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# Socialist Outlook

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WEEKLY

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1954

3d.

London Labour  
protests at  
'Outlook' Ban

(page 2)

## THE RENT RAMP HAS STARTED

### 'LOYALTY' SPECIALISTS

THE history of British Labour is one of untold sacrifice. Starting out towards the end of the last century a handful of relatively unknown men laid the political foundation for a movement which now ranks amongst the greatest in the world. Braving the poverty of their times and the persecution of the age old capitalist enemy, they pioneered from one end of the country to the other, armed only with ideas—the ideas of Socialism. This was the foundation upon which they built.

Besides untiring devotion the early pioneers had one further characteristic. They were independent men in their political thinking. Whilst devoting the maximum time to the struggle against the common enemy they passionately discussed matters of policy amongst themselves. Indeed freedom of debate was the basis of their strength. They did not fear the capitalist politician on this score, and he in turn knew full well that these differences were centred around how speedily the system he represented could be got rid of. Such differences are no encouragement to Toryism.

Consider in this light the "loyalty oath" for SOCIALIST OUTLOOK supporters prepared by Leeds L.P. officialdom. What would the pioneers of our movement think of such a document?

This disease of bureaucratism responsible for such a disgraceful effort is one of the most hideous enemies of our movement.

### An Electoral Machine

The Morrison theory which inspires the Leeds "loyalty specialists" considers the Labour Party as an electoral machine run exclusively from the top. All discussion to them is taboo—differences of opinion are well nigh criminal. The crime of SOCIALIST OUTLOOK in their eyes is that it wishes to speed up the progress of the Party towards Socialism.

Morrison, who advocated the policy of "consolidation" which eventually led to a Conservative election victory years for the day of Tory collaboration when he and others earned the dubious name of "Statesmen." His violent hostility to so-called Bevanism and SOCIALIST OUTLOOK is essentially based upon a fundamental hostility to the traditions of the pioneers.

The witch hunt in Leeds is primarily directed against ideas, and this follows logically from the circular of the N.E.C. The right wing know full well that they cannot put SOCIALIST OUTLOOK out of existence as a newspaper. Thanks to a firm body of socialist opinion inside the party this is impossible.

### Proscribing Ideas

What the "loyalty oath" gentlemen want to do is to proscrib ideas. That is why they specifically refer to support of this journal and its policies. Under the N.E.C. decree anyone who advances a policy in the Labour Party similar to SOCIALIST OUTLOOK can be made ineligible for membership. Since newspapers are the most powerful policy vehicle, they have singled out SOCIALIST OUTLOOK as a prelude to an all-round attack against independent Labour newspapers.

For this reason the fight must be stepped up all along the line to get the ban removed at Scarborough.

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## Labour Must Annul Tory Act

MONDAY, August 30, was the day the landlords have been waiting for ever since the great Glasgow Rent Strike in 1915 forced the government of the day to pass the first Rent Restrictions Act. The Tory "Housing Repairs and Rents Act" goes a long way to cancel the gains working class tenants have won in long years of bitter struggle for a square deal from the landlords.

From now on millions of householders are liable to receive notice that their rents will go up by as much as 8/- in the £. Many who thought that the increases would be kept to a minimum are being swiftly disillusioned.

Even tenants in the higher income groups "are staggered by the increases being asked them," according to the "Sunday Express" of August 29, and are discussing the formation of "tenants' committees."

If this is the effect the new Rents Act is having on those who can afford to live in luxury flats, what is going to happen when it is applied in full force to working class dwellings.

### POOR PAY MORE

The Oxford University Institute of Statistics has estimated that the lower your income the higher the proportionate increase in your rent. Households with a gross income of under £200 a year will have their

rents increased by 57 per cent. Those with over £1,000 a year will increase by only 35 per cent.

Thus the Tories carry out the class dictum "Unto those that have shall be given; from those that have not shall be taken away."

Only united action on the part of tenants, organised in "Tenants' Committees" can effectively fight the landlords. Local Labour Parties and Trades Councils must take the initiative in the formation of such committees and give them a lead.

Nationally, the Labour Party must give a lead by issuing a statement that when returned to power it will annul the Tory Rents Act and restore all rents to the position existing before the Act became law.

This would act as an effective curb on the unbridled rapacity of the landlords and would ensure the heaviest defeat for the Tories at the next General Election

## Mendes-France Seeks Fresh Way Out

LAST Tuesday the French National Assembly refused to ratify the "European Defence Community" Treaty. This was the climax to the constantly erupting Parliamentary crises around E.D.C. and the European Army in France over the past two years.

The French ruling class faces an insoluble dilemma. They fear the resurgence of German capitalism which can quickly become far stronger economically and militarily than France. On the other hand they are bound by capitalist and colonial interests to the war preparations of which German re-

armament is a part. Their economy is propped up by American aid. Because of this, Mendes-France, together with the French ruling class, cannot be, and is not, opposed to German re-armament.

He has already stated that on the rejection of E.D.C. his Government would still feel bound "to work out another solution in agreement with our Western Allies, with whom we have, once and for all, taken a joint decision for consolidating peace and organising security."

In place of E.D.C. Mendes-France searches for some formula to establish another basis for German re-armament, with more concrete guarantees from Britain and America against the threat to French capitalist interests of a strengthened German capitalism.

He also hopes for something from further discussions with the Soviet leaders. Having ended the war in Indo-China with an agreement which left France with a base when French forces were facing complete collapse; he hopes now to reach an agreement that would

aid French capitalism in Europe. He evidently believes that out of the bargaining with the Soviet leaders there could be forthcoming the help of the French Communist Party to carry through his economic programme and curb the French working class. This would bring to fruition his hope expressed after Geneva to the Assembly: "we may now get aid from quarters formerly opposed."

The decision of the French Assembly will undoubtedly toughen opposition to German re-armament at the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party Conference. British Labour would be taking a big step forward if it denounced E.D.C. as part of the preparations for war. But at the same time it must see the alternative not in illusions in French capitalist politicians; power bloc meetings to decide the fate of the German people over their heads, but in the demand for the unconditional withdrawal of the occupation troops. Give the German workers the opportunity to decide their own future.

By  
**K. Edwards**

## DOCKERS WIN VICTORY

NOT for many years have dockers organised and led by their own rank and file committee inflicted such a crushing defeat upon the ship-owners as they did at Hull.

Displaying tremendous solidarity and real tenacity, the 4,000 Hull dockers conducted a determined struggle for ten days. The strike was carried on in face of opposition from the employers, a bitter Press campaign and a "return to work" attitude by the men's own union—the Transport and General.

On the morning of Wednesday,

the men have been prepared to struggle. The greatest asset of the dockers, their own organised strength, gained them this victory.

Yet in Hull, as confirmed by the strike meetings, the men feel that the T. & G.W.U. has not been their weapon in the way in which it should have been. In fact, they insist that it has been an obstruction.

This is the reason why the men have spontaneously raised the demand for entry into the "blue" union.

### BIRKENHEAD MEETING

On Sunday last, representatives of the Hull men travelled to Birkenhead. There, with Bill Johnson, prominent Birkenhead docker, they addressed a meeting of the Merseyside men.

In Birkenhead, as in Hull, there is reported to be strong feeling in support of entry into the N.A.S.D.U.

Hull could quite easily be the beginning of a movement that could lead to the formation of one union for dockers: in my own opinion, a very essential step in the struggles still to come.

## Not Afraid of Deakin

"We never have been and never will be afraid of Mr. Deakin. I trust he will repeat the charge of poaching on the floor of the T.U.C. Conference next Monday." These were the words of Dick Barrett, General Secretary of the National Amalgamated Stevedores' and Dockers' Union, at a mass meeting of two and a half thousand Hull dockers last Sunday.

Continuing, Mr. Barrett said he had evidence of Transport and General Workers' Union officials poaching his members during a trade dispute.

He stressed that the men must join of their own free will and be quite sure they wanted to transfer. A member of the "Blue" Union's Executive Committee, Mr. George Hearne, said they had come there at the urgent request of the Hull men themselves.

There was no intention to seduce the Hull docker. It was a matter for the Hull docker to decide for himself.

Mr. Hearne explained that it was necessary to get 3,500 forms filled in for application for membership—this means the overwhelming majority of the men.

The speakers received a very enthusiastic and warm welcome from the meeting. It doesn't seem that the task of getting 3,500 forms completed in Hull is going to be a very difficult one.

The Portworkers' Committee there has already begun distribution of these forms. This was decided at a meeting of the Committee later in the evening.

## Socialist Outlook Needs Money

The campaign against the ban goes on. Support is coming from all parts of the country and from every section of the movement. It is reflected in an upswing in our circulation figures—an increase both of individual subscribers and of bulk orders from organisations.

Our readers appreciate the job we do for them. Dockers in Hull bought in large quantity copies of our last issue, which gave full coverage to their dispute.

Our readers, too, recognise this as a test case. If Transport House gets away with this, then that will

be the end of freedom of thought and speech within the Party.

Is that the sort of Labour Party you want? Of course not! But it is action, not words, that counts. The main fight for democracy within the Party is now concentrated around the fight to get the ban on SOCIALIST OUTLOOK removed.

This campaign costs money! It costs lots of money and that money can only come from you!

Send all you can and send it now to SOCIALIST OUTLOOK, 177, Bermondsey Street, S.E.1.

# RESCIND THIS COWARDLY DECISION says MICHAEL FOOT, M.P.

## London Labour Protest at Ban

**"REFUSE to sign these loyalty oaths as unofficial,"** said Mr. Michael Foot, M.P., when he spoke on Thursday, August 26 at a meeting organised in protest against the ban imposed on SOCIALIST OUTLOOK. "That'll keep them scratching their heads in Transport House till Morgan Phillips returns."

Recipients of such letters, advised Mr. Foot, should reply that they would like a ruling from Transport House. They should further tell whoever asked them to sign that such a request was a disgrace to his membership in a democratic organisation.

Under the terms of these "loyalty oaths" everyone who attended that meeting was liable, including himself. He would rather be kicked out than sign a document of this nature.

**"We cannot allow this to go on, and free controversy and free newspapers to be stamped out of existence,"** Michael Foot declared, amid applause. In such an atmosphere, nobody knew who would be next on the list.

"Though no doubt that little problem would soon be solved by the Organisation Sub-Committee as it may think fit," he added.

"Here we are, facing grave problems as the result of the development of the atom bomb, with a Tory Government in power; yet somebody in the Labour Movement is circulating this. The great men who built this movement would be ashamed at documents such as this."

"The National Conference must rescind this cowardly, totalitarian

decision—and then get on with the job of making the Labour Party more democratic."

### DAMNED PERSECUTING SPIRIT

Mr. Kingsley Martin, editor of the NEW STATESMAN AND NATION, told the 400-strong audience which packed London's Holborn Hall that he was there to make a brief protest against "this damned persecuting spirit" now gaining ground in the "higher regions" of the Labour Party.

When groups became a nuisance, it was an easy habit to fall into to say "I'll ban you". But it was an absolutely fatal habit.

"Whatever truth there may be in the allegation that there is a Trotskyist faction at work in the Labour Party," said FORWARD editor, Mr. John Harris, "it is quite certain that for every Trotskyist faction there are ten non- or anti-Trotskyist factions, far more subversive and dangerous to the Party's programme and future."

Yet no action was taken against these factions—perhaps because on many of them sat right-wing members of the National Executive Committee.

### GLAD TO PRINT

"If a Trotskyist writes to my paper, and he has what I believe to be a useful contribution to make to discussion within the Movement, then I shall be glad to print what he has to say," said Mr. Harris. He felt confident that other editors on the platform would take the same stand.

Mr. J. Allen Skinner, editor of PEACE NEWS, spoke as a Socialist outside the ranks of the Labour Party concerned to uphold the freedom of the Socialist press.

He argued that the Labour Party was an undemocratic organisation which it was impossible to reform—believing this, he had left the Party on the disaffiliation of the I.L.P. in 1932. Members of the audience listened respectfully to Mr. Skinner, but made plain later in their response to a financial appeal and by passing a resolution

of protest, that they believed that the proper immediate arena of the fight was within the Party organisations.

Miss Monica Pearson, a member of the staff of the CO-OP NEWS, protested against the ban in her two capacities as Socialist and journalist. The banning of the books, she declared to applause, was the first step towards the burning of the books.

Mr. Gerry Healy, a member of the Editorial Board of SOCIALIST OUTLOOK, condemned the decision of the N.E.C. on the recommendation of its Organisation Sub-Committee.

"This decision has called forth the plaudits of the more far-sighted section of the ruling class," he said.

The DAILY SKETCH—which Mr. Healy described as the theoretical organ of the 1922 Committee—had said that "for almost the first time" it found itself in

agreement with the N.E.C. of the Labour Party. "Don't ban it, burn it," the SKETCH had advised. "And that is just what Morrison and Company would like to do."

### "COUNT ME IN"

Outlining the stand adopted by SOCIALIST OUTLOOK on some of the great issues in domestic and foreign policy since the paper's foundation in 1948, Mr. Healy dealt with the paper's attitude to the war in Korea, to the two election campaigns of 1950 and 1951 and to the struggle of the colonial peoples for freedom from imperialist rule.

"If that is Trotskyism," he declared, "then count me in—I'm one, and so are a lot of other people."

Mr. Healy described how he had searched in vain the columns of the organs of the Communist Party for some word of protest against the ban. Not a word had appeared—and this was all the more shameful in that consistently the OUTLOOK had championed the cause of Communist victims of the witch-hunt, and carried in its current issue a protest against the measures outlawing the U.S. Communist Party.

Messages were read by the chairman, Mr. Jack Stanley, member of the Editorial Board and General Secretary of the Constructional Engineering Union, from Birmingham readers, from Cypriot and Indian supporters in the audience and from the Editorial Board of the monthly journal, SOCIALIST REVIEW. A collection of more than £30 was taken.

At the end of the meeting the following resolution was carried unanimously:

"This meeting of London supporters of the Labour Movement pledges itself to do everything possible within the trade unions, Labour Parties and the Co-operative Party for the lifting of this undemocratic ban on SOCIALIST OUTLOOK."

## Policing the Party

A LONDON Labour Party member, in Yorkshire during August, wrote Mr. A. L. Williams, National Agent of the Labour Party. He asked him for a ruling on two points.

**First.** What his membership of the Labour Party endangered if he continued to purchase a copy of the SOCIALIST OUTLOOK.

**Second.** Was his membership of the Labour Party endangered if he purchased a share in the Labour Publishing Society—"publishers of the banned journal"?

The letter was sent on August 9 from an address in a small Yorkshire mining village.

On August 18, Mr. Williams replied. He stated only that the letter was receiving attention. Just what type of attention was shown seven days later, when the local ward secretary began making enquiries about members of the L.P. living at the address from which the letter was written. It appeared that he had been asked to get information by officers in the Yorkshire region!

What a shocking revelation of a state of mind on the Party! Two simple questions, asked of the National Agent, are enough to set the jungle drums beating all the way down from Transport House to a village in Yorkshire.

**Proof that it was no exaggeration to declare that the implementation of the N.E.C. circular would riddle the Party with an army of spies and create an atmosphere of witch-hunting and toadying.**

## ERROR

There was an error in the article of P. Morris—Railwaymen Restive—in the SOCIALIST OUTLOOK of August 20.

It was stated "The N.U.R. is claiming . . . £9 15s. 0d. and the A.S.L.E. and F., £9 5s. 0d." The A.S.L.E. and F. is in fact claiming £10 5s. 0d.

## Brain-Washing in Bermondsey St.

**OBSERVANT** readers will have noticed that there has been a change in the SOCIALIST OUTLOOK during the past few weeks. That the "old gang" of writers are no longer filling the columns of the paper with their revolutionary outbursts of vindictive against the capitalist class, the Right Wing of the Labour Movement, and the existing form of society in general.

They have been replaced by a team of writers who are hand-picked for their gentle manner towards the capitalists, their absolute loyalty to Transport House, and their outspoken defence of the existing form of society.

The reasons for this change are obvious. When the brains at Transport House decided that the SOCIALIST OUTLOOK was a veritable hot-bed of Trotskyists, the editorial board took swift and determined action. The whole staff from copy-boy to chief sub were fired on the spot with a week's pay in lieu of notice and a signed photograph of Herbert Morrison to help them mend their nasty ways.

Having taken this step it was then necessary that the editorial board should engage a new staff of impeccable character—a difficult problem when there are so many people inspired by evil motives.

### A CUSTOMS CLEARANCE

The editorial board decided to ensure that future writers in the paper would be able to carry a "customs clearance" certificate from the N.E.C. A loyalty test was drawn up to which applicants for positions on the paper should be submitted. It included an examination by a psychiatrist—to see if there were any dangers of

brain disease; a blood test—to see if there were a predominance of white corpuscles over red; and a political sterility test—to ensure that the applicant was receptive to the N.E.C.'s policies of past, present and future.

As can be imagined, it was rather difficult to find candidates who fulfilled all these conditions; many managed to pass 90 per cent of the test but hardly any achieved 100 per cent perfection. Those who were completely satisfactory were, without exception, already employed as trade-union secretaries and could not be released from their positions.

It was eventually decided that

By

**J. Harney**

"ninety per centers" would be taken on the strict understanding that they endeavoured to reach the required standard within three months.

Thus most of us now employed on the SOCIALIST OUTLOOK are busy reading, studying and attempting to live down the small indiscretions of the past which prevented us from reaching the hard-sought distinction of "one hundred per centers". The reasons for our failures are wide and varied. In fairness to our readers, they must be mentioned so that they might be on their guard, and spot any deviations from the straight and narrow path of political virginity.

### OUR FAILURES

The most common failure was having read dangerous books. One of the members of the staff confessed that he had read, with approval, "The Labour Party in Perspective", written by C. R. Attlee; this was considered to be highly dangerous—particularly in

view of the sentiments expressed in this book on the necessity for the Labour Party to allow criticisms and questionings of the official policy.

Another member of the staff came under a cloud because he had once read a sixpenny pamphlet written by Leon Trotsky; this, admitted the comrade in question, was many years ago—he felt that there was nothing wrong in this.

After all, he pointed out, the National Organiser of the Party, A. L. Williams, had actually written an article about Leon Trotsky in the April issue of "Fact".

It was, it is true, not a complimentary article—but it revealed that the National Organiser must have read a number of books written by Leon Trotsky. Nearly all of us confessed to having read, at one time or another, various books of Karl Marx; we justified this by explaining that Herbert Morrison was once in the habit, as a young man, of frequenting meetings of the S.D.P. with a copy of "Capital" tucked under his arm. We were forced to agree, however, that it appeared most unlikely that he had ever actually read the book in question.

So now you know of our weaknesses. You know that if we occasionally indulge in criticisms of the N.E.C. it is because we have not fully overcome the traditions of our pasts. But we are trying hard—we hope in the future to be as good at canonising revolutionary leaders like Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky as are leading members of the Party. When we can do this it will be safe for us to talk about them, and read their books, as often as we like. It is only when their ideas are used as a guide to current activities that they become proscribable!

## WITCH-HUNT IN LEEDS

THE LEEDS WEEKLY CITIZEN represents the views of an organised right-wing faction in the Leeds Labour Party. In the field of political relationships it is to Herbert Morrison what the RECORDER is to Winston Churchill—the mouthpiece of an hysterical lunatic fringe.

On matters of internal party democracy it maintains that it is absolutely proper for right wing spokesmen to say what they like,

By  
**G. Healy**

when they like, in public. For some time it has carried on a vicious campaign against Aneurin Bevan. Needless to say it enthusiastically supports the ban on SOCIALIST OUTLOOK. In its August 22 issue it claims that Hector McNeill "had the sense to see that the delegation would be entertained in Moscow and Peking by two great powers fundamentally united in a desperate effort to cause trouble between the U.S.A. and Great Britain."

### WITCH-HUNTERS AT WORK

Hailing the ban on SOCIALIST OUTLOOK, Mr. John Anson, Yorkshire Regional Organiser of the L.P., claims that the issue involved is one of the "World Revolution".

We can readily agree that if this is the case there is some cause for concern amongst Anson and friends—world revolution would certainly alter the status of regional organisers.

However, this is not so. Anson uses the "World Revolution" bogey as a red herring to distract attention from the witch hunt which has now started in the Leeds Labour Party.

Like all witch-hunters, he starts off with the full support of the most reactionary right wing capitalist circles. The DAILY SKETCH, theoretical organ of the 1922 committee, says on the ban that "for about the first time on record, we would like to agree with the Socialist Executive".

Anson, when it comes to attacking opponents, does not care much for facts. In the frenzy of the witch-hunt any old stick is good enough to beat an opponent. He goes to the Communist Party for his facts and reaps a just reward—the so-called facts are wrong.

In a quotation from "World News" (C.P. weekly journal) he claims that Mr. Healy was the publisher of the Trotskyist journal "Socialist Appeal" in 1938; that he was a full-time organiser of the "Revolutionary Communist Party". Everything here is incorrect: there was no such journal as "Socialist Appeal" published in 1938; at no time was Healy its publisher; neither was he a full-time organiser in the R.C.P.

Thus we see how the truthful and oh-so-ethical men of the LEEDS WEEKLY CITIZEN join hands with the C.P. and the capitalist right wing in an unscrupulous attack on Labour's left.

### THE REAL ISSUES BEHIND THE BAN

The ban on SOCIALIST OUTLOOK arises because the Labour Party is more and more tending to accept genuine socialist policies and rejecting the policies of Mr. Anson and the right wing. It is not a question of so-called "secret groups", "sinister instruction" and all the old familiar paraphernalia of the witch-hunters from McCarthy to Anson.

Any group of comrades who discuss politics over a cup of tea in a cafe can under the yardstick of the Leeds witch-hunt be termed a "secret group". We venture to suggest the best organised behind-the-scenes-faction in Leeds resides in the editorial sanctuaries of the WEEKLY CITIZEN and nobody should object. Politics in the

Labour Party have always been worked out by groups, and it could not be otherwise.

Let Anson and his associates quit playing policemen and discuss ideas, because whether they like it or not they will be forced to do this eventually or get out of the Labour Party.

Here is, in brief, the policy of SOCIALIST OUTLOOK:

(a) Full support for all who struggle against the Tory Government to improve wages and living conditions.

(b) Extension of nationalisation to all basic industries—the democratisation of these industries under workers' control.

(c) Freedom for all colonial peoples; opposition to the wars in Malaya and Kenya.

(d) Opposition to German rearmament and all war preparations.

These are the ideas which all the fuss is about and not so much SOCIALIST OUTLOOK as a paper. Let Mr. Anson produce better policies if he can. SOCIALIST OUTLOOK for its part will do everything possible to guarantee his right to present them.

## Briggs Workers Ban Overtime

BY an overwhelming majority, workers at Briggs, Dagenham, decided last week to place an embargo on overtime. Their action resulted from certain regulations on overtime working issued by the Briggs' management.

A statement issued by the Joint Shop Stewards Committee of Briggs declares these regulations altered long standing custom and practice. They involved the issuing of a Gate-Pass for week-end working and required the employee to work the full overtime shift—instead of being allowed to leave before the end of the shift if he had reason for doing so.

The Briggs shop stewards state the overtime ban is the culmination of much unrest since the Ford Motor Company took control of the factory last year.

"Since that time," continues their statement, "the Company have tried to introduce certain changes in established custom and practice that has existed over a number of years, such as payment of overdue wages to be paid in the employee's own time; that a written excuse for lateness be submitted before the latecomer was allowed to start work, and efforts to introduce a permanent day and night shift such as had not operated since the inception of the company.

"The management had also terminated the existing Trade Union Procedure Agreement that had been in operation since 1944 and are now making efforts through the National Executives of our unions to replace it with one less advantageous to the workers.

"This is the background to the present unrest that prevails in the Briggs' factories. Since the termination of the Procedure Agreement, the management have not only refused to negotiate major items with the Shop Stewards Committee, but have also refused to discuss such matters with our District Officials. . . ."

The Stewards Committee draws the conclusion: "The present tension will not be reduced until such times as the Company are prepared to co-operate in the institution of Negotiating Machinery towards the settlement of major problems pending an effective signed agreement with our trade unions for the purpose of avoiding disputes."

# H-BOMB HORROR: MORE HIDEOUS THAN PLANNED

A WHOLLY new dimension of destructiveness, unforeseen by atomic scientists themselves and now concealed by the Eisenhower administration, has been added to the hydrogen bomb. This previously undisclosed element of annihilation is so fearsome that it has been playing a major role in international political developments.

The sensational revelation was made by Joseph and Stewart Alsop, Washington columnists, in their August 11 syndicated article.

The fact of the widespread deadly range of the H-bombs exploded last March in the American mid-Pacific tests was partially uncovered at the time. Japanese fishermen and Marshall Island inhabitants, at distances of 80 to 120 miles from the point of explosion, were burned and made

trast to the original hydrogen bomb device set off in November, 1952—"would not merely consume the city of Washington in its blast and heat," the Alsops point out. "It would also cover a surrounding area about the size of the state of Maryland with dangerously radioactive matter." Maryland is 200 miles long and 120 miles wide.

But that's not the ultimate range of these bombs. Carried by swift winds or ocean currents the pulverised radioactive earth lifted by an H-bomb can travel hundreds and even thousands of miles.

The Alsops report that the cloud

from one of the Nevada A-bombs fell out over Long Island, "but it was no longer noxious and no one knew about it but the Atomic Energy Commission." Can they say how far and in what direction noxious particles from an H-bomb will travel?

Confirming our earlier observations on the political effects of the new H-bomb, the Alsops refer to the recent statement by Churchill to the House of Commons that "tremendous changes have taken place in the world which make the thoughts which were well founded and well knit together a year ago

utterly obsolete. These "tremendous changes", which the Alsops say are "also agitating the inner circle of the American government," are the unforeseen powers of the new H-bomb, "which were not produced by our first H-bomb test in 1952."

In short, Churchill went along with the original H-bomb and the "strategic position" engendered by it—that is, the strategy of an anti-Soviet atomic war—until the super-duper H-bomb opened the probability that England would be physically exterminated in an H-bomb war. Particularly, as the Alsops further note, because "the H-bomb tested by the Russians last summer was of the new type."

The far-reaching meaning of the new H-bomb phenomenon has already caused the American Civil Defence Administration to tear up all its old plans, report the Alsops. And, "by the same token, Prime Minister Churchill used this new phenomenon to justify abandonment of Britain's great Suez base."

The base, which stretches along 100 miles of the canal, is "now too vulnerable to have real value."

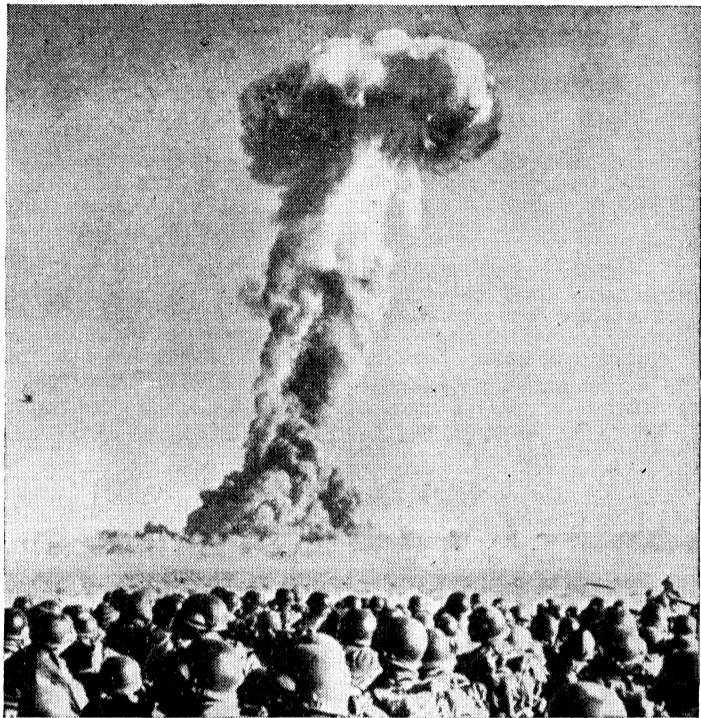
### SOCIALISM IS ANSWER

But the fears of the rulers of the great capitalist powers are no guarantee that imperialism will not let loose the new H-bomb that can spread a death pall of millions of tons of pulverised radioactive earth over humanity.

Inexorable laws of economic decline leading to economic cannibalism, drive capitalism into a murderous struggle for markets, raw materials, new fields for investments. In the end, as it has done twice in 40 years, capitalism will seek to save itself by world war.

There is no alternative to this fate except to take the power away from the ruling classes who to-day wield the titanic annihilating power of atomic destruction.

(Reprinted from the MILITANT, U.S.A.)



American troops watch an atomic explosion. Since then the hydrogen bomb has introduced a "wholly new dimension of destructiveness."

by

Art Preis

deadly sick by "fall-outs" of radioactive ashes.

But it was still generally assumed that the principal elements of destruction were the H-bomb's blast and heat waves, which devastate a 300 square-mile area, equivalent to most large modern cities.

### LARGER PHENOMENON

These factors of blast and heat, it is now disclosed by the Alsop brothers, are secondary to the new and unanticipated powers of the H-bomb, which "has turned out to be an even more hideous and destructive weapon than was planned and expected." For "it has now been discovered that . . . the heat and blast may be no more than the percussion cap of a much larger phenomenon."

This "much larger phenomenon" is the consequence of the fact that the latest H-bombs "ripped a huge chunk of material out of the earth's skin." The pulverised material "ascended into the bomb cloud." But, because of their weight, the "strongly radioactive particles" fall out over a wide area instead of dissipating into the atmosphere, as does much of the radioactivity unloosed by the H-bomb itself.

"What is not known or understood, however," write the Alsop brothers, "is the strong probability that this widespread fall-out of noxious particles was no mere accident but an inherent characteristic of the new kind of hydrogen bomb."

### SCIENTISTS UNPREPARED

Dr. Edward Teller and the other planners of the H-bomb tests were "quite unprepared" for the results produced, say the Alsops. But they have kept their mouths shut. Dr. Teller even denounced Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, leading A-bomb scientist, as a "Soviet agent," because the latter initially opposed making the H-bomb, warning of its frightful potentials.

Even Oppenheimer, who was dismissed by the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, although declared "loyal", could not envision the real scope of the H-bomb's deadliness.

One of the new bombs—in con-

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## COMMENTS ON THE N.E.C. COLONIAL STATEMENT

# These People Want Freedom Not Patronage

by Conference Delegate

THE N.E.C. has sent out its "Statement of Policy on Colonial Affairs," which will be debated at the Annual Conference at Scarborough. As usual, it reaches the affiliated organisations far too late for adequate consideration. Delegates from the Constituencies and from the Trade Unions will arrive at conference with only a hazy knowledge of their organisations' attitude towards this document.

This is not good enough! Labour's attitude towards the colonies is of first-class importance. It is a fundamental test of the sincerity of our socialist beliefs.

We need a thorough knowledge of colonial affairs throughout the Party, not a policy imposed from the top. This statement should have been in the hands of the affiliated organisations months ago and not just now, in the second half of August, when most of the Constituency parties take time off for their summer holidays.

The statement itself is hopelessly inadequate. It is a collection of platitudes which fall very far short of what should be Socialist policy towards the colonies. This can be summed up in a single sentence—**recognition of the fundamental and unconditional rights of all peoples to be free from foreign rule and to choose any form of government they desire.**

### PATRONISING

The N.E.C. statement says: "As soon as the development of each territory makes it practicable, arrangements should be made between the Government (of Britain) and the responsible leaders of each territory to fix a date for the transfer of power."

Who decides when this stage of development is reached? The Imperial Government or the colonial people? Only bureaucrats steeped in the imperialist

tradition could even pose the issue this way. It is the very essence of patronising arrogance!

And how do we judge who are the "responsible leaders"? Are Cheddi and Janet Jagan and the P.P.P. the responsible leaders in British Guiana? Is Yomo Kenyatta a responsible leader in Kenya? They are certainly the accepted and trusted leaders of their respective peoples; but today, both Jagan and Kenyatta are in gaol. Will Labour free them when it is returned to power?

Alas, there is little hope for that! "In Kenya," says the statement, "the Labour Party supports lawful action to defeat Mau Mau and to protect the people of all races from barbarous crimes."

### THE REAL CRIMINALS

The biggest crime committed in Kenya is the presence there of imperialist rule backed by imperialist armed forces. The greatest act of barbarism in that unhappy country was the alienation of the best land for the benefit of the privileged white settlers.

Mau Mau is the authentic expression of a brutally oppressed people in revolt. In the conditions prevailing in Kenya, with all legal outlets for expressing grievances and giving effect to the peoples' demands barred, **terrorism is inevitable.** Under similar conditions in Czarist Russia and British India, the people also took recourse to terror against their oppressors.

### HYPOCRISY

"Labour supports the assistance which is being given to the people of Malaya in suppressing Communist terrorism."

This is a masterpiece of hypocrisy! What evidence is there that the people of Malaya ever

asked for Templer and MacDonald? In fact, the very futility of the "anti-Communist" campaign is proof that the sympathy of the people are with the "terrorists."

Unless, of course, the N.E.C. mistakes the rubber planters, the tin-magnates and the merchants of Singapore as the "people of Malaya". And if Labour, when in power, had recognised the legitimate rights of the Malayan people, instead of being greedy for the

dollars earned by the rubber industry, there would be no terrorism in Malaya today and there would have been no need for a Templer.

Conference must reject this N.E.C. statement and substitute for it a genuine Socialist declaration recognising the rights of all people to be free and affirming Labour's aim when in power to abolish forever what is left of British imperialism.



**BRAZILIAN POLICE** arrested more than 100 people after anti-American demonstrations following the suicide of President Getulio Vargas. In one city in Brazil an allegedly Communist paper was raided and the editor arrested.

**IN GEORGIA, AMERICA,** nine Negroes have charged officials with violating the civil rights of 120 of their race by striking their names from the lists of voters.

**THE GREEK GOVERNMENT** is to receive additional military aid from the United States to maintain the numerical strength of the Army at the levels imposed by N.A.T.O. commitments. Field Marshal Papagos stated in a memorandum to President Eisenhower last February that the Greek economy could not support an army on a semi-war footing.

**IN FRENCH EQUATORIAL AFRICA** last Wednesday the trial began of 102 natives on charges made after riots in April this year. The riots followed the discovery of the bodies of two natives in the home of a European settler.

**IN AMERICA** 33,000 copper workers went on strike for a wage increase of 25 per cent.

**IN SOUTH AFRICA,** Malan has declared that his government still intends legislating to cut the vote of non-white South Africans.

**THE KOREAN DEFENCE MINISTER** announced on August 25th that agreement had been reached with the U.S. Secretary of Defence on an increase in South Korean armed forces, backed by American aid.

## American Newsletter

# Democrats Aid McCarthy

New York, Aug. 27.

WHEN the liberal Democrats rammed the bill through Congress outlawing the Communist Party they handed Senator McCarthy his biggest victory of the year.

As the liberals pulled all stops in their Congressional red-baiting orgy they undoubtedly believed that in doing so they were acting as clever politicians. Under heavy attack from McCarthy as the party of "twenty years of treason" and "Communist-coddling", they thought with this move to cut the ground from under him.

### STRENGTHENS MCCARTHY

They could not be more mistaken. The history of the past four years amply demonstrates that every effort of the capitalist politicians to "outmanoeuvre" McCarthy by outdoing him in red-baiting simply strengthens his position and increases the ferocity of his attack.

A case in point was Attorney General Brownell's attack on ex-President Truman last autumn. A close election was pending in California at the time between the two parties. At the same time the official Republican leadership felt it was being hurt by McCarthy's increasingly independent activities. By smearing Truman as a protector of "red spies" they hoped to outflank and "contain" McCarthy. At the same time they aimed at dealing a crippling blow on the Democrats.

Instead of pushing McCarthy into a corner as it was intended to, the Brownell manoeuvre provided the fascist Senator from Wisconsin with the perfect justification for every thing he had been saying

and doing. This was demonstrated when McCarthy took that occasion to announce for the first time that the Republican Party itself was tainted with softness towards the "red menace", and served notice that Eisenhower was on trial and would be watched.

### THE HARD WAY

Now the liberal Democrats are taking another turn at the same game. When they started the witch-hunt under the Truman administration they laid the ground for McCarthyism. Now that they are one of its targets they desperately hope to get out from under by out-McCarthyising McCarthy. They are going to expose McCarthy by proposing legislation more reactionary and unconstitutional than ever he is yet ready for!

The liberals will again learn the hard way that this is just what McCarthy thrives on. As with each previous sorry manoeuvre, they will discover the tables have been again turned on them, and not on McCarthy.

The incredible conduct of the Democrats menaced by McCarthy does not flow simply from stupidity. It is the result of the strict limits of their functions as a capitalist party. Fascism is the inevitable outgrowth of the crisis of a decaying capitalist system. Confronted with the fascist threat, a political party sworn to the defence of capitalism is incapable of striking at the root cause of the monstrosity.

That is why, even though their own heads are at stake, the Democrats can do nothing but capitulate to McCarthyism in the most miserable and treacherous way. And that is why it is so crucial that American Labour launch an independent political struggle against McCarthy fascism and the capitalist system that spawned it.

### Fighting Fund

September is our big month, comrades. We are asking readers to make an EXTRA SPECIAL EFFORT to raise £200 for the paper. This decision was taken some months ago, long before Transport House launched its totalitarian ban and roused the wrath of the rank and file of the Party.

Comrades, now is the time to ASK. Don't hesitate, in the course of this fight, to ask for money from people who have never before contributed to our Fighting Fund—who do not even support all the aims of our paper. Put it to them; it may be their turn next. The need now is to send—AND SEND EARLY!

Our thanks to: Audience at Holborn Hall, London, £30 10s.; Islington readers, £5 5s.; Birmingham readers and R. T. Shelley workers, £2 9s. 9d.; West London readers, £1-13s. 11d.

Total to date, £39 18s. 8d.

**THE CHAIRMAN OF THE AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY**—Stephen Mitchell—has made charges that a contract between the Atomic Energy Commission and the Dixon-Yates electricity company was a "scandal". He has alleged that President Eisenhower approved the contract because his friend, former golf champion Bobby Jones, has stock in the company.

**LANCASHIRE COTTON WORKERS** are giving £1,000 to aid strikers at the Omi Silk Reeling Company's mills in Japan.

The strikers are demanding recognition of their union, an eight hour day, an ending of censorship on workers' letters, freedom of workers to marry, and abandonment of "forced Buddhism."

Is the "SOCIALIST OUTLOOK" in your Local Library?

If not—ASK FOR IT!

# Briggs Shop Stewards Protest

MY committee wish to associate themselves with organisations and individuals who are opposing the ban on SOCIALIST OUTLOOK. We are of the opinion that this latest action is a further but unprecedented attempt to stifle the opposition from the rank and file against right-wing and reactionary policies.

While we on the Briggs Shop Stewards' Committee do not necessarily agree with all the views expressed in your paper, or any other independent paper of the Labour Movement for that matter, we stand for the right and freedom of those views to be expressed.

We are of the opinions that the N.E.C. decision is an outrage against the principles of the free press and call upon all organisations of the Labour Movement to demand that the ban be lifted.

J. H. Mitchell,  
Sec., Briggs Shop-Stewards'  
Committee, Dagenham.

## Unjust Treatment

May I say on behalf of LABOUR ISRAEL that we have read with interest and sympathy correspondence, etc., in TRIBUNE and elsewhere about the unjust treatment of SOCIALIST OUTLOOK and that we wish you every success in the struggle for freedom of expression.

P. LAMB,  
Editor, LABOUR ISRAEL.

## Marshall One's Strength

Your readers may be entertained by a little verse which actually appears in the August 1954 Labour Press Service (for September papers). It is reproduced from the CYMRIC DEMOCRAT.

In Wards, Divisions or Commons there applies  
The rule by which majorities hold sway;  
And they who advocate the losing side  
Marshall their strength to win another day.  
To marshal one's strength to win another day is all very well, it appears, for the Right, but it is forbidden to the Left.

Leeds Reader.

## A Farceical Situation

The ban on the SOCIALIST OUTLOOK reminds me of another farceical situation. The solution to Europe's dollar deficit, they said, was to capture the dollar market under Butler's slogan of "Trade Not Aid". But the Swiss have been taught a stern lesson that they must not be too successful in applying this slogan. A tariff has been raised on Swiss watches and other European exporters are thereby warned to watch their efforts.

In the same manner the National Executive Committee has warned that all critics of the present Labour leadership are welcome to campaign for a real Socialist policy only if they promise to remain a permanent minority. I can only conclude that your ideas, which I myself helped to propagate as a member of the Labour Party are gaining acceptance.

One could laugh at this farce

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## Readers Forum

Correspondence should be as brief as possible and addressed to The Editorial Board, 177, Bermondsey St., London, SE1

from a distance of 6,000 miles here appreciate the urgency of a really Socialist Britain, a pre-condition for which is an acceptance of the policies of the Left Wing.

Colombo. Dr. S. W. Bibile.

## Hostile Propaganda

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK is accused of publishing "propaganda hostile to the declared policy of the Party". Many editions carried on the front page a heading "Our Aims". Under it was reproduced part of the Labour Party constitution which reads:

"... to secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange ..."

In 1950, Herbert Morrison gave a "new and more comprehensive definition of Socialism". According to the DAILY HERALD, he said "Socialism means the Assertion of Social responsibility for matters which are properly of social concern."

I doubt if a team of experts from "Twenty Questions" could make any impression on this mumbo jumbo. He went on to elaborate what his "Socialism" means.

"The public ownership in suitable forms of (a) natural or almost inevitable local or national monopolies; and (b) of certain basic industries which are essential to the well-being of other industries and society as a whole."

Thus he flung overboard the

conception of "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange."

As examples of "natural monopolies," Morrison quoted: postal and communication services, electricity, gas, water and broadcasting etc. The great majority of these were nationalised under previous Tory and Liberal Governments. Mr. Morrison's "consolidated society" would be one in which about 20 per cent of industry would be nationalised for the benefit of the other 80 per cent privately owned. No longer is nationalisation to be the means of securing for the workers "the full fruits of their industry".

From time to time he has reiterated these sentiments. What is that but propaganda hostile to the declared policy of the Party?

Bromley Reader.

## Reason to be Afraid

The action of the N.E.C. in banning the paper is a disgrace to the democratic name of the Labour Party.

This, in my view, is a strong indication that this tiny section of a great movement has a reason for which to be afraid of SOCIALIST OUTLOOK.

The Labour Party is not my employer to tell me what I must do, nor my teacher, to supply certain reading matter and suppress others. We, the individual members of each local ward, are the Labour Party, and it is our collective opinion which goes to make the policy.

Tottenham. K. W. Gardner.

## The Road to Fascism

This branch protests in the strongest terms at the Bill recently passed by the American Congress which makes membership of the American Communist Party a criminal offence and prevents certain trade unions from having negotiating and legal rights.

This branch, while not subscribing to the policy of the Communist Party, believes that the Bill encourages McCarthyism and takes America along the road to Fascism. A totalitarian America will have serious consequences, not only for America, but for the whole of mankind.

Brixton E.T.U. R. W. Chester.

## Division of Germany

No doubt there are internationally minded Socialists in Germany, East and West, but, relatively, they are not numerous and they have little influence on policy, either domestic or national.

The consequence of American-British policy since the war is a Tory, capitalist-controlled Western Germany, bent on rearmament for the re-capture of Eastern territory.

So far as British wage-earners are concerned, the permanent division of Germany would be infinitely preferable to a Third World War.

There are Labour M.P.s (immune from conscription) prepared to risk such a war by backing the American demand for rearming the Nazis. The Constituency Parties must repudiate these M.P.s without delay.

There must be no support at the next election for any candidate who, as an M.P., has declared himself in favour of German rearmament.

Croydon reader

## MUNICIPAL HOUSING:

# 'Economist' Wants a Cut

WHEN the ECONOMIST gives the Government advice it is time to sit up and take notice. When that advice means a curtailment of municipal housing and a reduction in housing subsidies members of the Labour Movement should feel uneasy. What the ECONOMIST suggests today, the Tory government very often does tomorrow.

In its August 7 issue this journal declared: "It (the Government) could reduce drastically the annual number of houses on which the Exchequer subsidy is payable. Each local authority would then be forced either to curtail its rate of building or else to spread its available subsidies more thinly."

The ECONOMIST is very frank—he believes the worker living in council property "should be required to show why he cannot pay the full economic rent for his particular dwelling." Of course, the ECONOMIST'S—and the Tories—standards of working class income and needs would differ considerably from those of the workers.

### SUBSIDIES INCREASE COSTS?

"Subsidies," we are told, "are instrumental in causing the steady inflation of building costs by five per cent each year." We can only assume that the reasoning is as follows: While there are subsidies, the demand for building by local authorities remains considerable and hence the contractors and manufacturers can charge inflated prices.

Why have building costs risen? Just think about a few well established facts. There is the London Builders' Conference, which even Mr. Eccles, Tory Minister of Works, was compelled to criticise

because it limited competition and raised the cost of building.

Mr. Wells (M.P. for Faversham) has stated the conference exercises nation-wide control. One example he has given is the case of 12 firms which submitted preliminary tenders for a school. The average of the lowest eight prices was taken. To this was added £5 for each tender plus 2s. per £100. This arrangement put another £550 on the price, which was divided according to arrangement between the firms.

Or consider the price rings which operate. The Monopolies and Restrictive Practices Commission has sharply criticised quite a few (and the Commission is not tinged

## by Labour Councillor

deep red). With regard to cast iron rain water, soil and smoke pipes the Commission stated that agreements reached between associations of manufacturers and merchants were in "important respects contrary to the public interest". In a separate report a similar criticism of the cable industry was made.

The Commission has not investigated many associations in the industry, but it is known that almost all materials used in housing are controlled by rings. This aspect of high costs is not stressed by the ECONOMIST, needless to say.

There is another reason why costs continue to rise—the chaotic state of the building contracting industry. With a multitude of small firms it is not surprising that the industry is sadly lacking in mechanisation—this pushes up prices. For many years now the National Federation of Building

Trades Operatives have been stressing the need for nationalisation—and for many years they have been rebuffed by Labour leaders.

### ATTACK ON MUNICIPAL HOUSING

The ECONOMIST is obviously bent on reducing municipal housing. "... the slackening in local authority building"; it declares, "might set the trigger for a fall in costs and a new impetus to private enterprise building. This should be the Government's next step, after the passing of the Rent Act."

Municipalities were forced to provide housing because private enterprise concentrated on the more profitable fields of building than working class dwellings.

The advice of the ECONOMIST to the Tory Government is not based on reason but class needs—the necessity to attack working class standards. Embraced in ECONOMIST'S arguments are the future aims of Toryism: higher rents for council tenants and less municipal building.

The plans of Toryism must be opposed. It is time Labour tackled the whole housing problem more audaciously.

As a minimum programme the following must become planks in Labour's platform: nationalisation of the building industry, this to include the main industries manufacturing materials and components; the introduction of interest-free loans for local authorities; the nationalisation of the Building Societies with a view to the immediate reduction in the interest rate for those purchasing their homes; municipal ownership of rented properties.

A programme like this would go a long way towards solving the Housing Problem—and immediately it would show the Tories and their advisers that Labour means business.

# People, Places and Politics

By Cassia

## THIS BLESSED PLOT

TRADITION has it that one of the inherent characteristics of the Englishman is his love for gardening; like kindness to animals and constant conversation about the weather, it is supposed to be one of his distinguishing features.

It is in the industrial centre and working class areas that this characteristic is most pronounced. The dingy streets of England's soot-smothered cities are dotted with colourful patches of flowers which are like oases of natural beauty in a desert of bricks and mortar.

The tiny patches of soil jammed between pavement and wall, the small boxes of blooms precariously balanced on flat dwellers' window sills, these are the means by which the people seek to enliven their stark surroundings.

While not a gardener myself, I can appreciate things and I can understand the motives which prompt people to seek relief from the greyness which imprisons them. I can understand also why so many workers, when they have reached what is grandiloquently known as retiring age, spend so much time proudly cultivating colourful patches around their houses.

But now it seems that even this small pleasure is beyond the reach of those who are no longer able to perform a useful function for capitalist society. This I gather from a recent report which stated that the Clowne Rural Council decided that this year it would not award its usual annual prizes for old-age pensioners' gardens as none of those inspected was in "good condition". When asked the reasons for this the pensioners—according to the report—said that "they could not afford to buy the seeds this year."

In comparison with other events now taking place in the world this plight of the old-age pensioners and their gardens may seem a trifle—but to the old people it is a further sign of how low their standards have fallen at the hands of the Tory Party.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

AS I was leaving the SOCIALIST OUTLOOK meeting at Holborn Hall last week I had thrust into my hands a leaflet from an organisation calling itself the "Workers' League". This body boasts of its revolutionary character, contrasted to the remainder of the Labour Movement—it might be a good idea if it removed its headquarters from its present location—**Reform Street!**

### BALLET FOR BEGINNERS

I AM not an authority on ballet but I have always admired the graceful ease with which ballet dancers perform the most intricate

## Manchester Opposition

Opposition to the N.E.C. circular is being widely expressed in the Manchester area. West Salford C.L.P., East Salford C.L.P. and Altrincham and Sale C.L.P. have all, practically unanimously demanded its withdrawal.

Broughton A.E.U. branch, N.U.F.T.O. No. 247 branch, Manchester, have protested.

West Salford Party have decided to circulate all Labour Parties in the Lancs and Cheshire Region asking support for the protest.

Last week Twickenham Labour Party, by an overwhelming majority, decided to oppose the ban and demand the withdrawal of the circular.

Streatham Labour Party expressed its opposition by 31 votes to four. G. Healy is a member of this party.

The London Federation of Labour Leagues of Youth last Sunday carried unanimously a resolution condemning the N.E.C. circular and calling for its immediate and unconditional withdrawal.

Birkenhead Constituency Labour Party has protested "most strongly at the dictatorial attitude of the National Executive".

They "reject entirely the advice of the N.E.C."

motions with no apparent effort. My admiration for their dancing ability is now matched by an admiration for their ability to extract from their employers considerable concessions by trade-union activity.

Last week the members from the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company successfully danced on their employer until they received wage increases ranging between 20/- and 30/- a week, an increase in holiday pay and the promise that wage structures would be reviewed.

### QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"... the Labour Party is a collective expression of democratic sentiment based on the working class movement and on the constituency organisations of workers by hand and brain."

The Rise of the Labour Party, Transport House, 1946.

## Profit and Safety

A FATHER and five children recently died in a fire which broke out in their back to back house in Birmingham. Of the family of seven, only the mother and five-month-old baby survived.

As a result of this terrible tragedy Birmingham Corporation are to install fire escape hatches in the 11,000 back-to-back houses which it owns, in an attempt to prevent a recurrence of such a shocking disaster.

There are 26,000 back-to-back houses in Birmingham. The Corporation hopes that the private owners of the 15,000 will follow the example of the housing committee and provide safety measures for these death traps. Will the landlords respond? It remains to be seen.

It also remains to be seen by how much more they fleece the tenants of these slum relics of the hey-day of capitalism. The owners of these dwellings are not a philanthropic institution and we can rest assured that for any fire precaution devices which they install they will extract their pound of flesh, in the form of increased rents.

The Tory landlords, of course, face no such problems as the tenants of their ill-equipped property. The luxury flats which house the wealthy owners of property are provided with the necessary fire escapes. Their manorial homes are doubtless equipped with fire extinguishers for emergency purposes and of course there is always the paid servant to keep a watch on the property when the owner is away and raise the alarm in case of need.

### DEATH TRAPS

Just how much Tory-minded landlords are likely to heed the experiment of Birmingham Corporation is demonstrated by the attitude of the Ministry of Housing in relation to Hereford City Council's housing plan.

The Ministry returned the plans to Hereford with the suggestion that hallways should be dispensed with and the stairs should lead straight out of the living room to the upper regions of the house. This would save £8 per house. But it might cost another such disaster as that which occurred in Birmingham.

If fire broke out the only means of escape for the family would be through the upstairs windows. Like Birmingham's back-to-back houses and all the other houses built on this pattern in all the cities of England, these houses would be a death trap in the event of fire.

For Tory landlords, rent, interest and profit must always come before the safety of the community. In housing as in other spheres, Socialist planning is required, with all houses municipally owned.

Back-to-back houses and slum dwellings could then be replaced as rapidly as possible by new, up-to-date dwellings in which the necessary safety devices would be installed. So long as capitalist landlords control the majority of houses then safety measures will be disregarded in the interest of lucrative rent.

J.S.