

# THE FIGHT FOR UNITY IN PARLIAMENT

By WM. GALLACHER, M.P.

**D**URING the election campaign in West Fife the most was made of the argument, "There's no use in voting for Gallacher ; if he's returned he'll be all alone and won't be able to do anything."

But I was returned and I am far from being alone. From the first I have been warmly welcomed by old friends and comrades in the Parliamentary Labour Party. I was invited to make myself at home amongst them and given every possible aid and encouragement to find my way about in the somewhat strange job that had now been given me to do.

At first there was some doubt in the Labour Party, as a whole, as to whether I might not associate with the Maxton group and thereby become an added source of irritation to them, but there was no doubt in my mind. The line of the Communist Party in the General Election, which was the line of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, was a clear guide to me for my work in the House of Commons. Unity of all the forces against the National Government. Unity in Parliament, and unity outside of Parliament, for this the Communist Party and I, as representative of that Party in the House of Commons, had to work. In pursuance of this policy of unity the Party has applied for affiliation, while I, in keeping with this, applied for the Labour Party Whip. While I have not been accorded the "whip," it has not been refused me in any real meaning of the word. With the constitution of the Labour Party such as it is at the present time, it is not possible for the Parliamentary Party to accept me as an official member. This, of course, I understood and so appreciated very much the decision of the Executive of the Parliamentary Party, that the leader of the Party, Mr. Attlee, should have a talk with me and explain the position. Attlee strikes me as being a clean, straight and likeable colleague and should make a capable leader if there is efficient team-work developed in the Labour Party. Of that I will say something later.

Following the decision of the Executive he spoke to me and after explaining the position, expressed the hope that I would get on all right with them and that they would help me in any way they could. It is now for the Party to carry out its work in such a way that all resistance to affiliation will be effectively broken down. There is no doubt at all but what we can achieve this at this year's Labour Party Conference, if we effectively apply ourselves to the task. In all parts of the country the

workers and the small middle class traders and professional people associated with the workers want unity, and if correctly approached will support our application for affiliation. In the ranks of the Parliamentary Labour Party also, as amongst hundreds of Labour councillors throughout the country, the feeling for unity is growing, and with it an entirely new attitude towards the Communist Party and a higher appreciation of its work. When in the course of my first speech in Parliament I made a reference "to the party represented on these benches, *from which at the moment I am an outcast*," there were cries of denial. "No, no, Willie," not only from those who are classed as "advanced," but from those who had always been looked on as the most implacable enemies of the Communist Party.

But one of the urgent questions of unity that demands an immediate solution, is the present position and attitude of the I.L.P. group in the House of Commons and in the country. In the House of Commons the relations between the group and the Labour Party are exceptionally bad, almost incredibly so. The I.L.P.'ers shun the Labour members as though they were a plague to be avoided at all costs, while in the Labour Party there has grown up a feeling of angry irritation and deep distrust as a consequence of their (the I.L.P.'ers') behaviour in discussions and their associations in the Lobbies.

On several occasions during my short experience I have witnessed several unsavoury exhibitions. The most notable, but not the only one, was when Thomas was making one of his well-known gutter attacks on the Labour Party, Campbell Stephen kept up a chorus of jeers at the Labour benches such as "he's right," "you can't answer him," and so on. The effect of such conduct on the new young members of the Labour Party is to arouse them to indignant anger against the men who are prepared to "kick their own side" when the enemy is attacking. In their speeches also they continually receive the hearty approval of the Tories for their nasty sniping at the Labour Party. However, after the first day or two, this sniping took a new turn. Obviously they had been expecting me, despite the clear lead of our Party in the elections, to indulge in this game of "popularising" myself with the enemies of the working class. When they found that I was continuing the policy of the Communist Party in relation to the Labour Party, they turned their sniping activities in my direction. I now stand as a buffer between them and the object of their past attentions, so all their darts are thrown at me.

But this futile and foolish behaviour will get them nowhere and will have, sooner or later, to be ended. The gulf that now exists between them and the members of the Labour Party must be bridged, however difficult this may be of achievement. There is no doubt whatever that Maxton could play a much bigger part in the movement inside and outside

of Parliament if the present tactics of his group were dropped and a better attitude towards the Labour Party adopted.

In the Parliamentary Labour Party itself there is need for a much better understanding of party policy and party loyalty. There is far too much "playing one's own hand" and too little concerted effort directed against the National Government. This was demonstrated in a very striking manner in the big debate on the Hoare-Laval plan. This debate opened with Hoare's speech in which he insisted that "Oil sanctions" were "War" sanctions, and would lead to war in Europe. The idea being that Mussolini, driven desperate, would commit some "mad-dog" act in Europe which would embroil Italy in war with Britain and other European nations. Never was there such a fallacious or untenable argument. Mussolini would certainly be driven desperate through the firm application of oil sanctions, because it would be impossible for him to continue the war against Abyssinia. If it were made impossible for him to go on with the war in Abyssinia, then surely it is absurd to suggest that he could start in on a brand new war in Europe.

When Hoare got finished with his attempted justification of the proposed betrayal of Abyssinia, Attlee took the floor. He made a strong, reasoned, well-argued speech in which he showed that for what had happened, Baldwin and the hard-faced gang around him were equally responsible with Hoare. That all of them were equally guilty and all of them should share his fate. It was a sound lead in this big debate, but it was a lead that wasn't followed up by the members of the Labour Party who got an opportunity of participating in the debate. Not till the time came for Dalton to wind up, was Attlee's lead taken up and supported. Between the first speech and the last it was every man for himself. Sir Stafford Cripps, while he made criticism of the Government, was more concerned with accepting Hoare's thesis, that "Oil sanctions" were "War" sanctions and of utilising this for scoring, in his best, or worst, law-court manner at the expense of a feeble-witted member on the other side. He then went onto deliver himself of the usual "Left" phrases, about war being "inevitable" under Capitalism, that all capitalist states were the same, and until we got Socialism we could not get out of war. In the midst of this confused jumble, which was all directed towards weakening support for the League of Nations and Collective Peace, a Tory interjected: "Then why has the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations?" To this he made a reply that in itself is a complete exposure of his pretentious folly. The Soviet Union, he said, being a Communist State and isolated, had joined the League in order through pacts and agreements to defend itself from attack. Pacts and agreements with the States which according to him made war "inevitable." What an understanding of the international situation and the rôle of the Soviet Union! When the Soviet Union was "isolated" with no diplomatic recognition anywhere,

it looked on and treated the League of Nations as a centre of imperialist intrigue. Then Cripps was for the League of Nations. But now the Soviet Union is no longer isolated. With growing strength it broke down barrier after barrier, until it has diplomatic recognition, trade agreements with all the principal countries, and Peace Pacts with many of its neighbours. On the basis of the First Five-Year Plan and the mighty achievements this registered it became and remains the dominant factor in world economy. It stands forth ahead of all others. At the same time as these great advances were taking place great changes were taking place in the international situation, and were expressed in the changing character of the League of Nations. The withdrawal of Japan, followed by that of Germany, was significant of this change. The Soviet Union, not isolated and looking for protection, but mighty and strong, seized the opportunity and entered the League of Nations in order to drive ahead with its working-class policy of Collective Peace. Cripps, who was for the League when it was a den of imperialist war intrigue, is now against it when the first Socialist State is bending all its energies with the support of workers everywhere, to make it a real centre against aggression and war. This speech was a purely "personal" speech and was not in any real way a follow-up of the lead given by the leader of the party.

Then Maxton got in and wasted ten or fifteen minutes talking around the utterly absurd amendment which had been put down by the I.L.P. The central idea of this, if it can be called an idea, was that nothing could be done until the workers got power. It sounds very revolutionary, but it's just childish nonsense. Nothing can be done till the workers get power? But unless a whole lot of things are done, including the fight against war, the workers will never get power. It was tragic to think of Maxton with all the standing he still has in the working class movement, getting the opportunity to speak on such an important occasion and, instead of utilising it for backing up Attlee's attack on the Government, threw the chance away and said not a word that was of the slightest value to the working class movement.

Then came Thurtle, who took up the theme of the "Permanent Officials." This was a complete distraction and could easily have been used as an excuse for Hoare and Baldwin, or at any rate as a justification for softening down the criticism of them both. His big point was that the "Permanent Officials" at the Foreign Office, who were enemies of the League of Nations and the cause of all the troubles, should be made to take an oath of loyalty to the League of Nations. It is quite obvious that the Labour Party cannot make the headway it should while Members get off at such a tangent on important occasions such as this. All kinds of individual views are held and expressed without any clear understanding of how a party should concentrate all its best forces around a particular issue, a lead on which has already been given by the leadership of the party.

Yet despite these individual diversions, there is everywhere amongst the members of the Labour Party in Parliament, a growing realisation of the need for unity of all forces in the struggle to overthrow the National Government and to advance the cause of the workers. The more this feeling grows, and the greatest factor in its growth will be the extent and strength of the Communist Party's campaign for unity in the country, the more will these individualist tendencies become subordinated to the general policy of the Labour Party and the task it has of developing an opposition that will end the National Government at the earliest opportunity. The need for unity is urgent in the House of Commons as well as in the country amongst the masses of workers and their allies. In the House of Commons the situation is very favourable for unity and all my work, guided and supported by my Party's leadership, will be directed towards its speedy advance.

I will do all in my power to bring about unity with the Maxtons, and at the same time to strengthen the understanding of concerted action against the forces of the enemy. In this work I'll have strong support from many members of the Labour Party who, like S. O. Davies and others in the Thaelman letter, are already participating in various forms of united activity.

There is a big change in the Labour Party in Parliament from what it was under MacDonald's leadership. This change is all to the good, and if we work as we should and can work, unity can surely be realised.

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