

SOCIALIST REVIEW

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW, BUT INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

FORTNIGHTLY
for the
Industrial Militant —
for
International
Socialism

8th YEAR No 21

MID-NOVEMBER 1958

SIXPENCE

STAND BY THE STEWARDS

UNEMPLOYMENT is mounting. It is now 200,000 more than a year ago. The number of jobs on offer at the Labour Exchanges is falling—by 100,000 since that time. An employers' paradise seems within grasp: today, three men per job offered, soon—in January or February according to the Tory Chancellor—four or five men per job.

What a time for the employers! A time to pick and choose at the factory gates (or is it at the pub over the way?), to take on or put off workers like a pair of gloves. Business might be bad, profits sagging, but not for many years has it been so opportune to direct a blow at trade-unionism and the British working-class.

DOCKS

page 2

APPRENTICES

page 3

SOCIALIST ROLE

pages 4-5

Sure enough, the blows have begun to fall. This summer, the Tories succeeded in imposing a wage creep. Alone, betrayed by the TUC, deserted by their brothers on the tubes, and with little but their fighting spirit to help them, London's busmen could do no more than prevent a complete halt to the wage queue. That they did so was itself a magnificent achievement. At the same time the dockers' splendid solidarity could not extract one penny for the Smithfield men.

The second Cohen Report records the results with satisfaction: *In the first half of this year, nearly 4.1 million workers had been given increases, which added nearly £1.2 million to the weekly wage bill. This works out at a weekly wage-rate increase per worker of 5s. 8d. In the first half of last year, just over 9.4 million workers were given wage increases, adding about £3.8 million to the weekly wage: 8s. 1d. per worker.*

But that was not enough. Victory was not as clear-cut as the bosses would have liked. The opposition was too strong, the cost too high. **To get any further, they need to dig at the roots of working-class power, the basic organization on shop-floor and site—the shop-stewards' committees.**

This is where Southbank and London Airport came in. 1,250 men were sacked by McAlpines in order to weed out 36 stewards. 4,000 were forced on strike at BOAC because, in the words of Mr. Smallpiece, managing director, "we had reached the point of decision as to whether it was the shop stewards or the board of management who were running the corporation". Soon it might be the docks, even the mines—no section of workers can consider itself safe. Their shop, site or garage organizations are the target this winter.

The employers have to work quickly to get any lasting results. Unemployment, and with it, the pressures on working-class organization are growing now, but promise to ease this coming spring. They can't be sure of so favourable a situation for very long. If they can use it to disarm the class by smashing the stewards, they will have achieved something that will outlast the winter and take months of rising unemployment to repair.

The employers have allies, unfortunately. The Jim Matthews who find a communist conspiracy in every independent working-class action and who cross the class lines to denounce it; the Cousins who

promise to "take action" against a lock-out and whose actions help no one but the bosses; the right-wing leaders of the AUBTW who expel first-rate militants like Brian Behan for no other reason than their defence of elementary trade-union principles; the CP controllers of the ETU and the London district AUBTW who sent their members—heart-broken—across a picket line they had themselves recognized because they see a Trotskyist threat in every picket's badge.

The employers need lose no sleep over such officialdom. It has no teeth except to bite the hands that feed it. They need fear one thing, and one thing only—a strong, firmly supported shop-stewards' movement. A working-class movement rooted in every shop and site, at every place of work, whose very existence means struggle.

Such a movement, linking busmen with tubemen, could have beaten the Tories this summer. It could have bust McAlpines by tying up all his sites. Where and when it exists it is a mighty force. It alone can fight the employers to a standstill.

Such a movement cannot be culled from thin air. Declarations are not enough. Workers must be convinced that it is needed, convinced through their own struggles and through assimilating the experience of their fellows.

In this the militant socialist can play a part. He can bring the lessons of all workers to the single shop, bring the lessons of the shop to all workers. British history is alive with the tradition of shop-stewards' movements; it is our duty to help make them real today.

Building militant, Eric Heffer writes in defence of the Newsletter's right to meet

I AM WRITING this article in a blazing mood. It's bad enough having to fight continually the employers, but when our own "leaders" do the employers' job for them, that's even worse. I refer to the recent decision of the EC of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers to ban its members from attending or participating in the proposed conference of trade unionists to be called by our contemporary, the Newsletter.

One law for all

Although I often read the Newsletter, I do not support those who produce it. But I support their right, and anyone else's right to organize conferences of trade unionists if they so desire. Let me be frank, if one paper, or a group, is banned, then why doesn't the ban apply to all? Why, for instance, aren't the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists banned (Bill Carron and Sir Tom O'Brien know about this organization) or the Conservative Trade Unionists and many many others?

Surely all trade unionists have the right to sell what paper they like to their fellow trade unionists, and if they think the paper has good points, to attend any conferences arranged by it to explain their opinions.

I put this question to Harry Weaver, Bill Stuart and others on the AUBTW Executive Council. What would you have said if the conferences at which you were present, namely those organized by the New Builders' Leader, was barred? Do you not in fact owe your jobs to your "unofficial" activities? What about all the caucus meetings you attended where policy was carried out, and nominations put forward?

I am not suggesting that the Newsletter conference is similar to the beginnings of the old Minority Movement, but the facts are that hundreds of recent leading trade union officials were involved in that movement, one of these being the late George Hicks, a rather prominent figure in the AUBTW. It is also on record that when the Minority Movement was formed, one union, the

(turn to back page)

INDUSTRIAL

PORTICUS says

FIGHT THE SACK!

SURELY the most outstanding feature of society in this country today is its blatant hypocrisy. Throughout the length and breadth of the land this attitude is engendered by all sections of the Press, whilst the general public is either unwilling or too weak to expose it, with the result that the present Government has almost everybody eating out of its hand, despite the fact that its policies are designed solely to hand the initiative in all matters, industrial or otherwise, to the privileged few.

The labels stick

Look at the celebrations in relation to the Hungarian uprising of two years ago. Every newspaper carried the story, emphasizing most pointedly, that this revolt was an endeavour, on the part of the workers, to obtain political freedom, which among other things, included the right to strike, and they were most emphatic in their support of the action, expressing a very deep

Unemployment

THE October unemployment figure of 513,842 included 21,577 who had been unemployed for more than eight weeks. This was 46.9 per cent of the wholly unemployed. Some 451,000 were wholly unemployed and 63,000 temporarily stopped. Between September 15 and October 13 unemployment rose by 38,000, the wholly unemployed rising by 35,000, and the temporarily stopped by 3,000.

The increases during the month were largest in the London and South-Eastern region (8,121) and in Scotland (6,013). In the Eastern and Southern region the increase was 4,751 and in the South-Western region 4,553. The increases were less than 1,000 in the Midland and North Midland regions.

In both Scotland and Wales the percentage of unemployment is now just over 4, and in the north-western region it is 3.2, while in Northern Ireland, where there was a small improvement, it is 8. The average for Great Britain was 2.3.

The number in civil employment fell during September by 39,000 to 23,100,000.

The number of unfilled vacancies notified to exchanges declined by 12,000 to 167,000 and the number of operatives on short time in manufacturing industries rose by 10,000 to 170,000.

sorrow that the attempt was unsuccessful. This, of course, was exactly the attitude that any right-thinking person should have adopted, but just look at the situation at home.

Here, the newspapers go into reverse. When the busmen stopped work because of the procrastination and dilatoriness of the LTE, they were holding the country to ransom, whilst the TUC, suspecting that the comfortable position they enjoy, might become slightly ruffled if they acted naturally and gave support to the busmen, completely denied them, lining up with the Government in their desire to contain the strike to the buses alone and thereby to defeat them by allowing the tubes and petrol men to continue in operation.

Much was made of the principals behind the Hungarian revolt, but when the dockers in the Cold Stores and, in consequence, Tooley Street, stopped on a point of principal, the Press immediately condemned them out of hand. They were Communists, they said, just trying to disrupt the economy. Unfortunately, these labels stick, despite the fact that one national newspaper was forced to retract such a statement through the medium of its own columns.

Official indifference

When Senator McCarthy was riding the crest of the wave in America, the despicable and disgusting witch-hunts that he raised were condemned out of hand by every newspaper in this country, but today things are different. The militant trade unionist, conscious of the need to be ever watchful of the snares of Government-sponsored employers and tired of the complete indifference on the part of most of his officials, is pushed into the lead when action becomes necessary, only to become the target of the newspapers in their McCarthyite campaign. The result is that he finds himself cautioned or even expelled by the trade union leaders he pays to look after his interests.

St. Olave's wharf

The employer too, is not to be outdone in this situation, for if it is not possible to get rid of the militant by expulsion from his Union, he tries another way, the sack. And nowhere is this more apparent than in the docks as revealed by the position at St. Olave's Wharf, London.

At this wharf, one of the Hays Wharf Group, a gang of nineteen men are engaged on a regular basis for work in one particular section, and being hardworking industrious men have managed to effect reasonable rates of payment for the commodities they handle. But the men are also good trade unionists capable of taking resolute action if the occasion arises. Militant though they are, they are also completely orthodox in

their conduct of disputes, which is a trifle embarrassing to an employer who wishes to score off them.

Accordingly, he looks around for some excuse, and hearing that the men in Java Wharf have accepted a cut in payment for certain work, endeavours to try the same thing himself. He calls the men in and tells them that they are to be returned to the pool, but upon hearing that by so doing he will never get another regular force in their place, tries to compromise, by suggesting that he keeps nine and sacks ten. This also proves unacceptable to the men concerned, for as we have already explained, these nineteen men have principals.

Cut the farthing

Now the employer comes into the open. He tells the men that they cashed in when cheese was being worked, now he intends to cash in whilst the labour position is unfavourable to the worker. These men are getting a farthing a ton more on certain commodities than elsewhere and it has got to be cut back. The men, however, refuse to accept this position and the official has been called in to deal with it. The latest information is that the matter has been held over, the poor employer's statements were "misconstrued."

Witchhunt on

Be that as it may, the "witch-hunt" in the Docks is on. The union officials, conscious of the necessity to perpetuate the present system if they are to continue to enjoy their present inviolable position, are determined to seek out and crucify all men of militant mien, and as explained in the last issue of the SOCIALIST REVIEW, may take the opportunity offered by a reduction in the National Dock Labour Board's register as the means to rid themselves of the more ardent trade unionists.

In the light of this, it is essential for every man engaged in the Dock industry, to resist to the utmost any attempt by either the Union, the National Dock Labour Board or the employer to get rid of any man, irrespective of whom it may be.

How many people know that the unemployment and sickness benefits for a man in 1958 form a much smaller percentage of the average wage than they did in 1938, or indeed in 1912? Full employment, and not social insurance, has been responsible for the reduction in poverty since the war.

P. Townsend in *New Statesman*, October 18, 1958.

Furniture Trades

Liverpool, 21.10.55.

DURING the last few years of credit restriction, few industries, if any, have been hit as hard as the furnishing industry. Shut-downs, firms going bankrupt, sackings and widespread short-time working have been all too common a lot for the workers in the industry.

Under such harrowing conditions, the weapons of the organized workers to defend their living standards and rights (strikes, overtime bans, etc.) have, as one would expect, been put into use by the rank and file of the National Union of Furnishing Trades Operatives. With what results? Here is a brief report on that Union's National Executive Council in relation to two disputes that arose.

Following the settlement of the Apex Bedding Co dispute, a settlement negotiated by full-time union officials, sixty-one workers lost their jobs, including the shop stewards and the local part-time officials of the Manchester mattress-workers' branch. These workers, in justified resentment towards this top-executive agreement, produced a pamphlet condemning it and the action of the union officials over the four months leading up to it. But this apparently did not concern the General Secretary. What did concern him was that he received a call from a Liverpool man asking that his firm be given permission to work over-time—the local branch had refused to give this firm permission. Being a generous man, he wrote to the Secretary of the Employers' Federation giving all firms permission to work over-time if they wished. He then informed the Liverpool secretary (part-time) that he, the General Secretary, had lifted the ban as it wasn't in order.

But to date he hasn't been able to find a union rule which says that the ban on over-time wasn't valid. Is it any wonder that frustration and bewilderment is prevalent among large numbers in this industry?

SHELLAC

SOCIALIST REVIEW SUBSCRIPTION FORM

I enclose ^{16s.} _{8s.} _{4s.} subscription for ^{1 year's} _{6 months'} _{3 months'} issue of

SOCIALIST REVIEW.

Name.....

Address.....

Send to M Maddison
21 Aubert Park, London, N5

London Transport Apprentice, PERCY GARRETT exposes the modern RAW DEAL

Little is known of the conditions that prevail today for the apprentice. It is generally thought that we "never had it so good" since the indenture fee was lowered from £50 to £5 in the past 20 years, and with that the question is dismissed and given little or no publicity. However, if the question is examined a little more thoroughly, it will be found that the apprentice's job is no bed of roses.

There are three hundred or more apprentices employed by London Transport Underground. They are split up in groups of two or three and work in various signal stations, power stations and railway sheds. Their continual travelling from department to department causes certain difficulties.

Unlike any other staff, the apprentice receives no travelling allowance when his work involves extra hours travelling. This is not the only financial loss he sustains. He works on a bonus system, but receives no bonus for the day he spends at school (all London Transport apprentices spend one day a week at a training centre) and therefore loses approximately 7s. 6d. a week.

As many as 2½ million households in this country (17 per cent of the total) have no piped water, well over three million no water closet (23 per cent), and 6½ million no fixed bath (45 per cent).

The wage for an apprentice in one department may be less than that of another apprentice doing the same job in a different department, a variation of perhaps as much as 25s. The wage is so low as to deter most parents from indenturing their sons to the trade, and even should they wish to do so, it is likely that they would encounter some difficulty, unless Uncle Charlie works on the Board.

In some departments the work the apprentice is given is that of a mate, but where a mate would earn about £9 15s. on the job, the apprentice earns £5 10s. This use of the apprentice not only

exploits him financially but also hinders him in his training. As it is, the London Transport apprentice is given very little training with tools before he is sent round with a fitter, and what training he is given is concerned, not with the wider aspects of electrical work, but with the specialized equipment of London Transport. Nor is he stationed in a job where he will learn most, but in the job in which he will be most useful. Finishing an apprenticeship with London Transport, he usually has no choice but to take a job with London Transport.

No ropes

All the departments for which the apprentice works are reluctant to take the responsibility for his personal conditions: little attempt is made to show him the ropes—sometimes he is not even made aware of the dangers and safety regulations of a department (a serious default in railway work). Often there is no fixed arrangement for supplying overalls (staff are provided with two pairs of overalls a year) and he has difficulty in obtaining them because he doesn't know which department is supposed to supply him.

Organize the lads

The apprentice is aware of these things, but alone he is unable to do anything about them, and he rarely has a chance to talk to his companions. Clearly an organization for apprentices is needed if his conditions are to be improved. They should meet often to discuss their conditions and what they can do about them. The question that must have priority, of course, is that of training and experience in tools. The apprentices should write a letter to the Joint Stewards Committee, asking them to approach the union to do something about the position; either confine the apprentices to work which will be of use to them, or give him the wage the mate would earn—both!

BUILD THE SOCIALIST REVIEW!

Please send a free trial copy of SOCIALIST REVIEW to the following:

Name.....

Address.....

Name.....

Address.....

Name.....

Address.....

Send to SOCIALIST REVIEW,
M Maddison, 21 Aubert Park, N5

STEEL PRODUCTION SAGS				(Per cent change on year earlier)		1957
			1st qtr.	Apr./May	Output*	
U.K.	...	...	-1	-10	22.0
West Germany	...	...	+4	-6	24.5
France	...	...	+9	+9	14.1
Benelux	...	...	-3	-7	11.0
Italy	...	...	-0	-3	6.8
U.S.A.	...	...	-40	-40	102.3
Canada	...	...	-13	-11	4.6

* m. metric tons
Treasury Bulletin for Industry, September, 1958.

Martin Brennan, Southbank steward draws

THE LOCKOUT'S LESSONS

At time of going to press the struggle on the South Bank site is still in progress. During this struggle we have learned a great deal about the difficulties of the workers—the victimization by the employers of the militant trade unionist, of the role of the Tory Government and the so-called democratic press, of the brutality of the police and their infringement of the workers' freedom to picket peacefully, and of the top-heavy machinery of the trade union movement which refused to support the workers on the job who would not work with non-unionists.

But despite the difficulties the struggle continues. The so called re-phasing is over and some 120 brothers, on the advice of their unions, have gone back to work with non-union labour, while none of the shop stewards or members of the Works Committee are able to secure employment on the site. ETU members who returned to work on Friday, 17th, demanded the reinstatement of all the shop stewards, when this was refused they withdrew their labour (on Monday, 20th) and are still out. Only the solidarity of all the workers can beat McAlpine.

COAL PILES UP

by Martin Jones

COAL consumption in Britain in 1956 was 218 million tons; in 1957 it was five million tons less; and in 1958 it is expected to be a further eight million tons lower than in 1957 (*Economist*, October, 4, 1958). At the same time the demand for British coal abroad has also declined—from some 10 million tons in 1956 to probably less than five million tons at present. Altogether over two years, therefore, the total demand for British coal has declined by about 18 million tons.

As a result, unsold stocks have increased, to a present level of about 15 million tons. This is expected to increase to 20-25 million tons next year, even taking into account eight months with no Saturday working this year, the whole of next year also without it, and the accelerated closing down of unprofitable mines.

Cut mining force

As against the decline in the demand for coal, the National Coal Board is committed to an investment program aimed at producing 240 million tons in 1965. "This program provided for the closing of some 250-300 mines between 1955 and 1970, and the board has already accelerated the planned rate of closing (from 19 small pits this year to 34). It also reckoned on a decline in the labour force to (a national) 682,000 miners, and the board has already brought its numbers on colliery books down to only 10,000 above that." (*Ibid.*)

Thus the trend towards cutting down the mining force continues apace. From 1,267,000 miners in 1923, the number declined to 858,000 in 1938 and to 692,000 at present.

There are two main causes for the decline in the demand for coal: one, the stagnation and now decline of industrial production generally; two, the competition from oil.

How long the general economic decline is to continue is not clear. Probably the upward turn in the US economy, brought about largely by Government spending on defence and housing, as well as a cheap credit policy, will affect Britain after some months.

Full nationalization

However, one lesson the piles of unsold coal has taught: **if a small economic recession can cause such a disturbance in the mining industry, what havoc would be brought about by a really deep and prolonged slump!**

Without co-ordination of all fuel resources—coal, oil, etc.—there can be no stability in mining, and no security for the miners.

Piecemeal nationalization of industry—like the nationalization of the mines in 1947—does not protect the economy as a whole, not even its nationalized sector—from overproduction, slump, unemployment. No. What is necessary is a generally planned economy based on the socialization of the major portion of industry.

Finally, without workers' control of the nationalized industries, the workers will continue to be subordinated to the profit motive and have to suffer the hardships of capitalism. State ownership without workers' control is nothing but state capitalism. Only workers' control can guarantee that industrial work is for the benefit of the people engaged in it.

FORUM

Not all our readers will agree with Robert Emmett, some will disagree violently. His views, however, are important in raising for the first time—in our pages, at least—the fundamental problems of the relationship between socialists and the Labour Movement. This is a sadly neglected problem. Many, weighed down with trade-union chores, find it irrelevant; others, loaded with an undigested tradition, try to impose a rigid theory on history, to the discomfort of both theory and history. Robert Emmett does not presume to know the whole truth; nor do we. We should like to learn more and present the following as a contribution to discussion, hoping that however hard-hitting the discussion might be, it will be fruitful. Readers are invited to take part in the exchange of opinions—Editor.

Socialists and the Labour Movement — a discussion opened by Robert Emmett

A CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE of the various "Left-wing" movements and groups that have, during the past thirty years, sprouted on the fringe of the Labour Party, has been their non-proletarian character and composition, and their consequent isolation from the decisive sections of industrial workers employed in the basic industries and organized in the important trade unions throughout the country.

From the emergence of a group of "dis-affiliated" labour parties in 1924, through to the "Socialist League" of the '30's, to the late-lamented "Bevanite" movement, right up to the latest "Victory for Socialism" and "Nuclear Disarmament" groupings, this characteristic has held good.

The theoretical bases of these movements have been non-existent, or, at best, half-baked. Their leaders have sprung from "intellectual" circles—layers like Cripps and Pritt, lesser legal fry like Platts-Mills, astute businessmen like Gollancz, and professionals like Zilliacus, have all played their little parts and departed from the stage.

Occasionally a holy man from the Church has intoned a benediction on the Left. Now and then, even a real live MP would appear on the scene, but, alas, the "Hon. Member" would usually represent some hot-bed of class warfare—like West Thurrock—or Nether Wallop—and the fabric of capitalism would remain undisturbed.

A somewhat ironical—if logical—fruit of this type of "socialist" activity is that, until this day, there are more "Left-wingers" to the acre in places like Hampstead Garden Suburb, Welwyn Garden City, and Bloomsbury than are ever to be found in Poplar, Bermondsey, or Holloway.

• National minority

ONLY THE COMMUNISTS among the political groupings succeeded to some extent in penetrating certain sections of the trade union movement. The organization of the "National Minority Movement" in 1924 gave a surface appearance of some considerable strength, but this was merely a front for King Street and was subject to all the political winds that blew down the corridors of the Kremlin. In fact, the so-called "movement" consisted largely of an annual propaganda conference, which got progressively smaller and finally petered out in 1929, as did the two "revolutionary" unions thrown up among Scottish mineworkers and London clothing workers.

Indeed, in noting the relative success of the Communists on the industrial field com-

pared with the more amorphous Left-wing groupings, it must be said that the "Communist threat" to industry, which has served the Press so well over the past thirty years, exists largely in the fevered imagination of Fleet Street scribes to whom a good "red plot" was always worth a by-line.

In point of fact, the membership of the Communist Party, up to the outbreak of war, never exceeded 7,000. At a London District Communist Congress held in 1933, more than 60 per cent of the actual delegates were not even members of trade unions. At the National CP Congress held at Manchester in 1935, "fraternal" delegates from the Comintern poured scorn on the social composition of the Party—the bulk of whom were black-coated non-unionists.

It is true that, during the immediate post-war years, the CP marked up its membership register to the 50,000 mark—but this was a pure fiddle. Eighty per cent of such "membership" consisted of names on a list of persons who paid a shilling a month to door-to-door collectors and never participated in Party branch meetings or any form of political activity. Such members believed in communism about as much as the person who buys a bottle of milk in the co-op store believes in the co-operative commonwealth.

Top hat posts

Of more apparent significance than paper membership was the degree to which the CP succeeded in winning a whole series of top posts within a number of trade unions—particularly the miners, engineers, and electricians. Here again it is necessary to understand the precise conditions under which this was achieved—and the political price that was paid for the trade union posts.

As a result of the war, which, among other political changes, brought about the liquidation of the Comintern, the CP found itself largely freed from the rigid control from Moscow that had hitherto been exercised. The immediate effect was to bring the latent opportunism of the King Street leadership into full flower. The Party "line" was toned down and rendered flexible enough to be adapted to meet the needs of any given individual or organization that was being "wooded."

Neither the inmates of Transport House, the Tory M.P.s, or even the big capitalists were to feel threatened by the very peculiar "British" Road to Socialism produced by King Street, without reference to the membership, as a "Party Program."

Just how flagrantly opportunist the CP leaders became at this period may be gauged

from a document compiled and circulated by Ted Bramley, then Secretary of the London CP, which proposed that, in the event of the Labour Party winning the 1945 election, Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden should be invited to serve in the Cabinet. Precisely what sort of a "road" this opened up to "socialism" was underlined by CP support for conscription, the arms program, and a guarantee of "fair compensation" to the owners of any capitalist industry that might be nationalized. It is interesting to reflect that most of the new "revolutionary" socialists, of whom I shall speak later, were at that time members of the CP and, apparently, quite willing to swallow this choice brand of "socialism."

Another bunch of officials

In the immediate post-war years, as the realities of the "Welfare State" began to express themselves concretely in terms of rising prices, wage-restraint, and systematic overtime, the opportunism of the CP leaders, particularly in their newly-won trade union posts, reached even new heights.

It became a common spectacle for Arthur Horner, secretary of the Miners' Union and Executive Member of the CP, to trundle around the country urging miners to accept systematic overtime as a permanent feature of their work, and harangue strikers, urging them to return to work. Claude Berridge and Joe Scott, both AEU officials and top CP-ers, did the same job at Fords, Briggs, and other engineering strikes.

Just how far this opportunism went was well expressed by a member of the CP Executive, who, after a particularly flagrant decision to call off a strike, plaintively remarked: "I thought it was the job of the Party to lay down policy for the Executive of the AEU, but I find the AEU Executive laying down policy for the Party."

In this field, however, the King Street leaders over-reached themselves. As the CP members at factory and job level began to find that their CP comrades in the top jobs of their unions, were just another bunch of trade union officials, differing hardly at all from the official Transport House variety, disillusion spread rapidly and the CP began to lose the only real base it ever had—in the factories, and particularly among the shop stewards.

This process of break-up below was the inevitable outcome of the rampant opportunism at the top. The CP was already far gone in decline at factory level before the Hungarian events virtually liquidated it as a political force.

Read INTERNATIONAL

• The new groups

SINCE THE HUNGARIAN EVENTS some thousands of CP-ers have streamed out of the Party and the period has been marked by the mushroom-like appearance of the most extraordinary splinter groupings.

Anti-Stalinists, Pro-Trotskyists, International Socialists, University Lefts, all fly their brand new colours. **New Reasoners, Newsletters, Socialist Reviews, Left Reviews**—all rushed into print to assure the long-suffering proletariat that their's was the only virgin-pure brand of socialism, the theme song being "when other 'isms have been forgot—ours will still be hot." One can only conclude that, if the variety of policies, programs, publications and theories are an indication of political health, then socialism is certainly looking up.

Most vociferous of these groupings in recent months have been the adherents of the **Newsletter**—or, what is becoming somewhat cynically known as the "Clapham Contingent." This group is mainly composed of ex-CP-ers and ex-**Daily Worker** scribes who have shown a most remarkable facility in changing, chameleon-like, from Stalin worshippers to Stalin-haters, almost overnight.

Yet, old habits die hard, and, while the **Newsletter** each week breathes fire and slaughter against King Street, its adherents, in practice, are committing in 1958 all the cardinal errors of the CP since 1928.

On the broad political issues, the CP was famed for its habit of overnight somersaulting. In recent months we have witnessed the **Newsletter** carrying articles by the Editor and editorials calling FOR and AGAINST summit talks in almost consecutive editions.

Slogans galore

But, I am concerned here mainly with the question of socialist activities in the factories and trade unions, and, in particular, in respect of industrial disputes. It is in this field that the **Newsletter** adherents have been conducting campaigns which, in my view, are dangerously harmful to the working-class and a positive dis-service to socialism.

In a series of strikes in London we have witnessed this group attempt to gatecrash into the strike leadership with a degree of crudity and irresponsibility that is appalling. Always the battle-cry has been the same: "We need a new policy—a new leadership—and a rank and file movement—to hell with the trade union officials." To hear these people talk one would imagine that no one had ever before thought of a "rank and file movement"—and that new policies grew on the trees in the local parks.

With a big mouthful of slogans and not much else, the **Newsletter** have descended in turn upon the London busmen, dockers, meat porters, and building workers. Alleged "strike bulletins" have been churned out that expose clearly to any student that their architects know nothing of the industry and unions involved, and, in fact, haven't the faintest idea what they are talking about.

Just how unbalanced their views are, and how much reliance may be placed upon their political judgment, is clearly shown in their estimates of the results of two of these recent disputes.

In the case of the London bus strike, where the **Newsletter** was not able to make any impact at all upon the strikers, the estimate of the strike was that the busmen suffered an unqualified defeat. This defeat arose because the strike was official—and therefore conducted under the control of union officials. It follows, as a matter of logical deduction, that all official strikes will be defeated, and that unofficial strikes will

always have a better chance of success.

This judgment ignores the fact that the strike was successful to an important degree in preventing the LTE and the Tory Government from splitting the ranks of the busmen and forcing payment of a 5/- increase to country busmen whom the Government had every intention of leaving out altogether.

Even more important, it ignores the political effect of the strike upon the whole Labour Movement. It ignores the great wave of solidarity evoked by the truly remarkable stand of the busmen. It ignores the fact that the General Council of the TUC was forced on the defensive and that the hard right-wing core on the General Council have been discredited.

Presumably, had the London bus strike been fought as an "unofficial" action the **Newsletter** would have been much better satisfied. Had this happened, a number of things would have been quite certain. Instead of a magnificently solid action for seven weeks, during which not a bus moved on the roads, only a portion of the men would have been on strike. Its duration would have been measured in days instead of weeks, and the men would have returned, frustrated, defeated, and fed up to the teeth with trades unionism.

SR BOOK SERVICE

35B Priory Terrace, London, NW

Is this the sort of action that the **Newsletter** wants? From their attitude to the South Bank building strike it would appear that is so. Here again the **Newsletter** gatecrashed the strike and, on this occasion, were able to exert very considerable influence over the conduct of the dispute.

The result—due in some measure to this influence—was a complete shambles. The strike—or lock-out—as it became, was broken in the worst possible way, by masses of trade unionists crossing the picket line. Every responsible shop steward is out on the stones and expulsions from the union are under way.

The **Newsletter** cannot have it both ways—it cannot claim some credit for the strike—and deny all responsibility for the outcome. They must accept a share of the blame alongside of the union officialdoms. Their very presence—as an outside body seeking to influence the conduct of a dispute—was a standing invitation for every tin-pot union official to alibi himself with talk about "outside interference." In short, the **Newsletter** helped to put a body of strikers in precisely the same untenable position that King Street itself had done on many earlier occasions. Again I repeat: the song has ended—but the melody lingers on. The "new" tactics of Clapham turn out to be merely the old tactics of King Street.

So much for the tactical application of the **Newsletter** line to current industrial disputes. What have they to offer in the larger field? They speak grandly of calling a "National Industrial Rank and File Conference," and (shades of King Street) the formation of "A National Minority Movement."

What is this "new policy" which the **Newsletter** has for the struggling trades unionist? So far it would appear that the speedy assassination of all top trade union officials is the only concrete proposition.

Above all, what are these "rank and file

FORUM

movements" that are advocated as a guaranteed "pep pill" to cure all trade union ills? Here, it seems that if a dozen dockers, busmen, meat porters, and building workers can be persuaded to get together, the new revolutionary movement will be well on its way and the walls of Transport House will begin to crumble.

What pitiful balderdash! Are these the actions of responsible "Marxists" and "Socialists"? Does anyone imagine that experienced and responsible shop stewards, whose whole life is one of continuous battle against employers will fall for such twaddle? These are the actions, not of responsible socialists, but of political adolescents who see the class struggle as an infantile game of cowboys and Indians.

• factory roots

NO TRULY SOCIALIST movement will ever be built in this country that is not rooted in the great industries, factories and trade unions. That is why this question of how the socialist works in this field is of such paramount importance—and that is why, as one who has spent his entire life working as a socialist among trade unionists, I find it difficult to speak with restraint about such antics as those of the **Newsletter**.

Every industrial dispute that takes place, large or small—brings to the surface a group of devoted trade union shop stewards whose courage, integrity and influence are plain for all to see.

These men hold the love and devotion of millions of trade unionists. These are the men of influence. These men are deep-rooted in the lives of the working class. These men are our incorruptible sons who, when they are won for socialism, will change the whole face of the British Labour Movement.

But these men will never be won by a mouthful of slogans and a bunch of bulletins, not even when they are penned by professional journalists and bear the authentic imprint of the classics.

Within—not without

The rank and file movements that must be built to unite the forces, clarify the ideas, and develop the socialist understanding of trade unionists must be built WITHIN—not OUTSIDE the trade union movement.

The rank and file movement is, in fact, nothing more nor less than the trade union branches, factory and shop steward organisations IN ACTION, both against employers and government on the one hand, and against the class-collaboration policies of the top union leaders on the other.

The job of the convinced socialist is, therefore, to work INSIDE—not OUTSIDE—the trade union branches. Absolutely NOTHING that cannot be done within the trade union branches will ever be achieved OUTSIDE. That is the great fundamental lesson to be learned from thirty years of history—and thirty years of mistakes.

This is a hard road—maybe a long one—most certainly a difficult one. Had the socialists, during the past thirty years, been taking that road—we would be much nearer our objective. If the ideas of the **Newsletter** prevail—we shall get no nearer during the next thirty years.

In the words of a South Bank shop steward—I say to the **Newsletter**—"For Christ sake turn it up, cock!"

SOCIALISM

16 post free from M Maddison, 21 Aubert Park, London, N5

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The SOCIALIST REVIEW stands for international Socialist democracy. Only the mass mobilisation of the working class in the industrial and political arena can lead to the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism.

The SOCIALIST REVIEW believes that a really consistent Labour Government must be brought to power on the basis of the following programme:

● The complete nationalisation of heavy industry, the banks, insurance and the land with compensation payments based on a means test. Renationalisation of all denationalised industries without compensation.—The nationalised industries to form an integral part of an overall economic plan and not to be used in the interests of private profit.

● Workers' control in all nationalised industries, i.e., a majority of workers' representatives on all national and area boards, subject to frequent election, immediate recall and receiving the average skilled wage ruling in the industry.

● The establishment of workers' committees to control all private enterprises within the framework of a planned economy. In all instances representatives must be subject to frequent election, immediate recall, and receive the average skilled wage in the industry.

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

● The establishment of the principle of work or full maintenance.

● The extension of the social services by the payment of adequate pensions, linked to a realistic cost-of-living index, the abolition of all payments for the National Health Service and the development of an industrial health service.

● The expansion of the housing programme by granting interest free loans to local authorities and the right to requisition privately held land.

● Free State education up to 18. Abolition of fee paying schools. For comprehensive schools and adequate maintenance grants—without a means test—for all university students.

● Opposition to all forms of racial discrimination. Equal rights and trade union protection to all workers whatever their country of origin. Freedom of migration for all workers to and from Britain.

● Freedom from political and economic oppression to all colonies. The offer of technical and economic assistance to the people of the underdeveloped countries.

● The unification of an independent Ireland.

● The abolition of conscription and the withdrawal of all British troops from overseas. The abolition of all weapons of mass destruction.

● A Socialist foreign policy independent of both Washington and Moscow.

INTERNATIONAL

From India's State of Kerala

A Communist-Capitalist Pact

It is nearly two years since the Communist Party were voted into power and formed the Government in the Indian State of Kerala. Socialists all the world over have watched the progress of the CP administration with interest: will it or won't it mean an end to the savage exploitation of workers and peasants in the State? We have watched and noted that the police have been used as brutally as before to break strikes, that imprisonment, injury and even death have been used by the CP administration against workers struggling for elementary rights (see "Class Struggle in Kerala," SR, March 1, 1958).

Now a document has come to our hands which should settle the matter once and for all in the minds of those socialists who still doubt. It is an agreement signed on May 3, this year, between the Kerala Government and the Rayon Silk Manufacturing Company owned by the Birla brothers, the biggest of India's big monopoly industrialists.

There is no need to elucidate the anti-trade union nature of the Agreement's main clauses which we reproduce below. All that needs be said is that they contravene the usual practice in documents of this nature in being essentially an agreement on labour-management relations and not a business agreement.

Finally, why make the agreement? Surely the CP knew that it would arouse a storm of protest amongst its own members, let alone working-class sympathizers throughout the country. Possibly they did, but they had to convince Indian big business of their pro-capitalist bona-fides. As the Indian Statesman's special correspondent in Kerala wrote recently, the CP government agreed to these conditions because, "without them no industrialist would venture his capital in a state where his interests are traditionally suspect." Such is the cost of industrialization in a single, backward country. And, of course, it is the workers who pay the bill.

There is another reason for the Communist-Capitalist pact. The Agreement makes the Central Government (rightly termed on other occasions a 'capitalist land-lord government' by the CP) responsible for arbitration between Kerala and the Birla brothers. And since what's good for Birla is good enough for Indian capitalism generally, the Kerala government hope, no doubt, that Birla's valuable testimonials will serve to get them better than the pariah treatment they are receiving at the moment at the hands of the Central Government. If the cost is worse treatment for Kerala's worker-peasant population, that is merely by the way.

The Communist Premier of Kerala could not have been more to the point when he asked the Statesman correspondent: "What has our Ministry done that a Congress or Praja Socialist Party could or should not have done?"

EDITOR

NOW IT IS HEREBY AGREED AND DECLARED AS FOLLOWS:—

1. That it is the right and responsibility of the Company to maintain discipline and efficiency in the plant, and to hire labourers and to discharge them for any cause which to the Company appears just, and to relieve labourers from duty on account of inefficiency or lack of work or other valid reasons subject only to the provisions contained in the Standing Orders of the Company consistent with the statutes in force.

2. That the introduction of time standards and selection, placing and distribution of personnel are the responsibilities of the Company, and that the right to plan, direct and control operations of the plant; to introduce new or improved production methods, to extend production facilities, and to establish production schedules and quality standards are solely and exclusively the rights and res-

ponsibilities of the Company. The right and responsibility of the Company to exercise these and other functions will, subject to statutes in force, be respected in every case.

3. That it is the right of the Company to make such rules and regulations, from time to time, for the purpose of maintaining discipline, order, safety or effective operation of the Company's work and to require compliance thereof by labourers.

4. That the Company shall:

- pay wages and dearness allowance in accordance with a wage schedule which will be prepared by the Company on the basis of a scientific job evaluation;
- adopt hours of work and overtime wages as may be stipulated in the Factories Act, subject to Clause 6 (b) hereof;
- provide termination benefits, leave, holidays and welfare amenities in accordance with rules to be framed by the Company and notified to employees; and
- ensure the settlement of grievances expeditiously and frame the procedure for handling such grievances.

5. That bonus will not be related to the Company's profits or earnings but where found necessary by the Company will only be related to and paid on efficiency and productivity, according to schemes which may be formulated by the Company from time to time.

6. (a) The Government covenants that the Company observing and performing the several functions and stipulations indicated herein shall peaceably hold and enjoy the

One man was killed and four others were injured when police fired on strikers on plantations in two places in Kerala today. Police opened fire when the strikers attacked them.

The workers are demanding increased bonuses.

Manchester Guardian, October 21.

premises, liberties and powers granted in pursuance of this Agreement or any other Agreement without any interruption by the Government or any person rightfully claiming to act for them. Government shall at all times endeavour to bring about cordial relationship between management and labour and in the case of any dispute, harassment of the management and/or any other illegal act resulting in interruption in production, take timely and positive steps to prevent such occurrences.

(b) The Government agree with the Company that it will be difficult for them to carry on their activities, if the conditions obtaining at the time of starting their work are materially altered, and new burdens imposed on them in subsequent years. They will, therefore, do their utmost to ensure that the laws, rules and regulations, relating to the Company's relations with labour, and taxes and levies on the Company, are so administered as not to materially alter the conditions under which the Company begins its operations.

7. If any dispute, question or difference shall arise between the parties hereto touching this deed or any clause or thing herein contained or the construction hereof of any matter in any way connected with this deed then and in every or any such case, the matter in difference shall be referred to the Secretary to the Government of India, in the Ministry in which the subject of "Industry" is dealt with at the time of the reference to Arbitration, and this deed shall be deemed to be a submission to arbitration within the meaning of the Arbitration Act, and all provisions of the Arbitration Act, 1940, the Rules thereunder and any statutory modification or re-enactment thereof shall apply to such arbitration. The decision of the Arbitrator will be final and binding on the parties.

JOHN PHILPOT CURRAN

a review by Eric Heffer

A FEW YEARS AGO, browsing in a Liverpool second-hand bookshop, I came across a copy of the speeches of the Irish lawyer, John Philpot Curran, which included a Memoir by Thomas Davies, also an Irish lawyer. Despite its faded condition, and the small print, I found the book completely absorbing. Curran as a character was obviously a fascinating study. My appetite to know more of the man was further whetted after reading John Brophy's *Sarah*, based as it was on the "romance" between Curran's daughter, Sarah, and the young Irish patriot Robert Emmett. Curran appeared a rather strange man, an unsympathetic character with a rather hard nature.

Now, at last, the man can be fully sized. Leslie Hale, MP, has provided us with a brilliantly written book, *John Philpot Curran—His Life and Times*, published by Jonathan Cape at 25s. In the book, Hale shows a fine sense of history, its full sweep magnificently developed.

Curran, with all his imperfections (and they were many) emerges as a Lion of a man, a true Irish patriot, a brilliant wit, and above all else a genuine democrat. To me, he seems a sort of Irish Clarence Darrow, but much more eloquent and certainly with a stronger use of invective. His life was one continuous struggle, no less fierce because of his position and affluence.

Deep understanding

He was born in 1750, when the White-Boys were riding, and died in 1817, just prior to their re-emergence. Ireland was in a period of agrarian revolution, a period of great tragedy. A brutal, bloody period, in which the rights of the common people were trampled in the dust. During Curran's life-time the great French Revolution spread its waves to Ireland, and most Irish patriots looked East for deliverance from British Imperial rule.

The book gives a real slice of Irish history. We are taken through the rise and fall of "Gratten's Parliament", the corrupt "Union" with England, the growth of the United Irishman, and the tragi-foolish fate of Robert Emmett. Many of the great Irish patriots become flesh and blood, real living characters. Wolfe Tone, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Napper Tandy, Orr, are all there, and Leslie Hale must be congratulated for his deep understanding of the period, and conveying it so clearly to the reader.

Curran and Emmett

The arrest and conviction of Robert Emmett touched Curran in a very personal way, as his daughter had some sort of liaison with Emmett. There were some who were clamouring to implicate Curran in the conspiracy. No doubt they would have been delighted to have seen him hang. Curran was forced to refuse to defend Emmett, and was furious

with the indiscretion of his daughter, who incidentally comes out very badly in the incident.

In an age of corruption (and how corrupt it was is brought out in the sordid business of how the majority was secured for the "Union"), here was an honest man. As a result, the highest "honours" were overlooked. His one Government post in later years was the "Master of the Rolls". Curran, who was born a Protestant, and remained one, was a great champion of Roman Catholic emancipation. In fact, he was more forthright in championing their cause than many Catholics. He was born of poor parents, and always had a deep love for the ordinary "common-herd". His cause was their cause. He took up the cudgels of Ireland against England, and the poor against the rich.

Create rights

What contribution did such a man make? He was not a revolutionary. Leslie Hale says that Curran was disappointed that he had not produced some lasting political results. His period had been one of failure for Ireland. This, I am sure, was a wrong assessment on the part of Curran. His work, in a deeper sense than he could know, is part of our heritage, part of our great democratic tradition. Curran in a way, possibly that he did not understand himself, has helped to create the rights and liberties which we have. He has helped us to carry forward the gains made.

A people's advocate

This book, for all students of Irish and British history, is a must. For we who are Socialists fighting for the ultimate freedom of man, it helps us to know on what a solid basis our work is placed. If we wish to know the minds and true nature of the die-hard Tory, his mental background is revealed in this book.

Curran was a great orator, none was greater, yet despite all his emotionalism, here was the logical, calculated mind, which in debate reduced many of his opponents to silence. He was at home both in the Law Court and in Parliament. In both places he made great use of his powers of mimicry, wit and pathos. Curran's friends and interests were most varied, including such people as William Godwin and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Had he lived today, possibly we would have seen him beside Leslie Hale, as Socialism would have been the logical conclusion to his ideas.

Karl Marx, writing to Frederick Engels on 10th December, 1869, said this: "You must get Curran's speeches . . . It is now circulating among the English members of the Central Council . . . I consider Curran the only great advocate — people's advocate — of the eighteenth century, and of the noblest nature . . ." I think further comment from me is superfluous.

There is one curious omission in the book. At the back of the book, Leslie Hale gives his references, yet fails to mention Curran's speeches published in 1855. According to Thomas Davies, the compiler, the speeches in that edition are the most com-

BOOKS

plete. Possibly the author is unaware of this book, which is unfortunate because of its value as source material.

George VI and the Labour Party

by N. SWEEN

THE LONG-AWAITED publication of J W Wheeler Bennett's biography of King George VI has re-opened discussion on the part played by the Crown in the choice of the Labour ministers in 1945.

At the time when the second instalment of Hugh Dalton's Memoirs *The Fateful Years* was published in 1957, Attlee sharply denied that the King was responsible for his decision to make Bevin Foreign Minister in preference to Dalton himself though his own autobiography skated over the issue.

Now, however, we read the King's own words:

"I asked him (i.e. Attlee) whom he would make Foreign Secretary and he suggested Hugh Dalton. I disagreed with him and said that foreign affairs was the most important subject at the moment and I hoped that he would make Mr Bevin take it. He said he would."

If the King's account is correct, and it is difficult to argue that it is not, it means that even in 1945, the Labour Prime Minister was susceptible to an influence which few would argue was democratic.

The fault, of course, could not be said to be with the King for making the suggestion, but with Attlee for accepting it. It certainly spotlights the calibre of Labour Party leadership in 1945. Furthermore, the incident clearly illustrates the completely outdated position of a hereditary ruler in modern Britain.

If he (or she) has any influence by virtue of his or her hereditary position, it is just as undemocratic as the privileges of the House of Lords or those who have been to public schools. If, on the other hand, the ruler has no power, what is the point of having him or her anyway—particularly when the saving would be sufficient to build a good-sized housing estate each year.

The Labour bureaucracy

by Peter N. Sharpe

ANYONE who is interested in the seat of power within the Labour Party will do well to get hold of the current edition of the *New Reasoner* and read the article on *The Labour Bureaucracy* by John Rex.

A short article in the *Socialist Review* a month ago cited figures to pinpoint the way in which Labour Party Conferences are dominated by the block votes of several of the largest trade unions.

Effective power

John Rex has taken the question of power back one stage further and asks where the power of the leaders of these trade unions is vested. The answer he gives is that "effective power within many unions (including some of the largest) is in the hands of the career trade union official who approaches political issues with an eye to his own sectional interests."

Unknown newcomer

A little reflexion by all those with experience within the organized working-class movements in Britain will reinforce this conclusion. We all know that trade union organizers and middle rank office holders exert immense influence in the rise of delegates, executive members and others from the ranks. For after all, a newcomer will only be known to a limited extent in normal circum-

stances outside his own branch or area and most voters or persons having influence over voters in an election will rely upon the advice given to them by the only people who know such candidates—the existing office holders and officials. That is, of course, unless he is the nominee of some other organization which cuts across the branches.

Self-appointed

In effect, therefore, the existing trade union bureaucracy has a degree of self-perpetuating power. In Labour Party affairs, the success of the existing powers has been marked for many years by the reliance which the Right has been possible to place on the trade union block vote at Annual Conferences. In fact it would be possible to argue that Labour Party policy and leadership can be said to have been largely a reflexion of the desires and aspirations of this group.

Scratch the surface

Are these socialist desires and aspirations? One only has to look at Labour Party policy and the statements of most trade union officials today to see that they are anything but.

The conclusion is obvious. Whatever socialist educational work is done in the Constituency Parties, until something is done about the structure and exercise of power within the trade union movement, we are merely scratching the surface of the problem.

THE MOVEMENT

It is the bicentenary of

ROBERT OWEN—socialist pioneer

by Stan Newens

On November 17, one hundred years ago, Robert Owen, one of the pioneers of the international Labour Movement, died.

He was born on May 14, 1771, the son of a successful Welsh saddlemaker, and received an elementary education before he started working at the age of nine. In this he was more fortunate than the vast majority of his contemporaries, as he was, indeed, in later life.

He was in partnership at the age of seventeen, owner of his own spinning mill at nineteen and a manager of a factory employing 500 at twenty. He married the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer whose mills at New Lanark he acquired for his partners at the age of twenty-eight.

Condition of the poor

By this time, however, notwithstanding his business success Owen was already showing an interest in the conditions of the poor. He created a model community at New Lanark, where a tradition of providing education and insisting upon personal cleanliness had already been established by his father-in-law, David Dale. He reduced working hours, laid sewers, cleaned streets, founded stores which supplied cheaper goods, fought drunkenness, opened a savings bank, and set up communal kitchens. For the old he provided communal homes, for the young education.

When cotton supplies were cut off owing to an embargo in 1806, Owen refused to sack his workers and paid them normal wages. When his partners objected to his largesse in certain respects he found others with a more benevolent outlook and bought out those who objected.

Owen's work was an attempt to practice his theory that "Man's character is made for and not by him." This philosophy which he expressed in his *New View of Society* (published 1813) and other writings led him to insist on a better organization of the society in which men lived in order to improve their characters.

His ideas also led him to advocate the adoption of new educational methods the nature of which are suggested by the title on his new school at New Lanark, opened on January 1, 1816: *The Institute for the Formation of Character*. Owen did not believe in the monitorial system, whereby the teacher taught the pupil teachers who passed on his words parrot fashion to the rest of the children. Owen insisted on physical exercise, dancing and

singing and used charts, models and visual aids to an extent which was unthought of in the dreary religious establishments of his day.

Rule by despots

Yet all these ideas did not make Owen a democrat, let alone a socialist. He was extremely autocratic throughout his life and as late as 1832, told a deputation led by William Lovett, the Chartist leader, which objected to his disregard of a majority decision, that they were all ignorant of his plans and of the objects he had in view and must consent to be ruled by despots till they had acquired sufficient knowledge to govern themselves.*

In the period following the end of the wars with France in 1815, he did not appeal to the workers to liberate themselves, but tried to convince one of the most reactionary Tory Governments of all times to carry out reforms from above. The fact that he secured the co-operation of Sir Robert Peel the elder in limiting children's hours of work in cotton factories by Act of Parliament and that his schemes for "Villages of Co-operation" based on the New Lanark model and the ideas of religious reformers were seriously considered by the most reactionary ministers reveals that he was not considered a threat to property and ruling class privileges at this time.

It was eventually his atheism which destroyed his popularity in

* William Lovett, *Life and Struggles of William Lovett*—G. Bell & Sons (1920). Vol. 1, P. 51.

well-to-do circles and it was then that his real work for Socialism began. In 1825 he took over a community in Indiana, America, which he called New Harmony and which he attempted to run, after an interim period, on the basis of complete equality and common ownership. Unfortunately, the inhabitants had not been educated to live in such a community and it broke up in failure after consuming eighty per cent of his fortune.

Essential faith

Owen, his faith undiluted, returned to England and threw himself into the work to establish Co-operatives which his ideas had already inspired. The Co-operative Stores which he opened in Grays Inn Road in 1832 was one of the wonders of contemporary London, but once again the strength of his vision was not backed up by sound practical organization. Failure once again ensued. Despite this, however, his lectures and example inspired the 28 pioneers who founded the famous Toad Lane Store in Rochdale twelve years afterwards from which our present Co-operative Movement developed.

Grand National

Owen had little faith in the battle to get the vote for working men and turned his attentions to the creation of the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union. This was, however, partly killed by the savage sentences imposed upon the famous Tod-puddle Martyrs whose only crime was to join his Union. Here again

the practical side of organization was also at fault.

After these failures, one might have expected Owen to retire in disillusionment, but he continued to work for his ideals until his death in his eighty-eighth year, in November, 1858. He founded another unsuccessful community in Hampshire and made another visit to America, he lectured to the French revolutionaries in 1848 and he continued to propagate his ideas to the last day of his life.

Giant among socialists

It is easy to dismiss such a man as a crank and foolish to suggest that his vision of the new society as such would win the unqualified support of socialists today. He must, however, be recognized as one of the great Socialist pioneers. Impractical as many of his ventures were and incorrect as we might consider many of his ideas, he was a giant among early socialists.

Human brotherhood

In an age which accepted fearful poverty and suffering alongside great wealth, he preached the ideas of human brotherhood and equality. He saw the need for a new society when many of the best thought only in terms of reforms. He attempted to form a united trade union movement wedded to a concept of a new society instead of narrow craft prejudices. He created the vision of a great Co-operative Movement, although he was more concerned with producer co-operation than the consumer co-operation which is the basis of our present movement.

More than any other man, he popularized the concept of a socialist society utopian and unrealistic as his version may have been. As such Robert Owen is one of the really great figures in the socialist movement and November 17 is a date which all socialists will do well to remember.

NEWSLETTER'S RIGHT TO MEET—from page one

M and GWU, banned its members from attending. What is the phrase about history repeating itself?

The action of the AUBTW executive council raises many important questions about the rights of the ordinary rank and file member. First, do the rules of the AUBTW or any other union give the executive council the right to ban the members from attending conferences of trade unionists organized outside the normal union structure? I doubt it very much. Secondly, under what rule does the executive council set itself up as a censorship, and do not these actions infringe the rights of the member as a citizen? (It would be interesting to see if the so-called "People's League for Freedom and Democracy" protests at this bureaucratic development.)

Militancy vs bureaucracy

The AUBTW executive council obviously do not see the ultimate consequences of their action. At a time when the employers are developing their offensive and trade union solidarity and militancy is essential, the movement can ill afford bans and splits. Those connected with the Newsletter may not be right, but that

is beside the point; at this stage of the working-class struggle, all views which contribute towards a greater militancy must be heard. It is not militancy that will destroy our movement, but the growth of bureaucracy, which will sap its strength and so demoralize the workers. It happened in Germany; we ought not to allow it to happen here.

Barrackroom boys

There are many in the top ranks of the trade union movement who are given to the barrack room mentality, and no doubt will be itching to follow the lead of the executive council of the AUBTW. The rank and file are to be used as pawns; they must do the real fighting when required, but always under the King's and Knight's commands. Never on their own.

We who write in and support the many and varied socialist papers must unanimously raise our voices in protest against the ban on the Newsletter Conference by the AUBTW. If we don't, it could be our turn next.

Most Socialist Review readers will be aware of the fact that a group of Tory lawyers has produced a document to limit the rights of the trade unions. At

the same time, the "People's League for Democracy and Freedom" (capitalist freedom, of course) are demanding an inquiry into the trade unions, with particular view to limiting and destroying the power of the shop stewards (those wicked men with horns, long tails and three-pronged forks). These events must not be separated from the government decision to stop compulsory arbitration (taken without consultation with the TUC) and the growing toughness of the employers (State and private) when wages are discussed.

Ban bans and proscriptions

In this situation we will require all our strength. Don't please play the employer's game; meet criticism within the movement; call your own conferences; that's my advice to the executive council of the AUBTW. To ban or proscribe solves nothing. It merely creates martyrs which, as the Christians have proved, can be mighty useful.

Perhaps someone will now want to proscribe me for writing this. Frankly I don't care if they do. There is a time to protest at injustice, no matter to whom it is meted out. That time is now.

SOCIALIST REVIEW is published twice a month by Socialist Review Publishing Co. Ltd. Subscriptions, post paid: 1 year: 16s. 6 months: 8s. 3 months: 4s. Opinions and policies expressed in signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of **Socialist Review** which are given in editorial statement.

All communications to be addressed to the publisher, M. Maddison, 21 Aubert Park, London, N5

Printed by H. Palmer (Harlow) Ltd. TU, Bush Fair, Harlow, Essex