

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 6

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Our Own Correspondant

The WPPE is a revolutionary party based on self-reliance and democratic centralism. Its aim is to serve the working people of this country and help them achieve complete emancipation. This necessitates working peoples state power and socialism. Our party is non-sectarian and active:members are expected to show initiative and accept responsibility. Sympathetic non-members can attend branch meetings and are encouraged to take part in practical political work and political discussion. Are you interested in joining? Or attending meetings? Contact the General Secretary at the address below.

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SOCIALIST FEDERATION

On Sunday 23rd. August a meeting of revolutionary organisations and individuals after full discussion decided to form a SOCIALIST FEDERATION.

Organisations represented at the meeting included Mineworkers' Internationale, Pakistani Workers Union, the Society for the Advancement of Democracy, Brent CARD and Working Peoples Party of England; there were also individual trade unionists and militants. Messages of support were received from Camden Housing Action Committee and the Cambridge based Campaign for Socialism by 1990.

The Minimum Programme of the Socialist Federation was agreed as follows:-

- 1. For working peoples' power and socialism.
- 2. Against capitalism. Support for all trade unionists and working people struggling for their interests in society.
- 3. For an end to US domination of these islands.
- 4. Support for the Irish people in their struggle for unity and independence; and for all people struggling for freedom and socialism against imperialism and oppression.
- 5. Against racialism and fascism. Support for Black People in their struggle for emancipation. Active defence of all people subjected to fascist violence.
- 6. Support for the womens' emancipation movement.

Any organisation interested in affiliating to the Socialist Federation and working with its constituent organisations should contact the Convenor:

John O'Dowd, g, Carol St., London N.W.1.

Edittor:

In a recent statement WPPE spokesmen said, "The August discussion meeting is being called once more in a deliberately very informal manner, to remove as far as possible all fear of domination by one group. But we wish to make clear our continuing belief that revolution in England absolutely requires as elsewhere the development of a revolutionary party of Leninist-Maoist type with a clear revolutionary programme. Such a programme already outlined in WORKERS BROADSHEET over the past three years, is at present being put into book form for publication as soon as practicable. It is on the basis of such a programme that it will become possible to develop both a cadre party, and the wide alliance led by it, that are essential for the development of a successful revolutionary movement."

A STRATEGY FOR MINERS

Disillusioned, demoralized by the inactivity of the leadership of the NUM in face of increasing attacks by the Coal Board on workers' living standards and conditions, the miners - to everyone's surprise - flexed their muscles and let fly with an unofficial uppercut which stopped the NCB in its tracks and won the biggest single increase in wages in recent years. True we didn't get what we were really after, a shorter working week for surface workers. Had the Board conceded this demand it would have meant that the NCB were forced to negotiate with unofficial strikers. Rather than do this the Board were quick to let it be known that they were prepared to grant a substantial wage increase, to be negotiated with the NUM Executive as soon as the men returned to work. This was a partial victory but, more important, a crucial one; for with this unofficial strike the miners not only won a wage increase, they won back their self-respect and thus gave a tremendous boost to their flagging morale.

GREATER STRAINS

Since then we have had our National Conference. As a result we now have demands for minimum rates of pay of £20 a week for surface workers, £21 for underground workers and £30 for coal-face workers. The Welsh delegation moved a resolution to the effect that these demands should be backed up by strike action if need be. These demands, encouraging though they may be, will be outdated long before they are implemented. The miner should have had these modest demands met five years ago. What is needed today are demands aimed at increasing leisure, holidays, safety and health.

What is happening, however, is that more and more the miner is being subjected to greater strains, e.g. increased supervision, inhuman shiftwork, noise and dust. Though some form of measurement is attempted to indicate dust levels, as yet noise intensity remains unmeasured.

CONCILIATION - AN EXPENSIVE LUXURY

In 1956 the average weekly wage in the mining industry was £14-14-0 while the national average for all industries amounted to £11-15-4. A few months ago the average weekly wage of a miner stood at £24-9-9 (though many in fact earn a great deal less than this figure suggests) representing a 66% increase since 1956. On the other hand the average wage in manufacturing industries is £25-10-10 today compared with £12-2-2, an increase of 111%. The cost of living between 1956 and 1969 rose by about 54% - in other words, miners' wages have risen by only about 12% in 13 years in real terms - a rise of less than 1% a year; compared with a figure of 4.4% for other industries.

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astrategy for miners

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Had miners' average earnings kept pace with average earnings in other industries, in 1969 the miner, on average would have been getting £31-2-7 a week, while the NPLA rate would have been about 50/- above this figure, i.e. £33-12-6.

It can be seen from these figures that respectability and conciliation are expensive luxuries. The obvious is there for all to see. Militant action pays.

Dissatisfaction with trends and conditions in the mining industry has resulted in many thousands leaving the industry. But now, at least since the October Strike of last year, the miners have demonstrated that their long sleep is over and they are now prepared to reassume their traditional militancy in defence of their essential interests and are no longer prepared to have their future jeapordised by a lethargic executive NUM leadership.

SELF-RELIANT ACTION NEEDED

Having regained their morale, the miners will demand the six-hour day, the four day week for night shift workers, four weeks holiday a year, a democratised union, where it would be impossible for unwilling leaders to hide behind outmoded procedures. The miners must ally themselves with all progressive forces and take up again their historic role in the Labour Movement, preparing to defeat renewed pressure by the owning class and their government for legislation aimed at curbing the power and the rights of the Labour Movement.

Our strategy should be not just to ask for these things, but to take them; we should down tools and march from work when we have completed the six hour shift. We should refuse to work more than four shifts while on night shift. We should take four weeks holiday a year and march to the social security en masse and demand supplementary benefits.

In short we must get out of the habit of asking for things them sitting back for ten or twenty years waiting for something to happen. We must make them happen; and we can only do that by taking what should have been ours years ago.

This way we will one day achieve Socialism.

Fred Higgins

Bentley Colliery, Yorkshire.

Editor: Fred Higgins is a coal-face worker in Bentley Colliery near Doncaster. For many years he has been a militant unofficial leader in his mine. He is editor of "Link Up" - the miners' agitational paper.

Hands Off the NHS!

The new Tory government has promised to (1) reduce government expenditure (2) keep a military presence East of Suez and (3) reduce direct income tax. The logic of this coupled with their reactionary philosophy means that the Tories must axe spending on the social services, already starved of essential investment by previous Labour and Tory governments. So the cuts will come in Education and the Health Service.

TWO-CLASSES OF SERVICE

Already the Daily Telegraph and the British Medical Association have been floating ideas about how to finance health services by increasing private expenditure and cutting back on government spending.

The "Ivor Jones Report" produced by the BMA strongly recommended a two-tier system of 1st. class medicine financed by private insurance and a 2nd.class "Poor Law" system financed by the government and regulated by the Means Test.

The Daily Telegraph has over the past few weeks suggested that patients should pay for board and lodging in hospital; and pay for their family doctors' services in cash at each visit.

It has also been suggested that the government might foster private medicine by giving tax relief for private medical insurance payments (such as BUPA payments) either this autumn or at the next budget. In this connection it is important to be aware that private medicine is a very profitable business, not only for the elite of top Harley St. doctors but especially for those who invest in the private sector of medical care. One of the reasons why British and Commonwealth Shipping are seeking ownership of British United Airways, which is causing the present rumpus, is to generate fresh cash to finance a major incursion by this shipping line into private medicine. In other words the tories are wanting to enlarge private medicine not primarily for "ideological" reasons, but mainly for reasons of profit-making.

CAMPAIGN TO SAVE NHS

Already progressive health service workers have begun to develop a counter campaign to safeguard the NHS as a health service free at the time of use, where medical need determines treatment and not the ability to pay. At Brighton, the Trades Union Congress unanimously and enthusiastically carried a motion on these lines, moved by Medical Practitioners Union/ASTMS and supported by NUPE. The call was "Hands Off the Health Service". There is general public feeling that the fundamental principles of the NHS are correct and humane. We must build a powerful popular campaign against profiteering in health. In this way the Tories can be defeated.

THE MINERS)

by Dave Douglass, Editor of "The Mineworker", political organ of the Mineworkers Internationale.

For the first time since 1926 the stage is set for an official strike in the mining industry; when one considers that the last official strike on any scale was in fact 44 years ago, this is quite some achievment. Naturally the resolution which decided this fact did not simply arrive on its own. On the contrary the passing of this resolution represents the prelude to a culmination of years upon years of deliberate and dedicated struggle by teams of militants, socialists and revolutionary miners in every coalfield and every branch. Broadly speaking there are three or four organisations which have managed over the last couple of years to bring together all the progressive elements in the mines (usually in an informal organisation - except in the case of the Mineworkers Internationale) and work in the same direction with the same demands and arguments.

The first real evidence of success and progress came last year with the biggest national unofficial strike since the '40s (every strike since 1926 has been unofficial; last year 1,400 were reported by the Coal Board). For the first time since the mass run-down in manpower and increase in mechanisation programme, very good militant and socialist leaders have started to come to the forefront, incidentally many of them ex-Ruskin College students who have returned to their old jobs and mines to agitate and organise. It is clear that the leading areas now and until the last mines are closed will be Yorkshire Wales and Scotland.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The National Conference of the NUM held at the Isle of Man recently had little trouble passing a pay demand for £30 minimum for face workers, £21 for all other underground workers and £20 minimum for all surface workers. The fixing of these sums and the consolidation of all groups behind these demands for the moment, represents a victory of co-ordination for all of the militants' papers, news sheets, groups and conferences, without which the demands would have been separate and the support fragmented, thus leaving us divided and vulnerable to defeat by the bureaucrats, scissorbills and right wingers. Over the preceding months, since the surface men's big strike (which had 130 pits and 150,000 miners out on strike) the militants had kept up the pressure, banging away at the rank and file with a steady stream of leaflets, militant and revolutionary papers, meetings and branch resolutions. Not surprisingly it was Yorkshire, home of the most militant centres in the mines which moved the resolution. Under fear of alienation and almost certain unofficial action which would have

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swept away the right wing, the Executive retreated and voted for the resolution in the hope of controlling the other demands on the agenda.

STRIKE ACTION IF NECESSARY

In the preceding few years Wales had become increasingly impatient with the national leadership and had discussed several times the idea of a national strike against pit closures. It had also stood Firmly with Yorkshire and Scotland in the last unofficial strike. It is Wales more than any other area which makes a howling disgrace out of Durham area's delegates. The traditions of Durham makes their present position even more difficult for her few brave militants to bear. Wales, like Durham, faces just as severe and total economic consequences from strike action if the NCB carries out its threat of closure for any striking colliery. Knowing all of this, Wales very courageously moved a resolution for a national strike if the pay demand was not met. Predictably it was the Durham and certain Lancashire delegates who spoke against strike action on the grounds that we must be good boys or the nice Coal Board would take our pits from us (on our behalf of course!) However this time the militants had done their ground work well and the support came through, much against the recommendation of the Executive and the resolution was passed.

BALLOT CALLED FOR

Still not to be outdone, the bureaucrats of most areas (and some of Yorkshires are the worst) were determined that the union should not be used for the purpose it was formed, and hurriedly thought out ways of stopping the decision being carried out. One of the most despicable Yorkshire bureaucrats, Mr. Sid Schofield, is now running about trying to get support for a card vote - a ballot of the membership.

While there is apparently nothing wrong with this idea, certain facts should be considered. Firstly because of retired miner's membership being carried on till death, the continuing membership of sick and unemployed miners, the fact that in any closed shop you will have anti-trade unionists who refuse to vote or take part in any activity except management activity, but most of all because of the vast colliery office staff union having the right to vote on a pay demand which in no way effects their own pay rates, all of these things make the card vote, which requires a 2/3 rds. majority in favour of the strike, almost impossible to get in favour of striking. In fact one would need 100% almost of working miners in favour to get the 2/3rds majority of membership in favour of striking, which is practically impossible. When one looks at the people who are demanding this card wote, the action appears even more odious; Mr. Sid Schofield and Sir Sidney Ford, both life officials who cannot be recalled by the members.

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These life officials do not at any other time consider the members worthy of the right to vote. Moreover whenever the militants have campaigned for the right to elect and dismiss its area and national officials, these same two men have fought tooth and nail against it.

LAWRENCE DALY

It is very possible that this card vote will take place, in which case it is my opinion that we would lose it for the reasons mentioned. This would force yet another showdown with the right wing and the bureaucrats, a showdown which they are ill-equipped to cope with. Too often lately these people have blocked the way forward and brought our otherwise democratic union structure into disgrace and tyranny. The men and their newly developed militant leadership will tolerate it no longer. Lawrence Daly, the General Secretary, was elected on a platform of open militancy and a pledge that he would head the struggle for a streamlined union prepared and eager for action. He didn't come through last time, but this time he has already stood on platforms at miners' meetings up and down the country, committing himself to support any action necessary for the winning of the pay demand. He will not, nay, cannot play the same game twice. He must and in my view will come to our front this time in the event of the huge unofficial strike which will result. If in fact we do lose the card vote and the strike comes off then it will be showdown with the union bureaucrats as well as with the management. We are confient that with Daly taking our side, followed by the few 'left' area officials and militant miners delegates we would almost certainly win a double victory, one of wages and perhaps more importantly, we would shatter the hold of the traitors and redesign the union as an efficient fighting column, reasserting the fine militant traditions of days gone by.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE MINERS

If the Coal Board do not in fact grant our wage demand, and there is little doubt that they will not, unless we accept the hated third day wages structure, then our strike will give the newly formed Socialist Federation an opportunity to utilise the numerous groups of socialists in organising a March of Solidarity with the miners. This March could be organised on a non-sectarian basis and be of the proportion of the old VSC demonstrations, attracting heavy Trades Union support and interest. Such a March would help prove to miners that they do not stand alone and that in fact we were mirroring the the inseparable links of all working people, socialist vanguard and progressive students and intellectuals.

Dave Douglass Hatfield Colliery, Yorks.

THE GENERAL STRIK

We have received from Comrade Enoch Collins of Llanelli a summary of his experiences in the nine days one of our oldest revolutionaries, of the General Strike. Comrade Collins is still active and widely respected in the labour movement in Wales, chairman of the Llanelli branch of the AEF and a member of several pension and welfare committees, active in the movement to establish a Welsh TUC, and speaks in Welsh except when he is forced to speak in English. In 1926 he was secretary of the Llanelli Communist Party, chairman of the Llanelli Trades & Labour Council, chairman of one of the Llanelli branches of BISAKTA, and a tinplate worker, at that time the main industry of Llanelli. He was also an ex-Serviceman with two years service in World War I (from age 16) and a foundation member of the CPGB.

In no other town in the whole of Britain was the takeover by the workers in the General Strike more outstanding than in Llanelli -- in contrast with most of South Wales where the police succeeded in arresting many leaders. Comrade Collins was on the Central Committee of the CPGB from 1921. He was dropped in 1935. This may have been in connection with his support for Arthur Horner and others who opposed the sectarian policy of the CPGB at that time in trade union work, and/or his demand for a national policy for Wales against the CPGB policy, then as now one of extreme centralism.

Comrade Collins was again very active during World War II, having volunteered with 300 other Welshmen for war work in Sheffield. He formed class volunteer strike breakers. a Welsh Branch of the CP in Sheffield, a General Strike today student and maintained until the end of the war. At that time CPGB policy, apart from be in the forefront of the strike. demanding a Second Front in Europe, was grossly subservient to the Tory Churchill as Prime Minister and the reactionary Labour Home Secretary Herbert Morrison, leaving effective parliamentary opposition to the National Government to the Labour Left led by Nye Bevan. Comrade Collins strongly opposed this subservience, and was admonished by the CPGB leadership for supporting very reasonable changed its name and policy. It redemands by the workers. After the war Comrade Collins concentrated on work for the Britain/Ghina Friendship strike. Clerical workers from off-Association and was expelled from the ices and especially the Railway CPGB when about to go on a delegation Clerks Union brought typewriters to Socialist China.

WORKERS BROADSHEET is proud to print these recollections by who, we believe, should yet play a role in developing what we badly need, a revolutionary Working People's Party of Wales. Ed. Bd.

Diary of events of the General Strike in Llanelli

Fri. April 30th Coalminers' lockout starts.

Sat. May 1st Meeting in the Public Hall at Cross Hands (near Llanelli) to greet anthracite miners released from prison after so-called riots.

Sun. May 2nd Meeting at Llanelli to discuss strike instructions received from TUC, especially on their policy which included maintaining essential services -- gas, electricity, etc. This was followed by a town meeting near the Town Hall chaired by Enoch Collins as chairman of the Trades & Labour Council. This mass meeting of hundreds of people rejected -- two days in advance of the actual strike --the TUC policy of maintaining essential services. In particular the meeting asked parents who had children working as domestic servants to see that they come out, which they did.

Tues. May 4th Trades Council meeting agreed to demonstrate to local Board of Guardians (the Social Security of that time) and to send pickets out, and inside the town to deal with blackleg lorry drivers. (These were student and other middlewhite collar workers would certainly Ed. WB.)

The police gave us their support, e.g. lorries authorised by the Trades Council were allowed through to Llanelli Market to ensure that the poor people, including strikers, would be fed.

The Llanelli Trades Council now named itself "Council of Action", with a policy of maintaining 100% etc., and bulletins were exhibited

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intervals giving the real news of the General Strike.

Wed. May 5th Further march to Board of Guardians re feeding the people who were now without wages. Rightwing Labour councillors opposed such a march but were pushed aside.

Thurs. May 6th Council of Action press section in regular contact with position to new style name Council London and elsewhere. In West Wales, of Action etc., but the crowd forced a weak area, there were police visits them off the platform. I went to to houses of Communists and Left-wing the platform to prevent bloodshed leaders. In the Llanelli area there but there was no blood, neither was was no trouble with the police locally, there a change of name to our strike There was a real spirit of unity to avoid any trouble with the strike Council of Action 11 on this date both Sunday May 9th There were further the chairman, Enoch, and the secretary, public meetings, with the same M.P.s Walter Dillon, received from Picton Phillips, Chief Constable for Carmar- Cant (E.C. member CPGB) who had with thenshire, a number of summonses against both of them. Secretary Wal- from prison and Mr. Arthur Horner ter Dillon resigned and left Llanelli, a well-known National and Miner and later became an officer of the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers. Chairman Enoch Collins read the summons he had received to an outdoor meeting of 2,000-3,000 people, who decided to give him support to fight such summonses. No further action was taken by the Chief Constable either then or later.

Fri. May 7th Morning Public Meeting held at Llanelli Dock Cinema. This was lent by the proprietor, as there had been picketing of such a cinema previously over the organisation of the Cinema Trade Union. (Mr. Tom O'Brien was the Local Secretary.)

At this meeting mass picketing was agreed to and hundreds of people, male and female, hurses in uniform took to the streets in a real army on the march for Socialism.

This army accompanied the officers of the Council of Action to meet the Town Council, indicating the need of their support to make sure that there would be no repetition of 1911, when a number of Llanelli people were shot by troops during the 1911 Railway Strike; we later had a meeting with the Councillor i/c of any Troops or Mass Police (if such was imported). agreed we would send our officers, Glad to say neither Troops nor Mass Police were imported.

The Council of Action Sat. May 8th (i.e. Strike Committee) meet to examine the situation, as the bulletin indicated weakening in the National Leadership of TUC. In Llanelli Area disgust was felt to such betrayal of our road to Socialism.

Members of Parliament visited Llanelli, Mr. Tom Griffiths (BISAKTA) M.P. Pontypool and David Williams M.P. Swansea, addressing an outdoor public meeting, expressed their opmachine.

and also other speakers as Ernie other Communists just been released speaker and fighter for the miners and for Socialism (later General Secretary N.U.M.). I was the Chairman of that Sunday morning meeting. I accompanied Ernie Cant, a comrade I knew, to the platform. When we sat down, both the Labour M.P.s stood up and went off the platform. I left the platform to find why the walk off -- I was told that neither would be on the same platform as Ernie Cant who was a member of the British CP. I told them I was also. So I returned to the platform and informed the over 2,000 audience why both Labour M.P.s walked off the platform. There was five minutes booing, etc. A vote was taken, the audience were 100% for Cant to stay. Shortly after the meeting commenced Ernie Cant was given a standup greeting. Both Labour M.P.s returned to the platform.

Arthur Horner and myself went to a meeting of left-wingers at Ammanford to discuss available food supplies -- here again all present were convinced that we would achieve Socialism in a week or so.

Mon. May 10th A further meeting of our organised force was held at the Dock Cinema, full house. It was Enoch Collins Chairman, Dai John Local Officer AUBTW and Ben Griffiths Officer Clerical Union, to the police station to give notice to our local Police Inspectors Tom Davies (known locally as Twm Pwll) and

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the general strike

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Inspector Morgan of New Dock area -- we were further strengthened by Mr. Ernie Leyshon, a steel worker. There was no real objection by the Inspectors to their being given notice, as they could see through the police station window. I had to give the Clench Fist Salute through such windows.

When we left the police station we marched back to the Dock Cinema, and many felt despondent, as local bulletins indicated signs of betrayal inside the leadership of TUC General Council.

Our Llanelli leadership organised soup or food kitchens. We organised concerts, proceeds to assist the food kitchen and elderly people. We used a miners dram being pulled by a pit pony through our main street. All business people gave food, clothing, anything that could assist winning the strike. Our ranks were larger and stronger. Further news re. General Council was explained by miners' leaders and although the reactionary leaders of General Council were increasing their treachery, even the police in the lower ranks were as disappointed as we were. A sergeant came to see me to allow a trial train to go through Llanelli to test safety. I said, No. The police accepted the answer of our Strike Committee.

The situation in another day or so became clearer, when the General Council members of TUC crawled along behind Prime Minister Baldwin and called off this historic road to Socialism in 1926.

Written by Enoch Collins.

workers broadsheet

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TUC NOTES

BY OUR OWN CORRESPONDANT

The 102nd. Annual Congress of the TUC was held in September at Brighton and was attended by 1061, delegates from 150 unions with a total membership of 9,402,170 (7,250,000 men; nearly 2,200,000 women). This represented an increase of 526,789 on the previous year. All major unions except NUM and NUR had gained in membership but 209,440 of this increase was due to the recent, warmly welcomed affiliation of the National Union of Teachers to the TUC.

The opening session was picketed by young workers canvassing for a TUC backed Youth TUC Annual Congress. This idea was loudly applauded when voiced from the rostrum by Lanette Harkness of SOGAT, who received the new TUC Youth Award for outstanding trade union work.

One delegate was heard to murmur, during the presentations of awards, that he could see neither Lord Cooper, nor Sir Frederick Hayday, CBE, of NUGMW (both General Council members) on the platform when Bro.F.R.Richards of NUGMW received the gold badge for long service to the T.U. movement. Nevertheless they were prominent with the other TUC lords and gentlemen at the numerous cocktail parties, where whiskey, vodka and gir flowed freely, financed by members contributions.

An outstanding personal success of the Congress was Vic Feather, the General Secretary. A natural comedian and entertaining speaker, Feather was helped (a) by comparison with the wooden, reactionary, alien George Woodcock, his predecessor and (b) by the fact there is a Tory govt. No need to pull the rhetorical punches!

The Congress was virtually unanimous on most issues - to fight threatened tory cuts in spending on the social services; to fight tory attacks on the NHS and comprehensive education. For a better deal for old people. There was unanimity too on the need to stand united and adamant against any govt. attacks on union freedom and rights. There was also total opposition to any wages freeze.

Harry Nicholas, fraternal delegate from the Labour Party spoke to an almost empty hall - those who remained informed the rest that they hadn't missed anything. But Nicholas fared better than the AFL-CIO delegate (Renamed AFL-CIA delegate by some delegates) who not only spoke to a depleted hall but was continually barracked by those who remained. His line was indistinguishable from Presecent Nixon's.

One of the most significant developments of the TUC is the increasing growth in strength and militancy of white collar and technical unions. Sectarian barriers between blue- and white-collar are also breaking down. This bodes well for the future. The warm reception for teachers and Junior Hospital Doctor delegates symbolised this unity.

WORKING PEOPLE'S PARTY OF ENGLAND

LECTURE-DISCUSSIONS

SUNDAYS 8 p.m.

at ARTS LAB 1 Robert St. N.W.1 (Admission 2/-)

(Warren St. & Euston Sq. Stns.)

4th Oct. POLITICAL LESSONS OF THE SPANISH WAR by ALEX HART (W.P.P.E.)

llth Oct. YOUNG POWER
by JOHN O'DOWD (N.W. Polytechnic)

18th Oct. DOCTORS IN THE N.H.S.

by PAUL NOONE

(Chairman Junior Hospital Doctors' Section MPU/ASTMS)

28th Oct. THE GENERAL STRIKE -Economic or Political ?
History and Prospects
by ALEX HART