

The Week

**POVERTY
AND OLD
PEOPLE**

A NEWS ANALYSIS FOR SOCIALISTS

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DO WE GO IN?

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A NEW ANALYSIS OF THE
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SHOULD WE - WILL WE - GO IN?

Mr. Wilson has been putting on a Churchillian-like act in Europe these last few days. He has also thrown in a bit of anti-American demagoguery. This hasn't fooled anyone - least of all General de Gaulle. If Mr. Wilson really wanted to stand up the the United States he would make a stand of some kind on Vietnam. If anything, one of the reasons de Gaulle is so reluctant to let in Britain is because he feels that this will increase American influence in the Common Market. However, this is all part of the manoeuvring of Mr. Wilson and the Cabinet: what are the really serious issues so far as socialists are concerned?

The Common Market represents the response of European capitalists to the unfriendly post-war world. It is an attempt politically and, therefore, militarily, to get on equal terms with the two super-powers. It is an attempt to get over the limitations placed upon capitalist rationalisation by national boundaries. It is also designed to present a united front against the working classes of the west European countries who are, in some cases led by politically suspect political groupings. There are two separate aspects to Britain's entry into the Common Market: (1) from an economic point of view it could assist big monopolies to get behind the tariff barriers of the Six, and by subjecting British industry to fierce competition assist those who want to rationalise British industry by sweeping away a multitude of small and inefficient business enterprises. (2) British entry is an integral part of the process of unifying Europe for a greater part in the cold war.

Both these aims are extremely reactionary and in the last analysis both are directed against the workers' movement. The economic affects of joining the Common Market would be to strength big monopoly capital against the small and medium sized enterprises, and against the working class. Entry would be followed by an immediate attack on the people's standard in the form of a huge increase in food prices. A medium term effect would be to close down hundreds of the small enterprises, which would be used to weaken workers' organisations in the larger ones. British big business would also be more able to use its international connections to break workers' resistance to these measures.

From a class point of view we should oppose entry. But this must done not in the spirit of nationalism or chauvinism. Opposition to Britain's entry must be linked with an offensive strategy and an alternative programme for reconstructing British industry to serve the needs of the people. That this must be a socialist programme goes without saying. But the problems which the Common Market attempts to solve from a capitalist point of view are real ones and our socialist answer must be concrete. The Week will be carrying a number of discussion articles on this question, but let it be said that the socialist answer to the Common Market must be based the concept of a Socialist United States of Europe and the complete unity of European workers.

Yet another important contribution to the growing literature indicating the collapse of welfare standards in Britain has been made by the Socialist Medical Association. In their pamphlet "Poverty and Old People" *, the socialist doctors have collected together much of the evidence about the serious neglect of the aged which has come to be a normal characteristic of our mis-called "welfare state". The author, while drawing attention to the statistics of deprivation, (discussed in a review of Peter Townsend's new fabian pamphlet three weeks ago) are not content simply to call for higher pensions, or for higher pensions at 70 years of age than at 65. They continually and rightly stress the isolation and loneliness of old people, the inhumanity of current attitudes to retirement and the sense of futility, of sheer uselessness, which is so widely engendered by them and the attendant standards of capitalist morality.

"Old age is imposed by society, if retirement is involuntary. Infirmity then develops more quickly, and, in fact, forced retirement is a definite threat to health. Moreover, the increased pace of work in modern industry has meant that there are fewer elderly people at work now than 40 years ago."

The figures speak most eloquently in this matter:

The decrease in % of gainfully employed older people, 1921 to 51

Age	Gainfully employed 1921	1951
55-9	94.0%	95.0%
60-4	88.0%	87.8%
65-9	79.0%	42.7%
70-4	52.6%	27.4%
75+	27.0%	12.6%

Of course, the monstrous "earnings rule", which eats away the pension rights of those who earn more than the most meagre pittance, has a great deal to do with the story.

If the rhythm of work in factories was adapted to the needs and impulses of people, instead of being imposed upon them, then the increased reliability, accuracy and meticulousness of older men would be most useful in industry. Le Gros Clarke discovered that one fifth of 65 year-olds who could still do useful work, were forced to retire by the rigid standards of their normal jobs. When we read about the myth of Procrustes, who stretched his victims on a rack, and sawed them short, in order to have them fit his standard pattern of what was right, we can still feel horror. But modern capitalism has all the edge on Procrustes. It can get men driving themselves silly with worry to diminish their stature by the requisite amount, or killing themselves with exertion in order not to seem smaller than the demands of their job. Only 10% of 65 year-olds retire by custom or their own wish. 10 to 15% are pushed out by rigid rules, 20% can no longer keep up the pace of work demanded, and 10% retire because of serious ill health.

Social class gravely affects the ability to go on working: in social class V, (the unskilled workers' grouping) the proportion unfit is 4 times that in class I, (the professional and higher managerial group). There is a need for serious trade union attention to all these problems.

*Available 9d p.p. from SMA, 13, Prince of Wales Terrace, London W.8.

Poverty and Old People /continued

The pamphlet also provides a serious documentation of ill health and distress caused by bad housing, malnutrition and hypothermia, or in plain English, lack of fuel. In 1955 one fifth of the old people surveyed in Sheffield were badly nourished. Dorothy Wedderburn calculates that 200,000 old people can't hear properly, but have never had an aural test. 100,000 more than this can't see properly and haven't had their sight tested recently. 670,000 need chiropody:

"Lack of mobility due to foot defects is a potent cause of ill-health and social breakdown."

All of this, (and there is a lot more to learn from this horrendous pamphlet) adds up to a demand for a real explosion in provision for the old: pensions, remedial services, health centres, day centres and clubs, help of a hundred kinds, need organising and financing. In housing, hospital, and general health services, vast areas of neglect need urgent attention.

Of course, with the bankers on its back, the Government is not anxious to rush to grips with such problems. The old have a comforting habit, from the point of view of abstract economics, of ceasing to pose problems. They die. "Dynamite and abrasive" policies in the factories will bundle out more and more prematurely retired men, who will then decline or fade away. Money spent on welfare would on the best event be merely a palliative in this situation: but the palliative will not be applied.

. . . Not, that is, unless the conscience of Labour can be awoken, and the trade union opposition can move over to the offensive to reverse the policies of Wilson, drift and rot.

NOTTINGHAM CSE EXAMINES THE PRICES AND INCOMES ACT from a Nottingham reader

"An attack on the whole trade union movement". In these words, George Perry M.P., "one of the few Labour MPs of the new intake who have ever soiled their hands to get a living", characterised the Government's Prices and Incomes Act, when describing the fight put up in committee by himself and Frank Cousins, during the consideration of the Bill. When he was threatened by the whips for his stand on this measure, Mr. Perry refuted the claim that Incomes Policy was not a matter of conscience. "I can't think of any other issue that would affect my conscience so strongly", he said. George Perry was speaking to an audience of about 50 people who were attending the inaugural session of the Nottingham Centre for Socialist Education last Friday. With him on the platform were the regional organisers of NUPE, ASSET and the T&GWU, Ernie Roberts of the AEU and Ken Coates of CSE.

Speaking for ASSET, George Smith, a lifelong trade unionist, said of the Act, "it is a complete and total betrayal of everything that socialists believe in." He went on to say that he fully supported the educational work of CSE, which was vitally necessary to the future of socialism. Ernie Roberts showed in detail how unjust the distribution of income is in Britain, and argued strongly for redistribution between the shares falling to capital and labour.

Nottingham CSE Meeting on Prices and Incomes Act continued

"Don't argue among ourselves about the 40%", he said: "What matters is the 60% we never see." Ken Coates said that the attacks on trade union freedom involved in the Act were only the beginning, and cited the Scamp Report on the car industry as evidence of strong forthcoming attacks on shop stewards. He attacked the offensive against so-called "restrictive practices", which often represent elements of workers' control that needed expansion, not contraction.

Ray Thorpe, of the T&GWU, explained his union's policy, stressing that it was completely untrue to say that the unions were unwilling to protect the low-paid. He pointed to Frank Cousins' case for the £15 minimum wage, and showed how unjust some recent settlements for low paid wages had been. Bernard Savage, a leading NUM militant, drew attention to the Government's attacks on the mining industry, and a useful discussion developed on the problems of socialist fuel policy in particular and defence against capitalist "rationalisation" in general.

It is obvious that CSE in Nottingham will fill a real need in the life of the Labour movement. The Spring programme of fortnightly meetings will include discussions on poverty, on Vietnam, on the future of Labour's Left, East of Suez policy, and a number of other topics. An encouraging thing about the inaugural panel-meeting was the high ratio of trade union activists in attendance.

CSE TO HOLD SCHOLARS' CONFERENCE ?

Mary Klopper, has recently returned from the United States, where she took an active part in the organisation of the second American socialist scholars' conference, which brought together socialist researchers from many tendencies and numerous cities and universities, for a most useful long week-end of joint study and discussion. She has proposed to the Centre for Socialist Education that it might emulate the New York example. At the last December meeting of its steering committee, CSE decided to ask members to write in if they supported the idea. It is hoped that an early decision can be taken on the matter.

LAWRENCE DALY TO SPEAK IN GLASGOW AND HULL

Lawrence Daly, General Secretary of the Scottish Union of Mineworkers, will speak on Saturday March 4th in the McLellan Galleries, Sauciehall Street, Glasgow, at 2.30 pm. Mr. Daly, who is a member of the International War Crimes Tribunal, will be speaking about his recent visit to Cambodia and North Vietnam. The meeting is organised by the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign.

Lawrence Daly will also be speaking in Hull on Friday, March 17th, at the Church Institute, Albion Street, at 7.30 pm. The meeting, at which Ken Coates will also be speaking, will be chaired by Tom Watkinson, NUR.

The Financial Times of Friday, January 20, carried an important editorial which examined in some detail the figures for unemployment which had been published the previous day. The arguments the paper used are an important counter to the rose-tinted-spectacle-type stories the papers generally carried that day. I have culled the significant parts of the editorial: "....The figures for mid-January are apparently reassuring. Total unemployment has now reached 600,000, or 2.6% of the labour force - with much higher percentages, of course, in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. But if one considers only those who are wholly unemployed, leaving aside school-leavers and those who are only temporarily without a job, and if one accepts the Ministry of Labour's allowance for purely seasonal factors, the January percentage comes down to 1.9%. This is a good deal higher than the 1.2% of a year ago but not so high as to be politically intolerable. There has, moreover, been a marked slackening in the rate at which unemployment is growing. In October the seasonally-adjusted figure rose by 33,000 and in November by 47,000. But in December the rise dropped to 25,000 and the latest figure is up by only 5,000: the curve does seem to be levelling out....."

"This may be a weight off Mr. Gunter's - and Mr. Wilson's - mind. But three reservations of differing importance must be entered before these latest figures can be classified as encouraging. The first concerns the weather: we are not yet quite out of the period during which a spell of really bad weather can drive the overall unemployment figure (which includes those temporarily stopped) up to an embarrassingly high level and have a disproportionately large influence on Government economic policy. The second concerns the weather in a more technical sense. The fact that the winter has so far been relatively mild is a reminder that seasonal corrections must be regarded with some scepticism: the apparent slowing-down in the growth of unemployment may be no more than a statistical accident.

"The third and most important reservation concerns the probable trend of unemployment in the months ahead. Even if the violence of the initial shake-out turns out to have been short-lived, even if we get through the winter without unemployment rising to an embarrassingly high level, the odds are that the trend will continue to run upwards until the Government take steps to reflate demand. Production may level out and even rise a little, but it is unlikely to rise as fast as capacity: the latest forecast of industrial spending on new plant and equipment merely confirms the general impression that the growth of national output this year will be slow. The rise in unemployment that this implies will be masked, once the winter is over, by the seasonal upswing in demand for labour. The Chancellor, if he gets through the next month successfully, may not have to worry much about the political repercussions of rising unemployment until the autumn. But the trend will be there to remind him that, unless he finds a way of reflating demand selectively, unemployment will be higher still next winter."

HIRE PURCHASE DEBT CUT BY £100 MILLION from Tony Southall

Hire Purchase debt fell by over £100 million between July and the end of November, as a result of the credit squeeze. The drop in November alone was £22 million. New credit issued was only 75% of the average for Nov. 1961 and less than 70% of that for Nov. 1965. H.P. sales of durable consumer goods were down by 28% on November 1965.

Speaking in the House of Commons on Wednesday, 18th January, 1967, Mr. George Brown said in reply to a question by Mr. James Davidson, Liberal M.P. for West Aberdeen:

"MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION IS THAT THE BASES IN THAILAND ARE NOT BEING USED FOR BOMBING OPERATIONS."

Mr. Brown understood this question just about as well as he understood the question of the bombing of civilian centres in North Vietnam. The very same day, U.P.I. sent the following despatch from Bangkok:

" U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin today officially acknowledged that U.S. forces were using bases in Thailand to participate in the Vietnam war.

It was the first official acknowledgement by the United States of a topic that has been an open secret in Thailand for the past three years. Until now, Washington has denied it.

Mr. Martin made the remarks in a speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce here. He also disclosed that there are 35,283 U.S. troops in Thailand - about 8,000 of whom are working on logistics facilities.

He also acknowledged that there is an American Special Forces group in Thailand training Thai troops in counter guerrilla warfare. He added: "For the record, neither the Special Forces and other American forces have ... participated in actual counterinsurgency operations."

Confirmation of the U.P.I. report came from Peter Duval Smith, writing in the Sunday Telegraph of January 22nd. Writing from Chiang Kong, Thailand, he said:

" Ever since Utapao was declared open last August by 10 Buddhist monks who sprinkled holy water on the runway, the airfield has been used regularly by about 35 of the big KC135 tankers which are a familiar sight to every rice farmer in the north-east of Thailand, as their umbilical cords are lowered in flight to feed fuel to Phantom and Thunderchief fighter-bombers on their way to Hanoi.

Strangest of all, Thailand does not admit that the first raid of all on North Vietnam, on Feb. 7, 1965, was launched from a Thai base or that today no fewer than two-thirds of all raids on the north originate from Thailand.

In fact there are six main American air bases in the country, more than 500 planes and 35,000 American servicemen, the great majority in the Air Force.

Apart from these, there is a special forces mission teaching jungle warfare to the Thai Army: there are all those mystery men in the north and elsewhere; and a variety of engineers are constructing a major port at Sattahip, near Utapao, and building roads, pipelines and a nation-wide communication system.

This year American military aid will total more than 60 million dollars, and at least as much money again will come in from American private investment. Bangkok today is a modern capital city, prosperous as never before; but the new look that is rising among the temples and the old canals is unmistakeably a dollar look."

GEORGE BROWN'S CONTEMPT FOR THE RANK AND FILE from a Manchester reader

George Brown's absolute contempt for the opinions of the rank and file of the labour movement could not be more clearly expressed than in this correspondence, between the foreign secretary and a well-known Labour Party activist from Lancashire, Councillor N.V. Weall.

Councillor Weall wrote to Mr. Brown just before Christmas, to ask for an interview. As he explained:

"I was recently responsible for convening a conference in Manchester to discuss the war in Vietnam. Over 70 organisations sent delegates, and I have been greatly encouraged by the support I have received. At the conference I was asked to try and arrange for a deputation to wait on the Prime Minister, during his recent visit to the area.

"I was informed, however, by the Prime Minister that his visit would be an extremely short one which would not permit time for him to receive us, and that, in any case this was a matter for your Ministry, and that it would be better, in the first place, if the approach was made to yourself. I am, therefore, writing to request that you receive a deputation of prominent citizens from the area, to discuss the need for Her Majesty's Government to assist in the promotion of peace in Vietnam."

Mr. Brown, after thanking Councillor Weall for his letter, replied as follows:

"I do not think that anyone can have the slightest doubt that the British Government are acutely aware of the need to promote peace in Vietnam or that they have been making vigorous and persistent efforts to create a climate in which negotiations could take place and an end be put to the war..." After repeating the story of his various trick "initiatives" as a "mediator" (would any citizen accept a pickpocket's offer as an arbitrator between himself and the man who had just stolen his watch?)

Mr. Brown went on to brusquely reject the appeal: "In these circumstances I do not think that the subject you propose needs any discussion between us, nor in the absence of a response from Hanoi to the various initiatives that have been made do I think I would have anything to add to what I have said in public, both in the House of Commons and, most recently, in my speech at Belper on 7th January.."

BROWN: 14% INCREASE IN FOOD COSTS IF BRITAIN ENTERS by Derek London

We are constantly being told the benefits of entering the Common Market. However, in a moment of truth, George Brown admitted in an interview with French reporters (circulated by Reuters on Monday, January 23rd.) that this is by no means the whole story. He agreed that Britain's cost-of-living and balance of payments would both suffer. According to the French journal Realites, Mr. Brown said that after a "period of transition" there could be a 10 to 14 per cent rise in the cost of foodstuffs, which would mean an increase in the cost of living of between 2½ and 3½ per cent.

SOGAT WINS CROYDON STRIKE

from a printing correspondent

The fortnight-long strike at George Rose Printers, Croydon, is over. The strike, which led to the disappearance of the right-wing journal The Statist from the newstands, was in protest against the sacking of two apprentices who had just completed their indentures. The men have now got their jobs back. The management say that this is on a "casual basis" but they would be very foolish to treat this as anything but a face-saving formula.

STOKELY CARMICHAEL SAYS NEGROES SHOULD EMULATE VIETNAMESE

Mr. Stokely Carmichael, chairman of SNCC and advocate of the "black power" slogan, advised American Negroes to copy the Vietnamese. He gave this advice at a Detroit meeting on January 19. The Vietnamese had learned "that they have the right to fight." A whole generation of Negroes might have to suffer before they learned this lesson. He stated: "This is why we can never win in Vietnam - because the Vietcong have learnt in fighting the French for so many years that the right to fight is theirs. We must learn that also." In his speech he advocated land redistribution - "and that's what this country doesn't want to talk about." The aim of an organised Negro vote, such as he worked for in Lowndes County, Alabama, last year, was to put in office men pledged to high property taxes.

"The Negroes, being propertyless, will vote for the taxes, and the handful of landowners, if they don't pay, will have to forfeit their land - and the country will then redistribute it," he said. Mr. Carmichael had announced earlier in the week that he is to resign as chairman of the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee. He is to take this step so that he can concentrate on founding a third political party with a special appeal to Negroes. He is making a nation-wide tour explaining to Negroes that their first objective must be to organise themselves, starting in "ghettoes" of the big northern cities.

Based upon press reports.

INDIAN BIG BUSINESS TO INVEST IN SCOTLAND from an economics correspondent

A striking confirmation of the thesis that the capitalist of under-developed countries are quite unable to solve the economic problems of their nations owing to their very nature has come in a rather unusual news item. The huge Indian monopoly Birla Brothers is to build an asbestos plant in Scotland. This, the firm's first investment in Great Britain, will go under the name of Glen Asbestos, and will make asbestos cement sheets for roofing and lining. The plant, which will be based in an industrial estate near Edinburgh, will also produce asbestos cement soil pipes and similiar products.

The plant and machinery, costing at least £300,000, is being shipped from India. About 60 people will work at the plant initially; they will all be locally recruited. Recently, Birla Brothers have announced that they are going into business with various American and German monopolies to build chemical and fibre factories in India.

The extremely interesting aspect of this report is that Birla Brothers put the crying needs of the Indian people aside for higher profits. In India there are tens of millions unemployed and partially unemployed. The country desperately needs its industrial base building up. Yet Birla Brothers invest in Scotland because they will make more profit that way.

WEDNESDAY IS WORK-PARTY NIGHT!

Every Wednesday, supporters of The Week assemble and despatch the journal. This work, which anyone can do, is of vital importance to the paper. The more people come along - the earlier, the better, - the greater our chance of reducing postal delays, and the more discussion we can have afterwards! If you can help Wednesday (or any other time) please contact Geoff. Coggan at 588 5064 or Pat Jordan at FRO 3138.

HULL UNIONISTS LAUNCH "SILVER COD" PETITION

from Tony Topham

The following circular is being distributed throughout the labour movement in the Hull area (and other fishing centres.):

"We are writing, as fellow trade unionists and as men who are engaged in the hazardous trawling industry, to urge you to give the maximum support to the enclosed petition to the Prime Minister. We can assure you, since we write as experienced fishermen, that the petition correctly states the deep feelings of trawlermen on this subject of death rates at sea, and the responsibility of the trawler owners. In the past, we have been too fatalistic about the dangers in our work: we are now determined that the system will have to be changed. We think that the act of a Labour Prime Minister in presenting the Silver Cod trophy is not the best way of starting on the road to the changes which we want to see. We need a government, and M.P.s, and a trade union, which is on our side, not which fraternise with the owners.

"Please collect the biggest possible number of signatures on the enclosed petition, and return it to us as soon as possible, at the above address. If you can also forward a contribution towards the costs of this petition, we shall be very grateful. We hope to publish the petition in a public advertisement in the newspapers, and for this we need funds.....

J. Spink (trawler engineer), D. Ayre (trawler engineer), K. Crowther (trawler engineer), S. Mahoney (tug skipper), W.H. Petty (trawler spare hand), A. Kirk Naulls (trawler engineer), E. Brady (trawler cook), A. C. Beer (trawler deck hand), and L. Turnbill (trawler spare hand). All members of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Copies of the petition, which contains a well-argued case on the question of safety in the fishing industry, can be obtained from: T & GWU Offices, St. Andrews' Dock, Hull. The organisers would particularly like to be put in touch with either ^{people} in the fishing industry or in towns where there is a fishing industry.

COURT GRANTS INJUNCTION AGAINST PICKETS from an industrial correspondent

Trade unionists will be very disturbed to learn of the High Court decision to grant an injunction against 18 building workers to prevent them from, as the court put it, illegally picketing the £4 $\frac{1}{2}$ million Government building site in Horseferry Road, London. The terms of the injunction, granted ex parte to the firm concerned, Bernard Sunley and Sons, are: "To restrain the defendants from watching and besetting the works and from intimidating persons employed by Sunley's or their sub-contractors for the purpose of persuading, or inducing them to cease or abstain from working for Sunley's or their sub-contractors."

The order also bans the workers from similarly watching the approaches to the works, from intimidating people delivering goods to the site, from assaulting people employed by Sunley's or the sub-contractors, and trespassing on the works. The injunction is effective until February 3rd. The writ in the main action claims damages against the 18 men for alleged unlawful conspiracy to injure Sunley's. This action amounts, in the opinion of many, to a blacklegs' charter and an encouragement to so-minded employers to launch attacks on union organisation. It is vital that trade unionists insist that the union movement at all levels nips this development in the bud. Otherwise we might find this action being used a precedent for legal purposes in all manner of industrial disputes, official and unofficial.

TRADE UNION FREE SPEECH CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED. from a special correspondent

The following statement is being circulated very widely in the trade union movement:

" We are writing as individual trade unionists who are deeply concerned about the question of Vietnam, to urge you to support the enclosed statement regarding the admission of spokesmen of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam to this country. Once before, in August 1965, three representatives of the National Liberation Front proposed to visit this country, to speak at "teach-ins" on Vietnam in several towns. On that occasion the government would not issue visas for these men. We believe that the continued escalation of the war creates an urgent situation in which the people of this country should be allowed to hear the views of the Front.

Other sections of the public will be making a similar appeal to the one which we address to you. We believe, however, that it is especially necessary and right for the trade unions to speak out for the right of free speech, since our movement has always been closely associated with the creation and preservation of the democratic values on which that principle is based.

Please make every effort to collect the maximum number of signatures on the enclosed form, and return it to us at the above address at your earliest convenience. Please note that the appeal may be signed either by individual trade unionists, or on behalf of branches, trades councils, and other trade union bodies.

The completed petition will be publicised by an advertisement in the national press. In order to do this, we need money. Please send us a contribution towards the costs of this publicity. For your guidance, it will cost us approximately ten shillings for every name which we print with the petition.

Yours sincerely,

Lawrence Daly, (General Secretary, Scottish N.U.M.)

J. W. Jones, (General Executive Council, T. & G.W.U.)

Ernie Roberts, (Assistant General Secretary, A.E.U.)

A.J.Topham, (Secretary to the Free Speech Petition.)

Copies of the statement and the petition can be obtained from: Free Speech Campaign (T.U. section), 12, Sunnybank, Hull. The organisers would like very much to hear from trade unionists at all levels, and to be put in touch with trade unionists.

A similar campaign is to be organised amongst academic circles. So far Malcolm Caldwell, Ralph Miliband, John Westergaard and others are sponsoring the campaign. Anyone who would like to help in this should write Free Speech Campaign (Academic Section), 71, Onslow Gardens, London N. 10. Telephone: TUD 0578.

THE THOUGHT OF WALTER PADLEY continued from last week

"Extensive public works of social value - for example the building in the post-war period of five or six million houses - can be operated only if the banking system is socialised and the bank credit is not subject to interest charges as at present. It is important to remember that an extension of credit is merely a matter of book-keeping, and that the only real cost involved is paper, ink and clerical labour. So long as materials and men are available, there is no limit to useful work which may be undertaken, once we are determined to do away with the artificial limits imposed within capitalism by the fetter private profit. A cheap credit policy will also attract the support of the intermediate layers in society - farmers, small businessmen, shopkeepers, etc - thus helping to maintain industrial activity and the food supply, while it will make possible an immediate extension of the social services.

"Let us emphasise once again that this policy alone cannot solve the economic problem of our time. Only full Socialism can do that. While practising the expansionist technique, a Socialist Government must push ahead with a policy of socialisation. But Socialism will triumph only if the Socialists can make their policy synonymous in the minds of the people with full employment, social security and a decent standard of life. Therein lies the significance of this transitional policy.

"Tentative suggestions, or even blueprints, are useless unless they have movements behind them. And this raises the problem of power, which is inseparably bound up with the vexed question of unity on the Left. The only straightforward solution is to be found in the vision of Keir Hardie and the pioneers of the Labour movement. They foresaw an all-in federation of the Left to which the Trade Unions, Socialist Societies and Co-operatives could affiliate. The Labour Party was intended to meet this need, but since 1918 it has steadily become less of a federation and more of a disciplined party, practising black-listing and heresy hunting. "

It may be asked, if this is what Mr. Padley thinks, why was it Frank Cousins who resigned from the Government and not Walter Padley? We should perhaps be fair, and explain that these very considerable thoughts were written down a little while ago: in 1944, to be precise, in the Left Book Club booklet "The Economic Problem of the Peace. Some water has gone under the bridge since then and, judging by last year's TUC, to which Mr. Padley was fraternal delegate from the Labour Party, various other fluids seem to have passed through Mr. Padley. In case he has forgotten what he used to think, we think it worthwhile to remind him. It might also be thought that others in the Labour Movement could well do with reminding, too.

Some of us, who have been expelled from, or disciplined by, the Party for saying very similar things, would like to hear from him: would he, in deference to his own Socialist past, be pleased to advocate our reinstatement to full party rights, if we confine our comments on public affairs to discreetly chosen quotations from his works? I, for one, would be happy to take up the challenge.

(* of which he was relieved during the recent mini-reshuffle - Ed.)

Along with the refusal of the Government to allow extra money to local authorities to implement comprehensive plans there are a number of other strands to Mr. Crosland's bow that add up to a potentially disastrous state of affairs. Early last year there were a number of reports in the press that the Government was considering replacing student grants by loans, repayable later. However, this was discounted at the time, but new moves and statements now put a question mark over these disclaimers.

Firstly, there has been the recent increase in overseas students fees, ranging from £70 to £250 per year. This has already created a furious reaction from the National Union of Students. The NUS pointed out that this will entail many overseas students being faced with the choice of living in extreme poverty or returning home before finishing their course of studies. Mr. Crosland's bland answer to this is that overseas students should find places in universities at home, adding that Britain was helping many of them. What he forgets of course is that aid to overseas countries is to be cut this year.

Secondly, Mr. Crosland made a most remarkable speech on January 20th at Lancaster. He said "...universities might have to sacrifice some of their luxuries if they are to maintain their past rate of expansion..." Specifically he mentioned a) the present level of student grants, b) ratio of staff to students, c) the number of students living in university accommodation. On the question of the level of student grants one can only wonder at this type of cloud-cuckoo thinking. Any-one familiar with students from working class families will readily understand that the present level, far from giving them the life of 'Riley' that Mr. Crosland imagines, makes it very difficult to live a decent life. Perhaps these remarks are intended to pave the way for the introduction of loans instead of grants. Such a move would be a retrograde and reactionary step in all its aspects. It would deter many working class youngsters from going to a place of higher learning. Moreover, it would create an ever growing pool of graduates who would have a chip on their shoulder at being saddled with a large debt right at the start of their working lives, when their pay was relatively low. As for student lodgings Mr. Crosland should go and have a look at some of them, not the new blocks but the dingy private accommodation, before talking about luxury. One of the major problems in most provincial universities is in fact the lack of adequate accommodation for students.

Not content with these items it now seems that the Labour Government is getting ready to increase the price of school meals. Mr. Crosland said in Parliament recently that the question of the cost of these meals was being considered. Along with this, Margaret Herbison gave a very non-committal answer when directly questioned on this matter.

From these straws in the wind it would seem that once again the Labour Government is preparing to do an about face on some more of the programme it was elected to carry out. Perhaps when Harold Wilson spoke about the University of the Air he meant hot air.