

SOCIALIST REVIEW

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW, BUT INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

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SIXPENCE

LABOUR'S MARCH FORWARD by John Fairhead

PEOPLE plan their summer holidays. They decide where they want to go and how to get there. They travel with friends. And they take with them only the luggage which they need.

It is otherwise in politics. Many men and women in the Labour movement have not been accustomed, until now, to planning ahead. In many of its constituent bodies, delegates are selected and resolutions submitted only (as statutorily required) two or three months before the Party meets in conference. The delegates, once chosen, treat each other unselectively as comrades. Their intellectual baggage is either too light, or weighed down with a confusion of good intentions.

This year, things must be different.

RIGHT WING PLAN

Gaitskell's "fight, fight" speech was a signal for the Right to go into organised action. The Right has done so, favoured initially by two advantages: its leaders understand their objective, to destroy the socialist programme and working-class base of the Movement; and they are on the one hand, equipped with a committed rank and file. Their organization is top heavy, and their local people are not, in general, equipped to fight politically, preferring crude organizational methods. In the branch rooms, and up and down the constituencies. Pickstockery is not popular.

Spurred to action by the leader's defiance of Party discipline and the vote of Conference, the Left is hitting back. Its strength and weaknesses are exactly the opposite. The ranks are willing and able to fight; but the leaders are uncertain of their direction except in general terms.

All socialists who mean business thus have a big job. They have to start now to build, in an organized and campaign manner, towards Conference. And this in turn means that they must treat the conferences of the unions, co-operative organizations and Federations of Parties as battle grounds in preparation for all-out war.

FIGHT TO THE DEATH

This is the beginning of understanding: that compromise is not to be desired. Overtures have been made (from Crossman, Wilson

and even Brown) and more will follow. It is to be expected that among the terms offered will be the resignation of Gaitskell in return for the retention of most of his programme.

The answer to these peacemakers should be a kick in the teeth. The fact is that last year's Conference took decisions which the Party is entitled to see carried out. Those who disagree with the decisions have the right to remain and seek to win a majority for their views, and they must be protected against expulsion for advocating those views (as left-wingers have consistently been expelled in the past). But they must be removed from positions where they can sabotage the Party's wish. And if, as in the Young Socialists, they use the machinery of the Party against the declared will of the Party, they must be fought to the death.

The departure of Gaitskell the individual will mean nothing, unless it signifies the defeat of Gaitskell's ideas.

GO FORWARD

The Left's first task is to establish a clear and consistent policy, especially in parliament. By now there can be hardly a trade union branch or ward organization which has not discussed the Scarborough decisions and resolved the question of who stands where. Not one person who has declared, in speech or by vote, for the Left majority must remain unorganised.

Every organization, beginning with the London Labour Party in February, must be faced with the demand that the Scarborough decisions be taken to the working people, and public meetings, held under the official auspices to explain them.

Victory for Socialism, the Clause Four Campaign and the supporters of the Cambridge "Unity" manifesto must be brought together so that the fight can be properly waged. There must not be a single constituency Party or trade union in which the supporters of Party policy are working haphazardly or at cross purposes.

The fight on defence must be deepened and extended. Deepened by carrying forward the fight for unilateral renunciation of the Bomb to its next stage: a demand for withdrawal from NATO and the American alliance by a future Labour Government, and a

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by courtesy of Agitator—New Generation

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TU COMMENTARY

BUREAUCRATS

by J. Ellis

AT the very moment when organised labour faces the threat engendered by a sick capitalist economy, the leadership have embarked on a drive against workers' elected shop floor representatives.

This attack must be opposed, vigorously and decisively.

Working class struggle for progress is never easy. But it is made doubly hard when the bureaucrats attempt to tie one's hands behind one's back.

Look clearly at your organisation. Mark where the REAL leadership exists. Stand to the defence of the shop organisations and spread the demand for UNITY against the bosses.

★

George Wake, Secretary of the National Committee of Shop Stewards in Electrical Supply, is no martyr and must not be looked on as such. But he was elected by fellow workers, as was the committee itself, to do a job of work, a job which the so-called leadership had burked for more years than they dare to recall. Now the power workers' committee is outlawed by the AEU Executive.

Electrical supply workers rank among the low-paid sections of industry. For years electrical supply was pitifully short of

NO LEADERSHIP

Remember the London Power workers' strike? Remember who sold out? Not the workers involved, but the leadership!

Only by threatening to strike and actually withdrawing labour, have the electrical supply workers won any sort of justice.

Where was the national union leadership? Sitting on its rump, bleating about "disciplining the unruly membership", or calling the shop-stewards movement "werewolves".

First the M&GWU "leaders" pronounce their hate campaign against shop stewards. Then the ETU turn turtle, and condemn rank and file committees, now the AEU, through the Carronites, moves smartly forward to DO THE DIRTY WORK OF THE BOSSES.

ONLY THE WORKERS

The TUC (once so correctly described as the most conservative body in the land) is praised by the employers for holding an enquiry into the behaviour of shop stewards. (*Times*, Jan. 9th, 1961).

No matter what steps the union "leadership" take now to "close the gap between them and the rank-and-file" (current excuse of the bureaucrats for being incapable), their pitiful record on behalf of organised labour will not be forgotten.

Only the workers' abundant sense of loyalty keeps the bureaucrats from being thrown

out on their ears, that and no sharp conflict with the ruling class.

But we know, instinctively, what to do when it is needed. Let notice be served on the Knights of Smith Square,—lay off the rank-and-file movement!

ENGINEER'S WAGES

by Karl Dunbar

"BY settling for substantially below the average percentages, the engineering employers have strengthened the position of employers in other industries where negotiations are uncompleted."

Thus the employers' friends in Fleet Street greeted the news of the "settlement" which our self-styled leaders had made and which now gives engineering workers the princely sums of £9.15.2d (skilled) and £8.4.10d (labourers as their basic wage).

That great militant (Sir) William Carron, is reported to have delivered these stirring and momentous words to the eager press boys. "We would sooner have had all we asked for, but the employers were very difficult this time."

Just to put our great leader's mind at rest, let him be assured that the million workers who have been aware of "difficult employers" all their working lives.

17,000 Coventry car workers know about the "difficulties" under capitalism, they're on the dole, or short time.

Shop stewards know when their names go on the black list.

Old age pensioners know, tenants too. Miners and bus-workers, railwaymen and dockers, they all know this, so Carron of the AEU is not making any revelations.

But, unlike Carron and company, all these workers who know this truth have and are doing something about it, they are fighting against the employer/Tory squeeze.

Since July 1960, the wise "leaders" of the Confederation have made not one single move to prosecute the wages claim which was unanimously carried at the Llandudno conference of that month. Any activity around the claim sprang from the workshop and the branches.

In lofty isolation sat the "leadership", ready as always to attack the shop stewards movement, as they did in the case of the power workers' national shop stewards movement, but incapable of leading a struggle for a decent wage in that industry.

What has this little exercise in "know your leaders" taught us? To me, one simple lesson emerges.

The more we place our trust in the union bureaucrats the more defeats we are likely to suffer. I believe the working

class movement is strong at the roots, but as weak as a pint of watered-beer at executive level.

OUR TASK

Our task is plain, to strengthen the real leadership in the workshop and branches. To support workers whose roots lie deep in the soil of the movement, whose class interests are clearly defined, who seek not to further the ends of the "cult of leadership" but rather strive always to build a thinking, acting, class-conscious movement. More power to the factory and workshop organizations must be our demand in the present battle for progress.

LEADERS?

by Les Bennet

WE appear to be enjoying a glut of trade union leaders at the present time, leaders in practically every direction, left, right and centre. Unfortunately we don't appear to have many representatives; the people whom we elect to represent US.

The disease of assuming the right to lead among trade unionists appears to arise from the assumption that the individual has secured a majority of votes in a particular election. Democracy is then abandoned apparently until the next election is due, when we are informed by the candidate that he sat on this committee and attended it, have we, the hundreds of thousands of "have-nots" been represented at all; has our candidate taken cognisance of our views?

How often has the trade union membership been consulted, before the elected officers of the various unions have appeared on television, or given press interviews, following the break-down of a wages claim or the fight for the 40-hour week.

SNUBBED RANK AND FILE

There can be no doubt today about the widening gap between the rank and file and the Executive Councils, especially in engineering, where today demonstrators outside the bosses' headquarters are referred to as "no-gooders" by our so-called leaders.

Is it not time some of them were recalled to spend a few years back in the factories and ships, to see for themselves how little the employing class has changed?

THEY ARE 'ALL RIGHT'

Redundancy is still the same as the sack and the sack today is still as bad as ever it was.

On the other hand, our leaders have never had it so good. With increases in their pay packets, pension funds, expense accounts, and payment for time off when sick, it isn't difficult to behave like a leader or even like a lord.

A MILITANT LEAD

by R. Thomas

LAST December the London North District Committee of the AEU asked all branches to forward resolutions for the 1961 National Committee Conference. In the request, the District Secretary stressed the grave problems facing engineering workers, with growing unemployment, short time working, the Rent Act and the general Tory squeeze. We were specifically asked to "make our resolutions really militant, a fighting policy is needed".

With this in mind, one AEU branch forwarded the following resolution to D.C. "This National Committee, conscious of the growing threat to the living standards of our members, declares its full support for the following policy:

1. A shorter working week without loss of pay.
2. Extended annual holidays to 3 weeks.
3. Total ban on all overtime.
4. Full maintenance for all unemployed.
5. The full strength of our union be used to force these demands from both the employers and the Government.
6. That an intensive propaganda campaign be launched, putting forward these 5 points, so that all our members are aware of the union's determination to fight against the attacks of the employing class and their political representatives in

That was the resolution, sent in December, to which there has yet to be an acknowledgment from the D.C.

There may be a good reason for the tardiness of the reply. Let's hope that the resolution hasn't gone in the waste-paper basket.

What do fellow trade-unionists think of the resolution? It would be very interesting to know if one branch's ideas are a reflection of the general feeling amongst factory workers.

ELECTIONS IN AEU

by J. Hanna

THE latest fat volume to arrive at AEU branches is the HALF-YEARLY REPORT. Without a doubt it is well presented and merits close study by all trade unionists. The first half of the book contains financial reports which few of the members understand; the second, election returns which they understand only too well. Election returns reflect branch attendances and when only 18% of the entire North London membership votes in the election for District Organiser, with 55% of votes cast going to the winner Bro. R. Birch, one wonders what the other 82% think of the whole business.

THE returns in the election for Asst. Gen. Secy, are interesting. Bro. Baxter, it is true, never seemed in any danger of losing his place (and he was returned

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with a massive majority) but our interest is aroused by some of the lesser fry and local heroes. One such unknown was Bro. Grahame from Belfast. We read his address at the time of the election; it was a red flag waving, giant killing affair and it worked! Bro. Grahame fetched in whole branches in many parts of England and Wales as far apart as Oldham and Stoke Newington, Glasgow and Kingston, and Aberdare and Dundee plus one branch in Sydney, Australia! A gallant effort but that is not how to do it in the AEU.

SOME other trade unionists have been winning things lately, namely Bro. Vic Feather of the TUC and Bro. H. Collinson of the Agricultural Workers. Here again tucked away in fine print, but this time the fine print of the New Year Honours List, in other words the brothers have "arrived".

CRISIS IN CAR INDUSTRY

by T. L. Roger

HOW bankrupt sound the fine election phrases now. No more "You have never had it so good", but instead the hard-faced reality of the boss-class with their instructions to the workers: tighten your belts. Tighten our belts, brothers; draw our dole, but not they theirs.

In the Midlands 71,000 car workers are now on short time.

The "working week" is now becoming a bad joke in the car industry where Nuffields of Birmingham are open 2 days a week, Morris Motors, Cowley, 2½ days and 2 night shifts; Fords, Dagenham, 3 days, and Vauxhall at Luton, apart from

mass sackings (1,500 in the past two months) now operate on 4 days. BLSP of Acton, the Rootes Group subsidiary, are also on 4 days.

The inability of capitalism to offer any kind of stability, any real future, for our class, is thrown clearly into focus. And workers are not blind to this.

Reduction of the purchase tax on cars and a general easing of hire-purchase restrictions can give some help to the industry. Again a cut in car prizes by squeezing out some of the fat profits of the industry could help somewhat to enlarge the market for cars. Reductions in the crippling fuel tax could also help. Trade with the underdeveloped countries—assisted by generous credit from Britain (a much more useful exercise than wasteful "defence" expenditure)—and trade with the countries behind the "Iron Curtain", could also help.

STRUGGLE

Above all, and immediately, what is needed is a struggle against sacking with a pittance for compensation. This struggle should be combined with a demand for the 40-hour week without loss of pay and three weeks' annual holiday, followed by a progressive reduction of working hours.

The car industry urgently needs planning. Notwithstanding Gaitskell and Co. the instability in the car industry shows that capitalism continues to be a system of insecurity. Capitalist takeover bids are still the order of the day. Ford, who pays something like 2s. an hour less on the average than wages paid in the Midland firms, are set on their bid. Clause 4—defending

the public ownership of industry—should now be translated into action.

A campaign of the whole labour movement should be launched for the nationalisation of the car industry under workers' control. Socialist planning should be the answer to capitalist anarchy.

"Redundancies" and dismissals...: in spite of the fact that the motor industry has never had it so good, reaping its highest-ever profits, working conditions and guarantees have never been worse. In spite of the persistent claims by the manufacturers for easier hire-purchase terms, the failure in the industry is due to more basic causes.

SELL OUT OF BUILDING WORKERS

by W. Cullen (NSP)

AS from October, the building trade worker is to receive an increase of 6d. per hour, with a working week cut from 44 to 42 hours.

At a glance, this would appear to be a great stride forward, but on closer examination both the employers and the T.U. leaders can be seen to have perpetrated an amazing piece of chicanery on the building workers.

Most of the workers have been aware of the negotiations for the shorter working week, most have known too of the proposed increase but few could have known the real price, not that which they would receive, but what they would have to pay for it.

The precious tea breaks, concessions won after years of bitter struggle, of stoppages and sackings, have been abolished—one can be sure to the great

satisfaction of the employers. For this they offer 6d. per hour, 3d. increase and 3d. for the lost two hours on the working week. And here the chicanery is exposed.

MORE SWEAT

The actual increase, comparing October 1960, 44 hrs. and October 1961, 42 hours, is 12/7 per week. But one must bear in mind that the operative does not receive the two odd hours tea break, so in actual fact he does two hours more on his actual working week. So that after October next the actual increase on time amounts to 1/4d. per week—(the amounts quoted here are London rates). Any increases in productivity obtained, will not be due to the tea break being given up, although no doubt after 12 months without tea breaks, the employers will proudly point to the rise in productivity. This rise has been showing itself for some years now.

The Labour correspondent of the Times (January 13th) quotes Mr Peter Trench, director of the Building Employers Federation, "for some employers the change would meet up to two-thirds of the cost of the wage increase, the rest of the total cost would be met by an increase of 4% in productivity, most of which should be achieved before the concessions on pay and hours come into effect."

It is difficult to imagine what in the minds of the T.U. leaders when this agreement was reached, but when the majority of the building workers realised how they have been tricked, the T.U. should have some unimaginative answers ready when questioned.

London Labour Party Conference

BY A. HAMMOND

THIS will be the last chance before Blackpool for the Labour movement of London and Middlesex to show the Gaitskellites that we want a forthright Socialist policy and a full-blooded fight against the Tories.

The subject for our demand? Housing and rents. The place of battle? St. Pancras Town Hall, on February 25th and 26th, 10 am each day. A defeat for the right wing NOW will strengthen the movement in the major struggle next October.

And London Labour can point the way forward.

Already we have had a foretaste of the Executive Committee's "line". Mellish, chairman of the London Labour Party, recently figured in a television party political broadcast, using the opportunity to wave the right wing banner, by proclaiming, "Labour stands for a property-owning democracy."

Let there be no illusion about who is going to lead the Labour movement in London. It will be up to the delegates, who really

represent the working class movement, to raise Labour's sights. Raise them above the mock politics of the right wing so that they are trained squarely on the issues which affect the thousands of workers who will be asked to vote in May.

Labour, tottering on the brink of electoral defeat in both London and Middlesex County Councils, must lead the fight against the Tories and landlords.

Resolutions which call for the setting up of tenants' committees need all the support they can get.

The London Labour Party can be the centre of a great all-London movement, injecting the spirit of resistance into every constituency and borough.

Let us use this opportunity, comrades, to make Labour mean what is should—the workers' spearhead against landlordism; the proud weapon of working class progress.

We can show the way forward this month, but only if we fight hard enough.

They never had it so good

The rise in wages and share prices in 1960 compared with 1953 is shown in the following percentages:

	Wages	Share prices
Britain	37	143
USA	29	137
France	74	301
Italy	29	288
W. Germany	58	644
Japan	37	165
Sweden	50	109

(International Financial Statistics, November 1960)

They too...

Company	hours worked	men's earnings	"emoluments" of directors (Full and Part-time)
Oil refining	47.3	£. s. d. 14.19. 0 per week	Shell £422 per week
Chemicals	47.3	14.13. 0 per week	I.C.I. £412 per week
Paper & Board	51.0	15. 4. 1 per week	Bowaters £377 per week
Soap	49.2	14.19. 3 per week	Unilever £320 per week
Iron & Steel	47	15.11. 9 per week	Guest Keen & Nettlefolds £169 per week
Manufacture of Telephones	46.4	14. 2. 5 per week	A.E.I. £148 per week
Motor car	47.4	19. 0. 5 per week	Ford (U.K.) £221 per week
Cotton spinning	48.3	11.16. 9 per week	Coats £248 per week

THE BELGIAN GENERAL STRIKE

THE little country of Belgium with its nine million people has witnessed one of the mightiest battles of the international working class. Whatever the outcome of the strike, and at the time of writing things do not look too bright, this chapter of working class history will live on.

The present article will try to pinpoint some main outlines of the strike and draw some lessons from it applicable to Socialists everywhere.

THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The Liege Socialist Party paper, *Le Monde du Travail*, (December 22, 1960) published an article called *Belgium, the "Sick Member of the Common Market"*. It referred to the fact that the rate of economic growth in Belgium was lagging far behind that of other members of the Common Market. Thus the rate of growth of industrial production between 1953 and 1959 averaged annually 2.94 per cent in Belgium as against 5.64 per cent in the Netherlands, 7.23 per cent in France, 7.92 per cent in Italy, and 8.37 per cent in Germany. (In 1953 Belgium was producing only 11 per cent more than in 1929, twenty-four years earlier; while the figures for other countries of Western Europe in OEEC was some 70 per cent).

Belgian industry is facing severe competition. Approximately 40 per cent of the output of its industries is exported (OEEC, *Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union*, Paris, 1960, p. 32). These exports depend largely on foreign demand for its steel products and textiles. The nature of total world demand for industrial exports has changed radically over recent decades: a shift of emphasis has taken place in Europe from products needing relatively unskilled labour—such as textiles and steel—towards highly finished capital equipment and a wide range of new industries.

In Belgium the necessary change has proceeded much more slowly than in the other countries of the Common Market, for a number of reasons. First, Belgium industries suffered much less destruction during the war than those of some other countries, notably Germany, which were by this fact compelled to re-equip with the most modern machinery. Secondly, the acute demand for primary products immediately after the war and during the Korean boom blurred the necessity for developing new types of production. And lastly, Belgian

capital found it more profitable to divert its capital to foreign fields than to invest at home.

To add to its troubles, Belgium's main raw material, coal, is produced under extremely bad conditions. It is true that in all capitalist countries the consumption of coal has declined in recent years. In Belgium the affect of the general coal crisis was even more acute than elsewhere, as Belgian coal deposits are thin and irregular and the pit equipment extremely backward. Coal mining is some 50 per cent more productive in the Common Market countries as a whole than in Belgium. The result: closure of pits on a mass scale over the past few years. "The number of underground workers declined by 33 per cent between January 1, 1958 and September 4, 1960 (according to official notes of the High Authority of the Coal and Steel European Community) and the reduction will no doubt reach 50 per cent at the end of 1961". (*La Gauche*, 26 November, 1960).

In an effort to soften the blow, the sacked Belgian miners were given a subsidy by the European Community for Coal and Steel. This was planned to terminate in October 1959, but was extended to September 30, 1960, when it ceased.

One result of the stagnation of the Belgian economy and the decline of certain traditional industries is a large pool of permanent and structural unemployment. Since 1949 the rate of unemployment has been a constant 8—12 per cent of all wage earners. (*Le Monde du Travail*, December 22, 1960). (This compares with 2 per cent in Britain at present.)

THE CONGO DEBACLE

To add to the difficulties of Belgian capitalism came the Congo debacle.

One should not overestimate the weight of the Congo in the balance of Belgian economy. In 1959 Belgian exports to Congo were only 2.7 per cent of her total exports, and imports 5.8 per cent of total imports. The National Bank of Belgium calculated that a complete rupture of all economic and financial arrangements with Congo might initially cause a reduction of 6 per cent in the gross national product of Belgium and in her tax revenue, 5 per cent. Congo was quite important for balancing Belgium's balance of payments, however. Exports from Congo were much larger than her imports, the difference largely helping Belgium. The aggregate surplus on current transactions in the 7-year

period 1953-1960 amounted to 1,660 million dollars, or nearly 3 per cent of the gross national product of Belgium. Congo also helped to cover up the actual deficit in the Belgian budgets.

Had the Belgian economy been growing at the same rate as the French, Italian, or West German—7—8 per cent a year—the loss of the Congo could have been absorbed, but with a rate of growth of only 2 per cent...

Above all "the Congo debacle... served, it was thought, to put the country in the right mood to accept drastic action." (*The Economist*, December 31, 1960). Actually, when Eyskens came to power in June 1958, he already had in his pocket a plan similar to that of the *loi unique*, but "nothing substantial was done" about it (*Ibid.*)

To drag Belgian capitalism out of the rut two complementary measures were proposed by the Government: 1) plums for the capitalists, 2) a cut in workers' standards.

PLUMS FOR THE CAPITALISTS

These are given to Belgian and foreign—mainly American—capitalists to persuade them to invest in industry: "The Belgian technique of attracting them is to offer a number of temporary fiscal exemptions, including what amounts to 130 per cent depreciation allowances for new machinery and plant installed during the development period. In addition to this, there are capital subsidies in certain cases, and finance is made available on very advantageous terms by loans which may be as much as 4 per cent below market rates." (*The Statist*, International Banking Supplement, December 17, 1960).

The result is that "the American industrialists who builds a factory in Belgium will, in fact, be bringing to the country only a comparatively small contribution to her foreign exchange reserves. He will be borrowing a large part of the money locally, and using the cheap interest rates provided by Belgian Government subsidy which have been offered to him as part of the inducement. This, of course, presupposes that Belgium will be able, at all times, to provide the capital funds required." "The affect of this is that the Belgian system will have to find a great deal of the new capital funds, financing the new American and other investments on her territory." (*Ibid.*)

Above, all, as a source of larger capital funds a cut in the workers' standards was sought.

ATTACK ON WORKERS' STANDARDS

In the Common Market area, Belgian workers enjoy wages second only to those of the French, being considerably above the West Germans, some 40 per cent above the Dutch, and some 50 per cent above Italians. (*The Economist Intelligence Unit, Britain and Europe*, London, 1957, p. 31.)

The aim of the *loi unique* is to cut these standards. The law provides for the introduction of a harsh means test which deprives the unemployed of benefit after a certain number of months. Secondly certain pension rights are to be abolished, affecting public employees—railwaymen, postmen, teachers, local government workers. The pensionable age is also to

be raised. Thirdly, there is to be a sharp rise in indirect taxation, the brunt of this falling on the broad masses.

The Belgian Socialists estimate that the workers will thus be robbed of some 3000—4000 Belgian francs (£21—28) a year in cash and suffer a reduction of various benefits in kind together amounting to a cut of some 10 per cent in their standards. The workers answered with a mass strike.

On December 14th a half-day demonstration strike was called by the Socialist Party and the trade unions. This was a resounding success. On December 20, the day on which the debate on the *loi unique* began in Parliament, a nationwide general strike of municipal workers was officially launched. Next day the whole of the Black Country came out on strike, the day after the Liege region, and within the next day or two the whole of Southern Belgium and beyond.

TRADITION OF GENERAL STRIKE

Belgium has a long tradition of mass industrial strikes. In 1886 a great series of strikes broke out, first in the neighbourhood of Charleroi, then in Liege and over a large part of the Walloon provinces. The main demand was universal suffrage; but there were economic demands as well in some places. Then in May, 1891, a mass strike of some 125,000 workers put forward a demand for changes in the electoral system. In April, 1893, another strike, embracing about a quarter of a million workers, broke out for a similar demand. The outcome was universal, but unequal, franchise, the votes of the rich and "cultured" counting for two or three times those of workers and peasants. The workers, dissatisfied, carried out another mass strike nine years later, demanding a complete revision of the Constitution.

An even bigger strike—in which 450,000 workers took part—was called by the Socialist Party and trade unions to achieve electoral reform in 1902, and again in 1913.

Another general strike took place in 1936 which wrested from the capitalists a forty-hour week and paid holidays. In 1950 a general strike led to the abdication of King Leopold.

In 1958-9 the coal-miners of the Borinage spontaneously began a general strike not merely for wage demands but for the nationalisation of the mining industry.

BELGIAN TRADITION OF "SOCIALIST"-CONSERVATIVE COALITION GOVERNMENTS

There are, alas, other traditions in the Belgian labour movement—coalitions with conservative parties.

As early as 1902 the Socialist Party, in the midst of the general strikes, flirted with the conservative party, in Belgium called Liberals.

In all, there were between 1919 and 1940 19 Belgian cabinets, in 11 of which the Socialist Party partnered a coalition.

To give theoretical justification to this mania for compromise with capitalism, the theoretician of the right wing of the Belgian Socialist Party, Henri de Man put forward ideas similar to those of Anthony Crossland some two decades later. In his *Plan du Travail*, adopted by the

by Tony Cliff

Socialist Party and trade unions, he proposed the revision of the Socialist programme by putting forward the idea of a mixed economy, with emphasis on control and not on ownership. He tried to attract the middle classes, and the left wing of the Catholic Party. He did not succeed in attracting either the Catholic Party or its trade unions. (By the way, in 1940, when the Germans overran Belgium, de Man dissolved the Socialist Party and remained in Belgium as the King's "adviser" under the Nazis.)

After the Second World War, the policy of coalition with the conservatives was tried again and again.

In the very midst of the present mass strike, the same compromising SR—19 policies were put forward. On 29 December, Leo Collard, President of the Socialist Party, declared: "The *Loi unique* cannot be the basis of a solution. The Government has conceived of this law as an organic whole... we cannot see how a compromise could be reached by amending its details. We are struggling quite simply for its withdrawal." (*La Wallonie*, 30 December, 1960). However, a few days later, Achille van Acker, ("Socialist" Prime Minister during 1954-8) approved in Parliament the Government effort "to maintain order" and appealed for negotiations to revise the law, instead of rejecting it in toto.

UNCOMMON SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY

With all this right-wing leadership, the Belgian Socialist Party is quite unique among the parties of the Socialist International. Where else would one find Social-Democratic parties again and again launching

by courtesy of Agitator-New Generation

Again, two short items from the strike: the Minister of the Interior early in the strike issued an order to all mayors to report, local government employees absent from work. On December 26, the 45 Socialist mayors of Charleroi district met and unanimously decided "to refuse to obey the injunctions of the Minister of the Interior" (*La Wallone*, December 27, 1960). Socialist mayors in other districts followed suit.

A few days later the papers announced that Socialist MPs, mayors, etc. in Liege district decided to hand their salaries during the strike period over to strike funds. (*Ibid.* December 31, 1960).

Above all, who in this country would dream that Labour Party rooms and the rooms of the Young Socialists would serve as local headquarters of strike committees all over the country?

STRUCTURE OF THE BELGIAN SOCIALIST PARTY

One reason for the militancy of the Belgian Socialist Party compared to its sister parties is its unique structure.

Unlike the Social Democratic Party of Germany or the Socialist Party of France, the Belgian Socialist Party is made up not only of individual members but also of affiliated trade unions, co-operatives and mutual aid societies. In this respect it is similar to the British Labour Party. But there are also basic differences. The British trade unions include all eligible wage and salary earners without difference of politics. In Belgium workers who oppose the Socialist Party from the right belong to unions affiliated to another party—the Catholic party called Christian Social Party—or unions independent of both. At present the Socialist trade unions have 692,000 members, the Catholic 742,000). Similarly there are co-operatives and mutual aid societies

mainly Walloons, and conservatives, mainly Flemish, aided and guided by the Catholic Church.

This intimate relation between the trade unions and the Party makes for less of a barrier between politics and economics in the movement, especially as those more right-wing workers who do not approve of the close bond between the two wings incline to belong to another trade union organisation under the auspices of another party.

Again, unlike the British movement, the Party and the unions are much less centralised, much more federative. The Belgian equivalent of the TUC—the Federation Generale de Travailleurs Belges (FGTB) is made up of over a score of semi-autonomous regional organisations, each comprising the representatives of various trades and occupations in a given area. Each regional federation has its centre in a co-operative society building or *Maison du Peuple*, which serves as a general meeting place for all sections of the labour movement. Each Federation enjoys substantial autonomy in its own industrial affairs and allows a large measure of autonomy to the regional organisation of the Socialist Party. Thus Liege can pride itself on having a daily Socialist Party paper, *Le Monde du Travail*, with quite a militant line, very different to the national daily, *Le Peuple*, issued in Brussels by the central leadership. Liege also publishes a trade union daily, *La Wallonie*, edited by Andre Renard, the joint Secretary General of the Belgian trade unions. And Liege has a smaller population than Nottingham!

Another reason for the Socialist Party being more amenable to workers' wishes, and for its officials, especially the local and lower echelons being more tractable—like the proverbial wheelbarrow going as far as it is pushed—was the early and prolonged stalemate of Parliamentary reformism.

Socialist majority in parliamentary elections looked most unlikely.

Traditionally Belgium has been divided into two halves, the Flemish-speaking, conservative, Catholic, agricultural North and the French-speaking, anti-Catholic, Socialist, industrial South, or Walloon area. (Actually the Flemish make up a little over half the population). It is true that over the last few decades the north has ceased to be purely agricultural, but contains centres of new industries. However, even the industrial workers in the Flemish areas are not free of Catholic influence, the bulk of the working class in these areas belonging to the Catholic Trade Union Federation.

(It is true that in some cases, in the industrial field only, the Catholic trade unions have been quite militant. This showed itself clearly during the 1954-8 Van Acker Government, when the Socialist trade unions played the role of direct agents of the Government in trying to avoid "labour conflicts that embarrass the Government".)

Thus in many cases the differences between Walloons and Flemish are differences between sections of the working class with different traditions and different levels of development. But largely it is also a difference between militant industrial workers and conservative agricultural workers.

The immediate effect of the national and religious split was to prevent the Socialist Party from being a complete slave of parliamentarism. Whereas in elections one Walloon worker has equal power to one conservative Flemish farmer, in the economic area, the former is incomparably stronger than the latter.

This national and religious split probably also aided the federalist, or autonomic tendencies in the trade unions and the Socialist Party. And this strengthens the non-parliamentary forces in the labour movement.

THE INFLUENCE OF SYNDICALISM

An influential factor in the labour movement of France and also Belgium has been Syndicalism, a mixture of anarchism (without its individualism and with a much exaggerated emphasis on organisation) with the trade unions. It spread its roots in the soil of industrial backwardness and lack of concentration. It gained strength from every betrayal by the right-wing Socialist parliamentarians, which developed among workers a natural suspicion of all political activities. Syndicalism identifies the general strike with the Socialist revolution rather than looking upon it as only one important element of modern revolution.

However much the Syndicalists or syndicalist-inclined people try to overlook politics, politics catches up with them, and this especially during mass strikes. The political arm of the capitalist class—the state with its police and army—are most blatantly present during such struggles. Therefore, without any political theory, with no political perspective, syndicalism leads to empirical, *ad hoc* measures; hence it is basically reformist.

ANDRE RENARD

An extreme example of the mixture of Syndicalism with nationalism is shown by Andre Renard, the dynamic and militant leader of the metal workers, the joint General Secretary of the FGTB, and the most prominent leader of the Socialist Left.

continued page 8



Demonstration in Liege, the day before the royal wedding. A poster expresses solidarity with republican Spain.

general strikes? What would our Gaitskell or our Carron say to the use of industrial action for political aims—for electoral reforms as in 1886, 1891, 1893, 1902, 1913), or against the King (1950), or against the government's hunger law (1961)?

who reject any connection with the Socialist Party and are connected with the Catholic party or remain independent of both. Indeed the entire pattern of working class organisation in Belgium arose largely from the struggle between socialists,

STALEMATE OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORMISM

The strength of Catholicism in the Flemish half of the country confronted the Socialist Party with a situation in which the winning of a

Labour History

The Chartist Convention

BY HENRY COLLINS

"YOUR demand is for Universal Suffrage... a right of which no human power can justly deprive you... and which you must regain at any risk—peaceably, if you may, forcibly if you must." From the first manifesto of the Chartist Convention, published in the *Charter*, February 17, 1839.

★
On February 4, 1839, fifty three delegates to the General Convention of the Industrious Classes met at the British Coffee House, Cockspur Street, Charing Cross. Thirteen were from the middle class—magistrates, editors, clergymen, doctors—and the remainder were described by their first secretary as "shopkeepers, tradesmen and journeymen". The working class element was not very conspicuous in this gathering, yet it began the organisation of Chartism as a national movement and Chartism has rightly been called the first independent political movement of the working class in history.

The first Chartist Convention, as the body came to be called, was dominated by London and Birmingham, both centres of small handicraft, not factory production. The two cities were also by the standards of those days, prosperous. The artisans and petty producers who made up such a strong element in Chartism, especially in its early months, were discontented men. The reform Act of 1832 had enfranchised the shopkeepers and business men, but given the mass of the people nothing. The Poor Law Reform of 1834 with its brutal workhouse test outraged the conscience of every decent person in the country. The economic crisis, which struck Britain in the Spring of 1837 and lasted for over two years, increased the demand for reform among the huge unre-

presented majority of the people. But the London and Birmingham artisans were not revolutionaries. The London Working-Men's Association, founded in June, 1836, aimed at attracting the "intelligent and influential portion of the working classes." It sought to promote the cause of progress through education, discussion and "moral force". Its leader was William Lovett, a joiner whose social ideas derived from Robert Owen while his politics were strongly influenced by Francis Place. The Birmingham Political Union, under the rich banker, Thomas Attwood, saw salvation through currency reform based on the enfranchisement of an enlightened working class.

MASS MOVEMENT

But the first Chartist Convention contained other elements as well. Delegates had been elected at mass meetings of 300,000 in Manchester, 150,000 in Glasgow and 70,000 in Newcastle. Here the handloom weavers, ruined and starving through competition from the power looms, miners and factory workers, predominated. Their spokesman was Feargus O'Connor, an Irishman, revolutionary and anti-Socialist. He was alive to the evils of industrial capitalism and the factory system. But he saw the solution in terms of a land reform which would cover the country with prosperous smallholdings. He advocated insurrection in principle while opposing it in practice.

Also represented at the Convention was a small but vigorous socialist wing led by Bronterre O'Brien, with George Julian Harney as a promising young recruit. It was private property, said Bronterre, particularly in land, banks and utilities, which lay at the root of poverty and

exploitation. The power of the bourgeoisie had been established, in England and France, through social revolution. A new revolution would establish the power of the workers and put an end to oppression and inequality. In his theories of exploitation, class struggle and historical development, Bronterre anticipated some of Marx's most important conclusions. But he failed to develop a comprehensive analysis of capitalism or of the emergence of a proletariat. In the decline of Chartism, after 1848, he took to repeating himself and led his small sect into the political wilderness.

WEAKNESS IN CHARTISM

Socially heterogeneous, theoretically immature and politically vacillating, Chartism was nevertheless a remarkable achievement. In no other country was there an independent working class movement and on the Continent of Europe, while socialist thinkers penned penetrating criticism of capitalist society, mass movements of the people remained tied to the left wing of bourgeois radicalism. The Chartists, by contrast, led a movement of workers not only separate from the bourgeois radicals but in opposition to them.

On the day the first Chartist Convention met, the Anti-Corn Law League began its first national conference. The Chartists had to define their attitude to this vehicle of Manchester liberalism and they did so. On February 12 the Convention passed unanimously a resolution, moved by Bronterre O'Brien, which declared that "the people's undivided attention" must be given to the campaign for the People's Charter, "being also convinced that the present agitation for a repeal of the Corn Laws was intended and does actually tend to divert the working classes from that permanent object; and being further of opinion that such an unconditional repeal as would alone be likely to receive the sanction of the Anti-Corn Law agitators, would be rather injurious than otherwise to the interests of the poorer classes". While political power remained in the hands of their enemies, in fact, neither free trade nor protection would bring any lasting benefit to the workers, and though, on occasions, local groups of Chartists were inveigled into supporting Corn Law Repeal as a palliative, the movement as a whole retained its independence of and hostility to the radical, Benthamite, free-trading middle class.

NATIONAL PETITION

The main efforts of the Chartists went into collecting signatures for the National Petition, which demanded universal male suffrage and related democratic reforms. Within the Convention, Harney asked for a decision as to what action would be taken if Parliament rejected the Petition. The majority, consisting largely of "moral force" Chartists, refused to allow the question to be con-

sidered. But among Chartist supporters in the country there was intense discussion and divided views. Some argued for a run on the banks, but they had no money. Others called for a general strike, but there were few trade unionists. Yet others advocated armed uprising, but though there was a scattering of pikes here and muskets there, few believed seriously in its chances of success.

PROVOCATIONS

In May the Convention moved to Birmingham. Faced with increasing government provocation it issued a manifesto stressing the constitutional and legal aims of the movement. "Aware of our position," it went on, "your oppressors are moving heaven and earth to bring us into collision with the enemy. They are pouring spies and traitors into your ranks, in order to seduce the unwary into illegal practices... Our advice is that YOU RIGIDLY OBEY THE LAW; but at the same time be prepared to make your oppressors likewise obey it. Be upon your guard against spies or madmen, who would urge you to illegal practices, but at the same time bear in mind that you have the same right to arm that your enemies have... Parade not your arms at public meetings but keep them bright and ready at home."

PERSECUTION AND ARREST

In July there was a wave of arrests. Meetings were prohibited. A body of police was brought down from London to break up a meeting in the Birmingham Bull Ring. The workers drove the police out of the Ring and it took troops to restore the government's authority. On July 5 Lovett, for all his moderation and "moral force", was arrested. A week later the Petition, with over one and a quarter million signatures, was rejected by 235 votes to 46. Now the Convention had to act or dissolve. There was no hope, it was soon decided, of redress from the existing House of Commons. But the workers were powerless to elect another. The Convention therefore decided "that the people should work no longer after the 12th of August next, unless the power of voting for Members of Parliament to enable them to protect their labour and their rights is previously given and guaranteed to them."

NEW STAGE AND DEVELOPMENT

This ended the first phase of Chartism. It did not destroy the movement, which came back, stronger than ever, during the "Plug Riots" of 1842. Finally, the Chartist movement was defeated in 1848, and though it took another ten years to die it was never again a serious force. But the working class movement regrouped, assumed new forms and came back again into the struggle.

continued page 7

continued from page one

campaign by the Socialist International against war preparations immediately. And *extended* by linking the fight for a socialist foreign policy to the struggle for socialist nationalisation and for colonial independence.

To stand still on Scarborough is to invite the sabotage of Scarborough.

TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

Party Left-wingers traditionally have kind hearts. They must harden them. Officials who try to suppress journals like *Keep Left*, which uphold official policy, must be fought to a finish (regardless of any criticism which can be made of the journal against which action is taken). The supporters of these officials must be hounded unmercifully.

Right-wing MP's and councillors, who seek publicly to identify the Party with policies to which it is no longer committed, must be harassed and if possible driven out—certainly they must not be readopted. This action should be taken against them *not* (it is worth repeating) because they hold minority views, but because they seek to identify the Party with them. There must be an end to sentimentality and liberalism on this question.

We dare not leave the next Conference to chance. We have to prepare every step. In proportion as we are strong and politically sound we shall win over the irresolute. The present fight against capitalist ideas in the Party will lay the foundations for the next advance against capitalism itself.

It's Rich

'The feeling of "ownership" that a woman develops for the machine on which she works is thought to be one reason why 3,000 women so willingly rise at 5.30 am in South Yorkshire to go to work in the mills of Bradford and Halifax up to 30 miles away.'—*Guardian*, 18 January.

'The labour scarcity is so acute that, for instance, when a fire broke out recently in a factory of the Ruhr, the manager of a neighbouring plant was on the scene before the fire brigade, offering employment'.—*Times*, 30 December last.

'...the agreed reduction of two hours in the standard working week may therefore amount in practice to an increase of half an hour or more a week for many employees.'—*Times* comment on recent agreement on hours in building, 13 January.

'The grass round the Lincoln Memorial, browned by the recent long-lying snow, is being dyed green to provide a touch of spring for inauguration day.'—*Times* report on the inauguration of President Kennedy, 18 January.

'I have only two superiors above me, first, God almighty, and secondly, the people's consultative congress.'—Sukarno, President of Indonesia, reported in the *Economist*, June 25, 1960 (The People's Consultative Congress has still not been convened).

'Mr Antenor Patino is to lend the Bolivian nationalised tin industry £1,785,000, on condition that the government changes the divorce law, and so permits him to get rid of his wife'—*New Statesman*, 31 December last.

'...according to the translator all this was about his people's satisfaction with the hospital and dispensaries the Government had built, but according to the ubiquitous whisperers of the "overground" it was in fact a turbulent affirmation of the Nagas' desire for independence. The annoyance of the officials seemed to reinforce this claim'.—*Times*, 23 December last

What is a missile, when there's a dog to befriend?—*Reynolds News*, June 26, 1960.

'With your enormous prestige is it not better to hammer those views out with technical people rather than to make dangerous statements to the emotional millions?'—Sir William Hildred, Director-General of the International Air Transport Association in a letter to Lord Brabazon of Tara after the latter had demonstrated on TV the dangerous nature of J.P-4, the inflammable but cheap fuel favoured by private air-plane operators, reported in the *Observer*, last Christmas day.

'The Economic Research Council... was able to report that 21 girls got drunk in 1954 as against only 14 in 1953. The "inescapable conclusion" it declared, was that "not only is the young male indulging in liquor to an increasing extent, but he is using his surplus of earnings to demoralise the young girl as, or before, she leaves school"'.—*New Statesmen*, 24 December last.

LANDLORDS' PARADISE

RENT rises can't be needed to raise the landlords from depths of poverty. They are doing very well and, if their sellers' market is not put under control, are expecting to do even better.

Their profits are known only so far as their accounts have to be published. But what these tell us is true for the undisclosed accounts.

Since 1957, higher profits are reported in each year—with higher dividends to match. Latest reports show:

London, County and Freehold's report to March 31st, 1960, revealed net profit of £582,270 (a rise of £137,800 over previous year), and dividend 10.83%, i.e. 2½% more.

Artizan and General Properties made over £45,000 more and dividend was 18% (but 5% the year before).

Greencoat Properties (formerly Improved Industrial Dwellings) made more, too, and declared a dividend of 26% (8% the year before).

Alliance Property made a net profit of £389,847 (a rise of £125,000), and dividend was 15%, against 10% (equivalent) in 1958/59.

Raglan Property made a further £15,000, and raised dividend from 7½% to 10%.

Property Holding and Investment showed a net profit of £163,130, against £116,389 in the former year. Dividend rose from 7½% to 9%.

Regional Properties made £31,000 more and dividend was 37½%, but 30% the year before.

London Midland Associated have just paid a 60% dividend, against 52½% last time, with profits now up to £265,000.

Letter

To the Editor, Socialist Review
Dear Comrade,

I read with concern Geoff Weston's article in your January issue.

I sincerely hope that his attitude of passive, frustrated pessimism is not widespread in the Young Socialists. Maybe *New Advance* and certain other aspects of YS are not up to the expectations of its Left Wing contingent but surely any dependency at this stage is premature. Even Transport House learn by their mistakes and are prepared to give YS a freer hand than its predecessors.

May I suggest that Mr. Weston diverts his activities to YS and helps other left-wingers to obtain the type of paper and organisation we want.

Yours fraternally,

Christopher W. Drew
Secretary, Withington YS

ANTI POLARIS DEMONSTRATION

On Saturday, February 18th about the time that the U.S. Depot Ship carrying Polaris missiles is expected in the Clyde, the Committee of 100 will organise a nonviolent demonstration outside the Ministry of Defence in London.

Mass support is needed for this demonstration.

The demonstrators will stage a four hour sit-down to press home their demand for the immediate scrapping of the Polaris agreement and serve notice on the Government that they can no longer stand aside while preparations are being made for the destruction of mankind. A declaration to this effect will be signed by all demonstrators and posted upon the Defence Ministry door.

BELGIUM—An Eyewitness Account of the General Strike

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 - What the Socialist Think
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Socialist Review Fighting Fund

LABOUR HISTORY

contd.

Propaganda went out for a "Sacred Month" which was to inaugurate the rule of the people. But it soon became obvious that there would be no adequate response. The workers were not strongly organised and the Chartists had neglected to build up their strength in such unions as there were. On August 5 the Convention, from which the right wing had mainly withdrawn, abandoned the "Sacred Month" and called, instead, for a token strike of "one, two or three days". They appealed, belatedly, to the "united trades" for help. But even a token strike was beyond their powers and on September 6 the Convention, confessing defeat, decided to dissolve.

We need £40 an issue

During the last month we have received from:

	£	s	d
Islington	7	17	0
Willesden	6	8	6
Harrow	3	10	0
Camden Town	5	5	0
Shoreditch	2	7	0
N. Lewisham	1	6	6
Ramsgate	3	10	0
Liverpool	1	0	0
Newtonhill	1	0	0
Total	32	4	0

THANKS! and KEEP IT UP, COMRADES!
I enclose a contribution of£.....s.....d. to the SOCIALIST REVIEW Fighting Fund.

Name
Address

Send to SOCIALIST REVIEW APPEAL FUND, 117 Carmelite Road, Harrow Weald, Middlesex

BELGIAN GENERAL STRIKE

contd.

Disgusted with the right-wing reformism of Van Acker and Co., Renard, who lacks a scientific-socialist, unified world outlook, seeks a different solution to that proposed by Van Acker, (coalition), but nevertheless confines his perspective within the framework of capitalism. Renard wants to transform Belgium into a federal state. "I am a Walloon, and I am a federalist, and I shall remain one. We do not want to submit to Flemish clericalism any longer." And as a leaflet distributed in one of his meetings in the Walloon colours of yellow and red said: "For a Walloon Walloon: against the *Loi Unique*: against the misery in the Borinage: against the oppression of unitary government: against the Flemish Government: against the murderers of the Walloon people." (Times, January 10, 1961)

Whether this slogan of federalism squares with the general trend towards increasing economic and political integration, and above all whether it squares with the spirit dominating the fighting, marching workers who again and again sing the "internationale", is not for us to deal with here.

The basic criticism of Renard's "Federalism" is that it is reformist: it assumes changes in the structure of the state on national lines instead of the social revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state and the establishment of workers' power (although a change in the national form is of course not necessarily excluded by the socialist revolution).

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

In all the present struggles the Communist Party is playing a very small role, and a damaging one to Socialism at that.

The Communist Party, that had a very small influence in the 1920's and 1930's, was able to gain a fairly massive influence during the war and the "Resistance" to the Nazi occupation; This influence was shown clearly in the parliamentary elections of 1946, when the Communist Party representation reached 23.

Straight after the war, they took part in a coalition government with conservatives and right-wing Socialists and helped to preserve order during the great social crisis of the aftermath of the war. Then under the conditions of the "Cold War", the Communist Party took to extreme sectarianism. Following the "thaw", it moved to servile opportunism, lining up with the bureaucracies of the trade unions and Socialist Party. The net result was that the Communist Party's influence dwindled—a decline that is reflected in the fact that they have only 2 MP's today (the same number they had in 1929).

An editorial in the Communist Party daily, *Le Drapeau Rouge* of December 29, 1960, entitled, "Two Communist Proposals for a Total and Rapid Victory" gives the following lead: First, let the strike be as wide and general as possible (this is just repeating what all other labour papers said); secondly "let the Social-Christian and Liberal MP's be visited by strike pickets and workers' deputations to explain to them that they should conform to the aspirations of the electors rather than the ukases of the bankers and the government." This idea of lobbying rings a bell! And this in the middle of the most relentless class battle!

No wonder the Communist Party's role in the strike was so small. Its voice was not distinguishable from that of the central leadership of the Socialist Party and the FGTB.

"LA GAUCHE"

From a distance it is very difficult to judge the correctness or otherwise of different slogans put forward by the Left in the midst of the battle in Belgium. But to the present writer it seems that the only revolutionary and realistic lead was given by one national paper—*La Gauche*. This is a weekly of the extreme Left of the Socialist Party including number of Trotskyists which has quite considerable influence, especially among the young Socialists.

In its issue of December 24, one of its editors, Ernest Mandel, explains that the only consistent solution to the crisis could be a **worker's government based on the trade unions.**

However, Mandel argues, if the workers did not reach the level of consciousness needed for the establishment of such a government, there is a danger that the right-wing leaders will bring forth a coalition government and a "rotten compromise", that will open the door to the extreme right. The minimum below which the overwhelming majority of the workers on strike should not be ready to go, is the complete abolition of the *loi unique* and the implementation of a transitional programme, (including a drastic cut in military expenditure, radical fiscal reform, control of the big holding companies, free national health service, nationalization of the power industries, the planning of the economy to guarantee full employment, the establishment of a large National Investment Fund toward the same aim).

Above all, Mandel argues, one should not forget that parliament is not the be all and end all. Without Socialist participation in government, mass pressure can bring important results. In 1893, he reminds his readers, the electoral reform was achieved by extra-parliamentary measures without the Socialist Party taking part in the government. The conservative MP's simply "changed their minds". Conservative MP's could "change their minds" about the *loi unique* too if enough pressure were brought to bear on them. The main thing is that the strike must be continued to a victorious end.

ECONOMICS AND POLITICS

All reformists see a Chinese wall between political struggle for economic and the political struggle for revolution. The mass strike exposes the hollowness of reformism. The police and army—the political weapons of the ruling class—are there for all to see as decisive factors in the struggle. The mass strike is the best demonstration for Lenin's saying that politics is nothing but concentrated economics.

THE QUESTION OF WORKERS' CONTROL

The mass strike, by raising the question of who is the supreme sovereign in society—the capitalists or the workers—raises at least embryonic forms of dual power.

When, in the Belgian strike, coal merchants go to the strike committee to get a permit to take a certain amount of coal from stock and deliver it to authorised persons—old people, hospitals, etc. who is the master in the country?

When workers, coming to repair a damaged sewer, carry placards "We are on strike; we work by permission of the strike committee and for humanitarian reasons", who is the sovereign power?

ORGANISER OF THE CLASS

One cannot improve on Rosa Luxemburg's description of the centr-

al role of the mass strike in organising the workers into a revolutionary army: "In former bourgeois revolutions where, on the one hand, the political education and leadership of the revolutionary masses was undertaken by the bourgeois parties, and on the other hand the revolutionary task was limited to the overthrow of the government, the short battle on the barricades was the appropriate form of revolutionary struggle. Today, at a time that the working class must educate, organise and lead itself in the course of the revolutionary struggle, when the revolution itself is directed not only against the established state power but also against capitalist exploitation, mass strikes appear as the natural method to mobilise the broadest proletarian layers into action, to revolutionise and organise them.

INSURRECTION INHERENT IN THE MASS STRIKE

However, the mass strike by itself cannot overthrow the capitalist class: the capitalists have much greater financial resources than the workers and therefore they can hold much longer than the workers. The logical and necessary climax of the mass strike, if it is to end in complete, final victory over capitalism, is the armed insurrection.

Here it was quite symptomatic that already at the beginning of the Belgian strike efforts were made to draw the soldiers to the side of the workers. The Strike Committee on 24 December issued the following call: "Soldiers, The Belgian working class is engaged in a decisive struggle for its right to life. The Government wishes to use the Army and the Gendarmerie to try and break the strike and to repress the social struggle now taking place. We ask you to understand and to do your duty. If asked to replace workers in enterprises or services immobilised by the strike, just cross your arms. If brought face to face with strikers or demonstrators remember that they are your parents, your brothers, friends. **Fraternise with them.** You were called up to defend the country, not to strangle it. Have no fears. The whole socialist workers' movement is there to defend you. Soldiers, Don't be traitors to your class. We count on you, **'ACTION COMMUNE'**. (La Wallonie, 24. December 1960. Reproduced from Agitator New Generation's pamphlet, *Belgium, The General Strike*, London, January, 1961.)

IN CONCLUSION

Whatever the immediate result of the Belgian strike, its main lessons will continue to help the international labour movement. The class struggle goes on. Years of full employment and "affluence" may put a gloss of conformism on the working class, but they also strengthen its self-confidence and combativeness. The "apathy" is transitory at worst. If workers who face deterioration on the present scale in their conditions, show such militancy and revolutionary fervour, what heights of heroism and initiative will workers scale when the contradictions in world capitalism reach really tremendous dimensions, as they are sure to in the future.

The class struggle is in the last analysis a political struggle. The struggle for reforms is not inherently and entirely separated from the struggle for revolution. The need for a unifying, consistent scientific socialism, for Marxism and Marxist leadership is vital for the success of the class struggle.

The workers of Europe and the world, to use Rosa Luxemburg's words, should learn to "speak Belgian".

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 ie, 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, 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 abolition of conscription and the withdrawal of all British troops from overseas.

- The abolition of the H-bomb and all weapons of mass destruction. Britain to pave the way with unilateral renunciation of the H-bomb.

- A Socialist foreign policy subservient to neither Washington nor Moscow.