For the Independence of Egypt!

We publish below an extract from a Manifesto of the League Against Imperialism.

The anti-imperialist front has now been extended to Egypt which has been under the iron heel of British imperialism for 48 years. The native Egyptian proletariat and peasantry have revolted against the terrible conditions to which they have been reduced by imperialist and native capitalist exploitation and feudal tyranny. From being a rich and self-supporting country producing its own food, Egypt has now been reduced to a colony because a minority area containing the entire population, mostly peasant producers, have now become largely dependent upon their foreign and native exploiters for the sale of their cotton production in a system of increasing intensified exploitation the petty bourgeoisie of the towns has also become steadily impoverished. The country is drained of its resources, the moneylenders, the landlords and the foreign bondholders, capitalists and imperialists for the maintenance of the imperialist-feudal State apparatus and the foreign army of occupation. From the surplus value created by their labour is maintained also the Reserve Fund which the puppet governments, appointed by British imperialism, devote for the most part to placing orders with British heavy industry. Under this system of increasing intensification the population of the towns has also become steadily impoverished. The country is drained of its resources, the moneylenders, the landlords and the foreign bondholders, capitalists and imperialists for the maintenance of the imperialist-feudal State apparatus and the foreign army of occupation. From the surplus value created by their labour is maintained also the Reserve Fund which the puppet governments, appointed by British imperialism, devote for the most part to placing orders with British heavy industry. Under this system of increasing intensification the population of the towns has also become steadily impoverished. The country is drained of its resources, the moneylenders, the landlords and the foreign bondholders, capitalists and imperialists for the maintenance of the imperialist-feudal State apparatus and the foreign army of occupation. From the surplus value created by their labour is maintained also the Reserve Fund which the puppet governments, appointed by British imperialism, devote for the most part to placing orders with British heavy industry. Under this system of increasing intensification the population of the towns has also become steadily impoverished. The country is drained of its resources, the moneylenders, the landlords and the foreign bondholders, capitalists and imperialists for the maintenance of the imperialist-feudal State apparatus and the foreign army of occupation. From the surplus value created by their labour is maintained also the Reserve Fund which the puppet governments, appointed by British imperialism, devote for the most part to placing orders with British heavy industry. Under this system of increasing intensification the population of the towns has also become steadily impoverished. The country is drained of its resources, the moneylenders, the landlords and the foreign bondholders, capitalists and imperialists for the maintenance of the imperialist-feudal State apparatus and the foreign army of occupation.

The history of the British occupation of Egypt is one of the most disgraceful even in the annals of British imperialism. After the defeat of Arabi Pasha who had successfully organised a rebellion against British occupation, the British occupied Cairo on September 15th, 1882, on the pretext of protecting foreign lives and property. One British government after another gave the most solemn assurances that Egypt would not be annexed or permanently occupied and that the troops would be withdrawn as soon as order had been restored. Those hypocritical pledges were made in order to deceive the Egyptian masses, until Egypt was openly declared a British Protectorate in December 1914. The revolt of the Egyptian masses in 1919 was crushed by British and Egyptian warships. In 1922, the Government attempted to conciliate the propertied classes by recognising Egypt as an "independent sovereign State", but with certain important reservations which reduced the so-called independence to a mere farce. They proposed that these conditions should be embodied in a new constitution. This constitution was then specially called into being in 1923.

But the Egyptian Parliament, representing mainly the propertied classes, refused to accept the Treaty which seriously curtailed their power to exploit the Egyptian masses. One government after another was set up in order to give the sanction to the Treaty, and all these governments, until in April 1930, when the Cabinet of Nahas Pasha and his colleagues in the Wafd Cabinet, returned by an overwhelming majority secured under the existing electoral law, went to London to conduct negotiations so as to obtain from the Labour Government the maximum concessions of British imperialism.

The nationalist leaders of the bourgeois Wafd Party, mostly capitalists, landowners and lawyers, have placed themselves at the head of the anti-imperialist struggle of the masses in order to exploit it in their own interests and to prevent it from taking a really revolutionary course. They have attempted to convert the movement of the masses into a constitutional struggle against the absolutism of the feudal monarch and for the protection of the rights of the Egyptian Parliament, in order to prevent it from becoming a direct and open struggle between the masses and British imperialism, because this would overthrow the interests of the landlords and landowners. The Wafd Cabinet of Nahas Pasha, which had nearly signed the Treaty, demanded by Great Britain and legalising the British imperialist exploitation of Egypt, declined
to do so at the eleventh hour under the pressure of the rank and file of the Party and in view of the growing revolutionary discontent of the broad masses of the peasants and workers, stimulated and encouraged by the revolt of the Indian masses. The Wafd leaders pretend to have taken up the struggle in the name of the people, while at the same time their agents are negotiating in London and they themselves are diverting the attention of the masses from the real issue, namely, the overthrow of British imperialism, by concentrating on the defence of the Constitution, i.e., on the attainment by the property classes of full control over the machinery of the State and of Parliament in order to share more fully with British imperialism the profits of the exploitation of the toiling masses.

In spite of the pacifist manoeuvres of the Wafd leaders, the masses have given expression to their militancy in the mass demonstrations, bârricade fighting and bloody conflicts with the armed police and military force of imperialism that have taken place during the last few weeks in the streets of Mansura and Bilbeis, of Alexandria and Cairo, of Suez and Port Said. During these conflicts, hundreds have been killed or maimed for life, thousands injured, thousands arrested. The country has been placed under a regime of military terror. Every printed expression of anti-imperialist revolt has been suppressed. The new system of censorship of the press and of assembly has been abolished. The country is under a Fascist dictatorship which receives the praise and the support of the Imperialists and Social Fascists of Great Britain.

In the suppression of the anti-imperialist revolt of the Egyptian people, the Labour Government is playing the same dastardly role as it has been playing in India and in Palestine. It has sent warships to Alexandria while making a hypocritical declaration of neutrality and has given military and moral support to its feudal vassals in Egypt to prevent the further development of the revolutionary movement and to protect the interests of British imperialism. At the same time the Labour Government has been continuing its negotiations with the Wafd Leaders in whom it rightly sees the men that will finally and inevitably make the desired compromise with British imperialism.

The League Against Imperialism, while giving its wholehearted support to the Egyptian masses in their struggle for national independence and social freedom, deems it necessary to warn them against the treacherous tactics of the Wafd leaders, which are similar to those of the Indian National Congress and which must be clearly exposed to the masses of workers and peasants, as well as to the students and urban poor that constitute the rank and file of the Wafd Party and among whom there are sincere anti-imperialist elements. The League wishes to make it clear to them that the conflict can only be improved by carrying on an uncompromising struggle for the complete overthrow of imperialism and its feudal and capitalist agents among the Egyptians, and for the establishment of national independence. This struggle cannot be carried on under the domination of leaders whose interests demand a compromise with imperialism, but only with a clear programme that corresponds to the real economic and political interests of the broad masses.

The League Against Imperialism calls upon all truly anti-imperialist elements in Egypt to unite their forces and bring into the struggle anti-imperialist organisations that shall coordinate the struggle for Egyptian independence in Egypt itself with all the anti-imperialist forces of the world and thereby ensure the complete victory of the Egyptian masses.

IN THE CAMP OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

The I.L.P. Hypocrites and India.

By V. Ch.

In the colonial countries it is generally believed that the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain is a genuinely anti-imperialist organisation, that its principal leaders, Maxton, Fenner Brockway etc., are "rebels" who are in revolt against the imperialism of the Labour Government, and that these "rebels" may be relied upon to take up the fight on behalf of the independence of the colonial peoples. These illusions have been systematically created in the colonies by the radical phraseology adopted by the I.L.P., which has now assumed the role that the Labour Party used to play in the old days when Ramsey MacDonald denounced British imperialist exploitation in India in a book the entry of which into India he himself as Prime Minister forbade in 1924. There are some left-wing Indian National Congress leaders, all the Indian National Congress leaders trust the I.L.P., there is an important Indian statesman (now leading the resistance against the imperialist treaty imposed by MacDonald in Iraq), who is a member of the British I.L.P., and the Wafd leaders of Egypt find in the British Labour Party the best of all possibilities between themselves and the imperialist Government.

It is hardly worth while to try and expose these "left wing" colonial nationalists the real role of the I.L.P. in the maintenance of the British Empire. For imperialism and bourgeois nationalism have to come to a compromise after a few preliminary skirmishes, and it is these "left wing" parties on both sides that are working to bring about the agreement for the joint control and exploitation of the masses and the suppression of the revolutionary movement.

But to the workers both of Great Britain and of the colonial countries under British imperialism exploitation the treacherous tactics of the I.L.P. must be mercilessly exposed. There is not a single colonial question—whether China or India, the Beja in Eritrea or Palestine—given to the I.L.P. without its support to the imperialism of the Labour Government, as can be proved by the speeches and writings of leading I.L.P. politicians.

To begin with, let us consider their attitude towards that lying imperialist document, the Simon Commission's Report. On June 13th, Fenner Brockway wrote in the "New Leader" (Vol. I. of the Simon Report), "Even though I have not yet had the opportunity to read it, I am inclined to support the report as a whole in the hope that it will contribute to the solution of the Palestine question."

This imperialist propaganda is repeated with still greater vehemence by H. W. Nevinson in a review of Vo. II of the Simon Report. He quotes the Government figures intended to show the enormous diversity of races, religions, castes, languages, and interests in India, and goes on to say that the idea that there are just one or two "facts" to start with is completely wrong. He should read Vol. I. of the Report. If he neither knows nor reads, let him hold his peace! So the ultimate authority with regard to India is the Simon Report! So far, the I.L.P. leaders are in perfect agreement with the imperialist parties.

Where they apparently, but only apparently, differ is with regard to the immediate tactics to be followed. In concluding the article already quoted, Brockway writes: "I propose to conclude with a series of concrete proposals which I am confident would prevent the threatening disaster in India", and among the seven proposals he makes the principal one is that the Round Table Conference "should be asked to prepare a Constitution automatically advancing to complete self-government, to define the transitional period from the present to the new regime" etc. He wishes to give India the right of secession after that period, but in making this generous offer he is clearly in common with the Labour Government of the Empire. This is shown by the address he delivered on India at the I.L.P. Summer School on August 5th (reported in the "New Leader" of August 8th) in which he said that, if the above-mentioned proposals were accepted, "not only would Congress join the Conference, but India would most likely remain within the Empire".

These words indicate clearly how anxious Brockway & Co. are to maintain the Empire, and that they are speaking of the right of secession in order to prevent India from seceding! This is the typical hypocrisy of the I.L.P.

Another interesting piece of hypocrisy is revealed in the way in which the phrases "independence", full self-government and "Dominion Status" are used by the I.L.P. At the 6th Annual Conference of the I.L.P. Guild of Youth held at