dominions Trust, who last week demanded a showdown with the workers and their 'claims for bigger and bigger wages'.

The fact must be faced that British trade unions are lagging far behind the employers in their preparations for the impending class battles.

Recent months have witnessed plenty of high-sounding Left talk by a certain type of union leader. But this Left talk, which wins applause at conferences, is not matched by Left deeds when it comes to a showdown with the bosses.

(Continued overleaf, col. 2)

H-BOMB CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE FORMED

An H-Bomb Campaign Committee has been formed to arouse public opinion and urge the Government to stop making the bomb, 'in order to lessen world tension and create an atmosphere in which agreement could be reached'.

The Committee has been set up on the initiative of Victory for Socialism and the Movement for Colonial Freedom and is supported by Tribune and over thirty Labour MPs, including Frank Allaun, Harold Davies, A. E. Oram, Walter Monslow, Emrys Hughes, George Thomas, Konni Zilliacus, Fenner Brockway, Marcus Lipton, S. O. Davies, Ewen Evans, Fred Messer, Victor Collins, Bob Edwards and George Pargiter.

The Committee is organizing a mass demonstration against the hydrogen bomb at Trafalgar Square on Sunday, September 22, at 3 p.m. Sneakers will be: Barbara Castle, M.P., Anthony Greenwood, M.P., Ian Mikardo, M.P., Konni Zilliacus, M.P. and Dr. Donald Soper.

CUTS IN SOVIET NUCLEAR POWER PLANS?

By J. H. Bradley

DRASTIC cuts appear to have been made in the Soviet atomic power programme, though they have not been explicitly announced, or discussed by the Supreme Soviet.

Soviet News, no. 3648, of May 18, 1957, announced baldly: 'A powerful atomic electric station . . . with a capacity of 420,000 kw (420 mega-watts) is expected to produce current for industry in 1960.'

'This is the first of a series of powerful atomic electric stations now being built . . .—as though this were some great new achievement.

(Continued on back page)

SAYINGS OF THE WEEK

'The [Oman] affair has done good if it has reminded us that influence cannot be won without involvement, nor respect without risks; nor a claim to world power upheld unless we have both the right kind of forces in the right kind of places, and the will to use them when necessary.'—The Sunday Times, August 18.

'Mr. Cousins in particular did himself credit by committing his personal reputation to an attempt . . . to get the men back . . . though it would be more prudent to see in his conduct merely a realistic appreciation of the fact that the strike . . . had been virtually broken by resolute employers.'—The Sunday Times, August 18.

'One of the greatest things we have done in Britain, I would say, is that we have linked the name of the Communist Party and the Daily Worker with what goes on in the socialist countries.'—Alan Brown, Daily Worker, August 21.

'The imperialists say our system is cruel, but our workers and peasants say the régime is not cruel enough.'—Mr. Kádár, at Kisuiszallas, August 20.

COMMENTARY

CALL A HALT!

LAST week we wrote of the Covent Garden settlement: 'Those who opposed a return to work may turn out in the long run to have been the wiser and more far-sighted.' In the event 'the long run' was less than thirty-six hours. That was how long it took the Covent Garden bosses, flushed with their victory, to dismiss 120 porters in an attempt to smash the union completely in the market. On Wednesday morning another 80 were sacked, including Mr. Bernie Holland, union branch secretary. The arrogance of Mr. Mack and his friends is the price the marketmen have to pay for their union's surrender. Every time any section of the workers gives way, the employers immediately and unconscionably press their advantage. There is no vacuum in the class struggle. Today Mack wields the whip; if he is allowed to get away with it he will be wielding the scorpion tomorrow, and other sections of the employing class, whose hearts have been gladdened beyond measure by the outcome of the Covent Garden struggle, will be following suit. The employers are asking for trouble: it is to be hoped that they are checked, or it will be the worse for the entire working class. All the relative prosperity and enhanced trade union rights of the past twelve years are in jeopardy. Either a halt is called now, or one after another these gains will be whittled away. The time to defend trade union rights and conditions is now. The time to fight against wage cuts is now—before they are imposed. The time to fight against unemployment is now—before the employers succeed in building up the reserve army they are thirsting after. Every struggle to beat back the employers' offensive on any sector is of concern to the whole class. The portworkers understand this; it is time their understanding was more widely shared.

It is a little late, no doubt, to expect it to be shared by certain trade union officials. Mr. Wells, for example, Covent Garden market officer for the Transport and General Workers' Union, told the Press after Tuesday's sackings: 'I am hopeful that no sympathetic action will be taken.' What kind of language is this from a workers' leader?



THE supreme lesson of the whole Covent Garden fight, with all due respect to Mr. Wells, is that the workers can contain the employers' offensive and themselves go forward for new gains only if they display firmness and militancy. The employers are ready to pounce on the least sign of weakness. They want to bring the workers to their knees. Their hopes can be dashed—if the full might of the working-class movement is brought into play. Two hundred porters sacked at Covent Garden today will be a thousand dockers sacked tomorrow, ten thousand engineers sacked the day after that—unless battle is joined. The whole movement is awaiting the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party conference to see what kind of lead is forthcoming from these two gatherings. Will they speak in the accents of Mr. Wells? Or will they echo the growing awareness of the men on the workshop floor that the time to protect organization and conditions is now?

HARRY CONSTABLE (Continued from front page)

Covent Garden has provided a classical instance of this. Rarely has a 'Left' demagogue been so swiftly exposed by events as Mr. Frank Cousins, leader of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

The hero of his union's biennial conference yesterday becomes today the butt of his members' anger. 'Good old Frank' is now 'Judas' in the eyes of the workers he has let down.

For the Covent Garden men who for many years have exercised almost full union control of their working conditions have now been robbed of the protection they have won in decades of struggle.

Mr. Cousins has fixed his 'Left' seal to an arbitration agreement drawn up by Tories committed in advance to back up the employers' onslaught. Mr. Donald Mack, virtual dictator of London's fruit and vegetable trading, played the trump card put in his hands by Government arbitrators. And Mr. Cousins revoked.

The Covent Garden employers were so sure of victory that they handed the men the new agreement and gave them half an hour to accept or get out of the market.

Though hundreds of his members were embattled against a cocksure and arrogant enemy, Mr. Cousins went away to the south coast—the British Riviera—to enjoy a well-earned holiday.

While Mr. Cousins basked in the sun his members were displaying one hundred per cent solidarity—though, since the strike was 'unofficial', they were receiving no dispute benefit.

An army of scabs

That the employers had long been preparing for this trial of strength was proved by the way a well-drilled army of scabs—clerical workers—moved into action to keep supplies of produce moving through the markets.

(A notable feature of the struggle was the intervention of a group of young members of the Clerical and Administrative Workers' Union, who went down to the market morning after morning to try to persuade the scabs to stand by the marketmen.)

One of these CAWU pickets, 23-year-old Miss Vivien Mendelson, was invited to address a mass meeting in Trafalgar Square, and won the applause of marketmen and portworkers alike by her forthright criticism of Cousins's attitude.)

But if blacklegs could be found to carry crates of fruit and sacks of potatoes in Covent Garden itself, there was no one on the docks who was prepared to handle 'black' produce. The marketmen had an ally, and a powerful one, in the shape of thousands of portworkers.

True to their traditions of solidarity, London's dockers stopped work rather than touch produce that was to be taken across a picket line.

Gang after gang walked off the wharves, despite the fact that the dockers employed in loading and unloading fruit are among the highest-paid men in the Port of London.

Especially significant were the facts that the permanent men—considered sometimes as a privileged section—were absolutely solid behind the strike; and that over 12,000 men were involved in the struggle without any form of unofficial committee.

Unofficial committees collapsed

The unofficial committees that had flourished a few years ago under Communist Party influence and leadership had completely collapsed without a trace. Most of their members are now discredited in the eyes of the rank and file, because of their attitude during the big strike in 1955 for recognition of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers in the North of England ports.

In 1957 leadership came from experienced rank-and-file dockers, including members of both the NASD and the Transport and General Workers' Union.

While Communist Party dockers were silent or unaccountably absent from meetings these dockers took the lead, explained the need for the utmost solidarity with the Covent Garden men, and the impossibility of any return to work until seven dockers victimized for refusing to handle 'black' goods were given back their jobs.

And so the strike spread from wharf to wharf, until even

after the Covent Garden men had voted by a slender majority to stay out five more days, then resume work on the terms recommended by Mr. Cousins, the dockers refused to go back until the marketmen had returned—and 2,000 more dockers a day were joining the strike.

When Mr. Cousins came back from holiday he spent several hours closeted with Mr. Mack.

Mr. Cousins secured a few minor and trivial adjustments to the agreement that had already been rejected by the marketmen. Then he persuaded the inexperienced leaders of the marketmen that they should recommend a return to work. When they realized the full meaning of this recommendation, they quickly reversed it.

Mr. Cousins addressed the men for an hour, and persuaded them to go back. But it was a hollow victory—509 votes in favour of going back, 432 in favour of continuing the struggle.

As he left the meeting Mr. Cousins was surrounded by angry workers, who shouted: 'Go back to your holiday', 'Lynch him' and 'You've sold us out'. The bubble of Cousins the champion of the rank and file had been pricked, and pricked for good.

The Daily Telegraph and The Sunday Times hailed Mr. Mack's victory. Mr. Mack himself was transported with joy.

Yet the men could have won. For the dockers in Leith had refused to handle ships carrying fruit and vegetables. The working-class movement would have rallied to the support of the marketmen.

Did not use its power

Cousins did not—or could not, or, most likely, did not want to—utilize the power of his own rich and mighty union, to bring the employers to their knees. He preferred an accommodation to a fight, even though that accommodation inevitably means that the marketmen can be sacked at will in a 'reorganization' of labour that will be a model for other sections of the employing class.

One aspect of this whole dispute that cries out for comment is the role played by the Communist Party and the Daily Worker. From beginning to end they have sought to bolster up Cousins as a 'Left' leader.

This fight has thrown a merciless light on the Stalinist attitude to the workers' struggles. It has shown beyond a shadow of doubt that instead of seeing them as a means of educating the workers and improving their conditions, they look on them essentially as a means of improving the position of the Communist Party in the trade union machinery.

As long as a particular struggle improves the Communist Party's bargaining power, it will support it. But when it becomes expedient to do a deal, then the Stalinists have no hesitation in seeing the workers defeated.

The whole Stalinist strategy towards Mr. Cousins ever since his election has been based on the hope that he would, in return for services rendered, lift the ban on Communists holding office in his union, a ban imposed by his predecessor, Mr. Arthur Deakin.

Tied itself into knots

To this end the Stalinists and their Press made not a single criticism of the official trade union machine during the Covent Garden dispute. They soft-pedalled the workers' resentment and anger at Mr. Cousins's betrayal—and they remained silent about the employers' glee at their victory.

The Daily Worker tied itself into grotesque knots trying to prove that the workers had got something out of the arbitration award and that a return to work was therefore 'some advance'.

As in the case of the Anglo-Russian Committee of 1926 the British Communist Party has been turned by its leaders into the Left flank for the trade union bureaucracy.

A cover for Cousins, who sells his members down the river—that is the role that King Street plays in British industry today, in the face of the employers' offensive.

The Stalinists can see their own member Johnnie McLoughlin sacked from Briggs, they can see their whole organization smashed at Standards, but the chance of a future deal makes them swallow this without choking.

The British Communist Party has in practice sold itself to the trade union bureaucracy; it is utterly unfit to lead any decisive struggle of the British workers.

The key question now facing the workers, therefore—and many militants are becoming increasingly aware of this—is the question of leadership.

Of all sections, the dockers are most aware of the need for forging a new and competent leadership to carry our class through the serious battles that lie ahead.

The electricians, too, are beginning to grapple with this problem, as the recent conference of their once Stalinist-dominated union showed. So are the engineers.

The need for a strong, alert, energetic, combative and courageous leadership is not grasped in one day. It forces its way only gradually into the workers' consciousness, and often not until the absence of such a leadership has brought such bitter lessons as that of Covent Garden.

As the marketmen go back to work under the jeers and taunts of employers and blacklegs, this is the supreme lesson that presents itself to them.

New leadership will be forged

We are approaching an important stage in the development of British trade unionism, a stage when a new leadership will be forged on the anvil of experience and tested in the fires of struggle.

More and more the old reformist leadership is seen as bankrupt, cringing before old formulas and incantations about 'arbitration', ready to force the rank and file to accept unwelcome and ominous agreements, worshipping before the altar of procedure.

The only way the employers' offensive can be halted, in the long run, is for a new leadership to take over, and to infuse the ranks of organized labour with confidence in their strength to halt the offensive.

The workers cannot and will not let themselves be smashed piecemeal. They will fight back, and will learn in the process to separate genuine leaders from phoney ones.

The Week at a Glance

JAPAN: The Prime Minister, Mr. Kishi, said his Government would not allow the USA to bring nuclear weapons into Japan.

SIAM: Three Army leaders—the Minister of Defence and his two deputies—resigned, severely shaking the Government of Marshal Pibul Songgram.

USSR: A draft law published in Moscow 'for purpose of discussion' provides for deportation and compulsory labour for beggars, vagrants and persons living on unearned income.

GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC: A statement issued at the end of a Federal Cabinet meeting said: 'All rumours of an intended revaluation of the D-mark are without substance.'

INDIA: The secretary of Kerala Communist Party accused the Roman Catholic hierarchy of conspiring to subvert the Kerala Government 'by unconstitutional, undemocratic and violent means'.

HUNGARY: Over a hundred protest meetings were held all over the country against the United Nations report on the Hungarian Revolution and the proposed discussion of it on September 10 by the United Nations General Assembly.

SYRIA: Following the discovery of an alleged American plot to overthrow the regime the Syrian Government dismissed a major-general, two brigadiers and seven colonels, promoted Colonel Afif Bizri, said to be a communist, to major-general and appointed him Commander-in-Chief.

CANADA: Tear gas was used to break up fights between strikers and scabs at Murdochville (Quebec). Workers at the Gaspé coppermines plant have been on strike for five months, demanding union recognition. The Quebec Provincial Government has declared the strike illegal and banned picketing.

USA: President Eisenhower met the worst defeat of his political career when the foreign aid appropriations Bill, cut by \$809 million (about 25 per cent) by the House of Representatives, was passed to the Senate.

Mrs. Martha Dodd Stern, daughter of a former U.S. Ambassador to Nazi Germany, was named by the House of Representatives committee on un-American activities as an intelligence agent in the service of Moscow.

In Prison I Found Humanity and Friendship

A young Dorset reader, ALAN BENNETT, recently spent some time in prison because he objected to being called up to fight in colonial wars. He has written the following account of his experiences.

THE first days were hell. Not merely physical discomfort arising out of the most oddly cut garments, complete with pre-Edwardian waistcoat, buttonless shirt and leaden shoes.

But a psychological depression arising from thoughts of days without Stan Kenton and the sight of any woman at all, attractive or otherwise!

The hours passed cheerlessly until a fellow-prisoner with whom I was talking on a working party—a forger of enlightened political views—turned to me and remarked:

'Blimey, I know now why they raised the pay. They knew you was coming in and would have started a bloody union in no time to fight for an increase!'

And indeed, the week I entered one of Her Majesty's prisons the minimum rate was raised one hundred per cent to the fabulous sum of 1s. 8d. per week.

The screws, as the warders are called, were a mixed bunch, ranging from the self-confessed ex-Mosleyite to characters who will surely one day gladden the heart of Miss Leslie Greene.

BULLIES AND JANGLERS. Some bullied, others merely ambled around, jangling keys and looking most impressive. As they rustled around in shiny dark raincoats you felt they were seeking an excuse to rave at some confused new prisoner.

Joyless days. And then one morning, seven days after my arrival, I was scrubbing the floor of my cell with no great enthusiasm when I chanced on the following inscription pencilled on one corner of the battered cell wall:

'Where there's life there's hope,' I deciphered. 'So what the bloody hell are you worrying about?'

The sheer optimism of the man who wrote this, and who might have been some poor devil with ten years to serve, cheered me up immensely.

Within my first three weeks of captivity I was transferred to a second, third and finally a fourth prison. 'You're too hot for any prison to hold you', cracked one of my friends.

ARGUING AND LEARNING. But in my last residence I found myself among young men with the most uncompromising religious views I had ever encountered. And I passed some delightful days, arguing and learning.

One of my staunchest political opponents was an unusually pleasant warder from the cider county—'God's country', he called it—who, when sufficiently roused, would gesticulate at me and stamp his foot passionately on the ground, shouting:

'When the communists take power here, son, that's where you'll be—under the dictator's heel.'

He had a remedy for crime. He urged that a gallows should be erected at every prison and two prisoners strung up every morning as an example.

But he wasn't serious. In fact he was dedicated to his work in this 'prison without bars'—the type of man who can really help to establish in the more embittered a feeling of responsibility to the community. I wish there were more like him in the prison service.

I used to attend a debating class. One day the topic was 'Should Christopher Columbus have sailed?' As usual the controversy raged through widely scattered areas.

I WAS DEFLATED. I got to my feet and denounced the Eisenhower doctrine, which, I maintained, was helping to strengthen the reactionary and often slave-owning dictatorships of the Middle East.

'Freedom is a fundamental human right', I cried. There was a burst of applause. For a moment I was delighted about my seeming success. Then a Lancastrian voice roared:

'You'd better tell that to t'Governor.'

Another piece of light relief was one lad's story of how after a masterly raid on a warehouse he returned home to find that of 750 shirts he had taken, 700 were without collars.

And then freedom, with all its responsibility. In saying good-bye to many, many friends I thought how true is the saying 'There but for the grace of God . . .'

And I thought how unjust is our system of law under which a man can get six months in one district, another two months in another district, both for identical offences.

My experiences in jail enriched my life. Above all, they strengthened my belief in my action. I do not regret it.

ALAN BENNETT

ISRAEL

CALL FOR AMENDS TO JEWISH WRITERS

THE Israel Press has commemorated the fifth anniversary of the judicial murder of Soviet Jewish writers.

The Jerusalem Post said the Soviet Government had not yet made any public declaration to rehabilitate the victims and, to some extent, to repair this wrong.

The continuation of the policy of suppression of Jewish life in the Soviet Union was a glaring deviation from the USSR's declared policy towards national minorities in its territories.

Davar, the organ of the Israel Labour Party, said the crime of the Jewish writers was their insistence on their right to continue to promote Jewish culture and literature after the Soviet leaders had decided that this was no longer needed for their purposes.

Al Hamishmar complained that even after getting rid of their former distortions, the rulers of Russia continue to treat the Jews differently from other peoples. The Soviet allegation that Jewish culture in the USSR was dead and that it was senseless to revive it, contradicted the real state of affairs.

USSR

ANOTHER CHARGE AGAINST MOLOTOV

CURRENT issue of *Kommunist* accuses Molotov of attempting to justify 'serious mistakes made in the past in connexion with the personality cult and condemned by the party'.

The magazine says that the 'anti-party group sabotaged the implementation of the general party line both in Russia and in the rest of the world'.

In a further attack on Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich, Pravda on Monday wrote:

'The unanimous condemnation by all communists and by all Soviet people of the factional anti-party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Molotov, and of Shepilov who joined them, will promote the further strengthening of the Leninist unity of the Soviet Union and the struggle for its general line.

'A real communist, no matter what post he may hold, is guided always by the interests of the party and the Government. Communists must struggle against those who weaken the iron discipline of our party'.

AN OPPOSITIONIST'S MEMOIRS REVIEWED

REVIEWING Antonov-Ovseyenko's memoirs of the October Revolution in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, K. Petrov observes that 'the author writes with anger of the harmful tactical line of Trotsky, who, in defiance of Lenin, hindered the organization of the armed uprising'.

This is an example of de-Stalinization run mad. The late J. V. Stalin, in his article on the first anniversary of the October Revolution, acknowledged that all the practical work had been carried out under the leadership of Trotsky.

The latter's principal assistants, he added, were Podvoisky and... Antonov-Ovseyenko.

(See Stalin's 'The October Revolution' (Lawrence and Wishart, 1933), p. 30. This passage is omitted in the version given in Stalin's Works, vol. 4 (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1953, pp. 155-7.)

The reviewer omits to mention that Antonov-Ovseyenko was for some years a supporter of the 'Trotskyist' Opposition. After his capitulation to Stalin he was sent to Spain as chief Soviet representative in Barcelona.

Following his return to the USSR in 1937 he disappeared, together with all the other leading personnel, civil and military alike, of the Soviet mission to Spain.

His name was never publicly mentioned again until, at the Twentieth Congress, Mikoyan caused a sensation by referring to him and to Kossior—another of Stalin's victims—with the honourable epithet 'Comrade' before their names.

Antonov-Ovseyenko's memoirs have been reissued in connection with preparations for the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution.

BIG BUTTER AND WATER MAN PUNISHED

A PROVINCIAL newspaper, the *Omsk Pravda*, recently carried an illuminating crime story. It told of the assistant manager of a State commercial organization who was arrested for an ingenious form of swindling.

Taking time off from his work he would frequent the Omsk railway station and surreptitiously offer slabs of butter to the passengers on trains stopping there.

He did a roaring trade until one day a passenger examined the purchase in time to report him for selling in the guise of butter a frozen mixture which was three parts water.

The guilty man had done well out of his private trading activity—'a fine flat, excellent furniture, his own car'.

When he was taken into custody his wife, who was clerk to the local people's court, pulled a lot of strings, and the judge dealing with the case found himself under heavy pressure from higher authority to release him.

Among other reasons for leniency the fact that the arrested man was a party member was mentioned. The attempt was unsuccessful and the intriguers were punished.

Commenting on this affair, Party Life reminds its readers of Lenin's precept that communists have no privilege whatever over other working people, but only a higher measure of responsibility and duty... Soviet laws are obligatory upon all.

DOCUMENT

YUGOSLAV WORKERS' COUNCILS SEEK NEW RESPONSIBILITIES, MORE EDUCATION

The first congress of Yugoslav workers' councils, held at Belgrade from June 25 to 27, and attended by about 1,750 delegates and guests from twenty-four countries, passed a long resolution, extracts from which are given below.

An article by Tony Guthrie on the congress appeared in *The Newsletter* of July 13, p. 72.

THE CONGRESS of workers' councils—the first meeting of representatives of the organs of self-government in the economy—expresses the pride and satisfaction of the working class in seeing that, as the fruit of the socialist

revolution and continual progress in the development of socialist relations, the right of producers to self-government has been a reality in Yugoslavia for the last seven years.



1 WITH the handing of enterprises to work collectives for management, and with the development of the system of producers' self-government, the age-old militant demand of the revolutionary working-class movement has been realized.

The workers' councils are neither the owners nor a collective owner of the means of production, but a component part of the political system of socialist democracy.

The true interest of the working class and workers' self-government are opposed by both bureaucracy and every kind of egoistic individualism which disregards the interests of all the working people in our country.

Workers' self-government in Yugoslavia has been developing and strengthening successfully just because the responsible socialist forces have fought uncompromisingly against these tendencies and against any distortion of socialist relations and workers' self-government.

Workers' self-government... has displayed in practice... the correctness of the Marxist theory under which the means of production must be managed by the producers themselves, so as to establish democratic and socialist relations in production.

With the setting up of workers' councils, social ownership passes into a more developed form characterized by social management, i.e., by the appearance of communities of producers based on the public ownership of the means of production.

The future democratization of our political and social life, the future development of management in all fields of social life, as well as of other democratic achievements of the working class, depend upon the place and the role of the workers' councils and the communes in the general political and economic machinery of our socialist society, upon their consolidation and ability to carry out their duties.



2 THE DELEGATES to the congress, being conscious of the... level of our productive forces, emphasize that the struggle to overcome our economic backwardness and preserve our national independence has required a fast pace of capital consumption which made it impossible to create a broader material basis for the activities of the organs of workers' self-government and so limited their activities.

The congress considers that the direction of economic development... should... seek:

A freer distribution of income so as to realize the right of the producers to earn according to their work;

To establish more uniform conditions of earnings for all collectives;

To strengthen the independence of enterprises within the planned guidance of production, consumption and the development of productive forces.



3 SINCE the realization of workers' self-government inevitably affects both the role and the functions of the representative organs of government authority and the State administration, the congress considers:

That the democracy of decision-making in the economic field should be further strengthened;

That the task of the representative organs is to guide production and consumption of enterprises and create the necessary conditions for a free development of the socialist forces;

That conditions must be created for decreasing administrative measures in economy... and for greater influence of producers on the determination of such measures;

That social control of the workers' organs of management should be strengthened without impairing the independence and self-management of enterprises.

The League of Communists, the trade unions and the youth organizations are particularly called upon to create favourable conditions for self-government in the enterprises... by eliminating the bureaucratic remnants in man's consciousness, habits and methods of work.

All social organizations ought to take greater care of the general, professional and social-economic education of producers and their training for active and conscious participation in the organs of self-government.



4 THE CONGRESS considers that a simplified system of accounting and book-keeping should be devised so as to enable the organs of management to have a better insight into the operations of the enterprises, to make better decisions, reveal problems and hidden reserves.



5 BEARING in mind that the management of enterprises by workers causes inevitable... changes in the position of the producers... the congress stresses that workers' self-government lays the foundation for the true freedom of man, since producers manage affairs directly and take greater part in forming their production relations and their working and living conditions.

The congress... considers that new production relations require that employment, dismissals, the maintenance of discipline and the undertaking of disciplinary actions should, as far as possible, be the concern of the producers themselves and their representative bodies.

In the future, and in keeping with material possibilities, the workers' councils should have greater freedom in regulating other working conditions, such as hours of work, holidays, housing problems, restaurant facilities, etc.

The congress calls on the workers' councils:

Not to allow any infringement of their rights, or any illegal or inhuman treatment of individuals;

To oppose firmly all undemocratic attempts to suppress criticism and the free expression of ideas and proposals;

To suppress all manifestations of bureaucratic, petty-bourgeois and egoistic conceptions;

To devote more care to the training of workers.



6 THE COMPULSORY submitting of reports by the organs of management, conferences and meetings of producers, the increasing of the number of problems which the organs of management must discuss with the workers before making any final decision, etc., should be the forms of constant strengthening of the influence of the workers on the work of the workers' councils and managing boards.

It is necessary to... turn the managing boards into the executive organs of the workers' councils.

It is necessary to embark more resolutely on the formation of

wider organs of workers' management in different departments and workshops of enterprises in which conditions for this exist, to give these organs the right of taking direct decisions, either in concurrence with the organ of management of the enterprise or independently.



7 OUR school system and programmes should be adjusted to our social system, to the trends of our social development and to the needs of the economy.

Technical education should be given a more important place in the educational system of our country and developed so as to enable the workers in production to acquire the necessary qualifications for university training.

The social and economic education of producers must be further promoted through the trade unions...

Workers' universities should be further strengthened and developed into institutions with developed systems of work, in which the producers will be trained for various social and economic duties.

Schools should be set up for the social and economic training of worker-managers.

The programme of the social and economic education of producers should cover... certain skills and techniques so as to enable the members of organs of management to take successful decisions, assess the implementation of tasks, manage the enterprises and be capable of using and controlling professional services in enterprises.

The participation of all workers in workers' and social self-government is one of the most important contributions to the formation of socialist consciousness... as well as to the process of gradual disappearance of differences between manual and intellectual work.



8 THE DEVELOPMENT of socialist relations and democratic management imposes the need for a codification of basic regulations on the formation and setting-up of enterprises, on the organization and competencies of individual organs in workers' self-government, the forms of social and economic associations, the relations of economic organizations with State organs and other factors in social and political life.

The congress proposes the foundation of a Federal Institute or similar institution, as a scientific and research organization, which would study the various problems of the self-government of producers and working people in general.

The congress proposes more intensive publication of literature on workers' self-government, handbooks for members of the workers' councils and periodicals for the use of the organs of workers' management in the enterprise.

LETTERS

LIVING STANDARDS IN HUNGARY TODAY

MY ATTENTION has been drawn to some grave distortions of our report from the Central Office of Statistics in Hungary on living standards, published in the August 10 issue of *The Newsletter*.

1) Your version says the figures do not include 'the lower-paid workers (cleaners, messengers, doorkeepers, etc.)'. At no point in the original report was this stated, so it can only be your assumption that the census was selective.

2) Both your mathematics and your conclusions are wrong here. You say wages have increased **one** per cent, but if you work it out again you will see that an increase of 100 forints

on a monthly income of 1,129 forints is actually **nine** per cent.

You also jump to the conclusion that because people are spending 13 per cent more per head on consumer goods that the price of those goods has gone up 13 per cent.

While it is true that price increases might be partly responsible, it is equally possible that there were more goods to buy. This is partly borne out by the figures given in the original report which you had before you showing that in food alone consumption per head had increased in respect of sugar, raw meat, milk and eggs.

It is also known that more furniture and household equipment were on the market than formerly.

Can be due to more purchases

3) You conclude that 'inflation rages' in Hungary because the report says people spent 117 forints per head per month on clothing (against 88 last year) and 48 on furniture and household equipment (against 31).

Again you are making the same mistake of concluding that increased expenditure is due solely to increased prices, whereas it can equally be due to more goods being purchased!

4) By quoting the expenditure **per head** for rent, fuel and light as the expenditure **per family** you seek to prove that the families investigated are 'a privileged minority' who are 'occupying State-owned flats'.

The logic of this escapes me when we are looking at a country where most homes are publicly owned, but in any event it is gross distortion to treat the per capita rent as the whole rent.

Would not have far to look

5) 'The low standard of life of the Hungarian workers' you say is proved by the figures on personal consumption.

These include 'little meat' (6.35 pounds per head, man, woman and child, per month!), a great deal more margarine than butter, 11½ pints of milk per head and 10.4 eggs per head per month.

It seems to me that you would not have far to look to find standards worse or little better than these in countries richer than Hungary.

I recall that meat consumption per head in Britain in 1955 was estimated at 7.2 pounds per head per month.

6) Finally, in the last paragraph of your version you again wrongly draw the conclusion that labourers and other unskilled people are not included in the census. The original Hungarian, literally translated, refers to 'town workers and employees', which surely is broad enough.

Yours fraternally,

Lawrence Kirwan
(Hungarian News and Information Service)

London, W.2.

[While I was on holiday a correspondent submitted a report based on the Central Office of Statistics figures.

This report contained one mistake in arithmetic—which most readers will have spotted, since the figures were given as well as the percentage—and several conclusions not justified by the data.

Mr. Kirwan's points (2. and (3) are correct, and I profoundly regret that an improper use was made of the data supplied by the Hungarian News and Information Service.

The case of the socialist and communist critics of the present régime in Hungary is good enough not to need buttressing in this way.

Low degree of mechanization

On Mr. Kirwan's other points:

1) and 6) Owing to the low degree of mechanization in Hungary the proportion of unskilled to skilled workers is far higher than in this country (e.g., the number of people pushing wheelbarrows or driving horse-drawn carts on construction sites, the women in food-preserving factories cutting up vegetables by hand or pouring jam into bottles).

Before last October all unskilled workers and a few moderately skilled workers were earning below 1,000 forints a month; e.g. office cleaners got 620, van-drivers 700-800, women on

State farms 600, a miner not at the coal face and not on piece rates 800.

A wage of 1,129 forints (the average given for a year ago) is the standard of the moderately skilled, or more comfortably off, and as these people are in the minority a census which arrives at that figure must be selective.

4) Even multiplying 53 forints per month by three it is far below the rent many people pay for privately-owned accommodation. It must have been arrived at by including a high proportion of people in the new, centrally-heated, low-rent workers' flats.

But only a very small proportion of workers live in these. It is quite usual to pay 300 forints a month for one room.

To look at Budapest you need to go inside the big entrance arches of the old blocks. There you find a rabbit warren, forty or fifty poky flats surrounding the courtyard, inside a house which presents perhaps a dozen or so windows to the street.

Of course there are no figures of how many live in that kind of house; they are never published.

An unattainable dream

The new flats, built by the State since the war, are regarded by most people as an unattainable dream. To get a workers' flat you must have the favour of the party.

5) Mr. Kirwan will not deny that the average British working-class family consumes more meat, eggs and milk and less lard than its Hungarian counterpart.

Would he dispute that there are a great many Hungarians getting 600 to 800 forints a month who would find the average figures for meat, milk and egg consumption beyond their means?

Would he dispute that the list of food given in the Central Office of Statistics report would cost about 300 forints? Yet the figure given for total foodstuffs expenditure is 315 forints.

What about coffee? What about the macaroni products which form a large part of Hungarian working-class diet? What about flour, salt, cakes, sweets, none of which is mentioned?

Incidentally, Mr. Kirwan writes: '... a great deal more margarine than butter ...' Surely this should read 'a great deal more lard than butter'?

Bread and lard for breakfast

In fact of course his own report writes of 'margarine and other fats', since Hungarians eat practically no margarine, but large quantities of lard: bread and lard is the standard Hungarian breakfast.

Lastly, I should like to put two other questions to Mr. Kirwan.

How does he reconcile the picture of prosperity which the Central Office of Statistics report seeks to paint with the Kádár Government's recent decision to cut industrial workers' wages and wipe out the twelve per cent increase won since the revolution?

And how does he reconcile it with the great increase in prostitution since last autumn, till 40,000 women are now registered in the Budapest city police files as prostitutes (The Times, August 21)?—Editor]

PLEASE DEFINE THE TERMS YOU USE

MAY I request correspondents to define their terms when discussing revolutionary and reformist policies?

In pre-1914 parlance there were three divisions of socialist thought:

Impossibilists, who envisaged an immediate transformation from capitalism to socialism (this would now embrace anarchists, De Leonists and members of Common Wealth);

Revolutionaries, who called for the complete capture of power and a subsequent social transformation (this would now include the Socialist Party of Great Britain, the Socialist Labour Party, the Socialist Workers' Federation, the Trotskyists, etc.);

Reformists, attempting to build socialism by a series of partial improvements (now comprising the Communist Party, the

Victory for Socialism Movement, and some of those in the Socialist Forum movement).

The majority of the Labour Party would not qualify at all as socialists (Keir Hardie called himself a 'Labourist').

The First World War divided the reformists into 'centrists' and 'social-patriots' and the revolutionaries into 'Bolsheviks' and 'Left sectarians' (some revolutionaries of course became social-patriots).

What is certain is that the words have nothing to do with insurrection. Russian social-revolutionaries were insurrectionary reformists, while the SPGB is a constitutional revolutionary party.

Some correspondents appear to have their own individual definitions; would they be good enough to share the secret?

London, S.E.4.

J. F. L. Otter

THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATIONS

GORDON CRUICKSHANK tells us in the *Daily Worker* that the attitude of the Polish Government to the Lodz strikers is that their demands are 'not exorbitant'.

This seems fair enough. Bad legacies cannot be laid at the feet of the present United Workers' Party leadership.

However, when Cruickshank takes pains to stress that 'the militia dispersed workers with capsules, not bombs', I am amazed.

What would any socialist say if tear gas was used on workers in a capitalist country, especially when the authorities admitted that their demands were 'not exorbitant'?

The Lodz strike leaders have now been called irresponsible.

NUCLEAR POWER (Continued from front page)

Yet Academician Kurchatov wrote in Pravda on May 20, 1956, of five plants of 400-600 mw to begin operation in 1958, and of numerous types of experimental reactor (reprinted in Soviet News, no. 3398, of May 29, 1956). Mr. Malenkov spoke of 2,500 mw of nuclear power by 1960 (Soviet News, no. 3364, April 5, 1956).

Cuts might have been foreseen; an article in Soviet News late in March 1957 made no reference to nuclear power, but spoke of '140 large hydro-electric and thermal power stations ... in 1956-60', and of the various unified grid systems.

In view of the date, it is doubtful whether this can be associated with the dismissal of Mr. Malenkov, especially when we remember that the relevant decisions must have been taken by September 1956 if any station was to be finished by 1960.

It is conceivable that work had been going ahead until this March, and visitors to the USSR might enquire about those 'large stations near Moscow, Leningrad and the Urals'.

Considerable publicity was also given to the acceleration of the Stalingrad hydroelectric plant, to developments on the Yenisei, and to the birth of the Novosibirsk sea, a subject which had fallen into comparable oblivion since March 1953.

Transmission lines of 500,000 volts are announced, and lines of 800,000 volts by 1960.

Now, such lines are required only in order to transfer very large amounts of power. In this country, smaller projects ('the super-grid') were to have carried power from the coalfields of the Midlands north and south, but have been rendered superfluous by nuclear power (Manchester Guardian, July 17, 1957).

It is true that none of the hydroelectric or high-voltage schemes seems to have been abandoned at any stage, but little publicity was given to them for several years.

Those who speak of the military strategic advantages of the recent reorganization of industry may reflect on the crippling effect of the destruction of just one of these highly vulnerable lines, carrying power for several million people.

No government which seriously believed in civil defence would build so vulnerable a project, and the cost of putting them underground is about £200,000 per mile extra, and for the highest voltages is technically not feasible.

If the Government leaders had invited them to negotiate, their behaviour might well have been highly responsible.

Certainly the Lodz strike would have ended without the smell of bureaucracy in the workers' noses.

Such negotiation demands faith in the working class. Does a Lodz tramway workers' council exist? If so, where did its members stand in relation to the strike and what are their relations with the transport workers' trade union?

London, W.

Tony Guthrie

WAS 'UNNECESSARY VIOLENCE' IRONICAL?

I was surprised by the words in your commentary 'Tear Gas at Lodz': '... whether unnecessary violence was used in breaking it'.

Can violence used in strike-breaking ever properly be described as 'necessary'?

Or was this phrase intended ironically?

Scarborough (Yorks.)

James Gill

[The phrase was intended ironically.—Editor]

ONLY CAPITALISM FOULS ITS DOORSTEP

The popular Press seems to be steering clear of the scandal about the discharge of crude sewage into the seas around the British coast.

Yet, as The Newsletter says, what a commentary it is on capitalist civilization. Why, even animals don't foul their own doorsteps.

Cardiff.

M. Bird

The most interesting question—the causes of this change—are still unknown. They may be a political manoeuvre. The other cause could be economic or technical.

According to Kurchatov, the five big stations were to be water-moderated, a type of construction not previously used on any large reactor. Severe technical snags may have arisen, as is shown to have happened (despite the assertions of Sir John Cockcroft) by the power output figures for the first few months at Calder Hall.

These high-pressure water reactors suffer from certain serious instabilities, connected with uncontrolled boiling and consequent power runaways, and were in any case to reach only 275 degrees Centigrade compared with the 400 degrees Centigrade of Calder Hall.

Low temperature means a great loss of efficiency, and may have made the projected reactors uneconomic. Questions of maintenance and reliability are also very speculative in this connection.

Even under the old plan, the graphite-moderated, water-cooled reactor of the type used in the first Academy of Sciences power station was not to be developed highly, the first plant having an efficiency of only 17 per cent, compared to 31 per cent for the best modern thermal plants in use (Portobello, Edinburgh) in 1955.

A major scientific tragedy

It is possible that this has proved the better horse, or that Mr. Khrushchev will opt for the Calder Hall type of graphite-moderated, gas-cooled reactor, as the French have done.

The abandonment of the very diverse Soviet programme for power stations would be a major international scientific tragedy.

Britain in 1954-55 consumed 1,300 units of electric power per head. Mr. Malenkov spoke of about 1,600 units per head by 1960, as compared with 850 units in 1950.

The present rate of installation of 4,554 mw per year will allow this to be achieved only at unprecedented load factors, about 38 per cent.

It is much to be hoped that, far from cutting down the atomic power programme, the Soviet Government will accelerate it.