

The Week

A NEWS ANALYSIS FOR SOCIALISTS
Volume 9 No. 5 January 31st 1968

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The Week

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GREETINGS TO THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT!

"The blackest day of the War" said the headlines on Wednesday. For socialists, on the contrary, the humiliating defeats inflicted upon the American aggressors made this one of the best weeks of the war. One gasps in admiration for the heroism, skill and audacity of the National Liberation Front. But the events of the last few days have greater significance than the immediate effect on the military situation in Vietnam. The capture of part of the American Embassy by the Vietnamese liberation fighters was symbolic.

The American imperialists have sought to teach the poor of the world a lesson by making victory over the national liberation forces in Vietnam a question of principle. They seek to demonstrate that it does not pay to fight for national liberation and social advance in the world today. Instead, the Vietnamese are teaching the Americans a lesson: that they cannot, with impunity, attack even the smallest country. The cartoon which we have used on our front page indicates that some sections of the American ruling class are learning the lesson (it was based upon one in the New York Herald Tribune).

More power to arm of the National Liberation Front. Let us do what we can to mobilise direct political support for the Vietnamese people in their struggle against American aggression. The whole left should support the March 17 demonstration.

TEACHING THE AMERICANS IMPERIALISTS (2)

The Pueblo affair was another demonstration that the small nations of the world need not quake with fear in face of American imperialism. Contrast the behaviour of North Korea with that of the British Labour Government. War-devastated North Korea refused to allow the Americans to spy off its coast, Mr. Wilson and his colleagues capitulate to every demand the Americans make. Brown's defence of the Americans in the House of Commons reached the depths of cravenness. The North Koreans not only taught the Americans a lesson: they taught everyone that it is possible to call the American bluff.

SUSPENSION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The left has been characterised in the House of Commons by a desire to avoid at all costs embarrassing the Labour Government. Many of us think they have gone too far in this direction and have actually defeated the aims of their own actions. Be that as it may, there is no possible justification for the way the Labour M.P.s have been treated. If anyone wants punishing it is the Cabinet which has broken every election promise it made and has betrayed every principle the founders of the Labour Party stood for. Transport House should be bombarded with protests.

TROOPS LEARN HOW TO QUELL A RIOT

by Brian Simister

The above headline appeared in the Nottingham Evening Post on the 29th of January, accompanied by two photographs and the following caption: "Training in practical internal security was given at the week end to D Company of the Sherwood Foresters, Mercian Volunteers. The exercise at the Triumph Road Drill Hall included methods used for quelling riots and controlling crowds.

"Speed was an essential part of the exercise and in the picture above the Volunteers race to 'fall in', as they would before setting off to a trouble spot. An injured rioter, in the other photograph, needs to be removed from the scene by stretcher, but the bearer must also be guarded against further attack, so a rifleman gives them protective cover, while they beat a hasty retreat."

All the troops were fully armed.

PROPOSED 35%RISE FOR AEF OFFICIALS

from an engineering reader

Proposals for pay rises of up to 35% for full-time engineering officials of the Amalgamated Union of Engineers and Foundry Workers will be put to the union's rules revision conference in March. (N.B. the AEF is the result of the merger of the AEU and the Foundry Workers' Union). Since Mr. Scanlon succeeded Lord Carron as president of the union in November it is now the policy of the union to repudiate Wilson's incomes policy.

The effect of these proposals would be to give the seven executive members the same salary (£2,250 a year) as the president and general secretary. The executives' present salary of £1,660 a year would be raised by £590 (35 per cent.) whereas the president and general secretary would receive only £250 more than their present salary of £2,000, a rise of 12½%. The executive, which will be putting the proposals to the rules conference, will also be recommending pay rises for the union's other 190 full-time officials - ranging from an extra £150 a year for district secretaries (a rise of 10 per cent.) to £200 for the two assistant general secretaries (12 per cent.) The union, as the biggest in the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, is vitally concerned with a pay demand for all its members. This has already been condemned out of hand by the PIB, the employers and Ray Gunter. Militant action will be necessary to ensure its success.

HOUSES TO COST FIVE PER CENT. MORE

from a special correspondent

The annual report of the National Federation of Building Trade Employers which was issued on January 31st reports that housing costs are likely to jump 5% during the course of this year. It says that "an upward pressure on construction costs which builders will be unable to absorb, of an order of five per cent. or more is clearly possible during 1968. ...Increases in the price of imported timber following devaluation indicate that £20 or more may have to be added to the cost of a small house...." The report goes on to list other costs which will rise quite independent of whether wages go up or not. Once again, the Government emerges as the main culprit in the process of inflation. Yet they will have the nerve to try to stop increases to compensate for higher rents!

A special correspondent reports:

Mark Gapper, Labour correspondent of the Financial Times, greeted the decision to take the busmen's pay award to court as a victory for the Government in the paper's January 26 issue. He said:

'The government yesterday gained an important psychological victory over trade union opponents of its incomes policy when the TGWU decided against strike action in the busmen's pay dispute. Instead of using its industrial strength, the TGWU will go to the courts to try to obtain legal enforcement of its agreement with the 97 municipal bus authorities for a pay rise of £1 a week. This will give the government much less anxiety than the strike threat which existed until a busmen's delegate conference yesterday voted by 52 to 11 against a national stoppage.

It seems certain that the Government will shortly use its powers under Part II of the Prices and Incomes Act to impose a compulsory six month standstill on the municipal busmen's wages. But the TGWU believes that it can at least obtain a court ruling in favour of the £1 a week being paid from the date of the agreement, December 14, to the date when the Part II direction is applied. The union is probably mistaken in this view. Since Mr. Clive Jenkin's Association of Supervisory Staffs, Executives and Technicians caused such a fuss in the courts last year about the validity of the original Prices and Incomes Act, the Government has strengthened the new act to cope with just such a challenge as the TGWU is making.

Under the new Act, the Government can direct that a proposed pay rise should be frozen, not only immediately, but back to the date when the agreement was made. Under these circumstances, it is an astonishing climb-down for the TGWU to be taking legal action rather than industrial action. It will disappoint other militant unions which have been waiting to see the TGWU engage in a trial of strength with the Government. The right wing of the trade union movement will doubtless heave a sigh of relief because government spokesmen have stated recently that if unions are irresponsible over wages the government will take counter-action either through taxation or through strengthening its incomes policy powers. There is no doubt that Mr. Gunter has taken much of the heat out of the bus dispute by insisting that he would use Part II of the Prices and Incomes Act to compel the bus employers to withhold the extra £1 a week.

Mr. Frank Cousins, general secretary of the TGWU, advised a busmen's conference last week to undertake a series of selective strikes at a limited number of towns, and to levy contributions from all the 77 000 municipal busmen to make up the wages of the strikers. It was the militants who persuaded last week's conference to reject Mr. Cousins' advice on the grounds that any strike should involve all the busmen. But they were outmanoeuvred by Mr. Cousins, who detected at yesterday's conference that the delegates were in no mood for a nationwide strike in defiance of the Government. He advised them not to fight the Government but instead to confine the struggle to the union and the employers. His proposal that the TGWU should take legal action pleased most delegates though there is a danger that the militant minority may return to their home towns with plans for local stoppages. This danger mainly affects Scotland. The TGWU will take action at county courts in each of the 97 municipalities on behalf of its local bus members.

Recent articles in the press have commented upon the boom in take-overs and the corresponding monopolisation of British industry. The Financial Times of January 31st published a major article on the subject by Christopher Tugendhat - who first noted:

"Thorn Electrical Industries' agreed £155m. bid for Radio Rentals marks the culmination of a memorable month for mergers and take-overs. There have been more important announcements during the last four weeks than in any comparable period since the War..." He went on to refer to the merging of the National Provincial and Westminster banks, the merger of Schweppes and Typhoo Tea, the coming together of Leyland and British Motor Holdings, and the Ric Tinto Zinc's £55m. offer for Bora. "These are only the most important development," he added, "there are many other deals under negotiation, and it is a rare day that passes without new names added to the list..." Furthermore, "this tremendous spate of takeovers is one of the reasons why share prices are reaching new record levels, despite the certainty of an unpleasant budget..."

He continues: "Although January is in a class of its own, the events of the last four weeks should be looked at in a wider context. During 1967 quoted U.K. companies spent nearly £1,000m. on mergers with other quoted U.K. companies. This was nearly three times the average for the years 1959-63, and more than eight times the average for the period 1954-58. There is reason to believe that the trend will continue to gather momentum during 1968. Singer and Friedlander recently reported that there are 225 businesses up for sale on its 'mergers and amalgamations register', and Chesham Amalgamations says in its annual report that 100 new clients went to it for help with their amalgamation programmes." This was in addition to 400 already on its books.

The Government has played a key role in this process, Tugendhat notes: "Over a wider field the Government sponsored Industrial Reorganisation Corporation -has been ...strikingly successful. It was the IRC which acted as the essential catalyst when English Electric took over Elliott-Automation; the GEC bid for AEI arose out of a series of IRC-sponsored investigations and discussions and enjoyed the IRC's support; and the IRC was again the 'marriage broker' when Leyland and BMH came together. In the English Electric-Elliott deal the IRC provided a special loan of £15m. and another £25m. was forthcoming for Leyland and BMH.

One of the likely consequences of perhaps the most famous of the recent mergers has been widely commented upon in the newspapers: the likelihood that some 34,000 workers are to be made redundant because of the GEC take-over of AEI. The Evening Standard of January 29 noted that the "Monopolies Act was not proving a tough hurdle...to take-over and merger activity...Since 1965" (when the new act came out) "around 120 proposed mergers have been considered by the Board of Trade. Only seven have actually been referred to the Monopolies Commission, and only two were turned down following its report..."

Thus we get a picture of a growing monopolisation of industry which is being fostered by the Government. The unions at all levels should regard this trend with seriousness. Apart from the usual redundancy that occurs once rationalisation ensues, the larger the unit the employers are organised in the more difficult it is for the unions to confront them. Unions should create bodies which correspond to the growing strength of individual employers. Every help and encouragement should be given to combine shop stewards committees, where official union support is not forthcoming shop stewards should come together themselves.

LEADING LABOUR TRADE UNIONIST RESIGNS

by a Scottish reader

Mr. John Copeland, Secretary of the Dundee Trades Council, announced on January 24th that he had torn up his Labour Party card in front of Ray Gunter. He took this action over the Government's attitude on the busmen's pay award. Mr. Copeland is a £12 17s a week busman, a TGWU branch secretary, city Labour Party delegate and well known in both the Labour Party and TGWU.

He took part in last week's talks between the TGWU, municipal employers, and the Ministry of Labour, at which Mr. Gunter turned down the negotiated £1 per week increases for Britain's 77 000 municipal busmen. Mr. Copeland said he was furious ('and so are other busmen') at the attitude adopted by the Minister of Labour at the talks.

'The fact that meetings of all Scottish municipal busmen this week have voted for national strike action is an indication of the anger which exists,' he added. 'I told Mr. Gunter that the average guaranteed basic wage of a bus driver is £12 17s per week and after deductions, including payment of rent and rates he was left with around £9 to feed and clothe his family and for other domestic expenditure. 'With rising prices, rents, and rates, that was an intolerable position.'

HAMPSTEAD CLP TO DISCUSS DISAFFILIATION

by a London reader

Four of Hampstead's seven Labour ward parties have called for an aggregate meeting of members to discuss 'the party's future relations with the national organisation.' The meeting is to be held on February 13, this was decided by the General Management Committee of the party on Friday, January 26th. The decision has its origin in a decision 'by the party more than a year ago to disaffiliate should the Government support the Americans in Vietnam by sending troops, etc. In an exchange of letters between Hampstead's MP, Ben Whitaker, and Denis Healey it emerged that the Government was quite open about US and South Vietnamese troops being trained in Malaya by British forces.

CLP WANTS ROBINSON TO RESIGN

by a North London reader

A meeting of the management committee of St Pancras North CLP passed a resolution on January 24th opposing the decision to impose prescription and dental charges. A rider to a resolution opposing prescription and dental charges passed by the committee said Mr. Robinson's resistance to the Government's measures could now only take the form of resignation from the Government.

When Mr. Robinson met the committee his attention was drawn to a speech he made last summer in which he said that prescription charges 'would indeed be taxing the sick and contrary to all the ideals of social justice for which the Labour Party has long stood.' A committee spokesman said: 'We are not just asking him to resign as Minister on the question of health charges. We think it is Mr. Wilson and the Government that are out of step, not St. Pancras constituency Labour Party or a good many other constituency Labour Parties in the country.'

Students and Vietnam: Report of the Sheffield activities. by Mike Martin

Last weekend, students from most of the universities in the north of England met in Sheffield to discuss the campaign against U.S. aggression in Vietnam. The conference was well attended and above all in high spirits, and eager to proceed with the campaign to build support for the March 17th mobilisation.

On the Friday night Harold Wilson addressed a meeting in Sheffield to celebrate 40 years of Labour administration in the city, only to find that hundreds of students, many of them arriving early for the conference, had massed to protest against American policy and the complicity of the Labour government. In addition there were students protesting about their grants and many tenants from the city protesting against rising rents. In all they numbered thousands protesting against Wilson (or shall we say celebrating 40 years of Labour rule in a manner far more appropriate than the aged collection of aldermen and hangers-on gathered in the town hall.)

The police of Sheffield were well prepared however, and succeeded in isolating the students and indulging in the brutalities for which they are noted. Some 22 arrests were made, and the first session of the conference was cancelled in order that students could attend the court proceedings. I was told it was all very entertaining (rumour had it that the magistrate was a Labour alderman) but since I am not acquainted with the finer points of the law, I will not attempt to repeat the reports. Certain of the cases are still being fought, since several students pleaded not guilty.

The general feeling was that the demonstration had been the finest thing that Sheffield had seen for a long time, and this probably accounted for the enthusiasm at the conference. Politically there was a powerful current of feeling in favour of complete solidarity with the Vietnamese, while steps are now underway to make research into British complicity in the war production. There was a growing realisation of the potential value of campaigns around university research grants etc., for mobilising and radicalising large numbers of students. Activities are being planned in support of the March 17th demonstration including a protest rally at the Manchester offices of Dow chemical Ltd., manufacturers of napalm.

A coordinating committee consisting of one delegate from each university in the north was elected in order to ensure better liaison between student Vietnam groups, regardless of political differences. The ad hoc principle of bringing together groupings whose views may well be different in order to carry out a specific activity with the maximum effect is clearly gaining support. It is likely that several towns in the north will have March 17th committees, and a number of universities are about to establish Vietnam action groups, usually on a militant pro-solidarity basis. Readers in the north who want more information regarding forthcoming activities should write to the convenor of the committee:- Dave Clarke
c/o Socialist society, Student Union, Manchester University.

The conference held a wide ranging debate on the perspectives of the Vietnam protest movement, and the practical aspects of the campaign, particularly the forthcoming March 17th rally and demonstration.

BERTRAND RUSSELL AND MARY MCCARTHY CONDEMN RUSSIAN WRITERS' TRIAL

Two well known critics of American aggression in Vietnam have issued statements expressing their disquiet over the recent trial of writers in the Soviet Union:

Bertrand Russell: There is an influential body of people in the West which is always ready to condemn as wicked anything that happens in the Soviet Union, whilst at the same time boasting of the 'liberty' and 'democracy' enjoyed in the so-called Free World. Such people live in a black-and-white world and show no willingness to judge questions on their merits. Those of us in the West who have struggled over the years against these Cold Warriors have welcomed the enormous changes in the Soviet Union in the past 15 years, changes which have undoubtedly led to greater human happiness and freedom. These admirable developments are endangered by the mock trial just held in Moscow. So intolerably unjust were the procedures of the court that even the official journal of the British Communist Party, normally a faithful spokesman for the Soviet Union, felt compelled to publish its criticisms. The Soviet writers should be retried before an open court and have the right to defend themselves fully.

Mary McCarthy: A historian might wonder how it is that in countries where freedom of speech can lead and has often led to a prison sentence, speech has a value and an honest directness that we in the traditionally free countries almost envy. With you speech is a kind of action, while with us it is, more and more, words. Brave and blunt speech is coming from the writers of your country today, and from Spain, where only this week a young writer has been tried for speaking the truth in an article and risks two years in prison. Our problem, as writers in America and in England, is to make authority listen when we talk. In this at least you have succeeded. It was like the problem Tolstoy faced with the Czar, who cleverly refused to goad him for his subversive utterances and only goaded his followers. This left Tolstoy feeling like a hypocrite - in other words, a play-actor - which is somewhat our situation. Your gesture may, nevertheless, help us who are in opposition against our own governments, which justify the war in Vietnam on the ground, among others, that it protects the right of speech which they claim does not and cannot exist in communist countries. You and Sinyavsky and Daniel and Galanskov and Ginsburg are bent on proving that it can.

J. D. BERNAL SAYS LEAVE IT TO THE RUSSIANS

The polemic about the Soviet writers' trial has continued in the Morning Star. What must be surely one of the strangest contributions has come from J. D. Bernal, the well known scientist and FRS. He was, until he resigned through ill health, the chairman of the World Council for Peace, an organisation which usually supports the Moscow line in foreign affairs. Professor Bernal admits that it was wrong in the 'thirties to dismiss criticism of the trials as capitalist propaganda. He makes some valid criticisms of the Soviet authorities' conduct of this latest trial, but concludes that 'we ought not to make' the task of the youth of the Soviet Union who are defending their rights 'more difficult by protests'!

The Financial Times of January 26th reported an extremely strange event in South Africa:

'In a desperate effort to stem the continuing flow of Africans to the cities, South Africa's Minister of Planning, Dr. Carel de Wet, has "proclaimed" large areas of the country in which virtually no further industrial development may take place without his written consent.

Included in what is probably one of the most drastic pieces of industrial legislation ever to come into force in South Africa is almost the entire key Southern Transvaal industrial complex - stretching from Middelburg and Witban in the east to Klerksdorp in the west.

Bloemfontein and Sasolburg in the Orange Free State, as well as the Cape peninsular and surrounding areas, Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage have all been proclaimed. Only Natal has escaped the net.

'It is estimated that some 9,000 factories fall under the 37 areas now proclaimed. What the legislation boils down to is this: should any of these factories wish to increase its African labour force even by only one, then Ministerial approval will first have to be obtained.'

HUGE NUMBER OF BANKRUPTCIES IN JAPAN by an economics correspondent

More than 13,000 Japanese companies went bankrupt last year, according to the Federation of Bankers Associations, which counted only those organisations with a capitalisation of at least Yen 1m. (about £11 500). Total debts involved in these bankruptcy cases reached Yen 361 964m, the Association announced. A survey of 13 683 bankruptcy cases revealed that 23 per cent more companies went broke and losses involved amounted to 18.8 per cent more than was reported in 1966. Of those who took refuge in bankruptcy, 94.7 per cent, were medium or small-scale enterprises capitalised at less than Yen 10m, the Association reported.

A great number of the bankruptcies were caused by a fall off in business at a time when the companies were paying high interest rates on loans production costs were rising and cheap labour was becoming scarce. The majority of the bankrupt companies were in the manufacturing business, the wholesale trade or engaged in construction. Bank of Japan officials put most of the blame for the record number of bankruptcies on 'reckless management.' It is expected in business circles that the Bank of Japan will recommend to the city banks that future financing arrangements should be limited to those small businesses in sound financial condition even if this policy results in larger numbers of bankruptcies this year than last.

Some business men have already predicted there will be a 'March crisis' when settlements become due at the end of the accounting year. It was noted the bankruptcies occurred despite measures taken by the Government and private banking institutions to provide extra year-end financing for small business.

TWO NEW LABOUR CANDIDATES

Two new Labour candidates have been adopted recently: Mr. John Gilbert, for Dudley, and Mr. Roderick MacFarquhar, for Meriden. Both will be fighting by-elections soon. Both seem to confirm the trend towards right-wing intellectualism - another recently-chosen candidate for Acton seems to be of a like ilk.

Mr. John Gilbert was educated at Merchant Taylor's School and St. John's College, Oxford. He went to the United States 'to work in the catering trade' but is now an industrial and financial adviser. His wife is in the same line of business, being European editor of a large group of American business magazines. Mr. Gilbert returned to this country from the United States 'shortly before the 1966 General Election' - just in time, one might say, because he was adopted as Labour candidate for the Ludlow division. The by-election at Dudley, where there was a 10,022 majority at the last General Election, has been caused by the elevation of George Wigg to the House of Lords.

Mr. Roderick MacFarquhar, is the only son of Sir Alexander MacFarquhar, now director of personnel for the United Nations. He was brought up in India - his father working for the Government there. He is best known as editor of The China Quarterly, a scholarly, but very right wing, journal specialising in Sinology. In that capacity he has been on the BBC many times to comment on Chinese Cultural Revolution. He has worked as a journalist - a career which he has stated as being a necessary pre-requisite to politics. He worked for the Daily Telegraph as its Far East correspondent and then for Panorama. Mr. MacFarquhar joined the Labour Party in 1962 and contested Ealing South unsuccessfully in 1966. He will be resigning from his post as editor of The China Quarterly.

It is not thought likely that either of these two will give Mr. Wilson any trouble in confidence votes.

RIGHT WING ABSTAINER'S EXPLANATION ACCEPTED

The liaison committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party accepted at its meeting on January 24 the explanation from Mr. George Jeger of why he did not vote in either of the critical divisions at the end of the debates on the economy cuts. Because of this, his name has been removed from the list of defaulters who face possible suspension. Mr. Jeger has been attributed with the view that he abstained to try to put pressure on the party's managers to take a harder line with left-wing rebels. One would have thought that this was a more irresponsible act than abstaining for reasons of conviction, but the liaison committee evidently thought otherwise.

LEN WILLIAMS TO GO TO MAURITIUS?

The press was full of speculation over the weekend that Len Williams, the secretary of the Labour Party, would shortly be appointed as Governor of the island of Mauritius. The Evening Standard even published a photograph of him with ambassador's robes superimposed. Most of the papers linked his appointment with Mr. Wilson's desire to reorganise and modernise the workings of Transport House. Among his possible successors appeared the name of Jim Cattermole, well known for witch-hunting activities in the Midlands and East Midlands Labour Parties.

WHAT THE "PUEBLO" WAS DOING

from a U.S. correspondent

A very clear statement about what the Pueblo was doing off the coast of North Vietnam was given in an article in the January 24 issue of the Washington Post by George C. Wilson:

"The Pueblo is one of a big fleet of 'Ferret' ships that the United States uses as part of its worldwide intelligence gathering operations. The 179-foot-long ship carries a wide array of secret equipment that enables the crew to listen to communications - on shore, between ships and from planes. The Pueblo was patrolling the North Korean coast when captured. Chances are the ship was trying to keep track of the traffic going into North Korea and also supplying information on ships headed towards North Vietnam and Communist China.

"Standard ferret practice is for the intercepted communications to be recorded on tapes in the ship. The tapes are then flown to shore intelligence centres for translation and evaluation. This procedure is designed to get pieces of a puzzle that is fitted together in Washington. No one ship, therefore, can be called the key one in the fleet. But the Pueblo was operating in an area that was heating up, possibly as part of Soviet strategy to confront the United States with a second front besides Vietnam" (note by correspondent: this does not seem likely, judging from the way the Soviet Union has reacted to the crisis)

".....The Pueblo undoubtedly carried millions of dollars worth of secret electronic equipment. Even the photograph the Pentagon released - which is too old to show the latest equipment - shows highly secret Ferret gear. A close study of the photograph indicates this equipment aboard:

- Twin antennae, called yagis. They show where signals are coming from, so other equipment on the ship can focus on them.
- The long poles appear to be for supporting a long wire for sending messages to submerged submarines. Although the wire strung between the poles is not visible, Ferret ships usually have such apparatus. The long wire communicates with submarines with very low frequency radio waves, which can penetrate the sea's surface to about 50 feet.
- Radar equipment apparently for communicating by bouncing signals off the troposphere. This gives the ship still another way to listen or send. This troposcatter communication technique has special advantages for listening in on communications between airplanes and their ground controllers, for example.
- A dome-shaped antenna pointing skywards, barely visible in the photograph. This probably is the main way of communicating with airplanes and eavesdropping on their conversations."

It is absolutely certain that the Pueblo was acting in a manner that no country could be expected to tolerate. My Government seems to think it has the right to spy all over the world, and gets very angry when a small country like North Vietnam puts a stop to its activities. I wonder how Johnson would react if there were a North Korean spy ship a few miles off the Californian coast?

Your Government's attitude - as exemplified by Brown's talk of piracy on the high seas - is utterly servile. Even some of the most liberal opponents of the American Government's foreign policy have been able to see through this affair, realising that Johnson is seeking to get more resources on the basis of a scare. I hope you give your leaders hell for their crawling!

The Campaign for Democracy in Ulster held its first conference at the Irish Club on Sunday, 28 January. Although originally called as a London Conference, representation from many parts of England, Scotland and Wales and from Ulster itself gave it a national character.

Principal speakers were Chris Norwood, M.P., who took the chair at the morning session, Gerry Fitt, M.P., Paul Rose, M.P., and Charles van Gelderen. Dr. David Pitt took the chair at the afternoon session and effectively linked the struggle for full citizenship for immigrants to Britain with the fight for democratic rights in Ulster.

Several speakers, both from the platform and the floor compared conditions in this corner of the United Kingdom with South Africa. In both countries arrest without warrant; imprisonment without charge, denial of the right of recourse to habeus corpus; punishment by flogging; prevention of access of relatives or legal advisors to a person imprisoned without trial; censorship of the press, etc., are part of the law of the land. While there is no legal segregation in Ulster as there is in South Africa, in practice the Catholic population is discriminated against in jobs, housing and the social services.

Twelve M.P.s from Ulster sit at Westminster and take part in debates on all issues. Yet, when the situation in Ulster is raised with the British Government the reply always was that the matter came within the jurisdiction of the Stormont regime. Gerry Fitt referred to the irony of the situation that they could ask questions in the House about Manchester, Birmingham or anywhere in Britain but questions about his own constituency, Belfast West, were out of order.

Both Gerry Fitt and Charles van Gelderen pointed out that while the Campaign for Democracy in Ireland had an impressive number of M.P.s among its sponsors (100), they were doing very little in practical terms to advance the cause. Gerry Fitt intended to abstain on the vote on appropriations for Ulster and challenged his fellow M.P.s on the Labour benches to support him.

Charles van Gelderen also drew a parallel with the struggle of the Afro-Americans and that of the minority in Ulster: the black Americans had found that constitutional methods were not getting them any place fast. It was the duty of the British labour movement to support the people of Ulster in any action they took - constitutional or otherwise, in their fight for justice and democratic rights.

Information about the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster can be got from the Secretary: Pat Byrne, 79, Thrale Road, London S.W. 16.

GETTING ENGINEERING GOING

by a Midlands reader

It is well-known that engineering is one of the main growth industries and one vital to both exports and modernising Britain. One would have thought that this Government would have adopted policies which would expand the industry. The reverse is true: a survey published by the N.I.E.S.R. last week revealed that for every 50 people employed in engineering in 1966, there were only 49 in 1967. Output dropped $\frac{1}{2}\%$ and hours of work fell, but productivity rose 2%. The latter is, of course, a justification for increased wages.

The N.E.C.'s "consultative" conference on future party organisation in Greater London held on 27th January was a complete farce. Many organisations received less than two weeks notice and were unable to elect delegates. Joe Gormley took the chair, Willie Simpson presented the N.E.C.'s report and Sara Barker pulled the strings.

No vote was allowed, but it was clear that the majority of delegates rejected the proposal that the new party should be controlled by an official appointed by Transport House. The following points were generally agreed:

- (1) The new body should be called the Greater London Labour Party, and should have rights of representation at Annual Conference - it should not be a 'regional council' as the present model in other parts of the country.
- (2) The London Labour Party should appoint its own secretary and staff.
- (3) Proposals should be put to a properly convened delegate conference later in the year, with prior opportunity for the submission of amendments. Each proposal should be voted upon separately.

In his summing up, Simpson failed to register these points to be taken back to the N.E.C. - instead he tried to argue against them and, as a result, was severely barracked. Gormley appeared to give up the ghost and the conference broke up in disorder.

It is now clear that the existing London Labour Party at its Conference on 30/31st March should refuse to be disbanded until a new body is established to the satisfaction of the London membership.

ADVERTISERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

AVAILABLE NOW!

CHE GUEVARA SPEAKS

A collection of speeches, articles, interviews, and letters of the late, famed revolutionary. Selections span the years of Guevara's rise to world renown - from 1959 and the Cuban Revolution's triumph to 1967 and his death in the mountains of Bolivia. The speeches and other statements in this volume were made by Guevara in Cuba, Uruguay, the United States, Algeria and in the case of his manifesto on Vietnam, from "somewhere in the world" - now presumed to have been Bolivia.

Subject matters include Guevara's views on the history of the Cuban Revolution, guerilla warfare, agrarian reform, economic planning, socialism, the role of artists, imperialism, relations between underdeveloped and industrialised nations, and the war in Vietnam. The book opens with a 1959 interview which appeared in a little-known Chinese publication and was "rediscovered" only in 1966. Other features are an interview granted to the widow of Frantz Fanon, and Guevara's moving letters of farewell to his parents and to Fidel Castro.

Che Guevara Speaks contains 20 chapters and is 159 pages long.

It is available from Pioneer Books Service, 8, Toynbee St., London E.1. Costing 16/6d, plus 1/- for postage.