

Our Programme for Power

An end to the coalition with the bosses. Labour and Trade Union leaders must break with the capitalist Government and wage a campaign for power on the following programme:

1. Immediate despatch of arms and material to the Soviet Union under the control of the Trade Unions and factory committees.
2. Nationalisation of the land, mines, banks, transport and all big industry without compensation.
3. Confiscation of all war profits—all company books to be open for trade union inspection.
4. Workers' control of production to end chaos and mismanagement in industry to be exercised through workers committees.
5. Equal distribution of food, clothes, and other consumers commodities under control of the Co-ops, committees of workers elected from the distributive trades, factories, housewives committees and small shopkeepers.
6. A rising scale of wages to meet the increased cost of living with a guaranteed minimum.
7. Repeal of the Essential Works Order and all other anti-working class and strike-breaking laws.
8. Clear out the reactionary pro-fascist officer caste in the Army and Home Guard. Election of officers by the soldiers. Trade union wages for all workers in the armed forces.
9. Establishment of military schools by the Trade Unions at the expense of the state for the training of worker officers.
10. Arming of the workers under control of committees of workers elected in factories, unions and in the streets against the danger of invasion or Petainism.
11. Freedom for Ireland, India and the Colonies.
12. A Socialist appeal to the workers of Germany and Europe on the basis of this programme in Britain to join the Socialist struggle against Hitler to the Socialist United States of Europe.

E.T.U. SHIPWORKERS BONUS GRIEVANCE

BY TOM BURNS

The electricians in shipyard, Glasgow, complain bitterly about the new bonus arrangement which was bureaucratically enforced on them by the Government. The 'sparks' work harder expecting a reasonable bonus, but in practice they only receive a small addition to their meagre wage while the employer is reaping in more profits.

Some months ago, the National Executive of the E.T.U. balloted the membership with the view to introducing into the trade, a bonus scheme. A huge majority, nationally, voted in favour of the status quo. This democratic decision did not apparently satisfy Mr. Bevin, Minister of Labour, as he called together the shop stewards of this industry and dictated to them that either they accepted the bonus scheme, or else he would ask the employers to apply it independently. The bureaucratic leadership of the E.T.U. accepted the principle and an agreement was drawn up between the Shipbuilding and Engineering Employers Federation and the Union. The Scheme was put into operation on the 22nd February, 1943.

In the yard, a collective bonus for all ships under construction, was the method adopted by the boss. For sheer excessive profit-making, this idea takes some beating. The employer assesses the costs of the ships and the time to be taken. If the workers work extremely hard and speed up the job the savings will be divided out as bonus.

Although the agreement stated that a monthly result was to be shown, at the end of March no figures were produced giving the monthly bonus. A great agitation swept throughout the ranks of the electricians and forced the employer finally to give a provisional bonus of 10 per cent. In hard cash this meant the paltry sum of 38/- on an average for the month. At the end

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of April, again no figures were produced. It needed an organised protest by the workers to change this position. The April bonus showed 8 per cent, but as the employers reckoned that the previous month's figure should have been 8 per cent instead of 10 per cent, the 2 per cent owing would be taken off the April standard so making the amount 6 per cent. Therefore, for working till 9 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursdays, Saturday afternoon to 4.30 p.m. and alternate Sundays the average bonus earnings amounted to only 25/- for the month.

This decision so infuriated the electricians that a mass meeting was called and decided to write Bevin and tell him what they thought about his bonus scheme. A half day strike followed. Mathieson, a prominent Stalinist and member of the shop committee stayed on at work.

The local agreement on the 'payment by results' is, to put it mildly, one-sided. In point 8 it says:

"The percentage of work done on each ship will be assessed by a qualified man appointed by the management and the bonus to be paid will be decided by the management whose decisions must be accepted as final."

In the section dealing with penalties, workers will lose their bonus if time-keeping is not kept, or, if they break any of the yard rules and regulations. Altogether the agreement is a very poor one as far as the workers are concerned. Since 'payment by results' was introduced the management has declared many electricians redundant, so getting more work done by a less number of men.

When it is realised, that the wages paid to a shipyard electrician is only 1/10d. plus 1/4ths of a penny per hour, it is not surprising that these workers desire an increase in their pay packet, especially with the present high cost of living. The original demand of the electricians in opposing 'payment by results' should be pressed forward more sharply through the yard committees, shop committees and branches. Bevin's dictatorial attitude as representative of the capitalist government in imposing the present agreement onto the workers, must meet the instant condemnation of all sections of the working class.

The leadership of the E.T.U. must be forced by the membership to drive forward for a genuine wage increase from the bosses.



PAMPHLETS BY TROTSKY

- WAR AND WORLD REVOLUTION 2d
- TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME OF THE 4th INTERNATIONAL 6d
- TRADE UNIONS 1d
- L.P. & THE 4th INTERNATIONAL 2d

will not only ensure more democracy inside the union, but it will also greatly assist the education of the membership. When the national delegates see Walker get a trouncing like he did in London, they will soon understand the correct position.

One of the main reasons for London playing a leading part is because stress is continually being laid upon members taking an active interest in union affairs. The B.I.S.A.K.T.A. leadership don't like this because they thrive upon the inertia of the members. That is why members must immediately commence to play an active part in the union. Connections should be opened up with militants in other areas and a rank and file campaign instituted in the union to support London's lead. At forthcoming divisional conferences this year the slogans should be:

- Against Vansittartism and Walker.
- For more democracy in the Union.
- For an Annual Conference.

STEEL WORKERS OPPOSE T.U. LEADERS

The trend towards the left which is developing throughout the trade union movement is sharply reflected in the decisions taken at the Divisional Conference of B.I.S.A.K.T.A. held in London on July 3. In this, the most conservative of all engineering unions, 27 delegates, representing about 4,000 steel workers and engineers, made history when a unanimous vote (apart from 4 abstentions) they demanded that an Annual National Conference should be held in place of the existing divisional conferences. This was the first time such a demand was successful. It constituted a fitting reply to the anti-democratic Vansittart policies of the Brown Walker caucus. It is proof of the unrest which is sweeping the union, indicating the grouping together of a left-wing, particularly in the London area. Further resolutions of a militant character, such as the withdrawal of the Black Circular were also carried, while the resolution on C.P. affiliation to the L.P. was defeated by only one vote.

WALKER AND VANSITTART.

One of the main discussions at the conference was the Vansittart resolution which attacked the German workers as being equally as guilty as Hitler. Cunningly phrased, this resolution on the surface, appeared to be a modification of the usual Vansittart rubbish, but its underlying motives were the same. James Walker, M.P., the political secretary, made this clear as far back as 1941 when in his presidential address to the Labour Party Conference he stated: "I cannot separate the German people from the German Government. They are just as responsible for the acts of the Government as the Government itself." Mr. Walker has continually seized upon the political backwardness of B.I.S.A.K.T.A. members to foist this reactionary argument wherever possible upon the British workers. What he neglects to tell the members of his union is that when Hitler came to power in Germany, Labour and trade union leaders of Mr. Walker's type attempted to retain their fat salaried positions under Hitler.

Strong opposition was forthcoming against this resolution at the Conference, and it was only carried by 13 votes to 10, with 4 abstentions. At the Manchester Conference it was unanimously adopted, which shows the dire need for a strong campaign throughout the union against this policy.

LONDON GIVES THE LEAD

B.I.S.A.K.T.A. members everywhere must rally full support for London's demand for a national conference. Closer contact amongst the members

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Correspondence

A SOLDIER ON A.B.C.A. LECTURES

July, 1943.

Socialist Appeal, Dear Comrade,

I am writing to you about a most instructive experience I have had in the army. An experience which showed me quite clearly that the army chiefs and the Government are determined that the rank and file shall not be allowed to discuss seriously at the A.B.C.A. meetings the questions that really interest them. The ban on the discussion of the Beveridge Report may have been lifted, but the brass-hats are going to see to it that this does not lead to any serious discussion of the problem of social security.

An expert came to our camp to teach the officers how to give A.B.C.A. lectures on the Beveridge Plan. Two dozen privates were detailed to act as a stooge audience to which the "expert" gave a demonstration lecture while the officers looked on and listened. I was one of the stooges. I thus had an excellent opportunity of getting the tip straight from the horse's mouth.

The usual attempt was made to create the "heart-to-heart talk" atmosphere. ("You can smoke, chaps," and "This is just a chat between you and me.") Then came the "discussion". And I have never heard one which was more firmly controlled, or more carefully guided. The speaker limited the discussion strictly to the relatively technical question of health services. Nothing else was allowed. The point that the first essential for an improvement in national health is good wages, sufficient good food, leisure, etc., was ruled out of order as being beyond the scope of the discussion. The same with every other point that left the sphere of the purely technical and threatened to become political.

For an hour we debated how doctors should be paid. The rights and wrongs of the panel system. The question of

compulsory medical inspection for the whole population. But social security wasn't even touched on. The speaker's idea of discussion was to ask a question, and whenever the man who answered it got beyond a simple yes or no, to stop him and say he was not sticking to the subject.

It must be admitted that the speaker was a past-master in his particular art. But it was not the art of promoting discussion. On the contrary, it consisted in killing discussion completely. And the officers were listening all the time, learning to do the same.

It is quite clear that the army bigwigs regard the A.B.C.A. discussions merely as a safety valve. And they are determined that the rank and file shall not turn them into something more useful.

The Beveridge Plan itself is no more than a species of safety valve. It is highly significant therefore, that workers in uniform are not even allowed to discuss it freely. The official propaganda states that one of the purposes of the war is to secure a better future for everybody. But the very men who are supposed to be fighting for that are not even allowed to air their own views freely. That is democracy at work in the army. The Government and the army chiefs have been forced to allow some sort of discussion on the Beveridge Plan; but they are determined to keep it within limits. The demonstration lecture by the "expert" showed this clearly.

But whether or not the officers can handle the situation in the same way is another matter. It is up to the men to see that the discussions are not confined to trivial details and banalities but are a serious interchange of ideas on the real problems that face the British working class, whether they work in the factory or in the army.

A. S.

POPULATION FIGURES AND THE SYSTEM

The rapid decline in the population is causing alarm in the ranks of the ruling classes. The bourgeoisie is worried because the shrinking population threatens their prosperity and profits. Less labour-power, less consumers and above all less cannon fodder.

The debate in the House of Lords on June 6th led by Lord Geddes made some startling suggestions and revealed even more startling omissions. Lord Geddes stated that for some reason at present unknown the "reproductive germ plasma" among the races of North-West Europe has declined during the last 150 years. That this has resulted in these people developing a "psychological bias" so that not only are they unable to have children but that they are more and more unwilling to have them. In the face of this threat of the extinction of mankind Lord Geddes suggested that a Royal Commission be set up to investigate "the biological problem" of the population figures. As is usual in the House of Lords, the social, political and economic reasons for the problem are ignored and Lord Geddes concentrates upon the minor negligible aspects of the threatened destruction of the human race.

The Empty Cradle is a Consolus Act, it is a conscious and decisive condemnation of our present social system.

Lord Geddes deliberately or otherwise ignores this fundamental aspect of the problem. By his statements he is either trying to prevent the truth from becoming known, or he does not understand the question, and should therefore not be taken seriously despite his undoubted scientific knowledge.

If statistics are studied over the period of the last century it can be irrefutably established that the birth-

rate fluctuations follow economic crises precisely. For instance 1933 the period of the greatest slump coincided with the lowest recorded birth rate. The very fact that family allowances are becoming a common demand even from reactionary sections of society gives proof of the fact that the economic basis for the falling birth rate is more clearly understood by laymen than by Lord Geddes, a former anatomist of some reputation. Family allowances however, cannot solve the problem, since mere subsistence will not induce parentage.

Women who have struggled to free themselves from the drudgery of the kitchen and the washtub will not easily give up the results of their emancipation. Only a fundamental change in the whole social system can make it possible for women to become mothers, yet remain free. Only a socialist society can solve the problem of nurseries, communal kitchens, and automatic cleaning, as well as offer a reasonable security during the period of pregnancy, childbirth and convalescence. The question of education and chance in life is another aspect which limits the family. But the most important aspect is one of perspective.

Capitalism in decline offers nothing but war, famine, disease and death. Men and women to-day having the necessary knowledge and possessing the means, choose, deliberately not to have children.

The question of the survival of the human race is in the balance. The falling birth rate is only an aspect of the rapid extinction of the human race should the present barbaric system continue.

Only with a Socialist Society can man regain his confidence in the future of society, can there be a guarantee of freedom, plenty and happiness.

TYNE WELDERS' STRIKE

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so many workers thrown on the scrap heap.

Although the number of workers involved in this strike is small the issues at stake are extremely large, and from their leaflet it is obvious that the workers appreciate the magnitude of their struggle:

"We treat this as a test, and if the Management are allowed to impose their conditions and we are forced to accept, it will affect every piece-worker on this river."

The union official has attempted to convene a meeting to urge the workers to return pending arbitration. The workers are prepared to do this providing their interpretation, which is

the general interpretation on the Tyneside with regard to lieu rate, holds good until the tribunal gives a decision.

But the workers refuse to create a precedent by accepting the bosses' interpretation while waiting for the arbitration tribunal to meet. They are determined to resist all threats or cajolings to return to work and their fine militant stand is receiving the support it deserves from the workers of the Tyneside.

It has just been learned that the management is employing 20 girls to take the strikers' place. The yard opens up again on 12th July after being closed for a week's holiday. This is a deliberate provocative action on the management's part, and the strikers firmly believe that the whole yard will down tools as a result of this blatant attempt to employ scab labour. We urge the workers on the Tyneside, and elsewhere to close their ranks and prevent the capitalist class from filching from them hard won union rights.