

THE NEWSLETTER

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MOUNTING SUPPORT FOR OUR CONFERENCE

WITH only a week to go before November 16, when the national industrial rank-and-file Conference meets at the Holborn Hall, London, support for the Conference and applications for delegates' credentials are coming in thick and fast from all over the country. Despite the smears of almost the entire national Press and the witch-hunt launched by certain union leaders, The Newsletter's call has aroused an eager response from union branches and militants in many industries.

Proscription of the Conference by the full-time national officials of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers and of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, and the expulsion of Brian Behan by the AUBTW, have served only to underline the urgency of the discussion the Conference will initiate.

Its purpose—to build united action among industrial workers to resist and defeat the employers' attacks—has been welcomed as the need of the hour by branches of the very unions whose leaders seek to ban such a rank-and-file gathering.

As readers will understand, it would be unwise to name branches or delegates. But a gauge of the true state of rank-and-file feeling comes from one Merseyside building site.

Out of 120 bricklayers at a mass meeting called to discuss the AUBTW proscription, only two voted against a resolution to reaffirm support for the Conference and to send delegates.

To see for themselves

Most branches of the AUBTW and the ASW that had elected delegates are to send visitors.

And The Newsletter has invited all members of these unions who live in London or are able to be there next week-end to attend as visitors.

This invitation is also extended to the full-time officials and executive members of the unions concerned, so that they may see for themselves what their rank and file really think, and what the real character of this Conference is.

The opening statement at the Conference, which begins at 10.30 a.m., will be made by Brian Behan and the chair will be taken by Peter Fryer, Editor of The Newsletter.

The agenda consists of two items:

- (1) **How to fight the employers: the role of the shop stewards' movement and rank-and-file organization.**
- (2) **Unemployment and the colour bar.**

The main resolution to be presented to the Conference will be a draft Charter of workers' demands drawn up by The Newsletter's Editorial Board.

Democracy in trade unions

The draft Charter, the full text of which appears on pp. 287-8, puts forward demands concerning unemployment, nationalization and democracy in the Labour Party and the trade unions. It will, of course, be open to delegates to amend it if they want to.

Another resolution to be submitted to the Conference will be that of the Militant Workers' Movement, which unites shop stewards and other militants in Midlands industries.

This resolution condemns arbitration and courts of inquiry, and includes a demand for the protection of shop stewards.

The list of sponsors for the Conference lengthens daily

Continued on back page

BEHAN ANSWERS PAID OFFICIALS' SMEAR: 'WE'VE HAD TWO BOB FROM UNION FUNDS'

REPLYING to allegations in the Building Worker, the official journal of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, that THE NEWSLETTER had 'severely depleted' AUBTW local funds, Brian Behan declared:

'In fact we have received from local branches of the union precisely 2s.—delegation fees from a branch in London and a branch in Staffordshire.'

Behan said the executive statement, prepared at least three weeks before his expulsion from the union, showed that his appearance before the EC had been a farce.

The only crime The Newsletter had committed was to call for a public discussion of questions like unemployment, which was a serious problem in the building industry. He added:

'If we bear in mind that our executive committee, for a week's attendance at the national delegate conference this year, received £33 apiece in fees and expenses; that the general secretary gets a salary of £1,100, a house, a car, light and fuel, plus expenses for many delegations he serves on in the course of a year; then it is clear where the real depletion of the union's funds is taking place.'

LIVERPOOL BUILDING WORKERS REAFFIRM SUPPORT FOR SOUTH BANK MEN

By Our Industrial Correspondent

IN Liverpool last Sunday a meeting of seventy trade unionists, most of them building trade workers, declared full support for the action of the Shell Mex men in continuing the picket for the reinstatement of their shop stewards.

The meeting, which was called by the Liverpool solidarity committee, heard Brothers Hugh Cassidy and Mick McGuire report on the Shell Mex lock-out.

The two speakers answered the attacks which have been made on the South Bank workers both by the national Press and by certain trade union officials.

In the discussion one brother recalled how in 1951 he had been elected shop steward of the 'black gang' on a McAlpine site.

Later he had been sacked and the manager said that 'while McAlpine's tolerated trade unions they did not recognize them'.

Building trade workers present—most of them stewards—passed a unanimous resolution calling 'our executive committees to reopen negotiations with McAlpine's for the reinstatement of South Bank shop stewards'.

The resolution also deplored the expulsions of 'the brothers of the AUBTW for supporting the action of the Shell Mex men'.

COMMENTARY

THE LOGIC OF THE WITCH-HUNT

MANY of those associated with THE NEWSLETTER, and with the national industrial rank-and-file Conference that this paper has called next week-end, left the Communist Party two years ago, partly as a result of the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution. Not a few of the Fleet Street pundits forecast with pleasure that we would join the army of ex-communist renegades and 'freedom-fighters'. They have suddenly woken up to the fact that our disagreements with the Stalinist leadership of the Communist Party and our criticisms of the Soviet bureaucracy have *not* meant our abandonment of the working-class struggle or of Marxist principles.

This is why the capitalist Press has been attacking us so violently in the past two weeks. Here for them is a new phenomenon, one which disturbs and angers them (partly because they cannot attach a label to it). It is one thing to leave the Communist Party and launch a cultural magazine or open a coffee shop in Soho (both worthy activities). But to publish a small weekly which frankly espouses the cause of industrial militancy, which seeks to rally rank-and-file workers to resist the employers' offensive: this brings down on our heads the wrath of the Communist Party leaders and the Right-wing union leaders and the employers' Press.

It is sad but true that the witch-hunt against THE NEWSLETTER and the Conference began in the Communist Party journal World News, on October 11. It is sad but true that the leaders of the Communist Party have tacitly supported the paid officials of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers in their proscription of the Conference. Prominent members of the Communist Party have been heard to declare that their party had a hand in the expulsion of Brian Behan from the AUBTW. But the witch-hunt has its own remorseless logic; and the Communist Party itself has begun to feel the full brunt of it, in the London (North) district committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, in the Sheffield AEU and possibly, according to Sir Vincent Tewson, in the shape of an investigation by the Trades Union Congress into the affairs of the Electrical Trades Union.

There is a serious warning here for the rank-and-file members of both the Communist Party and the Labour Party. In their hatred of THE NEWSLETTER and of the Marxists associated with it, the Communist Party leaders have opened the door to a witch-hunt that cannot but affect their own members and weaken the common fight against the employing class. For our part, we declare our firm opposition to any form of witch-hunting in the unions, and in particular to any TUC inquiry into the affairs of the ETU, since it is the business of the members of any particular union to put their own house in order. We will fight shoulder to shoulder with Communist Party members against witch-hunters and would-be witch-hunters of any complexion: IRIS-ites, Catholic Action and the rest.

The lie on which the witch-hunt against the rank-and-file Conference has been based is that its aim is to weaken the unity of the trade union movement. This, of course, is what was said at the time about every 'unofficial' effort that has carried forward the development

of the trade unions: the Miners' Reform Movement before the first world war, the Shop Stewards' Movement during that war and so on. That there is already a split in the trade union movement no one who is active in its ranks would deny: it is a split between the members and paid officials remote from the needs, problems, thoughts and living standards of the members. Our aim in calling the Conference is to heal this split by encouraging the rank and file to exercise effective control over the officials whose salaries they pay. We want no 'breakaways' but a return to the original purpose for which the trade union movement was founded: defence and improvement of workers' wages and conditions. We want, not splits, but unity in action; not the weakening of the trade union movement, but its strengthening; not the isolation and smashing of the workers section by section, but solidarity action in support of each section which comes under fire from the employers.

The paid officials of the AUBTW and Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers take a different view. They do not flinch at the sacking of workers by Britain's biggest master builder with the aim of 'weeding out' stewards. They would let their members attend a Tory Party conference, or be associated with a Tory newspaper (as many well-known figures in the trade union movement in fact are from time to time). Freedom to attend a workers' conference, freedom to associate with a socialist paper: that is something different. Jim Matthews can provide intelligence reports about the unions to the employers in the way that was alleged in Tribune last week; but Brian Behan is expelled for fighting for his class on the South Bank and for his association with THE NEWSLETTER.

The fact of the matter is that Weaver, Lowthian and those like them are afraid of the rank and file, afraid of their members' waking up and thinking for themselves. To wall the workers off from the Marxists they will go to any lengths. But they will not succeed, any more than Deakin succeeded in battening down the hatches in the Transport and General Workers' Union. No force can prevent the growth of a powerful rank-and-file movement in British industry. No force can prevent the growth of a strong Marxist movement with firm roots in the trade unions.

Employees of Lord Kemsley and Lord Poole titillate the retired colonels and the share speculators with the tale that our Conference is a 'conspiracy'. It is a very odd way of conspiring, to broadcast far and wide the names of those who are calling the Conference, to summon two Press conferences at which journalists were free to ask any questions they wished. In any case, we shall measure the success of the Conference neither by the vehemence and malice of the witch-hunt nor by the number of column-inches in the capitalist Press. We shall measure its success by the number of men and women in the British Labour movement who, as a result of its deliberations, are better equipped to defend their jobs and their living standards.

THE NEWSLETTER is a small paper; we who run it have no financial resources whatever. Against us are arrayed the big battalions: the employers, their newspapers and their agents in the Labour movement. We appeal to militants, in the week that remains before the Conference, to put every ounce of energy into making it a resounding success, a fitting answer to the witch-hunters and the starting-point of a mighty advance in the working-class movement in this country.

A Draft Charter of Workers' Demands

WE, the delegates to the national industrial rank-and-file conference called by the Editorial Board of *The Newsletter* on November 16, 1958, submit the following Charter of workers' demands for the consideration of the members and leaders of the British working-class movement.

In our opinion, only a policy such as is here outlined can solve the problems that are now arising in industry in a way which will be in the true interests of working men and women, and which will help forward the fight for a socialist reconstruction of society.



WE have considered the problem of *unemployment*. What sterner condemnation could there be of the capitalist system than its inability to provide work for all who need it?

Half a million are idle in this country at this moment. And many of the machines that should be enriching the lives of all of us are idle too.

There are a million families whose bread-winner is either out of a job or on short time. Millions more are seriously worried about the danger that soon they also will be out of work.

The unemployment figure is rising by 30,000 a month -- and share values are rising, too.

In our opinion the time to fight unemployment is now, while the greater part of our class is still in the factories.

We must fight unemployment before it grows any more--above all, by refusing to the employer the right to hire and fire at will.

WE DEMAND:

- 1) The sharing of all available work without loss of pay.
- 2) Solidarity action with all sections resisting sackings.
- 3) A national protest campaign led by the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party, including a one-day national stoppage against unemployment.
- 4) No discrimination against coloured workers.
- 5) Solidarity between unemployed workers and those in work to prevent the use of unemployed men as black-legs.
- 6) Protection of shop stewards: all strikes against victimization to receive the full backing of the union concerned.



BELIEVING that even with a militant fight against unemployment this problem cannot be solved within the framework of capitalist society, we have considered the problem of *nationalization*.

The root cause of unemployment lies in the private ownership for private profit of the means of production.

To remove an industry from the incompetent and greedy hands of profiteers is the way to ensure jobs and

decent living standards for the men who work in it.

One of the biggest lessons of the South Bank dispute is that there is no need for McAlpine.

Equally, one of the biggest lessons of the BOAC dispute is that there is no need for d'Erlanger and men of his class.

The nationalization we envisage is nationalization *under workers' control*.

WE DEMAND:

- 1) The nationalization by the next Labour government of the engineering, shipbuilding, building and textile industries and of the land of the big landowners.
- 2) No compensation to the former owners of these industries.
- 3) No representatives of big business to have a say in the running of these industries.
- 4) Control of these industries to be in the hands of democratically elected workers' councils.



ANOTHER problem we have considered is that of *the Labour Party*. We state without hesitation that the main thing wrong with the Labour Party today is that it is controlled by a junta of middle-class Fabians and full-time trade union officials.

The rank and file in the trade unions' and local Labour Parties no longer have a say in determining the policy of the party.

We recall that the basic aim of the Labour Party, as laid down in its 1918 constitution, is to work for the social ownership of the means of production.

The Right-wing leaders have abandoned this aim. Only the rank and file can bring the party back to its original purpose and restore the socialist vision and energy of the pioneers of our movement.

The Tory Government can be defeated, and a Labour government pledged to socialist policies elected, only if the industrial workers in particular bring back a fighting spirit to the Labour Party, and turn local parties into organs of working-class struggle.

WE APPEAL TO INDUSTRIAL WORKERS:

- 1) To enter the Labour Party as delegates to local parties from their trade union branches.
- 2) To fight for the adoption of militant socialist policies and for the restoration of democracy within the party.
- 3) To make the local parties campaign centres in the industrial struggle, that will give the utmost moral and material help to all workers in dispute in their particular locality.



LAST but not least, we have considered the problem of *the trade unions*. For many years the control of the unions has been passing into the hands of the full-time paid officials.

In many unions these officials have in practice re-

placed the elected officials, and are taking decisions that are in violation of the constitutions and policies of their unions.

There is a growing division between the mass of trade union members and the leaders.

We are firmly opposed to the creation of new trade unions or of any sort of 'breakaway' organizations whatever.

We believe, on the contrary, that the rank and file have the power, and the responsibility, to restore trade union democracy, so that the unions can be better equipped to defend their members.

We believe that the employers' offensive makes more and more urgent the development of solidarity action among trade unionists, regardless of whether a struggle is labelled 'official' or 'unofficial'.

Disputes must be judged, not by the label some full-time official attaches to them, but by the demands of the workers engaged in struggle.

We believe that the creation of links between workers, in the same and in different industries, in the form of solidarity action committees and similar rank-and-file bodies, can powerfully assist the restoration of trade union democracy.

WE DEMAND:

- 1) No appointment of trade union officials, but their periodical election, with the right of recall.
- 2) Salaries, expenses and delegation fees of union officials to be determined by the average wages of the members of that union.
- 3) An end to the practice of squandering union funds on large motor-cars without indication on them of who owns them. Union officials to travel in cheap, economical vans, carrying loudspeaker equipment for factory-gate and other meetings, and with the name of the union prominently displayed.
- 4) Annual policy-making conferences of the rank and file in all unions.
- 5) Direct rank-and-file representation at the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party annual conference. National full-time officials not to form part of the delegations at these gatherings.
- 5) Fullest consultation with the membership in formulating, presenting and fighting for demands, and in the acceptance of settlements.
- 6) Complete opposition by the trade union movement to courts of inquiry, which are simply designed to prevent the winning of wage demands, and are now being used more and more to draw the teeth of the shop stewards' movement.
- 7) Prosecution of wage demands with the utmost energy, proper preparation of the membership and the broadest possible unity in action of the trade union forces against the employers.
- 8) A vigorous campaign for 100 per cent. trade unionism to seal up all gaps in organization.



OUR demands, we are well aware, do not cover every one of the problems with which the British workers are faced today. But if the demands that we have advanced in this Charter were won, the Labour move-

ment would be in far better shape to meet and beat back the offensive of the employing class.

Our demands are in line with the original constitutions and aims of the trade unions and of the Labour Party.

The pioneers who built our movement did so without the help of Consul cars, knighthoods or fat salaries.

They built our movement despite imprisonment and exile to Botany Bay. They made big sacrifices.

Today we need to recapture something of the spirit of the old days.

The job of the Labour movement is to fight the employers. This job cannot be done if the movement gets too 'respectable', but only if it regains its original purpose and militancy.

VERY STRANGE INDEED

In Thursday's Daily Worker its editor, J. R. Campbell, alleges that there is a 'strange united front' between the officials of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers and what he calls 'the organ of the Trotskyist circus', by which he means The Newsletter.

It is Campbell who qualifies for inclusion in a circus—as political acrobat and political clown.

One day his paper calls the South Bank militants 'trouble makers' (October 23); next day, three weeks after the struggle starts, it switches its line and gives them half-hearted support.

Meanwhile Brian Behan, a member of The Newsletter's Editorial Board, is twice arrested in battles between police and pickets—and is expelled by the very union leadership with whom he is alleged to have a 'united front'.

Campbell says The Newsletter 'helped to confuse the men'. Whom is Campbell trying to confuse when he says there is a 'united front' between an expelled militant and those who expelled and vilified him?

And how does Campbell explain that just before Communist Party member Joe Rootes became the AUBTW London organizer he supported a decision of the union's London divisional council to end support of the South Bank struggle and recommend the acceptance of McAlpine's terms?

SPERRY WORKERS WIN THEIR STRIKE

Management of the Sperry gyroscope factory, Feltham (Mx), has withdrawn two non-unionists from the drilling section.

The action follows a sit-down strike of the factory's 600 workers, who demanded a closed shop. The dispute was reported in The Newsletter last week.

The non-unionists have been suspended.

PROTECTION OF STEWARDS AND WORKSHOP ORGANIZATIONS IS VITAL

By Stan Yapp, AEU convener, GEC (Witton)

THE present leaders of the unions are incapable of struggling for such necessary demands as the immediate introduction of the forty-hour week and a determined fight against redundancy.

So rank-and-file committees linked together are beginning to play an important part. The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions leaves the onus for fighting redundancy on district and shop stewards' committees.

These workshop organizations have to be safeguarded against the employers' drive to weed out conveners, stewards

and leading militants.

Redundancy, where none exists, is used as an excuse for beheading committees.

In Birmingham one firm, after sacking six workers, including one convener, was forced by strike action to take back all but one—about whom negotiations are still taking place—thus proving that their jobs were still available.

This example shows the need for quick and strong re-

action to victimization. Strikes against victimization must be made official immediately and extended where necessary to bring the dispute to a successful conclusion.

It is no good resorting to long-drawn-out negotiations while the victimized convener or stewards are forced to remain passive outside the factory.

Militants must not be doubly victimized, by trade union leaders as well as employers.

Solidarity Action: The Need of the Hour

By Councillor W. STEVEN of Orpington, a bricklayer at Abbey Wood (Kent)

OCTOBER 8, 1958, will be remembered by hundreds of building trade workers as the day they took united action against McAlpine.

For the first time since the war at least, many jobs rallied to support their brothers who had been sacked en masse by McAlpine.

Our job at Abbey Wood took a decision to stop work for four hours in order that we could help picket the South Bank job. About 200 of us were there, and a stimulating experience it was.

We took action because it was obvious that if McAlpine was allowed to get away with the sackings then it left the door wide open for the employers as a whole to follow his lead.

Doubled in two years

But we also took into consideration that our industry was beginning to experience the effects of the Tory cuts in building, with the result that unemployment among building workers has doubled in two years.

When the employers are attacking our conditions and our right to a job we have no other alternative but to take what action our job organization allows.

Our solidarity action with the lads on Shell Mex is further proof that the rank and file will fight when they see the need.

The scandalous thing was that there was not a trade union official to be seen. We must see to it that they are taken to task.

It is no good for the 'Left-wing' organizers to say that they are with us. I didn't see any of them at Shell Mex. The only way that they can distinguish themselves from the Right wing that they are always moaning about is by associating themselves with the actions of the men in dispute—and end the impossible task of trying to remain in the centre.

It has been our experience that you either fight the boss or are part of him. There is no central path.

If further proof of this were needed, study the decisions of all the disputes commissions since the end of the war and you will not find one major finding in our favour.

Bold leadership is needed

Yet when the men on a job take action they are told they are acting 'unconstitutionally', and if on occasion the men don't act, the organizers use this as an excuse to castigate us. It is essential that we put an end to this.

The situation that we are entering will demand a bold leadership, and the extent to which we will get it will be determined by how hard the rank and file fight for it.

Towards this end, I believe that we have got to extend the hand of solidarity to every dispute that arises and pour in resolutions to our union offices demanding that they make all disputes official. Solidarity as shown by resolutions and finance is not enough however. These are only a poor substitute for solidarity action.

The Shell Mex dispute shows that unity in action can smash any employer, no matter how big. No power in the land can defeat a united working class who are determined to defend their conditions and right to a job.

The Newsletter Conference on November 16 will, I am sure, go a long way towards developing the solidarity among all sections of the working class that we knew before the war.

For, let's face it, it has been The Newsletter alone which has been giving a class lead to the workers in struggle.

Merely to call on the workers to put resolutions to their leaders, without calling them into action, tends to disarm them.

Determined to move them

As the struggle sharpens—and it will do, as the growing ranks of the unemployed and 'redundant' fight back—so will the Right-wing trade union officials become more hysterical in their actions against us.

They will endeavour to 'discipline' members even more than they are daring to do at the present moment.

They will only move as we want them to move when confronted by a mass of organized workers who are determined to move them.

The great need now is for powerful rank-and-file committees to be set up in every industry, with an all-industry liaison committee to co-ordinate and develop a programme of work.

A movement such as this could force officialdom into action. Historically, such a movement could be equated with the old Minority Movement of the 1920s; but it would differ in the sense of having leaders who would not be prepared to sacrifice principles to get 'unity' (for that is one reason why the Minority Movement failed).

Capitalism is tottering from one crisis to another. The working class are daily showing their discontent. They are crying out for an alternative—the November 16 Conference can give the lead.

SEVEN YEARS OF FALLING MEMBERSHIP: WHO ARE THE 'LIQUIDATIONISTS'?

From A Correspondent

LAST week-end's national congress of the Young Communist League revealed that membership has fallen from 5,000 in 1951 and 3,500 in 1955 to 1,387 in January of this year, plus 200 more at the end of August.

One of the few critical speakers in the discussion, Keith Bailey (Paddington), said the political report failed to spotlight the realities of the critical situation the League was in.

He strongly attacked the report for only calling for a cut in conscription to twelve months, instead of the policy decided at the last congress, which called for 'cutting the call-up to twelve months, with a view to speedy abolition'.

Except for six non-controversial ones, branch resolutions were not submitted to congress, but referred to the new national committee. An amendment which would have permitted discussion on items rejected by the standing orders committee but not withdrawn by branches was defeated by 70 votes to 52.

John Moss retired as League secretary after seven years.

USSR**41 YEARS AFTER THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION,
IS RUSSIA 'ON THE ROAD TO COMMUNISM'?**

By Tom Kemp

THERE is growing talk in the USSR of the building of communism, and no doubt this will provide a major theme at next year's Twenty-first Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

Does this mean that forty-one years after the October Revolution the USSR now stands at the gateway of a new epoch of abundance and freedom where, as Marx put it, 'the point is passed where labour under the compulsion of necessity and external utility is required'?

Is this phase of society—where 'socialized man, the associated producers, regulate their intercourse with nature rationally, bring it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as some blind power'—now in sight?

Economic reality is still a long way removed from this, despite the brave title—'Building Technical Basis of Communism'—given to an article by T. Khachaturov in Questions of Economics (English translation, slightly abridged, in Soviet News nos. 3924-5, Oct. 2-3, 1958).

To a large extent this article is concerned with generalizations about the relationships between improvements in technique, labour productivity and investment. The question of the world balance of political forces is excluded.

Still to catch up

What is stated about the Soviet economy now—as distinct from the hypothetical future—shows that the power of necessity is still overwhelming.

Khachaturov admits that production will have to be increased 2½ times, not to attain the abundance of communism, but to catch up the advanced capitalist countries!

In agriculture production is less than half that of the USA, the labour force is several times greater and consumption per head lags far behind.

Talk of changing nature or conquering space only serves to conceal the real problems which confront the Russian economy.

For a very long time ahead, as is in fact admitted, labour released by mechanization and automation will be primarily absorbed in increasing output in lagging branches of the economy.

'So far', Khachaturov writes, 'automation has been introduced very inadequately, and is not yielding sufficient results'.

But he finds the reason only in the technical field, saying nothing about losses due to bureaucratic inefficiency and distrust on the part of the workers.

In the mean time, all the fine words about 'freeing man

from arduous manual labour', 'shortening the working day' and 'eliminating the essential (!) distinction between town and country' conceal the actual extent of the long road which has yet to be travelled, and the obstacles in the path.

Stakhanovism in the background

Emphasis is now distinctly upon technique as the major factor in labour productivity; Stakhanovism has receded into the background.

But technique still means investment. With automation or nuclear power it means very heavy investment indeed. Therefore, before 'communism' can be realized a further indefinite period of holding back the consumption standards of the people will be called for.

No doubt past investment, bringing steady growth in total output, ensures that the mass of consumer goods available for distribution increases, without a spectacular change in their proportion.

But since the emphasis in the past was on investment in means of production to build up more means of production, the demands of the masses of the people still cannot be met rapidly enough.

Contradictions and social antagonisms, far from disappearing, reach a new pitch and find expression in new forms.

It is now a steady pressure in field and factory which imposes switches in policy, stunts and promises. Above all it imposes the current emphasis on opening up 'the road to communism', which recalls the atmosphere and propaganda accompanying the 'building of socialism' in the 1930s.

More rapid improvement will have to wait until the conditions have been prepared. For the present a strenuous attempt is being made to break down the suspicions of the people, and to use the appeal of the communist ideal to enlist their co-operation.

TO NEW READERS

Some copies are still available of the special 44-page issue of The Newsletter published a year ago in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

Contributors to the special issue included Professor Hyman Levy, Professor Bernard Stevens, Joseph Clark, John Daniels, Paul Hogarth, Don Renton, Beatrix Tudor-Hart and Donald Veall.

The issue was described by Tribune as 'a remarkable publishing achievement for a small weekly'. Copies can be obtained from The Newsletter, 180 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4, price 2s. 5d. post free.

The pamphlet containing the full text of Dennis Goodwin's attacks in World News on The Newsletter and the national industrial rank-and-file Conference, and of Peter Fryer's replies, is out this week.

Entitled 'The Newsletter Conference and the Communist Party', it costs fourpence.

Constant Reader | Fight with both Fists

THROUGHOUT its long history the British Labour movement has been cursed by a tendency to 'swing the pendulum' between industrial and political activity.

At one stage the advanced workers were saying: 'Down with politics, pure industrialism is the way forward.' At another: 'Mere industrial struggles will get nowhere, political power is the key.'

After the disappointing first Labour government of 1924 we had an 'industrialist' phase which culminated in the General Strike. That was followed by a 'political' phase crowned by the Labour government of 1929-31 . . .

The process had begun much earlier, when the workers, angered by the let-down of their hopes connected with the

Reform Bill of 1831-32, turned to pure trade unionism; then, after the failure of the Grand National Consolidated, switched to Chartism; then, after the failure of Chartism, back to a new kind of trade unionism—and so on.

The task is not to repeat the experiences of our rich history but to learn from them and avoid the errors of the past.

Today the rising militancy in industry needs to be accompanied by increased attention to political matters, more activity in the Labour Party and closer study of Marxism.

The adversary is not only the employing class, but also that class's political parties and institutions.

Only through a complete political transformation can the current problems of the working class be thoroughly and lastingly solved.

The tradition behind us

'Respectability is the death of all working-class movements. With the change in the public attitude towards trade unionism came a change in the social standing of the officials.

'They too became respectable, and with their new position came their divorce from the working-class point of view, the growing breach between the official caste and the rank and file.

'Divorced from manual labour, the leaders ceased to understand the needs of the wage-earner, and with the crowning camaraderie of the House of Commons died the last semblance of the old unity.

'The Labour leaders entered the governing classes, and Labour was left, perplexed and unmanned, to find new leaders from its own ranks . . .'

Who wrote this and when? Brian Behan in 1958? Leon Trotsky, perhaps, say in 1926? Alas for George Lowthian (and Dennis Goodwin), no and no.

The answer is: G. D. H. Cole, in 1913—in chapter vii of his well-known book 'The World of Labour, A Discussion of the Present and Future of Trade Unionism'.

The problem which the industrial conference called by The Newsletter will discuss is at least forty-five years old, and its roots are wholly in the British Labour movement.

Finger man writes novel

KOCHETOV, whose novel 'The Brothers Yershov' is being praised by the official Moscow critics as 'the answer to "Not By Bread Alone"', is a well-known spokesman on literary matters for the Russian equivalent of the Establishment.

A few years ago, in the period between Stalin's death and the Twentieth Congress, the Communist Party's publishing house in London planned to bring out a translation of a new work by the distinguished Soviet novelist Vera Panova, called 'Span of the Year'.

Work had already begun on it when a message from Emile Burns stopped the rot. He had just seen a review of the Panova book in Pravda, panning it well and truly. The reviewer was Kochetov.

Needless to say, the novel in question, which featured some rather mild social criticism of the bureaucracy, was duly brought out in English later on by a capitalist publisher, not unprofitably, I believe.

'The more the merrier'

THE instructions issued by General Darling, the Massu of Cyprus ('Go to it. Give them stick,' etc.) bring back a sinister echo from the past—the notorious address by Colonel Smyth, Divisional Police Commissioner for Munster, at Listowel in June 1920.

'Well, men,' he began, 'I have something of interest to tell you, something that I am sure you would not wish your wives and families to hear . . .'

'Sinn Féin has had all the sport up to the present, and we are going to have the sport now . . . If a police barracks is burned or if the barracks already occupied is not suitable, then the best house in the locality is to be commandeered, the occupants thrown out into the gutter. Let them die, the more the merrier . . .'

'Police and military will patrol the country roads at least five nights a week. They are not to confine themselves to the main roads but take across the country, lie in ambush, take cover behind fences near the roads, and when civilians are seen approaching shout "Hands up!"

'Should the order not be obeyed, shoot with effect . . . You may make mistakes occasionally and innocent persons may be shot, but that cannot be helped and you are bound to get the right persons sometimes.

'The more you shoot the better I will like you; and I assure you that no policeman will get into trouble for shooting any man and I will guarantee that your names will not be given at the inquest.

'Hunger strikers will be allowed to die in jail, the more the merrier. Some of them have died already, and a damn bad job they were not all allowed to die. As a matter of fact some of them have already been dealt with in a manner their friends will hear about . . .'

The accents of imperial militarism have not changed over the years between the unsuccessful war to hold Ireland, and the current war, which will also be unsuccessful, to hold Cyprus.

Colonel Smyth was shot dead a month later in Cork County Club.

Guess who?

'The one serious question that arises to give one pause is how it should have been possible for the international communist movement to have built up this man, whose arrogance of character and limitation of intellect cry out from every page, into a major figure; this, it seems to me, is a problem (I do not suggest it was ever a simple one) which needs serious and self-critical consideration.'

—Arnold Kettle in Labour Monthly, October 1958, p. 477. The reference is not to J. V. Stalin but to . . . Howard Fast.

Back numbers wanted

The set of The Newsletter in the British Library of Political and Economic Science lacks vol. i, nos. 2, 3 and 6, and vol. ii, no. 47.

This library, which is attached to the London School of Economics, is one of the most important centres of research for students—both British and oversea—working on the modern history of the working-class movement. The importance of ensuring that our publications are fully available there will be appreciated.

If any reader has a clean copy of one of the missing issues, and is ready to part with it, please send it to me at The Newsletter's address (not direct to the library) and it will be passed on.

BRIAN PEARCE

LETTERS

IT'S THE BOSSES WHO CAUSE STRIKES, SAYS NUM BRANCH SECRETARY

THE branch committee of the Ackton Hall (Yorks.) branch of the National Union of Mineworkers unanimously agree that we must concentrate all our energies between now and the General Election to build up support for the Labour Party and so enable them to win.

In the mining industry, as in all other industries, the Tories are putting misleading accounts into the newspapers to gull the public.

'The £20-per-week mineworkers,' they say. We know that only very few get such a wage. The majority underground get less than £10 per week, and the surface worker's top wage is only £8 10s.

In regard to the number of strikes, practically all of them are caused by the bosses' cutting down wages or else victimizing workmen who stand up for their rights.

Since nationalization the pits are a lot safer to work in than before, and it is the finest thing that was ever brought about for the mineworker for this reason alone.

So let us return a Labour government for the benefit of all workers in all trades.

Thomas J. Watton, branch secretary, Ackton Hall NUM

BOAC DISPUTE SHOULD HAVE BEEN COVERED LAST WEEK

I SHOULD like to point out what I thought was a serious omission from THE NEWSLETTER last week—the BOAC dispute.

I think it should have had some coverage, because:

1) Just as at Shell Mex, the shop stewards' organization was under attack.

2) Just as at Shell Mex, the link between the union officials and the employing class was exposed. One official who is a member of the Labour Party national executive has been hand in glove with the BOAC management.

A big national issue such as this should have been discussed by The Newsletter.

Leeds 12

Dennis Gilligan

[The court of inquiry met on the Wednesday. The AUBTW suspensions, which directly concerned us, took place on the same day. We print first thing on Thursday morning.

Since we have an editorial staff of precisely one man, and not enough money for the large-scale resetting and rearrangement of pages that richer papers can indulge in at the last minute, a choice had to be made. We remade the front page on what seemed the main issue.

When we have more money and more staff we shall be in a position to give a better coverage.—Editor.]

RIGHT TO FIGHT OWN EMPLOYERS MUST BE REASSERTED ONCE AND FOR ALL

A SIGNIFICANT lesson must be drawn from the witch-hunt against THE NEWSLETTER and the national industrial rank-and-file Conference.

This campaign and its passive acceptance by the so-called Left show just how far a climate has been created in this country in which the right of workers to strike is disappearing from our 'democratic heritage'.

The Statute Book need not prohibit strikes and workers' associations when the leadership of the trade union movement and the established parties of Labour are willing and anxious to do the job.

CONFERENCE (Continued from front page)

and news is rolling in of coaches booked for London from major industrial centres to bring the delegates in groups.

Sponsors now include leading militants and stewards among the building workers, dockers, engineers, vehicle builders, electricians, sheet metal workers, boilermakers, miners and transport workers.

They come from places as far apart as Birmingham, Coventry, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham and Salford, as well as many from London itself.

The letters that accompany delegates' application forms belie the slanders of the capitalist Press, the Right-wing union leaders and the Communist Party leaders.

AUBTW members rally round

Five stewards on the Hillington Estate, Glasgow, urge the Conference to discuss redundancy, speed-ups, lowering of bonus rates and victimization as questions to be tackled 'not so much by the individual factory but by groups of factories and even regions'.

AUBTW supporters of the Conference in a Midlands industrial city write:

'After recent experiences we have had with the local "servants of our union" when we were on strike, we agree that it is essential for ordinary workers to get together to fight the attacks of the employers.'

'Such people,' they continue, 'are incapable today of fighting for the workers. So what are they going to be like when it really needs fighters to win a struggle for the workers?'

'Let us hope that the real militant workers get together at this Conference and form a fighting machine capable of uniting the workers to defeat the capitalist gangsters and the Tories.'

The condemnation of a dispute as 'unofficial', the expulsion of militants from their unions and the open alliance of trade union leaders with the employers, so disgracefully demonstrated on the South Bank, are regarded by the ruling class as far more effective than government action.

Yet few voices are heard in the Labour movement warning against the dangerous stage matters have reached.

Surely the time has come to note the parallel between a fascist corporative constitution with State-controlled Labour syndicates staffed by government nominees, the banning of all independent workers' organizations and the repression of strikes—and British 'democracy', where an ostensibly independent but equally slavish trade union bureaucracy does the job for the government and the employers.

Old battles once again

There should be no illusions about this. We are faced once again, in a different form, with the old battles the working class fought and won a century ago—battles for the right of combination and the right to withhold labour.

These rights may exist according to the law of the land, but Transport House has its own codes, and they have nothing in common with working-class interests.

The workers on the job and their chosen representatives, the shop stewards, are no longer supposed to know their own interests best. Instead it is the union official with his expense account and limousine who is to be the sole arbiter.

The witch-hunt against The Newsletter and the Conference must be regarded as a challenge to all militant workers and a threat to the hard-won gains of a century of struggle.

The sordid alliance of employers, Press, trade union officialdom and the Dennis Goodwins must be exposed and defeated, and the right of workers on their own jobs to fight their own employers must be reasserted once and for all.

London, N.W.6

P. McGowan

A Nottingham shop steward writes:

'Redundancy, unemployment and a wage freeze are now major problems in the engineering industry.'

'Work out a policy'

'The Newsletter Conference will be a means for all trade unionists to work out a policy for the branches and the shop floor.'

Councillor Lance Lake, a member of Leeds district committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union says:

'I feel strongly the lack of leadership in both industrial and political fields.'

'Not only is there no positive programme, no energetic drive towards socialism, there is not even any preparation to meet the onslaught that the Tories and the employers are beginning against the working class.'

Coun. Lake adds: 'One of the demands that must be brought out at the Conference and widely spread around the movement as a whole is that an end be put to the privileges and "perks" of union officials.'

'Conference is long overdue'

Another Leeds militant, stewards' convener John Walls, of George Mann's, thinks the Conference will 'prove invaluable' and declares:

'The trade union leaders expose themselves day by day as incapable of combating the pressure applied by the employers.'

'The need for a rank-and-file movement to discuss these problems,' he adds, 'becomes ever more necessary.'

The secretary of a branch of the Transport and General Workers' Union writes: 'My own feelings on this Conference are that it is long overdue, in face of the concerted attack by both the employers and the Tory government.'