

HOW TO REORGANISE THE GOVERNMENT

by Harry Pollitt

IN my report, on behalf of the Executive Committee, to the Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party, we made the following statement:—

Two years of compromising with big business at home and imperialist policy abroad has at last compelled the Government to declare “the position of the country is extremely serious.” The labour movement, solid to the core against Tory attacks, is nevertheless profoundly disturbed.

The Communist Party, while defending the Government against the unscrupulous and hypocritical attacks of the Tories who have the main responsibility for Britain’s economic position, demands an immediate reorganisation of the Government to face the situation.

Those Ministers deeply compromised in placating big business and pursuing an imperialist foreign policy must be dropped. The Government must be strengthened with men prepared to smash the imperialist monopoly and vested interests once and for all and organise a real economic plan. There is no need for talk of a Coalition Government in Britain. The labour movement can and will do the job.

That was on February 22. Every day since then only confirms the urgency for carrying out a decisive reorganisation of the Government. In the recent parliamentary debate (March 10-12) on Britain’s economic position, every speech and argument used by Ministers gives added proof of how essential it is in the lasting interests of Britain and its working people that no further time should be lost in bringing about those necessary changes in the Government. These changes must be of a character to guarantee to the labour movement that the tremendously serious problems we have to face and solve are really going to be tackled with confidence, with enthusiasm, with the recognition that there must be a greater frontal attack on capitalism than we have yet seen in Britain. The main responsibility and leadership to carry this through must come from a Government composed of the most tried and trusted working-class fighters and leaders that the labour movement has.

There is no need here to go over the familiar arguments as to why Britain finds itself in the present serious situation. The main thing now is to recognise that we have to plan and work for at least five years ahead, understanding that it will take this time to organise effectively the maximum resources our country possesses, and to have entered upon new forms of international economic co-operation. This much at least would give the people the assurance that within five years our whole economy would be in a planned state of productive efficiency, that never again would Britain be confronted with its present difficulties and sacrifices.

It is time to speak plainly. We were among the first to state that the situation immediately after the formation of the Labour Govern-

ment was a honeymoon period which would soon come to an end. It is necessary to state now that unless the reorganisation we demand is carried out, this nation may face difficulties that would make the present position look prosperous. Meanwhile other nations in Europe will have long recovered from the ravages of war, and will have placed their economies on a planned basis. At the same time through mutual political understanding and trade with each other they will have become largely immune from any economic crisis which may arise in the United States of America.

The bloated financiers of Wall Street are already gloating over our situation. They believe that Britain will come more and more under their domination. The financiers in the City of London are already speaking about a new financial crisis in some months from now because of a shortage of American dollars.

This is what the Tories also have in mind. They too believe that by the summer the situation will have developed to a point where they will be in a stronger position to demand a Coalition Government, to slow down nationalisation and State control, to curtail social services and to sell Britain to America.

We are going to see some quislings yet in Britain.

But how little they know the spirit of our working-class if they think their aims are going to be realised! Our boys did not fight on the beaches of Dunkirk, at Tobruk, or lie awaiting death at Arnhem; our people did not face blitzes, flying bombs, rockets, while America was unscathed and its millionaires made more millions, to capitulate now either to Truman or Churchill.

Do we criticise the Labour Government for the sake of criticism, as some of our critics allege? Nothing of the sort. It is because we want a Labour Government to succeed, and it can succeed, that we make our present demand. We want to strengthen it against the present and coming attacks of the Tories. It is because we want to avoid a repetition of present experiences—as they can be prevented—that we call for a complete new overhaul of the present Labour Government.

One thing is clear. There is neither a common planned policy, leadership nor loyalty to one another in the present set-up. It lives from hand to mouth. Responsible working-class leaders, who in the course of their duties have to meet Ministers, are positively alarmed at the lack of confidence one with another, and lack of knowledge as to what is taking place in the different Government departments. It has also not escaped notice that when changes in personnel are suggested, in general the suggestions are aimed at Ministers who are on the Left and not at the dominant right-wing leaders whose policy since the General Election has so largely intensified the inevitable difficulties that would have come after a six years' war, after the loss of a former privileged monopoly position and amid the deepening of the general crisis of capitalism.

It is also essential to point out that in the main when changes are made in the composition of the Government, it is only the alleged "intellectuals" and never the class-conscious tried working-class fighters in the movement, who are promoted—never fighters tested in bitter strikes and lock-outs, men and women who hate capitalism and the capitalists, fighters who are in the movement because of conviction and not for personal careerism and advancement.

It isn't the accidents of external circumstance that are the cause of the present crisis in the leadership of the Labour Government, a crisis which gives the Tories weapons they ought never to have had placed in their hands to use against Labour. It is lack of policy and leadership, lack of faith in the working-class and Socialism. What else is it when we find them bringing the "best brains" of big business to operate policies they do not believe in, alongside a dependence upon American big business, while deliberately rejecting the outstretched hands of peace, friendship and trade with our natural allies in the Soviet Union and new European democracies?

There is no imagination. No appeal to those from whom the Government draws its power. For the present Labour leaders, as is made clear by Cripps and Dalton every time they speak, the workers are still the hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The decisive jobs in the Government go to inexperienced university men, newcomers with wrong Socialist theories, and no practice of any kind in the daily struggle against capitalism. What do Messrs. Mayhew, Wilson and Gaitskell know of the trade union struggle?

And yet the movement is so rich in people, great people, the common people, the types Stalin once proposed in his famous toast. We saw their initiative in producing "Tanks for Joe," in taking convoys to the Soviet Union, when the press was unanimous there had never been so much enthusiasm for production or more bravery and daring on the high seas. It can be organised now to a greater height, as the lead of the Communist miners in the Rhondda has recently proved. The common people, who during the war solved the bottle-necks of production, who displayed so many qualities of leadership in the air raids, at Dunkirk, Dieppe, El Alamein and Arnhem—how much greater could be their spirit to help solve Britain's economic difficulties if they were given a plan, told exactly what was wanted, asked to give their views as to what should be done, and how it could be done, and given the leading positions in carrying the plan through.

No Government ever had such a reserve of rich political capital. It is high time it was used to the fullest possible extent. We are confident that if the Government called a national conference of Shop Stewards and were prepared not to deliver speeches and pep talks but to listen and learn, they would get more out of it than all the conferences yet addressed by Ministers.

It is time to give the common people their head. It is time to stop thinking that American is the only country in the world that Britain can look to, even if America thinks it can look to Britain to find and pay for British cannon-fodder in furtherance of its own imperialist aims in Greece and the Middle-East. The people of Britain are waiting, but they won't wait too long. The Government will never get away again with what they have in these last two months: wage losses through the fuel crisis, open victimisation of active shop stewards, no Government relief either for wages or to protect the shop stewards. There is a murmuring down below, and it is dangerous both for the Tories and the Labour Government to ignore it.

The zenith of Social Democracy in Britain has been passed. The people in increasing numbers now begin to realise there is no middle way. To read now what the barren theoreticians of the Foot and Laski type wrote in the first few months after the General Election in July, 1945, is to brand them with political shame. Not that they ever said anything new. Bevin and Brailsford tried it on in 1928. Hilferding and Tarnov in Germany backed the same policy. America was the model then. America was teaching the world a new way towards Socialism. The Soviet Union would go down into barbarism. This was the theme song in 1928 and 1929. Then in the autumn of 1929 the economic crisis in America caught every capitalist country in its train and the rise of Hitler was one of the direct outcomes of that crisis.

The working-class do not intend to be caught again as they were caught then: and those who think they can be caught are making the most profound mistake in their lives.

A year ago it was only foreign policy which seemed to cause alarm in the ranks of the Labour Party. At the Bournemouth Labour Party Conference it was roses all the way for the platform. But now the disillusionment is spreading to home affairs. More and more Labour Members of Parliament have to give expression to the growing realisation that our economic difficulties spring from a fundamentally wrong policy at home and abroad and they are more and more compelled to voice the discontent they find in their constituencies at such gatherings as Attlee addressed at the private meeting of Labour Members of Parliament on March 10.

This movement will grow. It is one of the healthy signs of the times. What lies behind it can no longer be thwarted in its purpose. The movement wants a stronger, more united Government. It wants the best the movement can produce and it wants it to produce that overall economic plan that is known to every worker in the country, understood by them, fought for and worked for by them. It wants this plan to be integrated with the plans of the European nations who are already well into their stride. Those who from now on increasingly fight for such a policy in the factories, trade unions, Labour parties, Co-operative movement and local and county coun-

cils, Parliament and in public meetings and press, are rendering both Britain and the labour movement the best possible service.

They are taking a stand which can enable Britain to yet astonish the world by the manner in which its working people can adjust themselves to the new conditions and in free and fraternal association with all the nations of Europe, the Dominions and freed colonial peoples, help forward the prosperity of all labour and democratic movements throughout the world.

Let me conclude as I began : there is no need for a Coalition Government in Britain—the labour movement can and will do the job.

HARRY POLLITT.