

SOCIALIST REVIEW

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW, BUT INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

VOL. 6 No. 10

JULY, 1957

SIXPENCE

This Issue includes :

Labour's pension plan

Labour's colonial policy

The strike movement

The fight against apathy

Socialist Forums in Scotland

Youth and the t.us.

Parliamentary report, and

Gomulka's Poland

The Government is on the war-path

WE MUST STORM THE TORIES NOW

THE TORIES are having it too much their own way. And they are going the whole way. They have rushed through with their H-bomb tests to the bitter end, making a mockery of the uneasiness, the fears and the opposition of vast sections of the population, not only in Britain but in many other countries.

They have served notice on working class standards by pushing through the Rents Act whose bite we are only now beginning to feel.

They are busy sapping these standards even more by gouging the services provided by local authorities. Local initiative in housing has already been destroyed by the abolition of subsidies and the high bank rate. Local provision of education, fire brigades, personal health services, redevelopment, road safety are threatened by the proposed changeover from proportional grants to block grants, from a government subsidy measured by the amount of service given to a fixed, frozen subsidy based on the number of people served.

The faster the Tories build their inequality state the more unpopular they become. And the more that happens the less can they rely on conformity by consent, the more must they coerce and threaten. Telephone tapping, university spying, security checks in factories—the pillars of civil liberty are crumbling before the Tories' inability to satisfy the legitimate demands of the British people.

They are feeling the winds of unpopularity. They are preparing for

the next election. As the *Economist* writes, "the shifting of more responsibility to the ratepayer makes possible a more than proportionate saving in national taxation." And we know who will benefit from the Tories' pre-election, vote-catching budget of the future.

So far, the Labour Party leadership has let matters slide. The Rents Bill was met with shouts in Parliament but silence outside. They allowed the Bombs to fall on Christmas Island with

greater than Christian meekness as they balanced between their angry rank-and-file and their bipartisan foreign policy. The struggle over local government reform is scarcely joined.

Are the Labour leaders waiting for the "swing" to throw the Tories out? Has the election expert, the statistician plotting the graph of bye-election popularity taken over from the Labour Party propagandist?

We've had enough of the back-room boys. It is time the leadership stepped out from the corridors and lobbies on to the platform. The issues are there to fuel a national campaign. Demonstrations, mass meetings, massive propaganda; bringing politics into the factories and the factories into politics—these are the weapons that the Lab-

our leadership have to hand. These are the weapons we must get them to use in a national campaign to oust the Tories now.

In two months we'll be having our Annual Conference. We must let the Platform know that the movement is waiting for a change from the game of swings and roundabouts.

We want the Tories out; we want a Labour Government in on the basis of a socialist policy of:

nationalization under workers' control,
national planning,
extended social services, including housing, health and education,
a socialist foreign policy of peace and colonial freedom.

Labour's Colonial Policy

By Peggy Rushton • National Secretary, MCF

The latest Labour Policy document on Economic Aid for the Colonies is undoubtedly one of the most important yet published, not so much for what it says, as for the issues it raises and the basic discussion which it should stir up throughout the Labour movement.

The document sets out the Colonies' need for increased productivity to raise the standard of living of their people and to enable them to free themselves from disease, malnutrition and ignorance. With great frankness it faces the fact that private investment is in the Colonies for what it can get out of them, and that it will do little to raise the standard of living of the people... in fact private investment, aided by reactionary political policy, has been a major factor in keeping the standard of living of the colonial peoples depressed. Public investment is therefore needed to supply the schools, hospitals, roads and houses "for which, at the outset, the colonies themselves cannot afford to pay."

Labour's Plan

The means by which the Labour Party propose this should be done are summarised in the following eight points set out at the end of the publication:

1. Increase grants to the colonies under the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts.
2. Increase Britain's contributions to the United Nations Technical Assistance Board.

3. Support the immediate launching of the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development and offer to make our own contribution to the Fund immediately.

4. Begin at once to announce plans to expand Britain's aid by allocating an average of 1 per cent. of our national income over a period of years as Britain's contribution to the development of backward and colonial territories through the existing government, United Nations and other appropriate agencies.

5. Help our colonies stabilise the prices of their exports by negotiating long term bulk purchase agreements with them on fair terms.

6. Take the lead in the United Nations in seeking international agreements to stabilise world prices of basic foodstuffs and raw materials.

7. Expand the Colonial Development Corporation in order to enable it to undertake essential development work in all the underdeveloped countries of the Commonwealth.

8. Encourage the development of co-operatives on both social and economic grounds.

The first question Socialists will ask themselves is: Will these plans do anything to help the people of the colonies achieve a higher standard of living... to obtain education, health services, etc.? Will it, in fact, help to give them control of the wealth they create?

For it must be pointed out that the problem of poverty in many of the colonies cannot be attributed to a lack of natural resources but to the lack of

COLONIAL

capital formation due to exploitation by external investors. Two obvious examples are Northern Rhodesia and Malaya.

Exploitation in figures

Northern Rhodesia is rich in copper. Her copper production amounts to over £120 million a year. Yet only 13 per cent. of the money income of Northern Rhodesia finds its way into the pockets of the African people who form 97 per cent. of the population. The wage paid to an African mine-worker averages £160 a year. (The average wage of the European mine-worker is over £2,000 a year.) Wages paid to Africans in other industries are even less. *Barclays Bank Overseas Review* for June 1957 quotes the wages of Africans in the Chocolate and Sugar industry, the food preparation industries, and the tobacco industry as £83, £29, and £58 a year respectively.

In Malaya over £200 million was paid out of the country in dividends and profits between the years 1949 to 1953... an average of £40 million a year. Yet the average wage of a rubber tapper at that time was £8.10 a month and over 40 per cent. of all children of school going age were not going to school. In January 1956 it was estimated that nearly £12 million was needed to remedy the hospital deficiencies in the Federation.

One result of this exploitation is that the people of these territories are too poor to buy British goods! One cannot sell to people who have no money

Turn to back page



"But mother, why can't I let off my H-bomb in the garden—Mr. Selwyn Lloyd says it's harmless to the human race?"

By Belsky of the Daily Herald

YOUTH

JIMMY YOUNG, vice-chairman, Central Scotland ASW
writes on

YOUNG WORKERS and the TRADE UNIONS

Trade unions exist to protect and further the interests of working people and to provide them with wide opportunities to improve their standard of life. What is at stake is much more than mere working conditions. A young worker's life in a factory or office cannot be separated from his or her social life in a broader social environment. The amount of money that a young worker earns determines his way of life and, more important, his future.

If trade unions exist to better the conditions of working people, how far have they been successful? The important fact which emerges from trade union history is that the measure of a trade union's success is determined by its strength. And its strength lies in its organisation—in the unity and solidarity of its members and in the quality of its leaders.

Clearly, British trade unions have, over the years, won higher wages and, through parliamentary activity, social services, etc. The struggle for such reforms has had an important bearing on the development of class consciousness and working class organization. Even although Britain is not yet a Socialist country, the workers would

be much poorer without their trade unions.

What about the workers who are not members of trade unions? Theoretically, they are opposed to the aims and objects of trade unionism. Practically, they take a share of all of the benefits which trade unions have won in active struggle with the employers. Many of them are miserable hypocrites—thousands of others have not yet been convinced of the need to join a trade union. But the very important thing is that they give the employers strong excuses to reject applications for wage increases. They also weaken the bargaining position of trade unions. They therefore deprive

themselves and their fellow workers of their right to a share of increased productivity or profits. Thus the non-unionist has been well described as being akin to a thief.

Is not compulsory trade unionism contrary to freedom and therefore bad in principle? If the non-unionist is equivalent to a thief, why should we want to defend his "freedom"? Clearly, there is no more justification for freedom for the non-unionist than for the thief. The paradoxical aspect of this situation is that it is usually those who argue that the thief should be locked up who also oppose compulsory trade unionism in the factory or the office.

Human rights vs. property rights

If the organised trade unionists are justified in imposing compulsory trade unionism, are not the employers equally justified in insisting on non-union labour? The underlying assumption of this question is that the workers and employers are similar. In fact, the employers and the workers are totally different in every obvious and conceivable way. The employers are concerned about the process of production for profit in which the worker is merely "a factor of production"—but the workers are concerned about what they can buy out of the miserable wages of their labour.

What about the "good" non-union firms? Actually, the relatively good conditions in these factories and offices

are created only because of the existence of trade unions. Such conditions are the price that "progressive" firms have paid to "keep out the unions." These conditions are therefore a reflection of trade-union activity for better wages and conditions. So that even the good conditions in non-union firms are a result of ceaseless trade union struggles for advancement in working class living standards.

Why force the odd religious person to join a trade union against his or her will? Because we have already seen that wage workers stand to rise or fall together, and that non-unionism robs all workers, irrespective of religion or sex, of their right to higher wages. Anyway the real religious person would not want to deprive other workers of higher wages. And by forcing some reluctant workers to join a trade union, in any case, we are not asking them to act contrary to their religious beliefs. Also, we are not asking the odd religious worker to accept our political beliefs.

Trade unions will continue to fight for better wages and conditions. They will, moreover, insist on work for all, overwork for none; and a worthwhile life for all workers. The measure of the trade unions' success will, of course, be determined by the strength of the trade unions and by the inroads that can be made into the field of non-unionism.

NCLC SOCIALIST FORUM

There will be no meeting of the NCLC Socialist Forum during July owing to the Summer holidays. The next NCLC Forum will take place on Sunday, September 1st.

Is the Labour Party moving on the industrial front?

asks N. Sween, from the Eastern Region

SOME MONTHS AGO the Labour Party appointed an industrial organiser for the Eastern Region. This was a new venture for the Party, in the nature of an experiment. For although its ties with the trade-union movement have always been close, they have been tighter at the top than at the bottom. Unlike the Communist Party, the Labour Party has hitherto always steered clear of political organization on the workshop level.

The new departure is to be applauded to the hougsetops if it is meant to correct this fault. If the appointment of an industrial organizer presages the formation of Labour Party groups in the factories, where a socialist policy on factory and industrial problems will be hammered out and where industrial and political policies can be fused into a militant programme to oust the Tories and their capitalist system, there can be nothing better for the movement.

But if the only aim is to substitute the collection of subscriptions at work for the difficult job of collecting them at home, there is no point to it. However much the Constituency Party organisations might benefit in money terms, they will gain nothing in support or activity.

Labour Party workers will join factory groups if they can see that they can help them in their everyday problems. They will neither collect nor be collected on any wide scale if the Labour Party cannot give, as well as take, at this level.

THE NEW REASONER A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF SOCIALIST HUMANISM

The Autumn Number will include theoretical studies of contemporary Imperialism and of Laski's writings: an important study of the problems of steel nationalisation: drawings and notes on South Africa (Paul Hogarth): a short story of Doris Lessing: documents, poems, discussion and reviews. Copies of the Summer Number are still available.

Annual Subscription 15/-. single copies 4/-. from E. P. Thompson, Holly Bank, Whitegate, Halifax, Yorks.

SOCIALIST FORUMS

Readers of this paper will want to get in touch with the Socialist Forum in their locality. In order to assist them and also help the Forum Movement we hope to publish Forum news frequently and feature a regular list of local Forum secretaries. An initial list is printed below. It will be added to in the coming months.

FIFE
Lawrence Daly, 145 Kirkland Gardens, Ballingay, Fife.

HALIFAX
Jim Enright, 145 Cousin Lane, Ovenden, Halifax.

LONDON
Central Secretary, Alan Lamond, 242 Willesden Lane, N.W.2.

Islington, Marcia Emerson, 20 Cannonbury Park North, N.1.

Paddington, Michael Segal, 38 Warrington Crescent, W.9.

St. Marylebone, Michael Kidron, 30 Hamilton Terrace, N.W.8.

NEWCASTLE
Jimmy Johnson, 11 Portia Street, Ashington, Northumberland.

NOTTINGHAM
R. Kreigman (treasurer), c/o 6 Dunkery Road, Clifton Estate, Nottingham. (Send 2/6 to be on mailing list.)

SHEFFIELD
John Hughes, 56 Nether Edge Road, Sheffield 7.

A SCOTTISH CONFERENCE of Socialist Forums was held in Glasgow on Sunday, the 13th of June. This conference undoubtedly marked a very important step forward in this part of the country.

The three existing Socialist Forums—or rather the organising committees which have been recently set up—are planning to hold their first public meetings during the next two or three months in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Fife.

The development of the Socialist forum movement has been very slow in Scotland because the rebel elements have only broken with the Communist

THE FORUM MOVEMENT STARTS IN SCOTLAND writes a Correspondent

Party within the past two or three months. Moreover many of the rebels have decided that they will stay in the Party in order to remove the Stalinist leaders.

The conference unanimously passed a resolution, saying: that a Scottish Central Organising Committee of the Scottish Socialist Forums be set up to co-ordinate and continue Socialist Forum activity and to continue the discussion. Also, that a representative area national committee be set up. The members of the committee—who were elected unanimously—were: Don Renton, Laurence Daly, Jim Campbell, Hamish Gardener and Hugh Dunlop.

The conference gave the national co-ordinating committee powers to help to build up new forums in other areas and to discuss the prospects of organising propaganda meetings in places like Fife where the local Labour Parties are very right wing. In Fife for example, the rebels have created a loosely-organised Socialist League which has conducted agitational meetings on such questions as the H-bombs and old-age pensions.

The issues debated

About thirty people from rebel Communist groups and left-wing labour parties put forward various ideas on the way forward in the coming months. A majority of the comrades—though there were various other ideas on the immediate steps—agreed that the Socialist Forums should continue to discuss questions of Socialism, Democracy, Workers' Control, etc., etc. It was also generally agreed that we ought to build up a real Socialist wing in the Labour Party. Some of the comrades expressed the view that at least

a minority of comrades might have to form an independent Socialist Party, so that genuine Socialist propaganda could be aimed at those workers who are not yet active in either the trade-union or labour movement.

CP crisis continues

Don Renton, a former Scottish organiser of the CP, pointed out that the crisis was far from being over in the Communist Party—but rather that it was just beginning. He therefore suggested that the Socialist Forums should attempt to influence all of the critics of the CP, and that at least some of the theoretical Forum discussions should be related to the day-to-day struggles like the Rents Question.

The Socialist Forums look as if they will benefit from their comparatively late development and the opportunity to learn from the experience of the English ones. There is clearly a reasonable number of rebel Communists and militant Socialists who are prepared to support the Forums.

The rebel Communists especially will need the Forums. Although they realize the necessity of trying to sink their roots in the mass movement, they are not absolutely sure about what they should do next. They want to discuss various problems of Socialist theory and practice.

Send us Forum
news and views.
We'll print it all

FORUM

Tuned to the growing industrial militancy, Seymour Papert analyses

THE STRIKE MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to certain statistics which seem to me to be of great importance. They concern the patterns of development of the strike movement in Britain over the period of thirty years since the General Strike. At the end a list of conclusions will be stated, but no pretence is made that these assertions are **proved** by the figures in the body of the article. They are presented in the spirit of raising discussion about issues which are of the first importance to socialists.

The general impression that there has been a steady growth of industrial action in Britain is clearly borne out by the strike statistics. The number of man-days lost to industry through strikes grew from 1.4 million in 1950 to 3.8 million in 1955, dropped a little in 1956, and has already exceeded the 1955 level in 1957.

The question which immediately presents itself is how these figures compare with past strike rates in Britain and in other countries.

To get a clear answer to the first part of this it is necessary to divide the recent history of British Labour into two periods: before the General Strike and after it.

The General Strike and after

In the period before 1926 the strike rate was considerably higher than today. During 1914-18 it was around 5 million; after the war it averaged 49 million for three years, fell considerably and then hit 162 million for 1926 itself.

The second period starts off with an extremely small number of strikes for '27 and '28 which increased in 1929-1932 to a level comparable to today's. During the remainder of the thirties it was erratic, falling under a million in 1934, rising to 3.4 million in 1937 to drop back to 1.3 million in the following year.

The small figure for 1927-28 was almost certainly due to the after-effects of the General Strike¹. The treacherous defeat left the working class stunned and bewildered while the strength of the Strike was such an enormous shock to the Union leadership that they fell over one another to devise policies of compromise and negotiations whose stamp marks the whole subsequent history of British Labour.²

During the second world war the number of working days lost fell considerably but it is worth noting that this was due more to strikes being shorter than to their being fewer. The sharp recovery began in 1944 when the miners contributed 2.5 million to a total of 3.7 million days of strike. A drop followed under the Labour government which reached its extreme in 1950 (1.4 million) since when there has been a regular year by year increase.

During the post-war years the average British strike rate has been much higher than the German, about the same as the French (if allowance is made for demonstration strikes) and much lower than the North American.

The figures for the United States are particularly interesting partly because she gives us an insight into the effect on strikes of a higher standard of living than Europeans know, partly because in many respects Britain shows a stronger resemblance to her than to our continental neighbours.

The number of strikes in America is enormous. During the period 1937-54 she accounted for half the number of man-days lost to the industries of the 28 most developed capitalist countries. With a post-war average of 30 million days of strike per year she is the only country where the number of days **per worker per year** often exceeds 1. For most countries one-third is very high.

Duration and demands

There are two respects in which Britain and the United States stand apart from the capitalist countries of Continental Europe. These are the average durations of strikes and the demands on which they are fought.

The average length of American strikes is nearly two weeks, that of British strikes close on one working week while in France, Italy, etc., it is considerably smaller.

As for the content of the strike demands, the salient feature is that in the continental countries wage demands account for 70-90% of strikes while in Britain and the U.S.A. the corresponding figure is under 50%.

A closer look at the British figures together with this brief comparison enables us to pick out certain aspects of the present situation as being characteristic of ripening (perhaps one should add: and prospering) capitalism. The first of these is the bare existence of strikes. Both the American experience and the analysis of periods of slump and boom tell us that there is no reason to expect strikes to disappear in periods when capitalism can for one reason or another offer increased wages, relatively full employment, etc.

But there are strikes and strikes. One can imagine a situation in which ten million docile workers came out once a year in obedience to a call from a perfectly bureaucratized and reformist trade union leadership . . . and went back two days later after acting as the background for an annual ceremony of negotiating a national wage agreement for the coming year.

Can we tell from our statistics whether we are getting closer to this hypothetical kind of situation or further away from it? We can, and the answer is that we are moving more and more away from it!

From 'wages' to 'conditions'

The position of wage demands in relation to other strike demands seems to be very clearly characteristic of ripening capitalism. Not only does it mark off the US and Britain, undoubtedly the two "most capitalist" countries, but it has been a trend in Britain since 1911 so that it cannot be brushed off as a passing phase. Just as important as the decline in total disputes involving wages is the change in structure of these issues. Of the strikes classified in the Ministry of

Labour Gazette under the heading "Wage issues" only a small percentage are disputes involving claims for wage increases. In fact just 5.8% and 8.1% were in 1954 and 1955 respectively. On the other hand during the period 1927-38 the figure was 30%³ even without counting the now rare struggles against wage decreases which were common during the thirties. The aspect of this that I want to emphasize is that it means a shift from the struggle over issues common to all workers, to struggles more intimately connected with the working conditions in the individual shop or pit.

A second change parallel with this one is the increase in the number of strikes falling under the heading "Other working arrangements, rules and discipline." During the period 1927-38 this group totalled 13% of all strikes while in 1954 and 1955 it reached 37% and 35% respectively. **Even more clearly than the other, this change marks a tendency for workers to revolt against the conditions of work in the shop, that is, to interfere with the holy of holies of capitalism, the so-called prerogative of management.**

The unofficial strike

But worse still than the fact that they meddle is that they meddle without being supervised by their respective leaders. In fact the evolution of the strike slogans is directly linked with the growth of the importance of unofficial strikes, shop-stewards' committees, etc. I shall discuss this trend in detail in a separate article which will probe into the actual slogans and organisations of the unofficial strikes, but a few general remarks on the subject are necessary here in order to round off the picture.

It is common knowledge that the shop-stewards and union head offices of many industries live in a state of chronic tension. And bitterly as all the upholders of law and order complain about workers interference with management they never lose an opportunity to poke their noses into this conflict . . . of course always finding themselves on the side of the head office.

Thus **The Economist** writes: "It is not only particular industries which suffer from the stewards' irresponsible power. It is, **above all**, Trade Union Authority" (April 20, 1957. My emphasis.) How kind dear uncle is to the trade union movement! At about the same time Lord Cameron used his position as president of the Court of Inquiry into Briggs to hand out a piece of avuncular advice on the same lines: ". . . it will be in the unions' interests to investigate the shop stewards' organisation." (**Manchester Guardian**, March 12, 1954). **The Economist** followed up with an emphatic echo: "The court recommended that the unions concerned should immediately look into the organisation of the shop stewards' committee and liquidate its excess power." And of course it is not only over Briggs that this chorus has been sung. The report of the Court of Inquiry into the Newspaper strike had similar harsh words about irresponsible actions (**Ministry of Labour Gazette**, 1955, p. 126) . . . etc., etc.

It is not by accident that the conflict exists nor that the line-up is so clear. We have already remarked that since 1926 the TUC (by which I mean the entire machinery of the upper layers of the bureaucracy in the trade unions) has followed a consistent policy of co-existence. Becoming more and more plainly an organisation of professional negotiators it can, as such, be assimilated into the running of the country. In this capacity it necessarily sees the class struggle in a particular way—**itself as the officer corps, the workers as obedient soldiers** (—if the idea of soldiers seems to fierce one can always think of the salvation army.)

No brakes on class struggle

But the class struggle tends constantly to burst out of the limits set it by this conception, and so to **by-pass the TUC machinery**. It is in the factory that the worker is exploited and it is in the factory that he comes into contact and into conflict with capital and management. Here he becomes angry and here he fights—thus creating, for example, the state of affairs at Briggs that Lord Cameron describes as "anarchy and suspicion" and that shows itself in 234(!) unofficial stoppages there since the signing—**BY THE UNIONS—of an agreement to forbid them in August 1955.**

This struggle—some people call it **Irresponsibility**, Herbert Morrison called it **Egoism**—has very little in common with the board room negotiations of the TUC. It has no use for national negotiators and is ready to be obedient to no-one (as Lord Cameron bitterly complains). Little wonder there is tension, for this tendency threatens, should it get too far out of hand, to call in question the very existence of the TUC and with it, very likely, of capitalism itself.

This shift in the struggle is clearly reflected in the strike statistics and will appear yet more vividly in the promised second article. But before closing I should mention a secondary reflection of the same process. This is the decline in the number of strikes for "trade union status" from 10% to 1.5%. At first glance this might be put down to the victory of the working class in finally establishing the right of Trade Unions to exist, to the power of the TUC, etc. To a certain extent this is so. But to a large extent the change is that the Unions have moved into respectability and Lord Cameron has taken on the job of defending them while a strike in defence of a local leader is more likely to be put down as an infringement of an agreement signed by the union than as defence of trade unionism.

It would be rash to venture an estimate of the number of workers involved who have thought through the implications of their position and experiences. But fortunately this is not very important. What counts is that the experiences are lived through and, consciously or not, men are forced into a position in relation to capitalism and the trade unions. We have to assess (or dismiss) the historical importance of these processes. I think it is great.

INDUSTRIAL

¹ Some commentators associate the low level of strikes for these years with the boom. See, for example, Woodbury, **Revue International de Travail**, November, 1949. This seems to ignore the elephant while pointing to the flea—especially since it puts Britain out of step with most highly industrialised countries for which statistics are available (for example, the USA, France, Poland), in which the strike rate was higher during these boom years than in the slump. Countries for which the reverse was true are Switzerland, Sweden and Holland.

² See Knowles: **Strikes** (London, 1952). Unfortunately I could not consult this book while writing this article and so reference to it are from memory.

³ Figure calculated from data given by Gomberg in **Quarterly Journal of Economics**, November, 1944.

POLICY

The plight of Britain's old people has reached the dimensions of a national scandal. Their pensions are grossly inadequate. They are insufficient to buy even the bare essentials of life. They condemn the old aged pensioners to a process of slow starvation, eking out their last few years on poverty, misery and despair.

The Labour Party has now published a policy statement—**National Superannuation**—which shows what it intends to do about the problem. Is the proposed scheme enough? Will it satisfy socialists? The following articles show what can be expected and what cannot be expected from the Labour Party plan.

LABOUR'S PENSION SCHEME

By OWEN ROBERTS • London Correspondent of *Labor Action*

AT THE OUTSET, and before attempting any detailed comment on Labour's recent proposals for a national superannuation scheme, it will be well to give credit to the National Executive Committee for at least trying to remedy one of the most noticeable deficiencies of Britain's welfare state capitalism. The more cynical sections of the capitalist press, seeking to excuse the Tory Party's own inactivity on old age pensions, have sneeringly indicated that Labour's plan is a vote-catching stunt, formulated by Transport House officials whose eyes are fixed firmly on the next election.

Coming from newspapers which have a long and grubby record of election stunts on behalf of the Tory Party, this allegation would be sheer hypocrisy even were it true. One does not need to be a Socialist, or even a member of the Labour Party, to be painfully aware of the fact that for most workers in Britain the arrival of old age brings with it the unpleasant prospect of poverty.

The plight of the old

At the current levels of old age pensions a man and wife draw benefit of £3 5s. a week, or just over 27 per cent. of the average weekly earnings of an industrial worker. Even the meagre standard of living which this pension affords is continually being depressed by inflation, and in particular by government-inspired policies which push up the price of essentials which comprise a large proportion of old aged pensioners' budgets. This is clearly indicated by the fact that nine years ago the old age pension of a man and wife, although lower in money terms, was equivalent to just over 30 per cent of the average industrial workers' earnings; hence the standard of living for the retired workers has fallen in recent years.

This, basically, was the problem confronting the Labour Party executive when it sat down to formulate its pension policy. It had before it a problem common to most capitalist economies, and it attempted to remedy it.

Labour's plan

When judged by orthodox economic standards the solution found by the Labour Executive is passable. It seeks to give every worker a pension equal to half pay when he reaches the age of 65 and to build up a pension fund which is financially sound when judged by normal commercial standards. But Socialists have to apply a different yardstick in order to measure the value of this plan. For us the test is not how the plan will fit in with the existing capitalist economy and conform to commercial insurance practice while giving the workers maximum benefit, but how it will advance the economy along the road to Socialism and a complete removal of all the inequalities of capitalism.

When Labour's pensions plan is measured against this yardstick it falls far short of requirements. And when

it is also viewed against other aspects of existing Labour policy it contains features which can only be described as dangerous and which, instead of improving the position of the workers as a whole, might well worsen them.

The workers foot the bill

The first point to catch a Socialist eye in this respect is the way in which the pension fund will be financed. As with the present National Insurance Fund, the proposed superannuation fund will draw its money from three sources—workers, employers and the Chancellor the Exchequer. It is tentatively suggested that workers would be required to contribute three per cent. of their earnings each week and the employers a sum equal to five per cent. of the workers' earnings. To this the Exchequer would add a yearly sum equal to two per cent. of the average national earnings.

On the surface this looks fine—particularly as the employer will pay more than the worker. But underneath there is the danger that the workers will pay the lot in a round-about fashion.

Faced with a five per cent. rise in his wage bill, an employer will immediately look around for ways to make it good and thus preserve his profit level. He will either pass the cost on to the consumer in the shape of higher prices or—if this is not possible because of the danger of falling sales—seek other ways of cutting costs. He can do this either by reducing his labour force while maintaining output levels or, as a longer term measure, dig his heels in against future wage demands by the workers.

Whichever course of action the employer takes the workers will find themselves footing the bill. If the employers' pension contribution is passed on in the form of higher prices the result will be a twist to the inflationary spiral and a consequent reduction in the real value of the workers' wages. If the labour force is cut back while output is maintained the result will be a worsening of work standards. Or, if the employer seeks to tack his pension contributions onto his wages bill, unions will have it flung across the negotiating table each time they seek a wage increase.

This may seem, especially to those with a background of capitalist economics, rather like fortune telling and crystal gazing. But the history of capitalism teaches us that capitalists see as their first task the protection of their profit levels, and the introduction of a superannuation scheme by a Labour Government is not going to effect any drastic change in their way of thinking.

The class struggle continues

Such a situation, where the introduction of a superannuation scheme could lead to a decline in workers' standards, could be avoided—but only if the government in power pursued a policy which included a stop on prices and profits as part of an over-all economic

plan. This involves a far greater degree of public ownership and control than the Labour leaders are at present prepared to accept as a policy for the next Labour government, and so one is left with the conclusion that unions and employers will have to fight it out after the pension fund is established, with the employers having the decided advantage.

Of course, a much better way of overcoming the problem would be not to have a superannuation scheme based on normal insurance company standards. Instead of drawing contributions from workers, employer and state, all the funds could be provided by the state.

Need for nationalisation

Such a scheme is considered, but only briefly, in the Labour Executive's policy document. It is rejected for what are described as "two fatal objections." First, say the Labour leaders, there is a limit to the amount which taxpayers are prepared to pay out in taxes. Thus a scheme financed out of Exchequer funds would require such a high level of taxation that the taxpayers would jib at paying it. The alternative, says the policy document, would be to economise drastically on other government spending, "health and education for instance."

Here again we are faced with the fact that the people responsible for preparing this statement are constipated by their diet of capitalist economic theories. Certainly, if one wishes to preserve private capital and the present tax structure, it would be well nigh impossible to build up a pension fund from taxation. But who wants to preserve the existing order? Certainly not Socialists.

At the moment private insurance companies invest their funds in industries and use part of the dividends they obtain to pay benefits; Hugh Gaitskell has said that the national superannuation fund will do the same thing. But surely this is taking a trip around the world in order to get to the other side of the street? An easier, cheaper and more efficient way would be to bring a large section of money-making British industry into public ownership and use part of the profits from those industries to provide pensions for the community which, as a whole, creates the wealth of the industries.

Pensions vs. arms

This, again, implies a drastic extension of Labour's programme in other fields. And until this is done the difficulty of raising taxation will continue to present itself. (It must be added, however, that "health and education" are only part of government spending and a more significant slice—not mentioned in the policy document—is spent on arms. A drastic slashing of the arms programme would go a long way towards paying the cost of a pension scheme. But, again, this would require a change in Labour's foreign policy which is so far not forthcoming.)

The second objection which the

National Executive raises to a wholly state financed pension fund is that a government might slash benefits "in order to weather an economic storm." Says the document: "As long as the benefits are 'earned' by payment of contributions and financed out of an Insurance Fund they are felt to be something which the worker receives as of right and which no politician can take away from him."

It is only the inclusion of the words "felt to be" which prevents this statement from being sheer humbug. As it is it must be attributed once again to the economic orthodoxy which sticks out like a sore thumb throughout the policy document.

The present National Insurance Fund is supposedly based on what the Labour Executive chooses to call the "Insurance Principle," but this does not stop governments monkeying about with it. When the present scheme was established in 1948 the annual Exchequer contribution was set at one-fifth of the total of the contributions paid by workers and employers. In 1951 this proportion was reduced to one-seventh by the Labour Government (the excuse being that owing to full employment the unemployment benefits paid out from the fund were negligible and as consequence there was surplus of income over expenditure. In actuality the move was part of the reduction in social services to meet the arms programme).

The Tories have kept the Exchequer contribution at one-seventh and have also raised the contributions paid by both employers and workers. There is no doubt that at the first signs of a real economic draught they will not hesitate to again reduce the Exchequer contribution (or Exchequer "supplement" as it is revealingly called by the government) and cut the rates of benefit. A backward glance at the record of the pre-war years fully confirms this.

Economic principles and economic life

Thus, the plea that an insurance fund financed entirely by the state could be tinkered with, while one founded on "Insurance Principles" could not, is so much eyewash. Indeed, the policy document itself admits this when it records that by 1960 there will be a deficit of around £145 million in the National Insurance Fund and that by 1980 this will have risen to £424 million. This, says the Labour Executive, is because the "Insurance Principle" is being undermined by the number of older people receiving benefits greater than their contributions and because of inflation. In fact the prospect of a growing deficit shows that there is no such thing as an "Insurance Principle" involved in the fund. Nor can there be any fund which seeks to provide social benefits rather than show a profit.

While insisting on this so-called "Insurance Principle" the policy document shows a complete disregard for general economic facts of life.

[continued next page]

Some are More Equal than others

Writes Raymond Challinor • E.C. Member,
Newcastle-upon-Lyme CLP

THE LABOUR PARTY'S PROPOSALS embody many improvements on existing arrangements. The pensioners will, for example, be protected from the vagaries of inflation, as the pensions will be pegged to a special cost of living index. Also, the scheme goes some of the way to recognising women as individuals in their own rights and not as "dependents."

It is possible to calculate the pensions which people will receive 20 or 30 years hence. These will depend on two factors: the number of years the scheme has been in operation and the actual amount the individual has contributed. As the years go on, the funds will expand, and people will retire on a larger percentage of their pre-retirement income. By the year 2010 this should be, if the scheme has operated 50 years, half the income the person was receiving before retirement.

The good and the bad

This is, as we have said, a big improvement on existing arrangements. It is also a lot better than any of the schemes operated by private insurance companies. The Labour Party proposals are consequently a severe threat to this juicy sector of the capitalist economy. No wonder the chairman of the giant insurance companies have quickly made pronouncements against the scheme. They want to safeguard their profits!

Socialists must defend the National Superannuation Plan against these attacks. The insurance companies, motivated by selfish, profit-seeking, are

Labour's Scheme--ctd.

Throughout it is based on the assumption that, because there has been little unemployment in Britain since the war, there will be little unemployment at any time in the future. This assumption would be valid if at the same time the Labour Party intended, on becoming the government, to pursue a policy of driving rapidly towards Socialism and thus ensuring there would be no booms and slumps with their ups and downs in employment.

But, once again, there is no evidence that the next Labour government will pursue such a policy. And until it does there is always the inherent danger of capitalism that the economy will slump and unemployment will follow. Then where will the precious "Insurance Principle" be?

Any appearance of large scale unemployment means that the income of the superannuation fund will drop with a bang as thousands of workers go on the dole and stop paying their contributions and their employers stop adding their share. If this happens the state will be expected, as at present, to credit the workers with contributions while they are out of work, which means that the state must put extra money into the fund. But, at the same time, the general economic pressure will be reducing the state's own income—for closed factories and unemployed workers can't pay taxes. In such a situation the superannuation scheme will either go bankrupt or ruthlessly slash its benefits. Whatever course of action it takes it will demonstrate the nonsense of the "Insurance Principle."

putting their own interests before those of the community as a whole. They must be stopped.

But this does not mean that socialists should uncritically accept the Labour Party's scheme. It has serious defects. These were recently illustrated when Hilary Marquand, the Party's pensions expert, put the proposals before the Old Aged Pensioners' Association conference at Blackpool. The *Manchester Guardian* reported that he was subjected to "strong and vehement attack."

What pensioners think

The pensioners' criticisms were focussed on two main points: (i) the tying of the size of pension to the amount contributed and (ii) the failure of the scheme to do what it claimed to do—namely, to abolish poverty in old age.

To illustrate the first point, a pensioner took the case of the mother who has spent all her life raising a family. She has made an important contribution to the welfare of the community, perhaps more than the woman who went out to work, but, since the scheme applies the principle of gearing pension to contribution, she will receive a much smaller pension.

The same applies in the case where a husband dies, leaving a wife and family. Under this scheme she can be placed in conditions of severe hardship because she has not made the requisite contributions since she has spent her time at the kitchen sink and not the factory bench.

Again, throughout the document, there is the assumption that for as far as the eye can see in the future the "normal retiring age" (if there is such a thing) for workers will be 65. Further, and again resting on the premise that there will be full employment, there is the assumption that many workers will continue at their jobs after the age of 65 because there is no long queue of younger men waiting to step into their shoes.

This falls down on two counts. First, as previously indicated, it is wishful thinking to assume that there will be continuing full employment while we still have a basically capitalist economy. Second, and more important, no recognition is made of the fact that within the space of a few years the "normal retiring age" for workers might be much lower because of rapid developments now taking place in industrial techniques and usually lumped together under the blanket term of automation.

If Britain is provide decent living standards for the fifty million odd people crowded into its tightly packed islands, then its industries must keep well up with those of other nations. This means automation, and automation means many more machines, far fewer men and a greater output. If unemployment is to be avoided (and it must to make any sense out of automation) certain changes must take place in what is now commonly accepted as normal working life. One of these changes will inevitably be the earlier retirement of workers, thus the "normal retiring age" will be lower than what it is now. If the Labour Party National Executive is aware of this (and aware of the fact that workers expect to be able to retire

But by far the most important aspect of this flaw is that it uses Government funds to perpetuate inequality. This can be seen from the fact that, irrespective of income, a person pays 3 per cent of his income towards his pension and the Exchequer pays a further 2 per cent. This means that the Exchequer pays more towards the rich man's pension than it does towards the poorer man's pension. The rich man's bigger pension is partly the result of his bigger contribution—but partly the result of a bigger subsidy from the state.

Consider, for example, somebody earning £6 a week for the forty years of his working life (the period on which the pension is calculated). He will have had a total of £372 stopped from his wages whereas the man receiving £20 a week will have had £1,248 deducted. However, the poorer man's pension will be supplemented by a combined Exchequer-Employer contribution of £868 as against £2,912 to the richer man's pension. In other words, this scheme gives the richer man over £2,000 more than his less fortunate brother.

It is difficult to see how the Labour leaders can square this policy—a policy of unto him that hath, more shall be given—with their professed intention of reducing the "gross inequalities of society." It is equally difficult to see how they can honestly claim that this scheme "would play an important part in achieving this end."

These subsidies for the rich, this perpetuation of income disparities, has aroused the anger of just those people it was aimed to please—the old aged pensioners. But this does not mean that it has not been favourably received in other quarters: it has made the Tory press coo like turtle doves.

For example, George Schwartz, that reactionary columnist of a reactionary paper, is an enthusiastic supporter. Writing in Lord Kemsley's *Sunday Times*, he commends the Labour Party's scheme: "It is in essence a straightforward exercise in capitalist reasoning, based almost

earlier in financial comfort in the automation age) there is no indication of it in the document on the national superannuation scheme.

Their Plan and ours

All of these criticisms of Labour's scheme (and only space prevents a more detailed examination of them and others of a minor character) lead to several conclusions. First, the entire plan is conceived in terms of orthodox capitalist economics within the limits of the existing structure of welfare state capitalism. Second, and flowing from the first, this makes the plan full of dangers, for it is only workable (even as an orthodox capitalist insurance scheme) in times of economic fair weather. Third, even within the framework of capitalism it fails to recognise the technical developments now piling up in industry and which must cause changes in the composition and age structure of the labour force.

From these primary conclusions there follows the general conclusion that the problem of providing workers with an adequate pension in their old age is tightly bound up with the general development of the economy along Socialist lines. Public ownership of industry to provide a state fund for pensions; an overall economic plan to prevent unemployment; the widespread use of modern techniques to make possible an early retiring age—these are the requirements for security in old age. They cannot be provided by capitalism—welfare state or not—and only when the Labour Party has cast off the shackles of capitalism and adopted a Socialist policy will it be possible to talk in any real terms (such as full pay at fifty, not half pay at sixty-five) about old age.

wholly on capitalist methods of calculation and reckoning. Bless you, I have met stockbrokers who couldn't spell the word dialectic who have read it with interest and understanding.

"There is no mention of or hint about the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. There is no talk about the annihilation of that disreputable trio, rent, interest and profits. There is no nonsense about egalitarianism. On the contrary, the main thesis and principle is that the more you put in the more you take out. In short, chums, it is a stern lecture on the virtues of capitalist attitudes and behaviour.

"Just take the question of rent, interest and profits. You're not advised to abolish them; you're told to go all out for them. You are told specifically that if you pay contributions to a national superannuation scheme you should take jolly good care that the money is invested in profitable ventures."

"Gradualism" or Socialism

"In profitable ventures"—here we have the grounds for Mr. Schwartz's uncontrollable glee. He realises that the Labour plan is based on the assumption that a large section of industry will remain in the hands of big business till 2010—and perhaps beyond that! What is more, this sector must be sufficiently big to absorb a tremendous volume of public investment from the insurance funds.

Could there be any more fitting proof that the Labour leaders had discarded the shabby remnants of their socialist beliefs? Could there be any better way of showing their faith, their confidence, their support for so-called private enterprise than by investing public money in it?

In the past when talking about Socialism they have always mentioned "the inevitability of gradualism," and said that we would gradually transform the economy from being "mixed" into being socialist. But now we see that this gradualism would be outpaced by a snail. In 55 years' time—that is if we are living!—we shall still be living under a capitalist system... if our Labour leaders have their way!

To counter this desertion of socialist principles, Labour left-wingers must point out some elementary principles. They must show that the size of pension depends on two things: the size of the national income and the division of the national income. So long as capitalism exists, then a large section of the country's wealth goes in profits. Another goodly section is wasted through arms expenditure, advertising and unproductive competition. All this adds up to one thing: there is less of the national cake to divide among workers—and pensioners.

A further fact is that capitalism fails to employ its resources to best advantage. Only when conscious planning has been introduced, when production is to meet human needs and not to increase private profit, will the size of the national income be greatly increased. Under such circumstances there would be the basis for a higher standard of living all round—for workers and old aged pensioners alike.

In conclusion, we can therefore see that the interests of retired workers—like those who are still working—is tied up with a struggle for a Socialist Britain. The present position of capitalist Britain is precarious. A slump or a severe financial crisis would capsize it; it would go to the bottom like a sinking ship. And, as the Labour leaders should know, it is foolish to invest in a sinking ship.

Max Mueller is a West German socialist recently returned from a trip to Poland where he spoke with many Polish people including industrial workers, peasants, a medical doctor, management officials, technicians and journalists. Their identities, for obvious reasons, are not divulged.

THE "GOMULKA WAY" IN POLAND

By Max Mueller

1956 goes down in Polish history as an memorable year. In June the Poznan workers struck a blow against the Stalinist dictatorship only to be brutally crushed by the armed forces of the state. In October the people—the anti-Stalinist working class, peasantry, Catholic Church, and old bourgeois elements—carried through a peaceful "revolution." This "revolution," often characterized in Poland as the "October days," was led by the students, journalists and working class which organized mass demonstrations in all leading Polish cities demanding national independence and freedom. The Polish United Workers' Party (Communist), rolling with the punch of "revolution," rehabilitated Gomulka who became head of the Party. Gomulka became the symbol of the anti-Stalinist "revolution" and achieved a great deal of popularity in Poland during the "October days."

The compromises

Gomulka was caught between the seething fervent of the masses and the pressure of the Soviet State whose Red Army was (and is) on Polish soil. An agreement was reached with the Soviet Union which considerably improved the political and economic status of Poland. However, Poland retained her membership in the Warsaw Pact and she remains within the Soviet orbit. Internally, Gomulka reached agreements with the peasants, the petit-bourgeois elements and the Catholic Church.

With regard to the peasants, forced collectivization was ended and now at least 80% of the land is operated under private farms. A great deal of farm produce is sold directly by the peasants to the city people in local markets.

With regard to the petit-bourgeois elements, a considerable number of privately-owned small shops and businesses are now flourishing; however, no industry has been de-nationalized.

Gomulka made a "Concordat" with the Catholic Church which gave the Church much more freedom of operation. Religious education is now taught in the schools by the Church. Other churches also have this same right but the Catholic Church is the dominant church. Social pressure to attend the Catholic classes is great and a number of beatings have been administered to non-Catholic children who refused to attend.

Gomulka has been able to satisfy, at least to some extent, the claims of the peasantry, the petit-bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church. Naturally, these groups, with improved statuses, have to varying degrees, supported the "Gomulka way." There is evidence that they want more, however.

No love for Workers' Councils

The Communist Party, however, does not claim to be a party of the peasantry, the petit-bourgeoisie, or the Catholic Church, but rather a party of the working class. Its actions regarding the working class can best be described by a brief analysis of the workers' council movement.

Following the "October days" a workers' council movement developed in Poland. In November the Polish "parliament", composed of National Unity Front members led by the Communist Party, passed a law concerning workers' councils. It stated, in part, "Workers' councils, elected by all employees of a firm, shall administer the enterprise, which nevertheless remains the property of the State. The director is appointed by the State authorities after agreement with the council; and he has to direct the enterprise in accordance with the plan, the resolutions of the council and orders from a superior state authority. In case of conflict between the director and the council, the final decision lies with the minister." (*Economic Survey of Europe in 1956*, Geneva, United Nations, 1957, pp. 42-43.)

Subsequent statements of Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz and other government officials indicated that the workers' councils should be mainly interested in eliminating waste and raising productivity. The "parliament" under the National Unity Front regarded itself as the supreme political element in Poland.

Class struggle in Poland

The workers' councils did not hew to the Party line. They held a national conference at Chrzanow in February at which workers' council delegates from all over Poland met. The conference call stated that the delegates would discuss the relationships between the workers' councils and plant managements, central administrations, the Communist Party plant fractions and the plant trade union councils. (*Gazeta Krakowska*, organ of the Krakow District Communist Party, Krakow, February 11, 1957, p. 1.)

The delegates to the conference were divided into three different groups: revolutionary socialists, moderates or reformists and Stalinists. The first two groups included both non-Party people as well as Party Members.

The revolutionaries, under the leadership of L. Gozdzik, head of both the workers' council and the factory Communist Party fraction at the Zeran Auto Factory, put forth the slogan of "All power to the workers' councils." Gozdzik stated in an opening speech that there was no time for discussing the details of the relationship between the workers' councils and the central administrations but rather "It is a fight between us and them." The left-wing programme, strongest among the delegates from the large industrial enterprises of Warsaw, Poznan and other big cities, proposed complete workers' control of the economy from bottom to top with power to reside in the workers through their elected representatives in the plants and in the central administrations.

The moderates were anti-Stalinist but not so critical of the regime nor so sharp in their demands for workers' control.

The Stalinists (referred to as conservatives in the Polish press in contrast to the bourgeoisie which is referred to as classical conservative) seeking to divert the revolutionary anti-Stalinist direction of the workers' council delegates, issued an anonymous leaflet which was venomously anti-Semitic. (The Stalinists, supported by

certain bourgeois elements, led anti-Semitic riots this Spring in both Wroclow, formerly Breslau, and Stetecin, formerly Stettin.) This demagoguery proved unsuccessful.

The final resolutions of the workers' council conference, although not as specific and radical as the left-wing proposals, called for workers' control of the economy from the plant level to the central administration. (For the complete text of the resolutions of the conference, see *Gazeta Krakowska*, February 13, 1957, p. 1.)

Although some of the press reported the final resolutions of the conference, Gozdzik's slogan of "All power to the workers' councils" was either ignored or distorted. One newspaper reported it as "All economic power in the plant to the workers' council." Such a distortion indicated that the Communist Party realized the danger of Gozdzik's slogan.

The Workers' Councils now

Today, Polish workers' councils may be divided into two different types—real and fake. There are about 20 real workers' councils in which power is lodged in the workers who elect the director of the factory and has the right to hire and fire him. The relationship between the council and the central administration, although clear in the aforementioned law, has been hazy in practice. There have been numerous cases of clashes. These real workers' councils are concentrated mainly in the basic factories such as Zeran and the WFM Motorcycle plants in Warsaw and the locomotive and farm machinery factories in Poznan. All but the 20 real workers'

councils are phony in that their power is only advisory.

Who controls the factories?

Conditions in the real workers' councils are not all rosy. Following are excerpts from an interview I held with a Poznan worker who is employed in one of the factories which has a real workers' council:

Q.—Were the elections to your workers' council free?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Does your workers' council control the director of the factory?

A.—In theory, yes. They may hire and fire the director. But our director is the same man we had before October. The workers' council, the factory director and the minister in the central administration all work hand in glove.

Q.—Can you not control your representatives to the workers' council?

A.—They are elected for two years so what can we do. Gomulka has told us that Poland is poor and that there is no money for wage increases this year. You know that Russia forced Poland to sell coal to her for many years at half the price offered in the West. Also the coal was transported to Russia free of charge.

Q.—With your elected workers' councils, is it not easier to get wage adjustments?

A.—No. We are paid on the same incentive system. The standards are determined by the

(continued next page)

Prices and Work Time for Selected Items

Item	Amount	Price (zlotys)	Work time ¹ hours - minutes
Food			
Milk	1 litre (1½ pints)	2½	0 30
Butter	1 kilogram (2 1/5 lbs.)	60	12 0
Margarine	1 kilogram	30	6 0
Potatoes	1 kilogram	2	0 24
Sugar	1 kilogram	12	2 24
Eggs	1 dozen	16	3 12
Bread (wholewheat)	1 kilogram (2 1/5 lbs.)	3	0 36
Coffee	1 kilogram	400	80 0
Apples	1 kilogram	16	3 12
Beef	1 kilogram	26	5 12
Pork	1 kilogram	30	6 0
Canned Orange Juice (Stokely's)	.533 litre (1 pint)	35	7 0
Clothing			
<i>Men's</i>			
Suit	1	1200-1400	240-480 0
Wool overcoat	1	620-820	144-164 0
Sweater	1	295	59 0
Shoes	1 pair	200-600	40-120 0
Shirt (dress)	1	100-150	20-30 0
<i>Women's</i>			
Wool overcoat	1	1200	240 0
Nylons (Dupont 1st quality)	1 pair	150	30 0
Other			
Cigarettes (Polish)	1 pack of 20	6	1 12
Safety Razor (Gillette)	1	120	24 0
Flat Iron	1	100	20 0
Warszawa automobile	1	80,000 ²	16,000 0

Notes:

¹ This is based on an estimate of 5 zlotys an hour for an average Polish industrial worker's hourly wage including incentive pay. The minimum wage in nationalized industry as of April 1, 1956, was 500 zlotys per month or about 2½ zlotys per hour based on the 46 hour work week introduced also in 1956.

² The black market price (for those without a purchase permit) is 120,000 zlotys.

INTERNATIONAL

POLAND — contd.

same time study engineers who operate in the same fashion with the same stop watches. The time study engineers are also paid on the incentive system; the tighter they make our standards the more money they make.

Socialism in one country? No

The "Gomulka way" is not the workers' council way. Even the most radical newspapers such as *Po Prostu* and *Nowe Kultura*, once strong supporters of the workers' councils, are now cool on the subject. The reason given me by a leading intellectual and Gomulka supporter, is that the real workers' councils must die so Poland may live. (A revolutionary socialist took exception to this widely-held view. He contended that Poland should establish workers' council socialism and export revolution to the Soviet Union.) Almost all the Polish people are apparently convinced that Poland would be committing suicide and be obliterated as a nation by the Soviet Army if either socialism or capitalism was introduced. He attributed the failure of Poland to introduce socialism to two basic reasons.

First, Poland is isolated geographically with the Soviet Union on the East, Czechoslovakia on the South, East Germany on the West and the Baltic Sea on the North. Second, socialism in an isolated Poland is impossible and since the international working class movement is now dead, no assistance could come to Poland. The Communist Parties throughout the world oppose socialism and social democracy has such leaders as Mollet who is not a socialist.

Stalinist Reformism

The Gomulkaites, although unofficially very friendly to the Hungarian Revolution and very anti-Stalinist, follow an official line which may be characterized as reformist, that is reformist Stalinist. They do not work to overthrow the old regime but rather to reform it. The limits of the reform for them are prescribed by the Soviet Union and its implicit threat for intervention. Notwithstanding this, however, Poland since October, is certainly the freest of the satellite states.

There are, according to all reports, no political prisoners. There is apparently considerable freedom of speech, including criticism of the regime from both the left and the right. I found no-one afraid to talk to a Westerner and many were quite willing to criticise the regime even in public. Freedom has not been extended to permit the organization of any political opposition to the National Unity Front. Censorship of mail to and from the West continues. Only Communist newspapers were sold at the newsstands. Ironically, papers friendly to Gomulka such as *France Observateur* are not available while western Communist papers hostile to Gomulka are plentiful. Books such as John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World* are now being published. Rosa Luxemburg's works are allegedly available in the libraries although they are not published.

Low living standards

In the economic sphere, Poland seems in rather desperate shape. She has negotiated loans with both the Soviet Union and the United States. However, these loans are not sufficient to make much of a dent in the Polish economy.

Under the Stalinist regime in the past 12 years a considerable amount of industrialization has taken place;

THE FIGHT AGAINST APATHY

By Stan Newens • Agent, Epping CLP

THE MAIN ENEMY of the active Labour Party member today is probably apathy. How often do the finest resolutions, the best thought-out membership drives and the most carefully conceived propaganda campaigns come to nought through sheer lack of support?

Everyone knows that something is wrong, but despite universal discussion practically nobody has made a thoughtful analysis of the roots of the trouble. Instead Labour Party activists tend to be split between those who blissfully say that if only the Party had a left wing policy, the workers would rally to the ranks and those who say that the days of mass working class action are gone forever and the Labour Party's role is to perfect an organization for collecting subscriptions and getting votes to the poll.

Meanwhile the Labour Party drifts like a ship without a rudder, with different members of the crew striving to propel it in different directions. Simultaneously many of those who believe that mankind must make the voyage to Socialism refuse to board so leaky and so inefficient a structure and seek either to lay the keel for a completely new political vessel or to reconstruct the deserted frame of the good ship "ILP."

In a recently published pamphlet*, three rank-and-file Labour Party members have advanced the thesis that what the Party is lacking is a clear and consistent theory of politics. The Party fails to understand the basic causes of events but reacts to them subsequent to their occurrence. The conclusion of the authors is that a paramount need exists to create a

* *Labour in Perspective*, by Sam Levy, Frank Rowe and Morry Sollof, published as a special edition of "Socialist Current," 55, Forest Lane, London, E.15 (sixpence, post free).

they officially estimate that the number of industrial workers has doubled. Despite this, the economy is disorganized. Old housing has been permitted to deteriorate completely and new housing is very inferior. Coal is often transported by horse and wagon which is a common means of transportation in contemporary Poland. A tremendous Army is under mobilization and yet there is apparently still a great deal of both underemployment and unemployment.

The logical outcome of such a large Army, unemployment and a disorganized economy is low wages and high prices. From my discussions with a number of workers, I concluded that the average industrial worker earns about 5 zlotys per hour or about 1,000 zlotys per month. The official rate of exchange is 24 zlotys per US dollar. However, on the black market which is rather open, the rate varies from 100-200 zlotys per US dollar.

The consumer goods as in other Eastern countries are of very poor quality generally. Necessities such as meat are often not even available. Western clothes sell at high prices in Warsaw both on the black market and in the shops officially. See the adjoining table for the urban prices of a selected list of items and the work time necessary for an average Polish industrial worker to purchase them. A perusal of this table will show the incredibly low standard of living of the Polish working class. It is in fact, far lower than that of the East German working class which is considerably lower today than during the days of Hitler Germany.

Marxist tendency within the Labour Party. As this has long been the aim of the *Socialist Review*, those who support the aims of the paper will naturally applaud this conclusion and commend the arguments on which it is based on the broadest possible front.

After all, if one considers what makes a Labour Party member active, it is clear that except in the case of a small minority there is little hope of financial gain, and except in the case of a few prestige seekers, little hope of glory from most Labour Party work. There is only one thing that impels one to do it: **the conviction that socialism is the only road for the progress of humanity.**

Therefore, we must convince people of this idea if we are to increase the number of active socialists. Even if it were desirable for the party of the working class to employ the whole of its staff, Labour could never hope to raise enough money. It must rely on voluntary workers and no one will voluntarily give his time and energy to propagate the ideas of socialism, unless he feels it is a worth-while cause.

No policy, no thinking

After ten or eleven years of practically undirected drifting after the war, it has dawned on the Labour Party leadership that there was a need for political education to obtain these workers. Unfortunately we yet await the day of enlightenment on which they will grasp that basic ideas and not merely feeble attempts to justify Labour's day-to-day policy are required.

It is no accident, however, that the Labour Party has made no practical effort to come to grips with basic ideas. The truth of the matter is, as the three authors of the pamphlet point out, that it has no underlying political theory and acts empirically. It is in this respect, fantastic as it may seem, little more advanced in its idea of the nature of the society that it seeks to create and the actions required to do so than it was thirty or forty years ago. Many of the Party leaders have grafted on to Party policy all manner of ideas developed by open apologists for the capitalist system (like Keynes) for propping up capitalism. There is no fundamental guide to action.

Need for Marxist theory

This is why it is essential to work for the development of a Marxist tendency in the Labour Party. Marxism is scientific socialist theory and it is only on a scientific, rational basis that it is possible to explain the development of society in general and capitalism in particular up to the present day and to diagnose what is likely to happen in the future.

It is only if we analyse the present situation in Britain and the world at large in this way that we shall understand and see how and why socialism is the only way forward for mankind. And at the present time when most things on the surface appears to be prosperous and the bad old days of the 1930's to have gone for ever, we shall not convert workers to work for socialism unless we explain the underlying reality.

The key socialist workers of today were to a large extent made by the Left Book Club of the 1930's or the ideas disseminated by its subscribers, and the Left Book Club with all its faults was to some extent Marxist. One often finds that the youngest active party members today were the youngest eight or ten years ago, proving that the work of winning socialists has lapsed in the absence of some such

movement.

Unfortunately, apart from the activities of the Left Book Club, the Marxists in the British working class, as the authors of the pamphlet point out, have tended to cut themselves off from the Labour Party in the past—in the early days of the century, in the Social Democratic Federation, later on in the Communist Party, where their ideas in any case were stultified, and even today, by many who have left the CP in small sectarian groups. Even the Left Book Club was not an integral party of the Labour Party but merely a propaganda group working for a popular front between the various parties of the Left.

focus on the Labour Party

Today, however, welcome as such a movement may be and in the widespread interest aroused among young intellectuals by the new journal *Universities and Left Review*, we may be seeing the birth of the Left Book Club's heir, it is not enough. As the authors of the pamphlet emphasise, a genuine and healthy Marxist tendency in Britain can only be created within the mass party of the working class—the Labour Party. Insofar as the tendency remains aloof from the mass working class movement it will remain sterile and ineffective. Voluntary quarantine will be equivalent to political suicide.

Marxists in the Labour Party will only succeed in developing and propagating their ideas effectively if they are willing to play a full part in all Labour Party activities. The Labour Party is not merely a sphere for contacting other people of like ideas, but an organisation which they must help to build.

The contempt displayed by many left-wingers for day to day activity is misplaced. Lansbury showed in 1922, as St. Pancras Borough Council is showing today, that even in humdrum local affairs it is possible to give a real socialist lead, provided that there are socialists there to give it. It is much easier to achieve this in the arena than by giving advice from the gallery.

In the process of working to build the Labour Party, British Marxists will enrich their ideas, for the activities will compel them to adapt their concepts, their language and their research to a British background.

Increasing contact with the British scene must inevitably give birth to a national Marxist literature which will fill the vacuum in genuine socialist thought and help to refute the many non-socialist ideas which at present befuddle so many Labour Party members. Scientific socialist ideas will enable honest socialists to see their way through the haze of uncertainty created in present circumstances by the present superficial success of capitalism.

This is not to say that the creation of a Marxist tendency is either easy or presents an easy escape for present-day apathy. What it does offer is a means of developing a convinced and unwavering nucleus of socialist activists who will not be disheartened at the present by loss of faith in the possibility of achieving socialism or bewildered in the future when a new crisis arrives by the completely unexpected nature of events.

[concluded on back page]

Sunday School for Socialists

every Sunday evening at 7 p.m. at Michael Kidron, 30 Hamilton Terrace, London, N.W.8. (Buses along Edgware Road).

BOOKS

PARLIAMENT By Michael Millett

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (and others) were disturbed recently to hear of the Government's care-free attitude to the secrecy of telephone calls. Apparently, the Government not only consider that they have the right to listen in to whom they please but feel themselves at liberty to communicate the gleanings of their spying to anybody they think fit.

The basis of this eavesdropping is supposed to be the "Queen's Prerogative." The other part, the informing of the Bar Council, was justified by Mr. Butler on the grounds that "the circumstances made this action desirable." (Opposition cries of "Why?")

This business of "Queen's Prerogative"—or as circumstances dictate, "King's Prerogative"—is not without interest. We are supposed to be living in a democratic Parliamentary state where the monarchy is merely vestigial, a handy institution for reviewing troops and a useful legal fiction. Surely the decay of a 'liberal' bourgeois society is evident when the state power finds it necessary to resurrect such ancient ghosts as Royal Prerogatives to justify its actions. Before long, Mr. Butler will doubtless be quoting the "Forest Laws of Cnut" at us. These were a medieval attempt to put over a fast piece of class legislation by appealing to an earlier, imaginary authority, so they ought to suit the present Home Secretary.

MUCH TO THE DISMAY of Mr. Padley of the USDAW, the Distributive Trades Union, the Government has decided to abandon its intention to put the Shops Bill through the Commons this session. In all probability, they will abandon it altogether. It had a difficult passage in the Lords and the Cabinet are, not unnaturally, hesitant to present it, clause by clause, to their turbulent back benches.

The Bill was regarded as important by the shop workers themselves and Mr. Padley is the secretary of their union. His agitation is doubtless due

to the relative ineffectiveness in industrial bargaining of the scattered, not well organised workers in shops and the distributive trades. Currently, their only hope of improvement is by Government legislation on hours and conditions.

Although this was a Government Bill, most of the objections came from their side, since most Conservatives regard opposition to improvements in working conditions as naturally as they regard breathing air.

Not so much opposition as might have been expected has occurred, though, since greater regularity in shop hours improves the position of the larger shops and chain stores in relation to the small "family" concerns. Also, the working class is not unanimous on the advantages of earlier closing times, for example, your commentator must declare an interest in all this, being an inveterate late shopper himself.

WE WERE going to consider the treatment of the Egyptian refugees by the government. These unfortunate people are unable to withdraw any monies they might have in Savings Certificates, War bonds—British Government Securities!—because of some legal quibble.

The situation cannot be discussed, however, since the Government has given no reasons for its action, save that . . . "the cases posed serious and difficult questions of law" (Lord Hailsham, June 6th). How different it would be if a Labour Government were in power! What a press outcry there would be! But this is true of the whole Suez disaster. A Labour Government that involved the country in a war and then lost would find itself involved in civil disobedience if not civil war.

The Conservatives claim, and some people believed it, that the debacle was due to a cowardly stab in the back by—Lord help us!—the Leader of the Opposition.

Truly, conservatism is strongly entrenched in England.

APATHY—continued from page seven

The Socialist Review is attempting to play its part in the implanting of a Marxist current of thought in the Labour Party, just as Fabian, Christian and other tendencies have worked and are working to implant their ideas. It is not with the aim of imposing some sinister creed or some underground philosophy that we are working. Marxism, as **Labour in Perspective** points out, is not alien to the British Labour Movement. Much more alien are the ideas which are voiced by many moderate elements in the Party. Marxism is **not** Stalinism which has unfortunately masqueraded as such.

Bevanism

Bevanism and other vacillating tendencies are not enough precisely because they lack the scientific basis on

which to develop. Only Marxism can give this basis and show up the fundamental mistakes of attempting merely to reform capitalism.

On this ground all socialists must come to grips with the views expressed in Marxist circles. In presenting an analysis of the Labour Party as the mass party of the working class, and the need for a Marxist tendency, the authors of **Labour in Perspective** have done a very useful piece of work.

If friendly criticism might be expressed, however, the pamphlet loses by making use of jargon, which is not easily understood by Labour Party members. Thus it falls to some extent into the trap which it is pointing out to others.

Even so, it is well worth reading and the sooner the barrier which has for so long separated Marxism from the Labour Party is broken down, the sooner the socialist movement in Britain will begin to emerge from the stagnation and confusion in which it has too long been groping.

- SOCIALIST REVIEW does not appear in August.
- The next issue will be in September, in time for the Labour Party Annual Conference.
- Readers can spend the time usefully by gaining more readers.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Socialist Review stands for international Socialist democracy. Only the mass mobilisation of the working class in the industrial and political arena can lead to the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism.

The Socialist Review believes that a really consistent Labour Government must be brought to power on the basis of the following programme:

- [1] The complete nationalisation of heavy industry, the banks, insurance and the land, with compensation payments based on a means test. Renationalisation of all denationalised industries without compensation. The nationalised industries to form an integral part of an overall economic plan and not to be used in the interests of private profit.
- [2] Workers' control in all nationalised industries, i.e., a majority of workers' representatives on all national and area boards, subject to frequent election, immediate recall and receiving the average skilled wage ruling in the industry.
- [3] The inclusion of workers' representatives on the boards of all private firms employing more than 20 people. These representatives to have free access to all documents.
- [4] The establishment of workers' committees in all concerns to control hiring, firing and working conditions.
- [5] The establishment of the principle of work or full maintenance.
- [6] The extension of the social services by the payment of adequate pensions, linked to a realistic cost-of-living index, the abolition of all payments for the National Health Service and the development of an industrial health service.
- [7] The expansion of the housing programme by granting interest free loans to local authorities and the right to requisition privately held land.
- [8] Free State education up to 18. Abolition of fee paying schools. For comprehensive schools and adequate maintenance grants—without a means test—for all university students.
- [9] Opposition to all forms of racial discrimination. Equal rights and trade union protection to all workers whatever their country of origin. Freedom of migration for all workers to and from Britain.
- [10] Freedom from political and economic oppression to all colonies. The offer of technical and economic assistance to the people of the underdeveloped countries.
- [11] The reunification of an independent Ireland.
- [12] The abolition of conscription and the withdrawal of all British troops from overseas. The abolition of all weapons of mass destruction.
- [13] A Socialist foreign policy independent of both Washington and Moscow.

COLONIAL POLICY—from page one

to buy. The Policy document realises this for it says (p. 23): "Britain's future depends upon an expansion of world trade, upon making effective the vast potential demand of £1,500,000,000 customers in underdeveloped territories."

Will the "pumping in" of £160 million a year as visualised by Labour policy do anything to raise the purchasing power of the people in the colonies? The answer is obviously that while private enterprise, aided by a reactionary political policy can continue to exploit the colonial worker, "aid" from Britain or elsewhere will merely subsidise capitalist exploitation. Until the colonial countries have political freedom to control their own economies and resist economic exploitation no form of 'aid' can do much to help them.

Britain in debt to colonies

A second controversial issue raised by the Policy Document is the statement on page 7, "For Britain to make the necessary contributions overseas will mean more sacrifice and more work." It is tacitly assumed that there is no other source from which capital to be devoted to colonial investment can be taken . . . but at present Britain is spending £1,420 million a year on defence . . . a large proportion of it in ensuring the political domination of the colonial territories so that colonial economic exploitation may be made easier!

On May 3rd a very interesting debate took place in the House of Commons. The gist of the speeches on both sides was that Britain should invest more money in the colonies, but where was it to come from? Already she holds £1,446 million in Sterling Assets belonging to the colonies . . . money which they could well do with for investment in their own countries, but which we cannot afford to release to them . . . we are in fact a debtor

nation to the Colonies to that enormous extent.

Scrap arms budget

It must be clear that Britain cannot afford to pay her debts to the Colonies and maintain a defence programme of £1,420 million a year . . . yet it is admitted that unless the colonies have money invested in them they cannot raise their standard of living . . . and cannot become customers for British goods.

Surely it would be sound economics to devote the £1,420 million a year at present spent on defence into the production of goods needed in the colonies. With their own £1,446 million at their disposal they would need very little 'aid' from outside and would rapidly raise their standard of living . . . and establish that potential 1,500,000,000 customers for British goods.

DO YOU KNOW?

- THAT Britain's total contribution to the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund of the United Nations is only £22m. annually. But she spends £1,539m. on defence.
- THAT economic development in our own colonies is left largely to private investors. In Northern Rhodesia, 30 per cent. of the annual value of production goes in profits, dividends and interest to European and American investors. (U.N. survey).
- THAT the average wage of African mineworkers in the rich Copperbelt of N. Rhodesia is £12 a month. The African Mineworkers' Union claim for an increase has just been totally refused.
- THAT in the Kenya Three-year Plan (1957-60) just published, £23m. is set aside for assistance to private enterprise. But education expenditure is to be reduced from £3m. to £2m. At present only one per cent. of the African children reach secondary school; 25-30 per cent. have average of three years in primary school.

from PROD, monthly bulletin of facts and figures issued by the Movement of Colonial Freedom.

SOCIALIST REVIEW is published monthly by A. S. Newens, 16 Vicarage Lane, North Weald, Essex (Tel. North Weald 498). Subscriptions: 8s. annually (post paid). Opinions and policies expressed in signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Review, which are given in editorial statements. Editorial Board: Terry Gallogly (Nottingham), Pat Jordan (Nottingham), Michael Kidron (London), Peter Morgan (Birmingham).

Printed by H. Palmer (Harlow) Ltd. (T.U.), Potter Street, Harlow, Essex.