THE FIGHT FOR PEACE

WE LIVE in the terrible shadow of the H-Bomb. American bombers carry the deadly weapon over our heads. The Russian spurnik, a by-product of the arms race, is circling the earth. The search for better ballistic missiles continues. Humanity lives on the brink of an abyss.

What is the way out of this nightmare? What have the politicians—those men who proved themselves unable to prevent two world wars, the men who actively supported them—to offer the anxious people? What is their solution?

Four policies are on offer. First—a disengagement of the Powers in Europe, by which they mean the creation of a zone between East and West in which foreign forces would be limited or prohibited; second—an embargo on, or at least limitation of, arms shipments to the Middle East; third—the banning or nuclear weapons as a step towards general disarmament; and fourth—negotiations on the above measures crowned by a Summit Conference.

The struggle for peace is so urgent, so crucial, that no effort must be spared to discover whether these proposals would help in its preservation. Can they help, or are they, once again, a blind, a criminal bluff?

The “disengagement” bluff

AT ONE TIME or another, most major politicians have suggested some form of disengagement. Anthony Eden, Bulganin and Khrushchev, G saltskii and Bevan, Lester Pearson (former Canadian Foreign Minister), the Foreign Ministers of Poland and Ireland, and most recently George Kennan, the former US diplomat, have all put forward the idea.

Every one of those in the West support NATO, support the production of the H-Bomb by the Western Powers, the massing of the “deterrent against Russia.” Every one of those in the East support the Warsaw Pact and its military concomitants.

What do they propose? Do they really see eye to eye and mean the same thing? Certainly not. Khrushchev, master of the spurnik and the inter-continental ballistic missile, wants the whole continent of Europe to be cleared of bomber bases and H-Bomb-carrying missile sites. But he will not countenance a withdrawal of conventional armies. Hungary, if nothing else, has convinced him that the presence of Russian troops in Eastern Europe is the only guarantee against the disintegration of his Empire. Without his armies of occupation, revolution in Budapest and Warsaw, East Berlin and Prague would reach out to destroy the bureaucratic rulers of Moscow itself.

The rulers of the Western capitalist countries see ‘disengagement’ in a totally different light. Not having managed to make long-range missiles as yet, they are not prepared to shift their missile-and-bomber-bases from the borders of Russia. On the other hand, US and British troops have not yet been required to suppress popular revolutions on the Continent. Thus, although they might agree to withdraw their armies, they cannot scrap their missile bases.

What about the third interpretation of ‘disengagement’—favoured, it seems, by Gaitskii and Bevan—that neither conventional troops be withdrawn entirely (as this would not be acceptable to Khrushchev) nor H-Bomb bases be entirely done away with (as this would not be acceptable to Eisenhower and Macmillan)?

Such a compromise could not lead to peace. Hungary, Poland, East Germany and other countries would continue to be occupied; while the Scandinavian countries, Italy, Britain, Germany and France would continue to be springboards for destruction.

What hypocrisy is this talk of ‘disengagement’ in the mouths of the politicians! Socialists must point it out for what it is—a sop to mass anxiety and put forward their own, positive, internationalist and realistic version: the withdrawal of all foreign troops—whether armed with conventional or nuclear weapons—from all countries!

Peace and war in the Middle East

THE SECOND PROPOSAL for lessening world tension and protecting peace is just as fantastic.

The most decisive factor in the Middle Eastern upheavals is not the import of arms from abroad but the rising tide of national and colonial revolutions. This tide must inevitably engulf the Western oil monopolies and change the international relationship of forces between the powers, and might well lead to another World War.

To pretend, however, that an arms embargo can prevent this happening is to believe that history can be made by whispering charms.

There is only one way to prevent the Middle East (or the Far East, or Africa) from detonating a third World War: to fight for the freedom from political and economic oppression of all the colonies and to grant technical and economic assistance to the peoples of the underdeveloped countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.

Can they ban the bomb?

WHAT ABOUT the banning of the Bomb and disarmament? For years the banning of the A-Bomb was discussed by diplomats—without results. Now, it is the H-Bomb. A campaign will go on and on, fruitlessly. Again, negotiations will break down over the key question of control.

For how can Washington’s rulers—protectors of Franco and Chiang Kai-Shek—be trusted? Who can rely on the word of Moscow’s rulers—the butchers of the Hungarian workers?

SOCIALIST policy for peace

As long as the control of the economy—including the armaments industry—remains in the hands of a few parasites in West and East, no real banning of armaments production is possible.

Nevertheless, we socialists must press for the banning of the Bomb and for disarmament, and mobilize the masses of workers around these demands. But we cannot, must not, stop there. We must raise the call for workers’ control over armament production, workers’ control to see that the basis on the Bomb is actually carried out. We must support every direct workers’ action against the production of the Bomb, against the building of launching sites to deliver.

IF THERE IS NOT, and cannot be, any lasting agreement on the basic issues dividing the Great Powers, what good can come from a Summit Conference?

In 1955 the Geneva Conference took place. The heads of state conferred and reached an ‘agreement in principle.’ What happened when they came to translate principle into practice? The search for ever more deadly weapons continued unabated; the struggle for influence in the Middle East did not stop for one second; the Geneva ‘spirit’ evaporated during the butchery in Egypt and Hungary. And the Cold War continued with unreduced ferocity.

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

the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from all countries;
o H-Bomb, nor A-Bomb, nor missile sites, nor bomber bases;
workers’ control over armaments production;
for international socialism and peace!
INDUSTRIAL

Rank-and-file building workers demand

HIGHER WAGES, FEWER HOURS

GREATER LEISURE

An SR report

SIXTY-FOUR DELEGATES from union branches and 49 from sites in London and Liverpool met in Conference at the Holborn Hall, London, on January 17th. The Conference was called by shop stewards from the Alderden site at Chiswick.

Brian Behan (who wrote in Socialist Review, January 1, 1958) explained the purpose of the meeting: to mobilize the rank-and-file on the sites to transform the existing union machinery into an effective instrument for the coming struggle.

He reviewed the present state of the industry. He contrasted higher than average productivity (an increase of 181 percent), higher than average profits (one firm, W C French, showed a 100 percent increase last year), higher than average salaries (Turner Newall's, a building supply firm, paid its directors approximately £600 per week), with growing unemployment, which would affect 130,000 men by the end of this year.

Realistic claim

The Tory Government must be held responsible. The credit squeeze is crushing the smaller builders; the cuts in council housing will put up to 30,000 men on the streets. This is what the big employers want.

The present wage claim for 8d. an hour, the demand for a forty-hour week, are quite realistic. As it is, some of the bigger employers are paying up to 2s. an hour in excess of union rates. While the forty-hour week would go a long way towards getting rid of unemployment in the trade. They say the economy can't stand it; but why should we pay the armist bill?

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The Long Shift

HOBART HOUSE, headquarters of the National Coal Board, have issued orders to all pits in Britain instructing them to prepare for a fourteen-day shift. Supplies of food, water and diesel fuel are already being assembled at pit bottoms. Each pit is to be made self-sufficient so that no further supplies would have to be lowered to the workers during the fortnight.

Not, in fact, envisages a situation where no supplies could be lowered to them, for they are assuming that people living round about the pits will have been wiped out by an H-bomb attack.

Under such conditions miners at the pit face will just have to wait, knowing that their families, relatives and friends will either be dead or dying. Their own hopes of survival will depend upon help coming from outside the devastated area—that is, of course, if there is any area remaining untouched by a nuclear catastrophe.

The NCB are also locating mobile winding machinery well outside industrial districts. They hope to have crews standing by the winders who will dash into the devastated zone—after the radio-activity has partially dissipated—to pull up the miners.

Crazy projects like this fit in crazy policy on the hydrogen bomb!
Paul Simon presents a SOCIALIST POLICY FOR BUILDING

R E C E N T A R T I C L E S in the Socialist Review by comrades Heffer and Behan dealt with the immediate demands of the building workers who must organize to meet the growing attack by the employers on their living standards in order to obtop any possibility to the workers this attack will take place under critical slump conditions, or simply put, a "minor" recession is not for me to forecast. I leave that to the economists.

In either event the purpose for which these demands are put forward is twofold. On the one hand there is the need to develop working-class strength by building the unions, sharpening militancy and improving rank-and-file organization to free the hands of the trade-union bureaucracy, remove the workers' control of the union, and to strengthen the rank-and-file leadership, and win the maximum concessions from the employers.

On the other hand there is the need to develop the socialist consciousness of the working-class to point the way for a possible solution to the capitalist crisis—the need for Socialism, and to prove to the workers that they have the strength to dispose of the capitalist economically and politically and thus protect their gains politically.

I believe therefore that if the immediate demands of the unions are the correct demands politically, they will raise in the course of the struggle the question "who is to control whom?"

N E E D F O R T R A N S I T I O N P R O G R A M

The building industry employs directly a million or more people. Building and civil engineering with associated materials industries, etc., employ three million. It is one of the most backward technically of any in the country. Waste and inefficiency are bywords. Working conditions are primitive and deplorable. Labour is extremely casual and difficult to organize. While it is not a "decisive" industry compared to say, transport, or fuel, it is a large and important industry. The difficulties in organizing only serve to underline the need for correctly posing "who is to control whom?"

If we therefore wish to develop the discussion in the course of the struggle on the immediate issues of the right to work and the right to a living wage, then the points at the moment two alternatives. One is the glorious vision of Socialism—workers' control, atomized, immediate nationalization; the other is painstaking, Fabian-type constructive rationalization, whose influence, I believe, includes, as in the case of the Federation's plan building as a Socialist Service, proposals to nationalize.

I would agree that of late there has been too little of the visionary Socialism, particularly in the party of which I have most experience, the Communist Party. I imagine that there has been something less than nothing in the Labour Party.

However, we rely exclusively on the "gleam of Socialism," there is a real danger of us appearing like the right-wing, in reverse. I would like to bring up "Socialism" for the purpose of specifying but unwilling or unable to present a proposal for immediate purposes.

N O L U D D I S M

We are therefore back to the immediate demands and their political correctness. It seems to me, that it is not only possible but politically correct to distinguish between:

(1) Proposals which benefit the employers solely and exclusively—such as bonus schemes, payment by results,

(2) Reforms which rationalize the industry and advance it technologically, which, under capitalist ownership, serve to line the pockets of the employers,

(3) Proposals aimed at reducing the economic power of the capitalist class and democratizing sectors of capitalist ownership.

Obviously:

(1) Proposals which benefit the employers solely and exclusively, are to be resisted to the full. There should be no disagreement on this point.

(2) Reforms to rationalize the industry, there will, I think, be some disagreement with the points of view I wish now to put. I think it incorrect to resist or oppose reforms or rationalization aimed at improving the industry technologically. What must be resisted is the introduction of techniques at the expense of the working-class.

Let me give an example. Plastering is a dying trade and in the course of the next few years, it will be more and more superseded by other methods of surface finishing. The trade unions should demand that any plasterers made redundant as a result of new methods must be re-trained under full pay, suffer no decrease in skilled workers' wages, and that the trade unions in conjunction with rank-and-file committees to determine which men should be re-trained, having gone into the labor reference, etc. This point must be made over and over again that technology exists to serve man, that men are not cyphers to be declared "redundant" at the merest whim.

Strike against Profits

Of course such proposals would be resisted by the employers. Their whole point in introducing alternative techniques is to retain skilled labour by unskilled labour and so for a time have an advantage over competitors, or in the long run reduce the amount of labour needed to fulfill a specific function, and so increase the rate of exploitation.

The right-wing employers the unions must use every weapon, including joint strike action by all unions in the industry, to uphold the dignity of all building workers; the unions must not back down against the introduction of new techniques, but they must strike against the employers' refusal to run the industry for the benefit of the men in the industry and society generally but simply for the sake of increasing their own swollen profits.

In this way the issue of whether the building industry as at present organized—i.e., as a capitalist industry—is capable of meeting the need for a simple and patently just demands is immediately raised, and in turn raises the question "who is to control whom?"

NATIONALIZATION?

With regard to the third section we have the maximum confusion and the maximum disagreement. The only proposal that I know of any importance is the NFETO proposal to nationalize the industry. "Working class controls" I put on the other side of the revolution to the one we are on.

If we are to take the slogan of nationalization seriously it really must take it to pieces and see what it means.

Let us ages (1) to nationalize the land; (2) nationalize the materials industry (brickworks, cement rings, etc.); (3) nationalize the plant-lire firms.

What might happen to each of these proposals, if fought for to the bitter end is that the state machine and the right-wing would turn them into reforms of a state capitalist type. "profit nationalize the land firms" into "reintroduce development changes") but the issues are still clear and simple and can be fought for.

All value attached to land is communally owned. Practically all materials, land properties and industries are monopolized, ill-planned, etc., and could be taken over. The plant-lire firms have got something (plant) that needs to be taken over if we are to plan.

Also this, however, where are we? Apart from six or seven top firms actually owning something the rest of the so-called "industry" begins, on examination, to become—nothing. Let any building worker think for a moment exactly what his boss has and does. An office, a yard, a bucket and barrow, a bank account.

Workers themselves set up on "their own" like God Bless You and go bankrupt twice as quickly. They couldn't do this if they actually had to have anything to be a builder.

No, the builder-employer gets the steady work from his clients (usually there is nothing for another builder to take over.

The Federation's plan to compensate the owner of profit is therefore pathetic, confusing and class collaborationist.

This plan is actually a day dream. Not of the visionary socialism we talked about earlier, but of jobs for the boys in their later middle age.

There are other more practical proposals for reorganizing the industry by which building workers could fight for, and which if there is the interest, we can go into in another article. The important

P A U L S I M O N, is the pseudonym of an architect, member of the Communist Party. We wish to publish his article in important contribution to the argument on the future of the building industry—a future foiled by capitalist control at present—and a contribution to the formulation of socialist policy. Replies and criticism are welcome.—Editor.

B U I L D T H E S O C I A L I S T R E V I E W !

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Eric Heffer presents the case for the Industrial Union

To many in the working-class movement, the question of Industrial Unions is the most academic, something that is discussed in the abstract, without connection with events. However, at the 1957 Trades Union Congress, the issue was brought down from abstract discussion about trade unionism on the agenda of the British workers' movement.

It was obvious, beforehand, that there was much discussion and arouses many passions. Indeed, so concerned were the labour leaders with the explosive nature of the issue before them, that they decided it had to be discussed in private session.

The question was brought forward by the NUM, an organization long associated with the Industrial Union outlook. Although supported by the NUM, it was, however, shelved, and remitted to the NEC with very little encouragement for future hope. With things as they are, this was not surprising. There are many vested interests in the present trade union set-up, and these will need to be overcome before serious progress can be made.

New conditions

Does the 1957 Congress decision mean that all is settled, is the issue now a dead letter? My answer is quite definite, no. The problems which brought the question to the floor of Congress remain, and a vote by trade union delegates cannot get rid of them. Life itself will increasingly force these problems involved before the workers, and in turn will demand an answer. The fact that things are wrong in the present structure and organizations is reflected in the many books and pamphlets on the subject appearing today. Some, like G. D. H. Cole's pamphlet, actually ask the question, "What is Wrong with the Trade Unions?" As does also the Socialist pamphlet written by Tom Brown. Naturally many of the problems are given to the question, but what is particularly interesting is that the issue raises itself naturally, at this stage. We need to examine the basic reasons why the question is raised.

The obvious reason is that the present trade union structure does not tie in with the rapidly changing structure of British industry. Automation, new methods and new materials are breaking down the traditional distinction between skilled, semi- and unskilled workers. And employers are acting in closer harmony than in the past, and in most industries workers are finding themselves face to face with powerful national employers' combines or the State itself if they are employed in nationalized undertakings. At the same time, the State is increasingly directly interested on behalf of the employers, and the interconnection between State and industry has grown closer than ever.

Inefficiency of unions

These facts alone are sufficient to expose the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the present union structure. Obviously a change is required, however vigorous the organizations on the part of the more conservative wing of the movement, including those of its adherents, who may who wear a left label on their coats.

To give two examples of what I mean, let me quote the costly demarcation disputes which take place from time to time (Camnell Laird's has featured recently), and secondly, the well-known failure of British Railways where three unions exist in place of one and where inter-union black-legging has actually taken place during strikes. (I realize that union leaders would dispute the use of the term 'blacklegging' but that is what it really was.)

These examples alone show how archaic the structure and ideas are, and how on occasion, narrow craft and sectional interests are put before the interests of all workers in a given industry.

British trade-unions

Let me briefly set down the various types of trade union in Britain today. The three main groups are: (1) Craft Unions, (2) General Unions, and (3) Industrial Unions. The first group is the largest, with a fourth group which is in fact a hybrid, and which does not really come within any one particular category, but which has features of either one or more of the main types.

Within the first group fall unions like ASUW, ASTU, ASLEF, etc., in the second group we have unions like the TGWU and the NUMG, and in the third group the NUM, NUR, UPW, and the Iron and Steel Confederation. Within the last group (Number 4), should be included such giants as the AEU, USDAW, as well as the ETU, the AUEW, etc.

A peculiar feature of the British trade union scene is the existence of various Federal bodies made up of unions which fall in many categories. For example we see the TUGWU, the ASW and the AUEW all existing side by side within the NUM. The situation obtains in the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering, in the British Printing Trades Federation, and the Printing Trades Federation.

It is obvious from the above that more and more unions within the same industry have been forced to co-operate, to unite around certain basic questions. What needs be stressed, however, is that in today's conditions we still have to take the process further, and actually unite federated unions into one organization, creating within each industry an industrial union capable of dealing with all the problems of that industry in the interests of all the workers and not merely one section.

The pioneers

Advocates of Industrial Unionism have many and varied. United in demanding the industrial union, they have been often different poles apart on other questions.

The demand was first clearly and firmly put on the agenda by Tam Mann, in 1912. In 1919 the NUM and AEU formally merged into the Amalgamated Union of Mineworkers. In 1922 the NUM and AEU merged into the Amalgamated Union of Mineworkers. In 1923 the NUM and AEU merged into the Amalgamated Union of Mineworkers and Allied Trades.

These mergers showed how class struggle as against class collaboration and industrial unionism was vastly superior to the craft union in the conduct of the class struggle.

The pioneers of Industrial Unionism can be roughly divided into two: (1) those who thought the Industrial Unions were an answer to the problems of industrial action; and (2) those who believed that Industrial Unions, although an important factor in the workers' struggles and one which would form the basis of a new kind of industry unionism, could not do the job alone. All these leaders must be credited with their inability to separate the workers from the needs of the trade union movement. That is why today the American union leaders see their future only in an adjustment of the private property system; they do not at any time raise the question of social question of socialism.

To be continued
Notebook

IN OUR DECEMBER ISSUE we reported the first attempt of the London Labour Party to run a Week-end Youth School, and made some major criticisms of the way it was organized. In this report from the West Midlands, we show that the same criticisms are relevant there—only more so.

...After tea we had a report from Miss Moody, West Midlands Regional Youth Organizer. She dealt at length with the means whereby Youth Sections could increase their membership; during the tea break, a few suggestions were made, most of which seemed to the leaders to be of interest. However, we were told that a few matters where politics could be mentioned would be permitted.

She said Birmingham had been very successful in their recruiting campaign. At dinner our delegation were fortunate enough to be seated next to two of the Birmingham delegates. The two girls in question were not only unaware of the existence of Stowell-Trent (a fact which I regarded as rather fortuitous) but they were also unaware of the fact that Birmingham lived in. We were undecided whether to put this down to the shortage of teachers in the area or the success of Miss Moody's campaign.

A social evening had been arranged for the delegates. But, unfortunately, the sight of Bewdley—a few licensed houses and an ill-attended dance—came as a great let-down. Soon after 11 p.m., delegates started returning to the guest house. We expected everybody to behave with due decorum. However, the next few hours proved to be the most active of the week-end. The noise, that somehow or other failed to wake Miss Moody—kept everybody awake. There were sounds of drunken revelry that continued well on into the night.

Next morning a delegation from Rowley Regis, disguised at the previous night's activities, left the school. Two Teddy Boys were left behind, for they had been responsible for 'an unfortunate incident'—to quote the organizer.

Reflecting on the week-end, I thought it was a failure from the point of view of Socialist Education—however successful it might have been in other ways. It shows the futility of Transport House's policy of trying to attract youth on the basis of socials and record evenings rather than allowing youth the right to form their own democratic organization with the right to formulate policy.

DEREK HART
Stoke Youth Section

Revolt in the YCL

Another crisis in the Communist Party of Great Britain: an opposition group, based on Islington, has emerged to challenge the leadership of the London Young Communist League. The group has come out in the open and published a Bulletin and an open criticism of YCL's General Secretary of the Communist Party, in which they make the familiar criticisms of their Stalinist leadership; they reply to the YCL's 'attacks' on 'revisionism' by pointing to the YCL's 'history of one crude revission' after the other. Fair enough. And they also point out that the leadership has committed itself to the crudest 'revisionism' in the future by their blind refusal to commit itself to history: 'Here again we have no authentic history, either of the Soviet or British Party to assist us. How can we claim, 'they ask, 'to be a Marxist Party and at the same time not produce an accurate history of past events?' How indeed?

Moscow versus Marxism

They go on to submit that 'the great obstacle to our work in building the Party and YCL today is that we are still known as "Moscow men" and not as Marxists, who are not afraid to give a truthful accounting of past events, even though these may be unpleasant for some of our leading people." Rather than risk any such unpleasantness, the London District Committee of the YCL duly recommended the expulsion of the Islington comrades at its meeting on January 8th. And more expulsions are planned for the next meeting.

All this need hardly surprise us. But in the Bulletin, the Group's criticism of YCL policy (of course, no different from that of the parent Party), both in its analysis and in its conclusions, points the socialist alternative in unmistakable terms.

Co-exist with Cousins

On the industrial front, they criticize their leadership for its part in the sell-out of the BMC workers which the Daily Worker called a "partial victory." This was excused by the CP leadership on the grounds of necessity to co-exist with the right-wing union leaders. This desire to co-exist with right-wing union leaders, capitalism and anything else that might come in handy to co-exist with, can also be seen in the CP leaders going out of their way to "praise Frank Cousins, when he is clearly shown himself in his true colours as a strike breaker at the Covent Garden Market dis-..."

And on the issue of conscription the YCL's "apology for a policy" is equally unpalatable. The leadership "still call only for a cut." We can all see the logic of the Tory optimism of eventual abolition once they have an 'adequate' regular army. This makes it all the more necessary to line ourselves up against youth labour movement and the vast majority of working-class youth and call for the immediate drop-...ping of the call-up.

Abolish conscription

"The question is posed should we as a Marxist organisation support a policy of conscription in a capitalist country?"

"Some say it is necessary because it will be difficult to use conscripts as strike breakers or as cannon fodder for colonial wars. They even say that conscripts are a democratizing influence on the army. However, the facts are that conscripts have been used on many occasions as strike breakers in the dock strike and fuel transport drivers' strike, to name a couple. They are used to fight colonial workers, and far from having a democratizing effect on the armed forces, are systematically indoctrinated with imperialist and anti-working class ideas. We demand a principled and Marxist policy: NO CONSCRIPTI-...N IN ANY FORM. The armed forces forming as they do part of the state machine, will only defend our class enemy, the capitalist class."

This opposition group has done well to show the hopeless position of the "right wing" of the YCL for socialism in the CP and YCL. The Young Socialist believes that Marxists should join the Labour Party and help build up Youth Sections into a strong socialist youth movement.

YS Report

Next issue

MAIN SPAIN:
YOUTH AGAINST FRANCO
Labour Anniversaries

FEB. 4 1839

The First Chartist Convention assembles

By HENRY COLLINS

CHARTISM was the first political movement of the working class anywhere in the world. Though the party of working-class interests in British politics fairly consistently since 1815, they had fought for democracy and universal manhood sufragium without effective organization. In 1832 the first Reform Act extended the franchise to a section of the middle class, and the landed aristocracy had been forced to concede a share in political power. The workers had fought for the Reform Bill under the impression that a government under strong pressure from the middle class would be closer to the people than one dominated exclusively by the landed gentry. They soon discovered their mistake.

From study to street

One of the first acts of the reformed Parliament was adopting the New Poor Law, which made the administration of relief considerably more stringent. Ten years later, in 1836, the London Working Men’s Association, under the leadership of William Lovett, a conventional nativist and active trade unionist and co-operator, was formed. At first a modest study group, it soon began to hold public meetings and under the impact of a severe economic crisis secured substantial support among the London artisans. In February 1837, the Association convened a public meeting at the Crown and Anchor, in the Strand, and began a national campaign for the political demands, of which manhood suffrage was the most important. These demands, later to be embodied in the six points of the People’s Charter, became the focus of working-class politics for more than a decade.

People’s Charter

“A vote for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime”; a secret ballot; no property qualifications for members of Parliament; payment of members; equal constituencies; annual parliaments, under a program which, in the then state of working class opinion, would have led directly to social revolution. The movement for the People’s Charter, however, was far from being united, because the working class, on which the agitation was based, was not homogeneous. The London Trades Council, the movement, were mainly independent craftsmen and factory industry was almost unknown in the South. In the North there was a growing factory proletariat recently recruited from farms and towns, and composed of handloom weavers and others precariously clinging to the reed of mill independence. In the Midlands, the agitation was led, for a time, by the Birmingham Political Union, representing the lower middle-class followers of the banker, Attwood. London dominated the nucleus of the "moral force" Chartists who, led by Lovett, believed in strictly constitutional methods. The physical force "Chartists", of whom Feargus O’Connor was the outstanding leader and of which the Northern Star was, from its first publication in Leeds in 1837, the main organ, wanted the movement to set up its revolutionary authority to wrest power from Parliament, by force if necessary. The Birmingham Political Union combined advocacy of the Charter with propaganda for currency reform, as the means to abolish poverty.

The Convention

On February 4, 1839, the first Chartist Convention assembled at the Coffee House, Cockspur Street, Charing Cross. It consisted of delegates elected by mass meetings and the name "Convention" was intended to evoke memories of the revolutionary assembly in Paris in 1792. William Lovett, in his autobiography, The Life and Struggles of William Lovett, gave this account of the Convention: "The delegates to this body were, for the most part, appointees of large bodies of working men. The Birmingham meeting was composed of 200,000, the Manchester meeting of 300,000, that of Glasgow of 150,000, of Liverpool of 70,000, and other towns equally large in proportion to their population. The number of delegates composing the Convention was fifty-three, many of them representing several places, with a view to economy. Of this number three were magistrates, six newspaper editors, one clergyman of the Church of England, Socialist Review—FOUR one Dissenting minister, and two doctors of medicine, the remainder being shopkeepers, tradesmen and journeymen. On their first assembling in Birmingham delegates proposed me as secretary, and, though the proposition was strongly opposed by some of the physical force party, I was eventually elected unanimously." In fact, it was largely the convention which, financed by the northern manufacturers, was campaigning for the repeal of the import duties on corn which it regarded as the main cause of the prevailing distress. In a resolution proposed by Broterre O’Brien, who had edited The Poor Man’s Guardian (it has not been published unaltered, in defiance of the newspaper tax), the Convention unanimously resolved that "the people’s undivided attention should be concentrated upon the success of the National Petition for the Charter. The resolution, which also appeared in The London Edinburgh and Dublin Review on February 17 went on to say that it had present agitation for a repeal of the Corn Laws was intended and does actually tend to divert the working classes from the permanent object. In fact, "such an unconditional repeal would be likely to receive the sanction of the Anti-Corn Law agitators, would be rather injurious than beneficial to the condition of the poorer classes." This was because of the Chartist conviction that, in the absence of working class political enfranchisement, a fall in the price of bread would be followed by a fall in the level of wages, driving employers to employ fewer workers wanted to bring down bread prices mainly as a means of securing cheap labour.

Revolution defeats reform

While the moral force Chartists campaigned, a deliberate and propagandist body, the "physical force" Chartists wanted to make it a centre of working class power. A moral force" resolution which would have committed the Convention to "opposing the government and protest against any and every thing, whether in act or in word, which has a tendency to injure the interests, or to degrade the dignity of the people, or destroy the wealth and capacity and as now appointed, to offer, under any circumstances whatsoever, any dictation or control, for the guidance of their constituents or of any part of the people" was defeated by 56 votes to 6.

First charter ends

Nevertheless, when the Government replied to the Convention by rejecting the petition in July, and arresting a number of leading Chartists, including Lovett, there was no leadership forthcoming from the Convention. The Birmingham middle-class leadership had been broken away and when a half-hearted decision was made to call a general strike—the contemporary term was "Sacred Month"—there was no agreement on tactics or objective. The call for a general strike was issued and then rescinded. In the prevailing confusion, an attempted rising in Newport was quietly crushed. The campaign for the First Petition ended in total failure.

When the movement revived two years later it was under very different, more militant and more working-class leadership. But that forms another chapter in Chartist history, a chapter which, in the view of the Chartist convention that saw the movement of Labour reach a height of militancy and organization never previously attempted.

Note: Contemporary documents of this article are reproduced in part, in British Working Class History, by G. D. H. Cole and A. W. Filson and in From Cobbeit to the Chartist, by Max Morris.
PARTY COMMENTARY by Ron Lewis

The purpose of this commentary will be to spotlight events and statements of particular relevance to the struggle for socialism within our Labour Party. In order to give it the widest coverage and a telling punch, readers are invited to let us know what is going on in their own areas—good as well as bad, please!

RON LEWIS, our commentator, is well qualified for the job. Experience as Parliamentary Candidate, County Councillor, Organizer for Victory for Socialism, and in a number of other capacities has given him a sharp insight into the character and workings of the Party; an insight all the sharper since it flows from a militant socialist position and a revolutionary idealism.—Editor.

Error is continually repeated in action. That is why we must continually repeat the truth in words. [Goethe]

THE MOST SINGULAR thing about the present political situation in Britain is the apathy of the rank and file of the Labour Party and the obvious failure of the Party to win any significant number of votes away from the Tories. In almost every constituency the story is the same: dwindling attendances at Ward and council meetings; disaffection; a lack of preparation to undertake work, and a general lack of enthusiasm. And nowhere is this more evident than in the Tory areas where the Party seems to make any difference.

Contrast this with the situation existing during the last months of the last Labour Government. Then the Tories were expanding their membership, raising masses of money, and in a word, were in every way a going concern. Such was the mood of the Tories with the smell of victory in their nostrils.

Tories contrast with LP

In one field the contrast between the Tories on the eve of victory and the Labour Party today, is even more striking: the then they. Every little maience organization was in such a state that the Conservative branches were in existence everywhere andnumbered more members than the worst of constituencies—in hundreds. They constituted a tremendous military force within the Tory Party organization. We attributed the Tory success with youth at that time to the natural inclination of the youth of the LP was to be in the opposition. But what of today?

True, even in its halcyon days the Labour Party was not distin-guished by its youth in organizing the young, but even that congenital ineptitude does not disprove the argument that it is a factor. In fact the youth of the Party are the young in spirit.

What is the cause of this apathy?

A one-word answer is policy; but the present situation is the result of a number of other things as well. After all, we have had bad, weak, vacillating policy before. But we are being quite as bad as they are today. The chief cause is the failure of the Party to relate its propaganda to the daily lives of the workers. This has resulted in a growing number of voters thinking that policies are mere slogans for the fruits of office. All the while the average rank and file Party-member could believe that no matter how little we seemed to progress towards socialism, it was nevertheless our ultimate goal, he was not too affected by the apathy of the people at large. Also, as long as he believed that there was a good chance of changing the policy of the Party through various means—including Bevan—there was something to go on for.

The rot really began to set in with German re-armament, for the way in which the obvious majority view of the Party was contrived to be defeated, caused many stalwarts to 'vote with their feet' and quit active Partywork. Finally, Nye Bevan has succumbed to statism's disease and the chief rallying point of the broad left of the Party has disappeared.

WHAT OUGHT TO BE DONE ABOUT THIS SITUATION I hope to consider in full in a future article in this paper. In the meantime, a word about the heart-searching that is going on in the provincial regions of Hampstead and its environs.

The defection of Nye Bevan from the Bevianites has at last caused some members of the higher echelon of that group to recognize the necessity for organizing a co-ordinating body of left-wingers. "Those of us who have been trying to do this for some time might not have been put out of the way to make room for the new generals, but such feelings won't be expressed officially. I welcome everyone who wishes to help in the creation of a genuine community of the left within the Party, but the important job is on the ground in the constituencies. And may we are some who care about socialists to take a special interest in the formation of any new group, or "reconstruction" of any existing left wing group. The duty of convinced socialists is to get into it, and especially to promote its local organizations from falling into the hands of violeplants. Total abstention by advanced socialists will prevent it from becoming another intellectual mausoleum like the Fabian Society.

IF DECEMBER'S ISSUE OF THE Labour Organiser is to be believed, the only people who are coming any good to the Labour Party in considerable numbers are ex-Communists. In one of the most stupid articles I have ever had the misfortune to read it is suggested that among the thousands who resigned from the CP over fascism is itself an indication of the right to enter and capture for the self to be working against the Party, sufficient means exist for dealing with them. After all, what assurance do we seek from other applications? The man signs his form pays his dinner and he is in. He might be a secret member of the Conservative Party or even the Liberal Party. I don't think that we should make the ex-CP'er a parliamentary candidate straight away like we see to with ex-Liberal, but apart from that I would welcome him and glory in his conversion.

The way of disillusionment

A lot of people argue of course that if these people were really sincere they would have left the CP long ago. But this is an oversimplification of the process of disenchantment which is often a slow one. For years the process consists of small shanks of light appearing in the Party's philosophical armoury. But there are one's friends and acquaintances, and the comfortable familiarity which is the fruit of perhaps years of activity. There is also the thought that perhaps I might be at fault, I may have failed to understand. Then, all at once, as in a flash, creeping and iso-lated doubts become unified and disillusionment is total.

To attempt to brand people who will have undoubtedly under gone quite a serious emotional and intellectual struggle with themselves, pariahs, is another example of the cold, inhuman, cynical view of humanity that bureaucracy so often exhibits.
"DEPART, I SAY ..."

Cromwell to the Long Parliament

One of the greatest difficulties facing Parliamentarians, and political correspondents is that the words get worn out.

When one has to discuss anything of importance the new wave of verbiage soon builds up into what might be called the 'bull bair'.

Consider the most pressing of our present discontent. A few small groups of men can—and possibly will—wreck the world, destroy it, turn it into a vast rubbish heap.

"Oh, you say, 'That's old stuff, that drum's been hammered thin by now'." But it hasn't. Only the words themselves have been used up, worn to death until they are mere devices of speech. "Deport, I say," and other weary platitudes are making the truly terrible meanings that are their literal context.

To turn them into the malodorous think on the present Government.

For countries, three at the very least, opposition MPs have stood up and declaimed, pamphleteers and journalists have sat down and written, assailing the Government of their day with the most dignified reproaches, the most gallant phraseology, the most impressive rhetorical quips that their considerable ingenuity could contrive.

Men in ruffs, wigs, cravats, top hats and Norfolk breeches have caught the Speaker's eye and bowed excommunication at Stafford and Cromwell and Walpole and Peel and Balfour for the unmitigated disasters that would flow from putting common justice to the plough and for not ensuring that sufficient corn was grown; for not providing compulsory municipal sanitation and (over and over again) for interfering with the Englishman's liberty.

The present government

What would they have said, what have they said to a Government:

Which, by deceit, involved the country in an unpopular war and lost it within a week?

Which gave a foreign Government, indeed that Government's local commanders, the right to declare war for Britain irrespec-

tive of the wishes of the British Government, let alone of the British people?

When workers at Harwell go a long way towards obtaining nuclear power from seawater, in other words towards supplying the world with its atomic energy for ever, the Government reaction is to suppress the news until it suits the convenience of the Americans to announce it.

Finally it splits between those who think that it is better to soak the poor and those who believe in hanging on and hoping for the best.

If only Cromwell could speak again in the Commons and put his views once more on the mis-Government of the country he worked for! He would probably shame us all by showing what vigorous use could still be made of our old familiar words.

NB. The observant may notice that no mention has been made of the present opposition. Well, we can't think of anything to say. Can you?

MICHAEL MILLETT

"I should like to comment on one or two points in Mr. Harry McShane's interesting article on John Maclean in your January 1st issue."

It is news to me, a founder-member of the Catholic Socialist Society, that we were affiliated to the H.P. The Society welcomed Catholics who were members of, or sympathized with, the policy of any Socialist party. It may interest the present author to know that the author of one of our pamphlets was Hubert Bland, one of the first Labour M.P.'s.

And I take leave to doubt McShane's version of the incident when chairman John Wheatley is said to have whispered to Maclean that he was speaking to a Catholic audience when he (Maclean) began to talk about the origin of man. There are two assumptions in this story. One is that Wheatley, securely believed in a theory which was opposed to the teaching of his church—in other words, that he was a hypocrite. I knew John Wheatley well, and I say without the slightest hesitation that such an assumption is utterly unfounded.

The second assumption, equally unwarranted, is that Catholics areinnies who are afraid to face scientific facts, presum- ably because their church forbids someone to do so. No one should think that Catholics are unwilling to discuss man's origin for it is a mystery I am unable to solve. Perhaps McShane can help me here.

I am almost impossible to lift an "advanced" paper without coming upon some slight reference to the Catholic Church. Why is it that Socialists have to be reminded that the enemy is CAPITALISM, and that poten-
tial fighters against it should not have their attention distracted from the struggle by the red herr-
ing of Vatian villainy or any of the other ictyological mon-
storities from the well-stocked aquarium of the reactionary?

W. P. LAVIN

Readers, we like to hear from you—but short

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

The SOCIALIST REVIEW stands for international Socialist democracy. Only the mass mobilisation of the working class against capitalist and the establishment of Socialism can ensure the realisation of the ideas of a real and united workers' Government, which must be fought for on the basis of the following programme:

1. Complete nationalisation of heavy industry, the transformation of this into a socialised and democratically controlled industry with compensation payments based on a means test. Re-
nationalisation of all monopolised industries without compensa-
tion. The nationalised industries to form an integral part of an overall economic plan and not to be used in the interests of private capital.

2. Workers' control in all nationalised industries, i.e., a majority of workers' representatives on all nationalised board, subject to frequent election, immediate recall and the abolition of all forms of wage ruling in the industry.

3. The inclusion of workers' representatives on the boards of all private companies owning more than 20 people. These representatives to have free access to all documents.

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

5. The establishment of the principle of work or full main-
tenance.

6. The extension of the services of the National Health Service and the development of the National Health Service to the outpatients of all general practitioners.

7. The expansion of the housing programme by grant-
ing interest free loans to local authorities and the establishment of local housing associations.

8. Free State education up to 18. Abolition of fee pay-
ments to schools. For the establishment of extensive schools and adequate maintenance grants—without a means test—for all university students.

9. Opposition to all forms of racial discrimination. Equal rights and trade union protec-
tion to all workers whatever their country of origin. Free-
dredged migration for all workers to and from Britain.

10. Freedom from political and economic oppression to all colonies. The offer of tech-
nical and economic assistance to the people of the under-
developed countries.

11. The unification of an independent Ireland.

12. The abolition of conscription and the withdrawal of all British troops from overseas.

13. The abolition of all weapons of mass destruction.

14. A Socialist foreign policy independent of both Washing-
ton and Moscow.