

SOCIALIST REVIEW

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW, BUT INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

FORTNIGHTLY
for the
Industrial Militant —
for
International
Socialism

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SIXPENCE

PLAN FOR PROGRESS ?

ONCE AGAIN the Labour Party mountain has been in travail, and once again it has brought forth a mouse. But this mouse hardly even squeaks.

Plan for Progress, the latest in the series of policy pamphlets, deals with Labour's economic policy. It should therefore be concerned with the most fundamental questions facing our society, it should give a thorough analysis of the contradictions in the capitalist system and explain the Socialist solution. But it does none of these things.

It seems that "capitalism" has become one of the words that is just not used in polite Labour Party circles. It does not appear anywhere in the pamphlet. The title of the first chapter counterposes Tory stagnation to Socialist expansion. The very first page contrasts the British economy today with that of most other West European countries. Presumably Adenauer's Germany is to be taken as a model for so-called Socialist policies.

No hint of class

There is no hint that opposing class interests exist, even less that the struggle between them is inherent in capitalist society. "The Government must . . . consult with all the parties affected by its policies. Most people, if they understand what is needed in the public interest, will try to fit in . . . A partnership between the state and both sides of industry is essential to democratic planning." (p 10). That neatly disposes of, by avoiding, any awkward questions about what happens if the two sides of industry cannot agree, if the workers demand a wage increase and the owners say they cannot afford it.

The keynote of the pamphlet is the need for expanding the economy, that is, the capitalist economy. The policy it advocates would be quite reasonable if it were possible to conceive of a capitalism freed from the contradictions between a social mode of production and individual appropriation, between potentially vast productive capacity, and the artificially restricted capacity of the masses to consume what is produced.

The pamphlet describes the techniques that might be em-

ployed to make such a capitalism work more efficiently and more humanely. To increase efficiency the rate of investment must rise, exports must expand in order to avoid a balance of payments crisis, there must be "restraint" on the part of the majority. (p.35). It sounds very like the Crippsian mixture as before. The high-sounding policy of fair shares for all apparently boils down to the fact that company directors and shareholders must not receive too scandalously high a rate of profit.

Making capitalism tick

To find a method of dealing with a slump (p.13) the pamphlet merely brought out again the Keynesian "solution" of increased public spending.

Even judged on its own level that is considering only devices for making capitalism tick over, the pamphlet is unsatisfactory. For example, it is at pains to stress that planning does not mean a return to detailed controls, obviously because controls are thought to be unpopular and associated with food rations and other shortages. Planning is to be

concerned "with the larger decisions" (p.9). Similarly "the main purpose of building licensing will be . . . the control of major projects."

Planning and workers' control

But how is planning to be confined to the larger decisions when to often a "large decision" is the sum total of a number of small decisions and when policy must be executed in a series of day-to-day operations? In conditions of workers' control throughout industry the government at the centre might reasonably deal only with broad policy because there would be watchdogs in every factory to ensure that individual decisions conformed to the general policy. But **PLAN FOR PROGRESS** does not envisage any form of workers' control. The workers are expected to play an entirely passive role.

Keynes vs. Keir Hardie

The Government, in consultation with the trade union bureaucracy, will intervene at certain points of the economy. For the rest Private Enterprise will carry on.

A review of the pamphlet in the *New Statesman* for July 19th suggests that the line it takes is designed to win votes at the next election by offering expansion rather than equality as the main slogan of the Party. In the words of the review, Keynes is preferred to Keir Hardie. Whether or not this will bring success at the polls is arguable. Many workers obstinately stick to old-fashioned aims such as equality. They have no interest in expansion of the economy if the main benefit is to the capitalist.

The old, old story

But the policy put forward in this pamphlet is not a new departure in the thinking of the Labour leaders. It is basically the same policy as they pursued when they were in office. Socialist analysis and socialist solutions are repudiated. Reform of capitalism is the slogan. Conference must reject this attempt to do the Tories' job for them and demand that the NEC sets itself the task of showing not how to save capitalism but how to supersede it.

DOCKS

Lessons of the London Strikes p 4

BUILDING

London Strikes p 4

MID-EAST

Crisis Background p 7

To enable the editorial board to take their annual holiday, there will be no mid-August issue. Subscribers will sustain no monetary loss.—Editor.

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:

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- The establishment of workers' committees in all concerns to control hiring, firing and working conditions.

- The establishment of the principle of work or full maintenance.

- 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.

- The expansion of the housing programme by granting interest free loans to local authorities and the right to requisition privately held land.

- 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.

- 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.

- Freedom from political and economic oppression to all colonies. The offer of technical and economic assistance to the people of the underdeveloped countries.

- The unification of an independent Ireland.

- The abolition of conscription and the withdrawal of all British troops from overseas. The abolition of all weapons of mass destruction.

- A Socialist foreign policy independent of both Washington and Moscow.

LP COMMENTARY

● The Poll

DR GALLUP has recently taken another reading of the pulse of our body politic and the result confirms the impression given by recent Labour losses in local by-elections resulting from the usual round of promotion to the aldermanic bench, namely that the lead we had over the Tories is now gone. Today, the two parties stand level, which, because of the disposition of Labour's strength into relatively fewer constituencies, means that the Tories would probably win.

I regard this as further proof that Butskellism is not only bad from a Socialist point of view, but is not going to attract a majority. For a couple of years now, Gaitskell and his friends have been trying to remove all traces of "doctrinaire" Socialism from the Party's program.

The Red Flag may still be the banner of the Labour Party: Keynes has become the standard bearer. Capitalism, so far from being destroyed, is to be made more efficient.

The Labour Party is trying to become a better capitalist than the capitalists. To succeed it will have to win the confidence of the businessmen.

With astonishing naivete it appears to assume that will be easy. — *Manchester Guardian*, July 21st.

Nationalization has been abandoned in favour of share buying, we have agreed to carry on with the H-bomb, and the policy documents so far issued this year could almost have emanated from the Tory Central Office, and indeed probably will in an amended form before the next election.

In addition to this, the Tories have, during this period, lost the confidence of a significant number of voters who were shocked by Suez, a greater number by the Rent Act, and millions by the wage freeze.

But still we don't make any progress and this failure to attract electoral support should be used now by the Left against Right-wing policies.

● The Plough

THROUGHOUT recent history the peasants stood head and shoulders above other groups in the community as a bulwark against social progress. Even the Russians, with all the coercive

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machinery at their disposal have, to put it mildly, had their troubles with them. And while I am not going to suggest that the next Labour government should implement a policy of forced collectivization, I do feel compelled to utter a long gasp of disgust at the Party's surrender to the Farmers' Union in the policy statement, *Prosper the Plough*.

What is wrong with this document?

The chief fault is that it does not mention the nationalization of the land. Without this, thousands of drones will continue to live on unearned rent. Without this, there can be no Socialist policy for agriculture. To attempt to control prices, efficiency, output by other means simply will not work. Indeed, the chief result is to create a continuing sore of antagonisms which in turn divert people's minds from genuine infringements of freedom to parolour-liberal concern for the right of business men to avoid tax and enjoy the bucolic life.

The farmers' lobby being as strong as it is, and that is about the strongest in the country, no government unless it arms itself with the real power of land-ownership will ever be in any position to treat with the farmers on an equal basis. Without land-ownership, it is not possible to get the best use out of our land, for both the Agricultural Act of 1947 and the Town and Country Planning Act only enable the state to supervise development on a permissive basis.

What we need are the means to plan positively and directly the whole of the agricultural industry including, of course, marketing. To do this we must be in a position to use land freely, having regard only to its suitability and not to its price. This the Party has not recognized in *Prosper the Plough*, and so the document is merely a restatement of palliatives designed to secure some redress of the problems created by the crash program of 1945-51 when the aim was high production regardless of cost.

● Mr Brown MP

GEORGE BROWN is a unique fellow. Firstly, he believes that one should not take any notice of people who attend trade union branch, Ward and GMC meetings. George claims to be the representative of the people who do not attend meetings. No doubt he was thinking of these people when he abstained in the vote on Jordan.

Secondly, he has managed to betray the principle of collective responsibility without, so far as can be seen, suffering any disciplinary action.

Thirdly, he is remarkable for wanting to remain in the Labour Party at all. It is hard to recall any time when he has spoken with much enthusiasm about even the milk-and-water that passes for Socialist theory. The best thing that would happen to George and to the Labour Party is for him to take up American citizenship, then he and the Portugals can live happily ever after.

RON LEWIS

VFS — what next?

by Robin Fior

THE CRISIS MEETING at St. Pancras Town Hall on July 20th marked the first six months of the reorganized Victory for Socialism, and provides the occasion for a friendly assessment of what has been done and what remains to be done.

On the credit side, the membership has increased from 150 to 1,000; although constituency branches have not been formed, area groups are working, with varying success in provincial centres; week-end schools have been held in various parts of the country, to discuss Party policy, and three policy statements have been issued to try to counter the retreat from socialism by the NEC.

When we remember that the left-wing of the Labour Party for so long had to work in a vacuous wilderness with only the wavering beacon of Bevanism to lighten the darkness, we must recognize that all this activity is useful and worthwhile; and apart from VFS activities as such, its leaders did a first-class job at Aldermaston, and subsequently in the Anti-Bomb campaign.

Problems and policies

But to be equally fair, we have to remember that the last six months have been politically the hottest since the war: in Europe, France saddled with a proto-Fascist government, Spain and Portugal fighting to overthrow theirs; Cyprus blithely brought to the brink of civil war; in Germany industrial action taken against Adenauer's government accepting nuclear weapons; in the Middle East an upsurge of the nationalist movement; in South and Central America a strong movement towards neutralism. In Britain the Anti-Bomb campaign made an impression on "public opinion" that would have been undreamt of a year ago, while London saw what may prove to be the most important strikes since 1926.

And in this period, the leadership of VFS confined themselves largely to support for Aldermaston and the CND. Michael Foot in *Tribune*, the organ of VFS, gave good support to the businessmen, but the major failure of the leaders was not to link the struggle against the H-Bomb with the struggle against capitalism and present them as one—which they are. And the struggle against capitalism was mainly centred during this period on the struggle against the capitalists who control not only the London docks and markets, but the government, whose policies the "public industries" so readily reflect.

And this failure to mobilize on the industrial front is a key to the defects of the new organization in the Aldermaston campaign. It is an organization of the middle class, and so it is not surprising that it is not so much the workers who are the mainstay of the organization, but the middle class. It is this which is reflected in the VFS policy statement *Plan*

(*ctd next page*)

VFS—ctd

for **Summit Talks**; by relying on the big powers to fix things up, by forgetting the carve-up at Yalta, for example, the authors ignore the existence of the international working class, that the H-Bomb is a deterrent aimed not at either of the rival imperialisms, but at the forces of world revolution. * The second policy statement, **Equality in Education** was pretty good, the third, **Industry Your Servant**, has just appeared and I cannot comment.

Kinderlan or Konni

And these defects mentioned above were even reflected in the comparative failure of the crisis meeting. The previous week, Universities and Left Review Club called a meeting at the same place in solidarity with democracy in Europe. And in spite of some phonies on the platform, **solidarity with workers and students in the fight for socialism in Spain and Germany came across from the speeches of Comrades Juan Kinderlan and Theo Pirker to the audience, and meant something.** Most of the people at the first meeting came to the second. But Konni Zilliacus reading his last year's speeches from Hansard to the unique delight of a lady in front of me, meant nothing.

Both meetings drew about

1,300 people, which is good. But if VFS is to make any deep impact on the political life of Britain the membership must be mobilized on the level of political action. Well, what can be done?

On to the shop floor

Immediately after the Scarborough Conference a Members' Meeting is scheduled; originally, it was promised for before, but no doubt the Executive were anxious to avoid hurting the feelings of the NEC. Resolutions are invited, nominations for the EC will be accepted. Organizationally the EC must be compelled to inform themselves sufficiently of the nature of the membership to co-ordinate action in the Unions; to make sure this is done, it would be worthwhile electing convenors and shop-stewards to the new EC. And not only must action be co-ordinated at Branch level, but must be initiated on the shop-floor. It can lead the fight against the Bomb to victory—by mobilizing the membership on an industrial basis, in the Unions and on the shop-floor, to demand blacking the Bomb, blacking the bases. And once VFS has to face foremen and managers in the flesh (on the other side) members can test how serious it is in its challenge of capitalism.

* How many battalions has the international working class sneered Zilliacus in a letter to **Tribune** not so long ago.

LETTERS

It seems to me that some statements on the Lebanon made by contributor Dev Murarka in the Mid-July number of SR could easily mislead some of our younger readers.

I wish to refer to para. 4 where Murarka supports — unconditionally it seems — the "progressive forces of Arab nationalism in the Middle East."

If he were to say that these existing nationalist forces are less reactionary than the former corrupt ruling cliques, he would be nearer the truth and would clearly show that Socialism is the only answer to the problems of the Arab world and to the misery of the fellahin as well.

However understandable Murarka's singularly national approach may be, it could lead once more to national strife as happened in India, Ceylon, etc. Don't let us forget that the Socialist Ba'ath party was soon suppressed once Nasser's men took over Syria.

At the present moment while we are campaigning against Western intervention on the side of the Princes, we must see the situation with clarity.

Clr. Bert Crane
London, NW10

Dev Murarka replies: Reader Crane is putting the cart before the horse. At this stage of Arab history, nationalism is a liberating, progressive force. It is anti-imperialist and anti-feudal in character, and, owing to the industrialization of the countries in question, can pave the way to a socialist movement.

I would also like to point out that my piece on the Lebanon was written a week before the revolution in Iraq transformed the situation. Had it not occurred, there would have been no intervention. In any case, intervention does not alter the basic fact that the revolution is bound to succeed and spread. The Western imperialists are already looking for face-saving devices to hide their total failure to contain it, let alone defeat it.

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MIDDLE EAST

continued from back page

Palestine represented the regime of subjugation, exploitation, repression and black reaction. This regime is the same regime of Hitler and Mussolini with whom British-French imperialism struggle for the monopoly over the exploitation of the proletariat of the capitalist countries and the oppressed nations of the colonies" (**Kol Ha'am**, July, 1940). From now on the British High Commissioner is the representative of democracy and "we keep in our hearts his good personal features . . . the manifestation of his true social characteristics." (**Al-Ittihad**, organ of the Arab Stalinists in Palestine, 3rd September, 1944).

Now was the time to appeal for "national unity," for moderation," and to suppress the class struggle. Khaled Bakdash, the General Secretary of the Syrian Communist Party, could now say: "We assure the landowners that we do not demand and will not demand in Parliament the confiscation of their estates and lands, but on the contrary, we want to help them by demanding the construction of large-scale irrigation enterprises, the facilitation of the import of fertilizer and modern machinery! All we demand in exchange for this is pity on the fellah, and that he be taken out of his poverty and illiteracy and that knowledge and health be spread in the village! These are our economic, or if you can say so, social demands. They are democratic and very modest." (**The Communist Party in Syria and Lebanon: Its National Policy and its National Programme**, Beirut, 1944, pp. 24-5). In one point Bakdash is right: the plea for pity is really a very modest "demand!"

Again, after the war, the Communist Party of Palestine called for a bi-national (i.e.: Arab-Jewish) solution to the country's problem, and as late as 1947, the party organ sharply attacked the US for supporting the 'adventurist' project of partitioning Palestine (**Kol Ha'am**, October 13, 1947). However, on the evening of the same day the Soviet delegate in the United Nations spoke in favour of partition. So the Communist Party had to change course 180 degrees, and

its policy on the national question became practically identical with that of the Zionist movement.

It supported the Israeli state against the Arabs in 1948/9, it approved the occupation of the Negev, and complained that Premier Ben Gurion had given orders to discontinue the offensive in the direction of Suez.

Stalinist attitude to Nasser

Stalinist attitude to Nasser was no more honest or consistent. For instance, in November, 1953, the Egyptian Stalinists referred to Gamal Abd-el Nasser as Gamal Abd-Dulles. Again in 1954 the Soviet expert on Egyptian affairs, LN Vatolina, characterized the Neguib-Nasser régime as "madly reactionary, terrorist, anti-democratic, demagogic," etc. (Quoted in Laqueur, *ibid.*, p. 262). A volume printed in May, 1955, attacked Nasser's régime for its "anti-popular measures," such as restricting the rights of the workers, defending the big feudal landlords against revolutionary measures," etc. (K Ode-Vassileva, **Rasskazy Arabskikh Pisatelei**, Moscow, 1955, p. 182). However, in July, 1955, Shepilov visited Cairo, and a month later an arms deal was transacted between Moscow and Cairo, amounting to between 300 and 350 dollars! From now on not one word of criticism was directed at Nasser!

As a matter of fact Nasser's régime is neither as black as the Stalinists painted it before July 1955, nor as white as it has been painted since. Nasser is actually balancing between the two poles of Egyptian Society: on the one hand he confiscated all the land over 200 acres per landlord, in return for compensation. The 1½ per cent of landowners who owned half the land of Egypt now own a third. However, the land taken from the landlords is not enough to give plots of 2 acres to even a quarter of the landless villagers. Nasser has also cut land rent by 30-50 per cent. On the other hand, he severely suppressed any attempt on the part of the peasants to carry out the land reform independently (by seizure of land, rent strikes, etc.). He adopted the same policy toward the workers; on the other hand new labour laws were enacted which gave the workers certain rights they had not previous-

ly enjoyed (such as the right to organize agricultural workers' trade unions national federations of trade unions, etc.); on the other hand he suppressed strikes with an iron fist (arresting a number of strike leaders. (See "Whither Egyptian Bonapartism" by Babak, **Socialist Review**, May, 1954). On the one hand Nasser gives a lead to the anti-imperialist struggle, on the other he does his best to divert it largely into anti-Israeli channels. The miserable showing put up by the Egyptian army in the anti-Israeli campaign in 1956 shows clearly how little real enthusiasm a Bonapartist military régime inspires among the masses of peasants and workers.

Compared with Farouk or Nuri Said, the puppets of British imperialism, Nasser represents national independence and progress. As such his fight against imperialism should be supported by every socialist. However, such support has nothing in common with the twisting Power-politics of Stalinism.

The Arab people have no more hope of disinterested and honest help from the rulers of Moscow than the Hungarian workers had from those of Washington.*

Socialist program

The British Labour movement should mobilize all its forces to help the Arab people to get rid of imperialist rule and aggression. The Labour movement should fight for:

The immediate withdrawal of British troops from Jordan and from the rest of the Middle East.

The transference of all foreign capital—above all that of the oil concerns—into the hands of the Arab people.

An end to the threat of a spreading dirty war for oil profits.

* In view of the facts of Stalinist policy in the Middle East and elsewhere, it is astonishing to read the following in Peter Fryer's **Newsletter** leaflet ("Summit Conference for What?" July, 1958): "The Soviet Union has a right and a duty to defend the colonial peoples against any imperialist aggression." What Socialist would have dared to say: "The United States or Great Britain has a right and a duty to defend the Hungarian people against Russian aggression?" Do the butchers of Hungary have "a right and a duty" to defend the victims of Lebanon and Jordan?

MEAT and DOCK STRIKES

IN analysing the recent Dock Strike it is necessary to consider both the Meat Transport Drivers' Strike and the stoppage in Smithfield Market if one is to obtain a true perspective or arrive at any real conclusion.

The origin of the Meat Transport Drivers' Strike is now extremely well known, it arose consequent upon an increase in the Speed Limit, refused by previous Labour Governments but allowed by the present Conservative Government in 1957. The drivers considered, in view of the extra work that might arise, that they should have a compensatory increase in their basic pay to the extent of 15 per cent.

So reasonable was this request that 32 of the firms concerned agreed without demur, whilst the BRS and the CWS also agreed originally, but withdrew their offer after domestic problems had presented themselves. This left only three firms engaged in meat transport that had not acquiesced in this matter, and they were the Union Cartage Company, Messrs. Cornell's, and the United Carriers, all very large concerns in themselves, with the Union Cartage as the most prominent.

The men, through their Union, followed the correct and proper procedure by conducting negotiations to reach agreement, but dilatoriness and procrastination engendered by the employers

page, for whilst under normal circumstances only insulated and specially designed vehicles are allowed by law to carry meat, furniture vans, tipper trucks, open lorries, and even private cars arrived to pick up meat. This position was to become even more aggravated as time went on, for these same vehicles arrived under police escort and protection.

It is essential at this stage, for the purpose of clarity and in the light of subsequent events, to understand the true position in which the cold store workers found themselves when they came into the street. Although the employers had begun to use Unregistered labour, which in itself is a transgression of the Dock Labour Scheme, before they were actually out of the buildings, the cold store men themselves came out because they were refused a fundamental principle of trade unionism, which was "not to work a cargo detrimental to the interests of fellow trade unionists already in dispute."

In the past, this claim of the Dock Section has always been recognised by the employers who have accepted the position many times, and to add weight to this previous recognition, several stores outside the Vestey combine, among them Messrs. Borthwicks and Messrs. Hedley Vicars, accepted this position in the early days of this

by lorries to the wharves in Tooley Street, where they began operating as a force of strike breakers.

This action from the employers was the spark which lit the torch that carried the strike out of the area, wherein it had been most conscientiously contained and spread it to the other sections of the Port, for once it became known that "Scabs," to give them the name by which unregistered workers are known throughout Dockland, were operating in Tooley Street, the men in other Sectors wanted the fullest possible information. They had, of course, been carrying on their work without let or hindrance up to this point, and ably abetted by the railwaymen, who had just snapped up a 3 per cent increase to avoid helping the busmen, the Royal Group of Docks was able to ensure that a sufficient supply of meat got through to the retailers, despite the stoppage.

It was true that the men in the Royal Group were under the impression that the meat they were loading was going to destinations up-country and not to London, but what they did not know at the time was that the wagons were being redirected as soon as they left the docks to places like Croydon, Romford, Chelmsford, and the like, where they were being shunted into sidings and used as supply depots for the butchers in London.

Once in possession of the facts of the case, the men in the London Docks and the West India Dock, led by the Joint Liaison Committee which operates these docks, sprang to the support of the men in Tooley Street and withdrew their labour immediately. The vast majority of pool men in the Royal Group also joined the strike, but there was considerable difficulty in persuading the permanent men there.

Official Union opposition

Whether it was because of the difficulties of the bus strike or because of a pay claim which was coming up for discussion, the union officials were in opposition to the men throughout this period and had spent the whole of their time devising schemes to get the men back to work. Bro. Bert Fry, the London Area Secretary, told the men at Rotherhithe Assembly Hall that whilst he appreciated their point of view and would have acted in a like manner had he been a worker and not an official, nevertheless they should return to work, handle the meat, and hold themselves in readiness for the call which was bound to come in respect of the pay claim.

Union officials elsewhere informed the men in their areas that they would hold meetings every morning with the express purpose of getting the men back to work. Never, at any time, did any union official suggest discussion on the problems which had caused the dispute, although several mass Divisional Committee meetings were called in an endeavour to produce resolutions designed solely to coerce a return.

Throughout the first two weeks of the strike, the men in Tooley Street had endeavoured to carry out peaceful picketing of the stores and

SR industrial report

SOUTH

IN the July 1st issue of SR, builder-correspondent EJ Scott hailed the re-instatement of Bro. Cassidy on the South Bank site as a victory for trade unionists. This is true, McAlpines were forced by the militancy of the Steel Fixers and Benders to eat a small mouthfull of humble pie. However, there still remains a large portion to be swallowed, and McAlpines appear to be having an acute attack of indigestion.

Conditions on the site

Looking back at past events on the site, the Steel Fixers and Benders strike was not the first one. In February there was a 17-day strike on the site for better working conditions. The men at the time only went back to work on the understanding that conditions would be improved. McAlpines agreed to this. Today the men are still fighting for those conditions. To quote a few examples.

Canteen: the Working Rule Agreements state:

Accommodation and Provision for Meals: (a) Where the number of operatives remaining on the site during meal intervals is sufficient reasonably to warrant such provisions there shall be provided: (i) adequate and suitable accommodation... including sufficient tables and chairs or

Fred Francis, the author of this article, knows what he's talking about. He acted as Press and Public Relations Officer for the Tooley Street Strike Committee, the heart of the recent dock strike in support of the Smithfield meat drivers. Bro. Francis has been an active trade unionist for over thirty years and a member of the Labour Party for thirty-six. He came to the docks via Covent Garden.

This is the first of a series of articles drawing the lessons of the recent strikes by leading participants. Forthcoming issues of SR will feature the lessons as learned by the busmen and the Smithfield Market men.—Editor.

lasted over nine months, until the men, realising that they were getting nowhere, decided to withdraw their labour as from April the 12th.

Had they done so, the result of their action might have had a vastly different conclusion, but for some reason it was agreed to change the date to April 19th and to call out only those men whose firms had not given the required 15 per cent compensation. This gave the employers a further week in which to lay plans to meet the stoppage and was especially beneficial to the Union Cold Storage Company, allied to the Union Cartage Company, for it allowed them time to clear all their craft lying in the river and get all their meat into cold storage.

On April the 19th, the men detailed stopped work, with the result that the Union Cold Storage Company, operating in Smithfield Market, dismissed 600 of their porters. This was in the nature of a reprisal for they informed the men that because the drivers had stopped work there was nothing for the porters to do. It was, of course, because of this action on the part of the employer that the remainder of the market gave notice of a withdrawal of labour if these men were not reinstated, and, as everybody knows, they too stopped work as from May 12th.

Throughout this period, the drivers had been trying to enlist normal Trade Union support and had asked the men in the cold stores to black Weddel, Dewhurst and CWS meat, but their request had been refused on the grounds that their stoppage was not 100 per cent. The drivers explained that the reason they were operating their stoppage in that way was because they had no quarrel with either the meat importer or the housewife and they weren't trying to stop all meat going into the shops; their quarrel was wholly with the meat transporters who had refused to pay the increase. Unfortunately their explanation was also rejected and they remained alone until joined by the men from Smithfield, which brought the remainder of the meat transport to a standstill.

The cold stores

With the market closed, the cold stores which normally operate mainly as a stockpile for the market, suddenly found themselves swamped by fleets of miscellaneous transport pressed into service for delivery to retailers unable to procure meat in the market, with the result that they called a meeting to discuss the question on the very first day, May 12th, where the Stewards, in accordance with normal procedure, drew up a recommendation which was presented to the men in every store.

That recommendation was "that the men should make themselves available for any work with the exception of handling meat for delivery," and was accepted unanimously in every cold store concerned. The management, however, interpreted this statement as a withdrawal of labour and the men were asked to leave the premises. So began the Dock Strike itself.

That this position had been expected was apparent from the beginning, for even before the men had reached the street, the supervisory staff in all cold stores, although unregistered under the Dock Scheme, began delivery of meat to all those who applied. Again, the type of transport which presented itself showed only too well that much thought had been given to the anticipated stop-

page, for whilst under normal circumstances only insulated and specially designed vehicles are allowed by law to carry meat, furniture vans, tipper trucks, open lorries, and even private cars arrived to pick up meat. This position was to become even more aggravated as time went on, for these same vehicles arrived under police escort and protection.

It is essential at this stage, for the purpose of clarity and in the light of subsequent events, to understand the true position in which the cold store workers found themselves when they came into the street. Although the employers had begun to use Unregistered labour, which in itself is a transgression of the Dock Labour Scheme, before they were actually out of the buildings, the cold store men themselves came out because they were refused a fundamental principle of trade unionism, which was "not to work a cargo detrimental to the interests of fellow trade unionists already in dispute."

In the past, this claim of the Dock Section has always been recognised by the employers who have accepted the position many times, and to add weight to this previous recognition, several stores outside the Vestey combine, among them Messrs. Borthwicks and Messrs. Hedley Vicars, accepted this position in the early days of this

How the strike spread

At this meeting it was decided that the strike should be contained within its present area of Sectors Two, Seven and Nine and that a resolution from the cold stores reading "That the men in the cold stores would resume work immediately if they were offered alternative employment and not asked to handle 'Black Cargo,'" should be adopted unanimously. This resolution was put to the men in Tooley Street the following morning and accepted without dissent, which meant, of course, that the men in all three sectors were out until either their request was accepted by the employers or the dispute in Smithfield Market was resolved.

The Strike Committee thus constituted informed Borthwicks' Stewards that the men at that store could remain at work all the time that their employers accepted the resolution.

At this stage it was the opinion of the men that justice, in one form or another, would prevail and that either the employers would agree to a normal request or that the union, faced with the diabolical action of the Union Cold Storage Company in dismissing 600 men for something which was no concern of the men themselves, would step in and make the Smithfield stoppage official, thereby resolving the cold store problem, and in consequence of this supposition and despite the fact that "black labour" was operating in the cold stores, the men readily agreed to supply hospitals, institutions and prisons, the payment for which services should go to charity.

Additionally, when it was pointed out that cargo for a British Exhibition at Poznan was awaiting shipment and that its safe arrival would mean some £3,000,000 in orders, it was loaded without hesitation immediately the position was explained.

Unfortunately, this whole-hearted action on the part of the men emphasised the complete indifference of the employers, for on the day following the shipment of this exhibition material, the employers concerned rounded up as many of their City office staff as possible and conveyed them

the LESSONS by Fred Francis

INDUSTRIAL

wharves in dispute and had enjoyed a medium of camaraderie with the police, but with the introduction of the "Scabs" recruited from City offices, the attitude of the police appeared to harden and arrests were made. So bitter, in fact, did relations become that a question on the police attitude was asked in Parliament by Bob Mellish, MP for Bermondsey.

National newspapermen who visited the area were given conducted tours of the "trouble spots" to see exactly what was going on in relation to picketing, they were allowed to speak to any man they chose in compliance with the Strike Committee's desire that the truth be known, but unfortunately only two newspapers presented the facts to the public through the medium of their news columns, the rest preferred to attack the strikers despite the evidence produced.

Stoppage at its height

In spite of the distorted Press reports and the uncompromising attitude of the trade union officials, who, in Tooley Street, were allowed to use the Strike Committee's platform to speak to the men every morning, BEFORE the Strike Committee, the strikers themselves remained firm in their resolve and rejected resolution after resolution which came from the Massed Divisional. The first of these, read to the men by the official on May 22nd, was the infamous amendment in relation to perishable cargoes, discovered afterwards to have been rejected in other ports throughout the country at least five days before it had been presented in Tooley Street. Obviously the aim of union had been to seek a majority in favour before informing the men in Tooley Street that it was binding on them. Fortunately, the foresight of the men elsewhere had prevented such a *fait accompli*.

True, some sporadic successes were accorded these pernicious resolutions and some men went back to work, especially in the Royal Group, but the adamant resolve of the men in Tooley Street had the effect of forcing the employers to withdraw the "black labour" as a ruse to ensure the return of the men in the Royal Group at least, for, in the words of the management at Borthwicks, whose attitude had undergone a complete transformation, whilst the Royal Group of Docks was working normally there was no need to employ unregistered labour; in fact, they guaranteed that they would completely withhold it upon those very conditions.

Again, this ruse was successful in part and did ensure the return of the men in the Royal Group, but after just a day or so, with a nonchalance which could only suggest Government backing of the highest degree, more "scabs" were brought in and the Port came to a standstill.

June 3rd saw an approach to the men at Tilbury in consequence of a request for information, and on June 4th the men there withdrew their labour. It must be pointed out here and thoroughly understood that the Strike Committee's instruc-

tions to its speakers was that they were responsible only for the dissemination of information and at no time must they ask for physical support, any decision to be taken must be left entirely to the men concerned and this was the rule which operated throughout the whole tenure of the strike.

Contacts were made throughout the country and speakers were supplied. Information in relation to diverted ships was relayed to all ports, whilst some ports, uncertain of various cargoes, actually sent men to Tooley Street to find out the truth, some such men came seeking information from ports in Scotland.

Eventually, as the stoppage reached its height, more than 20,000 men were out and remained solid until once more the union, in conjunction with the Port Employers, met to scheme another way of splitting the men, with the result that on Saturday, June 14th, an announcement was made to the effect that "black labour" would be withdrawn conditional upon a full resumption of work.

The inimitable Bro. Fry informed the world at large that there would indeed be a full resumption of work on Monday morning, June 16th, and that Tooley Street would be expected to obey the order as loyal trade unionists. In this, however, he appeared to be just a trifle premature. Maybe it was the fact that the bus strike appeared to be folding up after six frustrating weeks, and the early voting returns tended to suggest this, but lo and behold, on the Monday morning, despite a wholesale return in most areas, the men in Tooley Street told the union officials to go back and discuss THEIR problem, which had nothing at all to do with "black labour" but was indeed a fundamental trade union principle, whilst they remained out.

The Minister intervenes

On that Monday afternoon, the Minister of Labour decided to set up a Committee of Investigation into the meat drivers' strike, a decision which was to have a greater effect upon the future of the dock strike than anything yet produced, for in asking for the men to return to work to allow the Committee to conduct its inquiry in a "strike-free atmosphere," the Minister gave the impression that his intentions were strictly honourable and more than worthy of consideration.

Accordingly, the following day the dockers met the meat drivers to discuss the Minister's action, suggesting that it did perhaps offer the basis for an honourable return. Promising to think the matter over, the meat drivers suggested another meeting of the two Committees before their mass

meeting at St. Pancras Town Hall the next day.

At this second meeting, the dockers' Strike Committee made it clear that the lines upon which their men were thinking were a full return to work in accordance with the wishes of the Minister to allow the Committee to operate unhampered, for, in their opinion, with right on their side, the drivers must win both a clean bill of health at the Inquiry and their desired increase.

Somewhat reluctantly, the meat drivers' Strike Committee drew up a resolution to present to their men at their mass meeting, for they realised that whilst the dockers had told them that they would in no way force their hand if they remained out, some of the dockers might feel that they did not want a solution and would go back to work without them, thereby causing a split which could prove disastrous to everybody, and the meat drivers might find themselves completely isolated once again.

Meat drivers—the real heroes

There is no question that the attitude of the meat drivers at the commencement of their mass meeting was one of solidarity which suggested no compromise whatever and that without the resolution from the table and its consequent discussion would have voted to remain out until they had obtained their just demands, but with the explanation from the platform and the realisation that the men in Tooley Street might no longer be in a position to offer the fullest possible support, they accepted the advice from the table and voted for a return to work in accordance with the terms of the resolution.

In view of what transpired afterwards it is perhaps as well to present the resolution in full. It read:

1. Having had placed before us that a committee of investigation is to be set up by the Minister of Labour, we therefore recommend a complete return to work of all members involved in the dispute to allow the investigation to take place in a strike-free atmosphere.
 2. Negotiations shall be concluded within four weeks of a return to work, and that the agreement shall operate on and from the first Monday of return.
 3. There shall be a 100 per cent return of all workers engaged in the dispute, with the same conditions operating as prior to the dispute.
- The return to work from the docks' point of view was made as from 12 midnight on Sunday, June 22nd, to allow the shift workers in the cold

[turn to next page]

YOUNG SOCIALIST reappears next issue

BANK — conditions on the site

benches for the taking of meals, (ii) facilities for boiling water and warming meals brought by operatives, (b) where the number of operatives wishing to purchase meals is sufficient reasonably to warrant such facilities, arrangements shall be made to ensure that all approaches to canteens or messrooms are kept reasonably firm and dry.

What is really the case? On the site during the daytime there are 800 men. The canteen only holds 400 at a time, and as the lunch period lasts for ½ an hour the inconvenience to the men is considerable. To add to this there are no hot meals provided at all (only tea and rolls, etc.). During the tea breaks the men have to stay put on their jobs while the tea is brought round to them in billy-cans and open cups, etc. Also it is customary on large sites to sell cigarettes in the canteen. But on the South Bank unless you are well supplied with such things before you start work, you've had it.

The very inadequate canteen that does exist (to say the least) doesn't even comply with the last point quoted from the WRA. After any short shower of rain the whole site is like a mudbath, and consequently all the dirt imaginable finds its way into the canteen. On this point one worker said: "You can be dressed up smartly when you leave for home, but by the time you've walked to

the main road you look like a tramp."

Toilets: the WRA says:

"sanitary conveniences . . . shall be provided on the basis of not less than one for every 25 persons employed."

Which Working Rule Agreements?

On the site there are six toilets, enough for 300 men only. Toilets are also specified "to ensure reasonable privacy." Perhaps if Sir Robert McAlpine were to use one of the toilets he might alter his views on what constitutes reasonable privacy.

Drying Sheds: to quote again from the WRA:

" . . . there shall be provision for depositing clothing not worn during work, together with such arrangements as may be reasonably practicable for dry clothing."

The drying sheds on the South Bank are quite a farce, just converted air raid shelters with roofs that let in the water, and are so damp that rats from the Thames find it comfortable enough to make a home for themselves there.

Extra Payments: under the WRA, extra payments are payable for the following:

Work in water where watertight footwear is necessary, 1d. per hour.

Labourers when using in the course of their normal work mechanically-driven compressed-air or percussive drills, picks, spades, rammers, tampers or hammers, 1d. per hour.

McAlpines agreed to pay these extra rates after the February strike, but today, five months later, they are still not being paid.

Stewards: on the site there are, as previously stated, 800 men who have elected 36 stewards to represent the various sections. McAlpines will only allow 7 of them time off to attend stewards meetings. This, however, is within the WRA which states:

The Works Committee shall be composed of not more than seven members who shall be selected from the respective Stewards on each section.

But it is customary, or general practice, on sites of such size to allow more than this

[turn to next page]

Lack of space precludes the inclusion of our usual TU Commentary. Readers are requested to wait patiently for the next issue.—Editor.

LESSONS of the STRIKES

continued

stores to function normally, but there were certain complications in respect of both the drivers and the Smithfield Market men for the employers suggested that some of the men couldn't start until the Wednesday morning.

Eventually, however, these problems were overcome and a full return was made, with Mr Tapp, the Chairman of the Joint Industrial Council for London Meat Drivers and Mates, most emphatic in his statement that there must be no victimization, to which the union representative agreed.

In the light of this most emphatic statement by the Chairman it is hard to reconcile his further statement that there would be some redundancy and its concomitant formula which was produced at a meeting the following day. The formula, accepted by the union, read:

Subject to the recognition of the rights of the employer to adjust at any time the number of men he employs, it is agreed that joint meetings will be held as quickly as practicable to deal with resulting redundancy, if any.

Again, despite his avowed desire that there should be no victimization on this same day, Mr Tapp also declared that the men had, by virtue of taking part in an unofficial strike, forfeited all their rights to holidays both for 1958 and 1959. Now this, to me, irrespective of the legal position claimed by Mr Tapp, is victimization of the most vindictive nature and suggests that it is possibly unwise to place too much reliance upon the statements of employers.

When one turns to the Committee of Investigation, set up to inquire into the CAUSE of the meat drivers' strike, it is surprising to discover that the Chairman was Professor Jack, who in his 1952 Presidential Address to the British Association claimed that the trouble with the British economy was too-full employment. This was the man empowered to investigate an industrial dispute. There can be no question that it was this bias on his part which allowed Mr H F Minter, speaking on behalf of the employers, to castigate both Bro. Jeff Farquahar and Bro Erik Recknitz for their action in ensuring an orderly conduct of the strike after it had become a fact. How it is possible to tie up the conduct of a strike once it has begun with the actual cause of the strike itself is beyond comprehension to a normal person, but maybe understanding on this point comes with erudition, unless, of course, one is singularly biased.

Credit and discredit

With the facts before us, what is to be learned from the Dock Strike as described? Is there any lesson for the future that can be useful should the occasion arise? I think yes!

Firstly, the solidarity of the meat drivers themselves, who, after nine weeks without money, still had the resolution and courage to continue their struggle despite the thought and possibility of being alone, and were only persuaded to give up their fight in the belief that they would receive a fair deal, provides an example which must command the admiration of every ardent trade unionist.

Secondly, the firm resolve and solidarity of the Sectors 2-7-9 who, despite the ins and outs of all other Sectors, continued to demand from their union officials the service for which they were appointed and who refused to return to work until so recommended by the unofficial Strike Committee, to whom they gave unswerving allegiance from start to finish.

Thirdly, the extremely useful purpose served by the Joint Liaison Committee, who made it possible for Tooley Street to contact the men in their Sectors with the least possible delay and who carried on the conduct of the strike in their areas with sincerity of purpose wonderful to behold. More power to their elbow.

Fourth and last on the credit side of this lesson is the splendid attitude of other trade unionists who immediately upon approach offered financial assistance of an unstinted degree which enabled the Strike Committee to carry out its duties unhampered by financial worries, but here the credits end and all that is left are warnings.

Obviously, in view of the composition of the Committee of Investigation it is not wise to put too much trust in the avowed intentions of the Government for equitable solutions to these problems.

Again, the type of transport used for the conveyance of meat during the strike and its whole-hearted support by the police suggests that the whole project received Government backing throughout. It also proves that the Government, in conjunction with the employers and through their medium, are prepared for a showdown with the workers in all spheres of industrial life. Reference to the strike in Covent Garden reveals this only too well.

There is no question that the employers themselves are fully organized to combat strike action by the workers and supported in the main by a reactionary Press they are in a position to convey to the public in general the impression that the striker is always in the wrong.

On the official union side there is untold evidence that principles no longer matter and that they are prepared to sell their members down the river on any such issue. To prove this point, Covent Garden struck on a point of principle and lost the day, but the busmen were given an official blessing when the Trade Union had been forced out on a limb.

Again, in this recent strike, the principle for which the cold store workers stopped work was completely ignored, whilst the union officials attempted to effect a return on the understanding that they would be calling an official strike on the pay question and elder statesmen and others have been suggesting that the strike weapon is now out of date.

Build rank-and-file committees

This last is not true, the strike is the most powerful weapon possessed by the worker, but it must be used judiciously. What is needed if the "political showdown" now in being is to be brought to a successful conclusion for the worker is the creation of militant rank and file Committees who must be prepared at all times to watch the position as it develops, to ensure that the trade union official carries out his duty in the manner prescribed, and, if need be, take over the direction of the struggle if the official fails so to do.

To this end it is essential to have an effective liaison throughout the whole port industry, drawing together the most militant among us and ready to go into action if the occasion demands. The Joint Liaison Committee have paved the way. The rest is up to us.

Southbank

continued

number. The situation at present is that on Friday evenings, when the Stewards meet, all work on the site stops at five o'clock, instead of overtime being worked until seven o'clock, so that the Stewards do not lose time (and the money that goes with it).

Fares: under the Working Rule Agreements, any worker that lives more than four miles from the site is entitled to a payment of 5½d. per mile. There are quite a large number of men on the site who live outside this radius. McAlpines avoid paying this rather cleverly. When it comes to paying out money or improving working standards as put down in the Working Rule Agreements for the Building Industry, McAlpines make advantageous use of the Working Rule Agreements for the Civil Engineering Industry, which are different on many issues, including the payment of fares. In the Civil Engineering WRA there is no provision for the payment of fares.

A new offensive

The question that naturally arises from this is: what is the difference between building and civil engineering? There are some conflicting views on this. Some workers on the site were of the opinion that there is no difference at all, while others say that any construction below first-floor level comes under civil engineering, and above the first floor is considered building. Whichever point of view one accepts there is no excuse for Mc-

Alpines to use both WRAs. This point is not without some significance. Sir Robert McAlpine happens to be the Chairman of the Master Builders' Federation, which as many building workers believe, has decided to launch a new offensive on the working standards of the builders. The rule books play some part in this.

If this is so then the initiative that has already been won through the Steel Fixers and Benders' strike must not be lost. The Union officials and Stewards have done a fine job in getting the site fully organized. Many men on the site thought, however, that the Unions are not pushing their case with enough strength or vigour. This must not be allowed to happen. If the Unions took

Safety on the sites

The problem of safety is becoming a very serious one on big building sites and promises to become more so with the advent of the big multi-storey building projects already under way in London. How serious it is can be seen from the fact that on one site alone—the Belvedere Power Station site—three workers have already been killed and six more are in hospital, three of whom are seriously injured.

A stand must be made before the situation deteriorates even further. As a first step, every support should be given to the Drake and Gorhams—Burroughs Welcome Site, Beckenham, which has been in dispute with main contractor Wallace's since July 21st. The problem—safety. Already factory inspectors have had to be called in on three separate occasions. Latterly, after an injury at work, Wallace's repudiated an agreement forced on the site agent to keep two maintenance electricians on the spot. The agent subsequently refused to reopen negotiations with Bro. Ball, the full time official.

Pending official recognition, the strikers need support. Send material and other aid to Treasurer Bob King, 5 Hamlet Road, Upper Norwood, London, SE19.

FOOTNOTE: As we go to press, work on the London Southbank site, has come to a stop. The issue—safety. The strike broke after the tragic death of a worker—the third fatality (and who knows how many near-fatalities?) since work on the site began. The day shift have sworn not to return to work until a trustworthy full-time safety officer is enrolled by McAlpines, the contractors.

enough trouble over dealing with their members' grievances as they do over getting members then there wouldn't be quite so many frustrated militant trade unionists in the movement.

The victory on the South Bank has been won in part. The next step is to show the bosses (and the unions?) that any reduction in working standards will not be tolerated.

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Tony Cliff presents the background to the

INTERNATIONAL

MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

THE MOTIVE for imperialist aggression in the Arab countries is the search for and defence of oil profits. To get a clear picture of the situation in the Middle East, therefore, it is important first to see the extent of the oil interests.

The world's oil industry is controlled by eight big companies, five American, one British, one Anglo-Dutch, and one French. The percentage controlled by the eight companies of each section of the industry outside the United States and the Communist bloc is as follows:

Ownership of reserves ...	92%
Production ...	88%
Refining ...	79%
Cracking ...	85%
Tanker fleets ...	66%
Pipelines ...	98%

(I. Campbell, *The Future of Oil*, London, 1958, p. 4.)

"The interests of the eight companies have been closely woven together by joint ownership of subsidiaries, which are the actual operating companies in the production, transportation, refining and marketing of oil. Typical of such joint bodies is Aramco, owned by four of the eight companies, and the Iraq Petroleum Company, owned by five of them. On the marketing side there are joint companies such as Caltex (Standard of California and the Texas Company) which has 35 subsidiaries including Regent Oil in the UK.

"It is clear that such a joint ownership implies considerable co-operation between the companies on such vital matters as levels of production, policies towards governments, etc." (*Ibid.* pp. 4-5.)

The pickings and the pickers

At present the US has a decisive position in oil production in the Middle East, as may be seen from the following figures: US interests in 1955 oil output in the Middle East—91.6 million tons, or 58.1 per cent of the total; Britain (including Anglo-Dutch)—55.7 million tons, or 35.3 per cent; France—10.4 million tons, or 6.6 per cent. In 1944 the US share was only 16 per cent, while that of Britain was 79 per cent, and of France, 5 per cent.

The profits derived from a ton of oil extracted in the Middle East are considerably higher than those derived from oil extracted elsewhere. By arrangement between the eight big companies, the price is determined by the price of Texas oil, even though the Middle East has superseded the US as the major oil exporter.

"The price of Middle East oil, therefore, bears no relation whatsoever to its cost of production. Middle East costs are considerably smaller than those in the United States for a variety of reasons, notably the far greater productivity of the wells and the much lower labour costs. In 1950, for example, the average output per well in the

US was 31 barrels a day. In Venezuela it was 200, and in the Middle East 5,000—some Kuwait wells even reaching 9,000 a day." (*Ibid.* p. 9.)

The result is extremely high profits. "Standard of New Jersey and its 51 affiliates and subsidiaries throughout the world made a net profit in 1956 of \$808 million (£288 million). It not only paid a dividend of just over \$2 on every \$7 share, but also issued a new share for every one already held. Shell, the Anglo-Dutch giant, made a net profit of £179 million and declared a dividend of 18½ per cent. Standard Oil of California with \$267 million (£96 million) and Socony-Mobil with \$207 million (£74 million) were not far behind. They declared dividends of 26 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.

"As the Chairmen's reports of Jersey and California both point out, the oil business is the most profitable in the whole free world." (*Ibid.* p. 9.)

The impact of Imperialism

Even in the Arab countries which do not produce oil, all key positions of the economy are in the hands of foreign capitalists. For instance, in Egypt foreign capital just prior to the second world war amounted to 47 per cent of the total capital of the country, including land, and, excluding land, to somewhere between 73 and 81 per cent. (A Bonné, *The Economic Development of the Middle East*,* Jerusalem, 1943, p. 73.)

Seeing that imperialist capital desires to monopolize the markets of the Arab East for its manufactured goods, and the raw materials produced there for its industries, it strives to hinder industrial development there and especially the rise of a machine industry which would make for economic independence. Seeing that the profits of imperialist capital are dependent on the low wages paid to the Arab workers and the low prices paid for the products bought from the peasant, Imperialism is interested in keeping the countryside in the most backward conditions, so that it will be an inexhaustible reserve of labour power and cheap raw materials. Imperialism is further interested in this for socio-political reasons: firstly because only backward, illiterate and sick masses dispersed in tiny villages far away from one another can be ruled easily, and secondly because the Imperialist fifth column in the colonial countries, its most faithful agents, are the feudal landlords. Thus Imperialism is intricately involved in the agrarian question.

Three-quarters of the Arab population lives in the country, subjugated to a tiny handful of big landowners. In Egypt prior to land reform 0.5 per cent of the landowners had 37.1 per cent of all the land, while 70.7 per cent had only 12.4 per cent of the land. Three hundred and thirty one men had three times more land than 1½ million poor pea-

sants and there were more than a million land cultivators who had no land of their own whatsoever. One plantation company alone owned such a large area of land as to employ 35,000 workers. A calculation of Emile Minost, Director-General of **Credit Foncier Egyptian**, a banking concern not likely to exaggerate the extent of exploitation of the masses, gave the division of the net income from agriculture as follows:

	per cent
To taxes ...	6.3
To large landowners ...	56.6
To merchants ...	12.1
To peasants ...	25.0
	100.0

Thus a few thousand landowners received twice the sum that three million peasants received. On an average, a poor peasant before the war did not earn more than £7-£8 a year. During the war his nominal income rose, but the cost of living rose more, and his real income therefore decreased. The income of the agricultural worker was even lower. The daily wage of a male agricultural worker before the war was 3 piasters (about 7d.); of a female 2; and of a child 1-1½, and they were condemned to extended periods of unemployment every year as the work season lasts 6-8 months. Even a foreman did not receive more than £2 a month, a clerk £3, and a cart driver £1 to £1 4s. Since the war, although wages have risen, they have barely caught up with prices.

With such low incomes, the food position is obviously terrible. As a matter of fact it is comparable only with that of the Indians. It has been calculated that the consumption of the average Egyptian, which is, of course, much higher than that of the poor peasant worker, is only 46 per cent of the optimum in wheat, 25 per cent in sugar, 23 per cent in meat and fish, and 8 per cent in milk products. Furthermore, the nutritional position is not improving, but steadily deteriorating.

Health, Poverty, Ignorance

The hard economic conditions of the masses impair their health very much and cause a very high death rate—26.4 per 1,000 in 1938 as against 24.3 per 1,000 in India and 11.6 in England. Of a thousand infants born alive, 163 died in the first year in Egypt, as against 167 in India and 52 in England.

The expectation of life is very low: males 31 years and females 36. In the United Kingdom the expectation of life is 68 years for a male and 71 for a female. Those who live to be adults are very weak. Among those conscripted from the villages in 1941, only 11 per cent were medically fit for army service. Ninety per cent of Egypt's population suffers from trachoma, 50 per cent from worm disease, 75 per cent from bilharzia, 50 per cent from ankylostoma.

Poverty is inevitably accompanied by ignorance, which in Egypt reaches fearful dimensions. Some idea of its extent may be gained from the very succinct remark of the paper *el-Mussawar* when discussing the results of the 1937 census (August 28th, 1942): "We have 30,000 holders of diplomas as against 14 millions who know neither how to read or to write."

Ignorance is the product of the existing social system, and also one of its pillars. Indeed, the ruling class knows very well that the illiteracy of the masses is one of the greatest assets of the regime. Thus a certain Egyptian senator thanked God that his country took "first place in ignorance." (*Al-Ahram*, July 7th, 1944.)

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MID-EAST—ctd

Riches, pleasure and hilarity of some tens of thousands of Egyptians and foreigners on the one hand, and hunger, disease and ignorance of the millions on the other—this is the picture of Egypt!

Is it any wonder that after 70 years of British rule in Egypt hatred of Imperialism is so deep and strong!

The last few years have seen a rising national liberatory movement starting to engulf the citadels of Western Imperialism in the Middle East. In 1951, Moussadeq, Premier of Iran, decided to nationalize the oil industry, until then British controlled. The British Labour Government replied with the dispatch of warships to the Persian Gulf.

Shocks to Imperialist system

However, notwithstanding this sabre-rattling and in face of the refusal of the United States to back British military action in Iran, Abadan had to be evacuated in October, 1951. But British oil interests did not give up, and, by using the weapon of economic boycott, supported by all the big oil companies in the world, they managed to bring the Iranian oil industry to a standstill. Eventually in August, 1953, the Moussadeq government was overthrown and a government more amenable to Western Imperialism—the military dictatorship of General Zahedi—was established. In the resulting settlement, however, British interests were able to obtain only a 40 per cent share in the new concessionary company (they had previously held 100 per cent).

A bigger shock to Western Imperialism was the overthrow, in 1952, of the corrupt puppet King Farouk of Egypt.

"The strategic importance of Egypt to imperialism was emphasized by the British

WHAT WE STAND FOR on page 2

Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Slim, in his conversations with the Egyptian Premier, Nahas Pasha, in the summer of 1950: 'Anyone who wants to hold the Middle East must hold Egypt . . . Egypt is the key to the Middle East.' (Quoted in **R. Palme Dutt, The Crisis of Britain and the British Empire**, London, 1957, pp. 237-8).

Two years later Britain was compelled to withdraw her troops from the Canal Zone.

Retreating from one position of the front, British Imperialism tried to strengthen its foothold in another. In 1955, in opposition to nationalist Egypt, the imperialist-sponsored military pact linking Britain, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan—the Baghdad Pact—was established.

At the end of 1955 a military mission headed by General Templer to draw Jordan into the Baghdad Pact aroused a storm of popular indignation. As a result, not only did Jordan not join the Pact, but in addition the British Commander of the Jordanian Army, General Glubb, was thrown out, and in November 1956, the Anglo-Jordan Treaty was denounced by a new Government.

Where East meets West

The British-French-Israeli war of aggression against Egypt—the Suez adventure—which ended in a fiasco, weakened the Western Imperialist foothold in the Middle East even more. To retrieve the position, in January, 1957, the "Eisenhower Doctrine" was announced. And now, in pursuance of this policy, US troops are in Lebanon and British troops have invaded Jordan.

However, all these are only holding operations: imperialism is doomed to defeat.

When Khrushchev's hands were covered with the Hungarian workers' blood he hastened to wash them in the Suez Canal. The reactionary nature of his role in the Middle East and that of his predecessor, Stalin, can be made no clearer than by following the unprincipled, dishonest twists and turns of the Kremlin agents in the area—the Stalinist Parties.

We shall have to limit ourselves to a few examples.

The Stalinist corkscrew

After the Hitler-Stalin Pact, a leaflet of October, 1939, of the Central Committee of the Palestine Communist Party said: "The Hitler against whom Chamberlain fights is not the same Hitler who was led by him against the Soviet Union. This Hitler who cannot make a campaign against the Soviet Union, but must obey (no more nor less!—TC) the instructions of Moscow is today no more the gendarme of Chamberlain and Daladier." Apparently he was the gendarme of world peace.

When Russia was at war with Germany, the line of the Communist Parties in the Middle East changed completely. Whereas till now the whole East was the foe of imperialism and "the masses of Indians and Arabs were on the eve of open revolts against imperialist rule" (**Kol Ha'am**, Hebrew organ of the Palestine Communist Party, June, 1940), now a decisive change occurred in the situation: "The government must understand that it has an important region of friends in the Middle East" (**Kol Ha'am**, December, 1942). Till now, the "British Government in

[turn to page 3

Socialist Review published this leaflet at the height of the recent crisis

MIDDLE EAST!

Once again the Middle East is the centre of world conflict.

Once again war is being waged to protect oil profits.

Once again lives are being sacrificed in order to maintain imperialist control.

Reactionary puppet kings, hated by the people, are being shored up by British and American troops.

No foreign intervention has the power to hold back the rising tide of the Arab peoples. For generations they have been slaves to the strategic and economic interests of the West. For generations they have lived in squalor and ignorance, ground by ceaseless toil. Now they are determined to control their own future free from the stranglehold of British and American oil profiteers.

This war is not being fought to protect the interests of the British people. Only the interests of capitalism are at stake. The Arab and the British peoples have common enemies. Only our common efforts can end this war.

It is up to the British Labour Movement to use its political and industrial power to put an end to this aggression against the Arab peoples.

We cannot leave it to the governments to decide our fate. The murderers of the Hungarian people and the butchers of Cyprus and Kenya cannot, must not, be allowed to use us as pawns in the international diplomatic game.

In this we cannot rely on Summit Talks. In 1955 the Geneva Conference took place. The heads of state conferred and reached an "agreement in principle." What happened? The search for ever more deadly weapons continued unabated; the struggle for influence in the Middle East did not stop for one second; the "Geneva spirit" evaporated during the butchery in Egypt and Hungary. And the cold war continued with unreduced ferocity.

What is needed is not a conference of the warmongers, but international, socialist activity in defence of peace against war and its instigators.

As long as foreign capital controls Middle Eastern oil the danger of war will be with us. The Arab people's right to their wealth cannot be questioned. As we supported Egypt's nationalisation of the Suez Canal, so must every socialist support the Arab people's seizure of foreign oil companies' assets.

From every factory, from every Labour Party ward and Youth Section we must demand:

1—STOP THIS DIRTY WAR FOR PROFITS.

2—WITHDRAW ALL TROOPS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING CYPRUS.

3—END THE EXPLOITATION OF THE ARAB WORKERS BY THE OIL-BARONS.

HANDS OFF