

POLITICS

The MacDonald Government and the Political Parties in Great Britain.

By J. T. Murphy (London).

** The Parliamentary debate on the **Coal Bill** brought sharply to the front the question of the relationship of the parties. The Liberal Party adopted a very critical attitude to the Bill and demanded that it must proceed further in the direction of applying the scheme outlined in the Coal Commission Report of 1925 advanced by the chairman of the Commission Sir Herbert Samuel. Four demands were formulated as conditioning the support of the Liberal Party. But when to the Bill and demanded that it must proceed further in the declaration that whatever the answer of the Labour Party and the Government to the demands of the Liberal Party the remainder of the Bill was so vicious that the Liberal Party could not support it. Lloyd George gave the Government a thorough castigation, denouncing the Bill as a coalowners Bill in every respect. This change of front on the part of the Liberals raised the question of the possible downfall of the Government and the imminence of a general election. The Government succeeded in winning through the second reading, only by 8 votes. That there was any intention of bringing down the government at this stage is out of the question. Nevertheless it was a well staged demonstration and intimidation of the Labour Government.

At the same time the possibilities of a general election this year are not ruled out by any means. It may come on the initiative of the Labour Government according to its fortunes in the forthcoming international conferences with the other powers if these conferences produce any kudos for the Labour Government. On the other hand if the conferences produce no results in the form of capital for the Labour Government and open the way for sharp criticism from Lloyd George, the Liberals and Conservatives together may force a dissolution. These are possibilities which are in no way contradictory to the principal tendency towards coalition and the growth of social fascism. The role of the Liberals is to maintain social democratic illusions in the minds of the working class as long as possible, and it will not be the fault of Lloyd George and the other Liberal leaders if they do not attempt to strengthen their position as a more decisive force within the general framework of coalition politics. This is the meaning of the tactic of Lloyd George when he leads the Liberal Party into more radical policies than those of the Labour Party. The Liberal Party stood for prompt and unconditional **recognition of Soviet Russia** when the Labour Party were seeking to impose the terms of the Tory Party. Their demands on the coal bill are more radical than the proposals of the Labour Party. The same applies to the demand for proportional representation. This attitude is obviously intended to catch the leftward drift of the workers and force the Labour Party deeper into coalition politics, with the Liberal Party leaders playing a more decisive part within the coalition. The question of the length of life for the Labour Government on the one hand is a matter of what the Liberals and the Tories consider the best tactical moment in which they can get a still firmer grip of the Labour Party and on the other hand of the initiative of the Labour Party in its efforts to secure majority government.

The latter, the Liberals and the Tories are determined to frustrate, not because they have profound differences with MacDonald and his government but because they fear the rapidity of mass disillusionment which would follow from the advent of a majority Labour Government. Lloyd George explained what he conceived to be the role of the Liberal Party as far back as 1919, he warned the bourgeoisie that Britain was topheavy so far as its class forces are concerned, that a small class at the top rests upon a mighty industrial proletariat. He warned them that there was and is no peasantry in Britain that can stand between these two classes as in continental countries. Therefore it is the task of Liberals to play the role in Britain which the peasantry plays on the continent and prevent the landslide from 'right' to 'left'. It

was for this purpose he appealed in 1919 and 1920 for the coalition of Tories and Liberals against the Labour Party which had not then travelled so far along the road of social fascism. It is for the same reason that he manoeuvres to-day with the Labour Party to stem the movement of masses from 'right' to 'left', to consolidate social fascism, "national" politics and coalition government — the corporate state. This policy does not by any manner of means preclude an early general election. On the contrary it may be that precisely for this reason the election may be early and we must guard against the formal argument that because the MacDonald Government is functioning as a social fascist imperialist government that an election is out of the question. This question will be determined by the relation of social forces and the measures which are deemed necessary by the bourgeoisie to stem the tide of radicalisation of the masses more than by any programmatic differences of the parties for these have well nigh vanished.

Especially will this be seen as the crisis within the Empire deepens. The rapid march of events in India sowing the Indian revolution advancing with giant strides accompanied with great waves of revolt in the Near East and in Africa is shattering all prospects of stability within the Empire, indeed tearing at its foundations and thrusting the Government along the path of Fascist Imperialism. It is in the policy of imperialist suppression of the colonial peoples that the Labour Government is rendering the bourgeoisie the greatest service and which will hold back the party attacks of the Liberals and Tories more than anything else. The "home" situation is undermining the Government. The colonial and foreign policy of the Government gives it strength in the ranks of the bourgeoisie.

But the question as to whether there will be a general election this year is not the outstanding question. The most important is the fact that social fascism is growing rapidly, that the bourgeoisie are growing more and more desperate. Not a strike occurs but what the Labour Government rushes big battalions of police to overawe and intimidate the strikers. Not an issue is raised but arbitration enters the field to throttle the workers actions at their birth. The trades union apparatus becomes more and more an integral part of the state machinery for the suppression of the mass activities of the workers.

In this process the pseudo-lefts Maxton, Wheatley, Brockway, Cook and Co., are playing the role of division of labour with the Government to save the government. On the question of the Meerut Trial they came on to the Meerut Defence Committee in order to sabotage its work and divert the agitation against the Labour Government into means of support for the Labour Government. On the question of unemployment they have posed as the critics of the government in order to divert the workers from the national Unemployed Workers Movement. They whitewashed the Arbitrators who cut the wages of the cotton textile workers.

It is these facts that thrust the Communist Party into the foreground of all struggles of the workers. At no time has the Party had such opportunities to advance as the leader of the proletariat. Its launching of the "Daily Worker" on the first of January this year sets it on the high road to becoming a mass party. Following, as it did, quickly on the heels of the Party Congress which made most decisive changes in the leadership in its determination to advance along the new line of the Comintern as an independent Party of struggle, there can be no doubt the sharpening of its relations with all other parties and the intensification of its class fight. Already the Party is feeling the great difference which a daily paper makes to all its work. It passes from a propagandist role to that of political leadership of the day to day struggles. It has set its face towards the factories with the determination to transform itself into a party based upon the factories, the mills and mines. It has demanded the cessation of vacillations within its ranks, issued the call to build itself on the basis of the policy of the "united front from below". The fact that the year 1930 opens as a year of deeper crisis for British capitalism means that it also opens as the year of greater and ever greater opportunities for the Party of proletarian revolution. That our party will seize these opportunities we are confident. Already the very appearance of the "Daily Worker" has made the capitalist press howl with anger. But that is

only the beginning. 1930 promises to be the year of great progress for the Communist Party and the mass organisations of struggle which it is building and leading. It is shedding its parochialism, listening more intently to the Comintern, learning rapidly and uniting the fight of the workers of Britain with the fight of the colonial workers and peasants against the common enemy. Along this path our Party will grow in strength and confidence.

The Intensification of the Class Struggle in Italy.

By M. Garlandi.

Recent events in Italy are deserving of the greatest attention. The fascist policy goes from one failure to another. The period of the "extension of industry" and of the stabilisation of the Italian currency was followed by the period of "agrarianisation". Fascism has turned its "face to the village", or more correctly said to the big landowners.

What is the reason of this turn in fascist policy? The industrial crisis of 1926/27 was followed by a still more serious crisis of agriculture which drove ten thousands of peasants into misery and privation. Fascism adopted a determined policy aiming at the annihilation of the middle sections of the peasantry and strengthening of the position of the big landowners.

The relative success of the mechanisation of agriculture brought with it a tremendous increase of unemployment in the rural districts and promoted the proletarianisation of many thousands of small peasants and small lease-holders. In connection with this there is to be observed a general decline of agriculture.

The deficit of the Italian trade balance, which amounts to 30 to 35 per cent., is the result of the decline in the production of corn which compels Italy to import many millions of centals of corn from abroad.

The poverty of the rural population is indescribable. The towns of Southern Italy are swarming with beggars who have come from the rural districts. In Apulia and Sicilia, where the agricultural workers constitute a large proportion of the population, unemployment is a mass phenomenon.

Industrial production has been greatly restricted. The greatest Italian automobile factor Fiat with an output capacity of 500 automobiles daily, produced only 200 Automobiles daily in 1926/27, in the year 1929 only 130, and even this number is constantly declining. The number of workers in this factory fell from 20,000 to 9 to 10,000, and these only work three to four days a week. The crisis is extending to all factories of Turin and Milan. Only the war industry, which receives the all-round support of the government, is extending. The number of unemployed in Italy has reached a million (together with their dependents five million).

A powerful upsurge of the labour movement in the North has set in simultaneously with the peasant movement in the South. Hundreds of toilers stormed the buildings of the municipalities and of the fascist party. The authorities have suppressed the rebellion by means of gendarmerie and militia. The village militia did not succeed in suppressing the movement and therefore is regarded as "unreliable". At the same time the partisan movement is growing. It happens more and more frequently that tax collectors and local representatives of the fascist government are attacked. In Faenza (province of Emilia) a peasant killed two fascists. The authorities answered with reprisals but met with the active resistance of the peasants. Eight fascists were wounded and, if the gendarmerie had not intervened the losses of the fascists would have been considerably greater.

At the beginning of November numerous workers of the Fiat works were informed by the management that they were dismissed owing to lack of work. Thereupon the desperate workers attacked prominent fascists, foremen and strike-breakers and wounded more than ten persons.

In the Lombard Iron Manufacturing Works in Milan the workers elected a committee to fight against wage reductions, which entered into immediate negotiations with the management of the firm. This action is a violation of the fascist laws, which "regulate" the relations between the workers and the employers. In spite of this fact the management was compelled to