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3d.

**The Rent
Repairs Bill
Analysed**
(See Page Two)

Leicester Labour Welcomes Jagan

On Nov. 2nd. Dr. Cheddi Jagan was to address a closed meeting of students of Leicester University College.

When we knew this, several comrades, including **Jack Johnson** (Labour candidate for S. E. Leicester) with only three

★ Star Letter ★

days notice, organised a public meeting for Dr. Jagan for the same evening.

In view of the short notice, the Leicester Branch of the **National Association of Labour Teachers** sponsored the meeting. Only a school hall could be booked—and even this was only after much “after you, Claude” activity.

400 were packed in the Hall and in perfect order heard Dr. Jagan speak for an hour, followed by questions.

Councillor **Bert Powell** (G & M. W. U.) took the chair, and he was supported on the platform by Councillors **J. Gale, F. Gumbrell, Len Hurst, Bro. A. Hall** (ASW and vice president Trades Council) **Bro. Spradbrow** (Trades Council) **J. Wells** of the Co-op Political Council. **Jack Johnson M.A.** moved a vote of thanks.

A collection of £17 7s. was taken and after the expenses were paid the balance was sent to the **Caribbean Labour Congress**, and the mixed audience from all parties showed overwhelming sympathy for the British Guiana P.P.P. case.

Leicester **L. P. member**

Engineers Take The Lead in Wages Fight

‘Daily Mail’ Discovers another ‘Red Plot’

A ONE-DAY stoppage of engineers has been recommended by the National Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union to back the engineers’ demand for a 15 per cent wage increase.

The delegates to the National Committee passed this recommendation by 35 votes to 17. **By 39 votes to 13 they rejected a resolution calling for a Court of Inquiry.**

The day after the National Committee meeting there was the press reaction which we now expect whenever workers express

their militancy. “The Communist plan to advance Britain into a great industrial crisis was advanced another step last night”, was the “Daily Mail’s” contribution to an understanding of why the National Committee took the decisions it did.

The “Daily Herald” was much more subtle. After reporting the meeting and the motions that were discussed, it remarked:—“There are almost 15 Communists or near Communists on the A.E.U. National Committee.

They regard the token strike as a softening up process”.

If the “Daily Herald” did a little arithmetic it would find that even if the votes of 15 “Communists or near Communists” were subtracted from the National Committee proceedings the decisions would remain the same.

The fact is that this committee’s decision to call for a one day stoppage and the refusal to go to a Court of Inquiry were a reflection of the discontent throughout the industry at the refusal of our wage increase.

The present militancy of engineers has already been shown in the monster demonstrations that have been taking place throughout the country backing the claim for 15 per cent increase in wages.

These feelings are the result, not of any ‘Communist plan’ but are born out of the constant struggle against a rising cost of living; out of the fact that our real wages are lower than in 1947; that all our efforts for higher productivity since that time have resulted only in higher profits and dividends.

The employers have tried to tell us that we have been doing very well. Their figures for wages, however, includes all overtime payments. But as **Jack Tanner**, on behalf of the engineering unions, has pointed out—about two thirds of those employed in engineering, and nearly three quarters of those in Vehicle Manufacture, did not work any overtime at all in 1952, nor are they doing so today.

The figures of the Annual Wage Bill in 1948 and 1952 prove, beyond a doubt, that the majority of workers today are worse off than they were five years ago, despite the great increase in output.

Meanwhile, gross profits have increased 101 per cent from 1947 to 1951. Dividends have increased.

By
Harry Finch

All the facts were placed before the employers representatives by the unions. The claim has been discussed since last July. The engineering employers offer nothing, **absolutely nothing!**

The recommendations of the A.E.U. National Committee for a one day stoppage will now go before a meeting of the Executive Committees of the unions affiliated to the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions. It appears likely, as the A.E.U. is the largest union affiliated to the

Confederation, the decision for a one-day strike will be carried through. It is reported that the chief opponents of the stoppage will be engineering leaders from the Municipal and General Workers Union and the Transport and General Workers Union. It is to be expected, in any case, that they will oppose any militant action of whatever character.

According to the “Manchester Guardian” they will demand a ballot vote of the union membership. But this isn’t love for union democracy but **love for delay**. It would take the G.M.W.U. up to three months to take a ballot of its membership! In these circumstances a ballot would be ridiculous.

We engineers now face a test. If a national one day stoppage is called every loyal trade unionist will do his utmost to make it a success, although I do not believe it will be decisive. After this demonstration we will almost certainly still be faced with the question; **what next?**

The A.E.U. has rightly rejected asking the government for a Court of Inquiry. Faith in Courts of Inquiry and Arbitration is dwindling in the industry. That is the result of experience of arbitration stalling our demands and Courts of Inquiry being used as a platform to attack militants and militancy.

The employers and the government may decide to test our strength to the limit. This will leave the preparation of a national strike as the only alternative.

Colonial Freedom: Why We Support It

REPORTS from all over Britain show that so far as the fight for freedom in British Guiana is concerned the heart of the British Labour Movement is in the right place.

Despite the N.E.C.’s shameful attempt to gag **Dr. Jagan** and **Mr. Burnham**—the representatives of the Guiana Peoples Progressive Party—meetings were nevertheless arranged for them throughout the country. Either directly by Local Labour Parties, or by Labour Party members acting through such organisations as the Fabian

of Labour’s support. The same people who in Britain cut the food subsidies and starve the old-age pensioners, who refuse wage increases and call out the troops to break strikes, who give millions to the landlords and raise the rents of working class homes—these are the same people who draw great profits from the exploitation of millions of peoples in Africa, Asia, and the West Indies. Therefore, when our fellow-workers in the colonies start a fight against oppression it is in our interest to give them every support.

And this support needs no other justification. There is no need to say “If we don’t support them they will turn to the Soviet Union”. Indeed, this kind of nervous argument can be most dangerous.

It implies in the first place that the Soviet Union is an enemy of the British workers, that they should therefore be concerned about preventing it gaining allies, and finally, that the present preparation for war against the Soviet Union are, in some way or another in the interest of Labour. But if that is really the case then it only remains for the Tories to produce “evidence” (and that’s what police agents are for) that the leaders of the Guianese people for example are Communist and presumably Labour’s support should be withdrawn.

THEIR OWN AFFAIR

It is an absurd method of reasoning. A movement against imperialism, such as that in Malaya, cannot be reactionary simply because its leadership happens to be Communist-dominated.

For all we know the movement in British Guiana may indeed be under Communist control. It would be strange if it weren’t, considering the kind of treatment that Jagan and Burnham have received



Mr. S. M. King, deposed Minister of Communications in British Guiana, now—together with six other P.P.P. leaders—imprisoned “indefinitely” by the Tory Government.

at the hands of our Labour leadership! But in any case the colonial people have a right to choose whatever leadership they like. That is their own affair.

Finally, whether we support them or not, it is certain that millions of colonial people will continue the fight against imperialism. It is also certain that this struggle—whoever leads it—will strengthen the Soviet Union because it will weaken the Soviet Union’s capitalist enemies. What it will not strengthen is the Soviet Union’s present bureaucratic system of government.

On the contrary, the crumbling of capitalism—of which the anti-imperialist struggle is an essential part—can only lend confidence to the Russian workers and thus bring nearer the day when those workers will settle accounts with their own system of dictatorial “party bossism”. The lesson is clear. Enemy number one is world imperialism. Defeat that and the task of cleansing the world Labour Movement of all kinds of bureaucratic distortions will become comparatively easy.

Sir Rex and the ‘Agitators’

By **Dan Brandon**
Editor **Portworkers’ Clarion**

SIR REX HODGES, general manager and secretary to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, is a courageous man. At least that is what the “Liverpool Evening Express” thinks.

“Few men have had the courage to say what they think about the undercurrent of agitation that has been flowing through dockland for several years”, wrote their shipping reporter, on November 7th. Sir Rex, obviously a lion among men, is one of the few.

He has stated his opinion that if only the “troublemakers” could be removed from dockland, what a happy and lovable place it would be. Everything in the garden would be lovely, declares this hero, ... if only it could be weeded. We know this valiant knight is a keen gardener. How he loves his geraniums! but he doesn’t like stinging nettles.

Sir Rex the Lionheart gave his opinions on dockland and a warning to “troublemakers” at the annual dinner of the Liverpool branch of the Institute of Export. “Shipowners support Sir Rex’s attack on trouble dockers”, said the “Liverpool Evening Express” headline. Inspired by Sir Rex’s example, a spirited (take that which way you like, remember it was a business mens’ dinner) shipowner went so far as to declare his support to the Express reporter.

But alas! for the frailties of human nature. Terrified obviously of the consequences of his declaration he asked to remain anonymous.

“Unfortunately,” said this shy type “the good types in dockland listen to agitators and are even threatened by them”. No doubt

this shipowner, being of course a good type, asked to remain anonymous because he has been threatened by members of the Portworkers Committee.

If these agitators could be weeded out, he continued “Merseyside would be the finest port in Britain without a doubt”.

Every intelligent docker knows that these shipowners are not concerned with the beauty of this port, but rather, with how much profit they can make out of it. **To be the finest we must be the cheapest.**

... and it’s a very old story!

During a wave of strikes one hundred years ago, the “Economist” of November 12th 1853, had this to say:—

“It is with sincere regret and deep disappointment that we have witnessed the proceedings of the operatives in the manufacturing districts during the last few weeks or months... on this occasion, as on all previous ones, the operatives have not managed their own business, but have submitted to the dictation of irresponsible if not self-elected leaders. In place of settling their own affairs with their own employers... they have preferred acting in combination and acting through a body which had no concern in the matter, and which their employers could not recognise”.

Whether or not these chronic attacks on the dockers are the result of verbal diarrhoea due to the rich food consumed at these frequent dinners we do not know. We do know what lies behind them. We do appreciate that the voice of Sir Rex is the voice of his masters—the shipowners.

The present attack by Sir Rex on the dockers means one thing—the employers deplore and are afraid of organised labour. In the past the counterparts of this knight carried out vicious attacks on the men who made possible trade unionism. They also blamed all their troubles on “agitators” who were alleged to wreak havoc among a “fine body of men”. But if the shipowners ever believed this, which I doubt, then they really take us for a fine body, not of men, but of children—led by the nose or pushed around by a handful of troublemakers.

These “troublemakers” on Merseyside have been elected by the dockers, they are supported by the dockers today who like their forerunners in the historic struggles of our industry want an organisation to defend their interests. Sir Rex is attacking men who want to carry trade unionism to its logical conclusion—the protection of the workers’ standard of life.

Sir Rex made a remark which I think would be a classic among schoolboy howlers. Said he; “Men with a grouse should come along in the normal way and get their grievances attended to”.

It is that easy, apparently. I leave this point with the dockers. **They know how easy it is.**

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THE Tory Party Housing Repairs and Rents' Bill, as I expected, a Landlords' Bill.

Its effect on tenants of rent-controlled property will be disastrous; their rents will rise steeply, their living standards will fall, their houses will not be repaired and...they have no redress.

They can submit, or go on the streets, or, what is more likely, crowd together to share the increased rent and suffer to a still greater degree all the evil effects of overcrowding.

The Bill has of course to go through the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Let nobody assume that its danger will be lessened in that process. Both these chambers are controlled by the Landlords' Party and they will see that its provisions are, if necessary, tightened up, so that the tenant will have no escape.

WHAT ARE "REPAIRS"??

Part II of the Bill deals with what is called Repairs Increase. The implication of the use of the word "Repairs" is that the increased rent the landlord gets is for that purpose only, not for extra profit. Even the Tory Party dares not say he should have more profit. Nevertheless the Bill does in fact give the landlord extra profit and does not give the tenant a properly repaired house. At the most, all the house will get is a "lick and a promise".

In order to get his increased rent, all the landlord is called upon to do is to serve a notice of increase on the tenant that his rent will go up in four weeks time from the date of the notice. The notice is required to contain two declarations:—

(a) that at the date of service of the notice the conditions justifying an increase of rent were fulfilled; and

(b) that during the period of twelve months ending with the date of serving notice, work of a general description has been carried out on the dwelling to a value of not less than three times the amount allowed by the rating authorities for repairs; alternatively this can be six times the amount spread over three years.

What is the position of the tenant when he gets this notice? It is laid down (in part 5 of the Second Schedule attached to the Bill) that the serving of the notice to increase the rent is to be regarded as the production of satisfactory evidence that the work required has been carried out, and that the validity of the declaration shall not be questioned on

the ground that the value of the work stated is less than required by the Act.

The tenant will therefore by law be forced to pay the increased rent unless within fourteen days of getting the notice (note the short time) he lodges an appeal to the county court to determine whether work has been carried out during that period specified and that its value is at least that required to allow the landlord to obtain the increased rent.

WHAT DOES REASONABLY SUITABLE MEAN?

Now let us look at what is meant by the conditions justifying an increase and the amount of work to be done.

Section 18 of Part II of the Bill says the house is to be in good repair and "reasonably suitable" for occupation. What does "reasonably suitable" in fact mean?

There is room here for the landlord's opinion, the tenant's opinion and every possible type and shade of opinion between, and the dispute can only be settled, according to the Bill, by a county court judge. There is no appeal (Clause 27).

The matter is rendered more difficult by two other provisions of the Bill. One is section 26 of Part II of the Bill which says "there shall be disregarded, in determining whether a dwelling-house is in good repair, any defect due to any neglect or default by the tenant or any breach by the tenant of an express agreement on division of responsibility for repairs between landlord and tenant".

Where such arrangements exist (and there are many of them) they will give rise to further disputes, again only to be settled by the county court.

Another provision, Clause 6 of the Second Schedule, says work done solely for the benefit of the dwelling-house shall be treated as having been carried out on the dwelling-house notwithstanding that the site of the work is not comprised in the dwelling-house.

It also says that work done for the benefit of the dwelling-house and also of other premises, whether the work was carried out on a site comprised in the dwelling-house or elsewhere, shall be treated as having been carried out on the dwelling-house. There seems to be no limit to what this can mean.

Certainly road charges could be claimed, under this clause, as re-

THE LANDLORD'S CHARTER

The Tory 'Housing Repairs' Bill Analysed By

★ TOM BRADDOCK ★

pairs done to the house. So might repairs carried out at the landlord's offices or his workshops or the workshops of the people he employs, or even his own house if he collects his rent from there. But whatever this strange clause may mean (and the legal profession will have a fat field day on it) it opens up further reasons for dispute only to be settled in a county court.

WHAT CAN A COUNTY COURT DO?

What happens in county courts? The poor judge, with no technical knowledge, listens to the landlord, the tenant, or their different legal advisors. He has got to get through the court business, he has got to get his own lunch or dinner as the case may be, so he will say to himself, well, what is reasonably suitable? Only a small minority of tenants will go to court, the majority have a healthy fear of court decisions and the bill of costs attached if they lose—or win, for the matter of that.

They will accept the devil they know, i.e., the landlord's claim, rather than face the legal one whom they know only too well.

The county court judge will therefore regard as "reasonable" a state of disrepair that the majority of the tenants put up with because they have no alternative they can trust.

The judge also has, under Clause 40 of the Bill, an interpretation of what "good repair" means. He finds there that good repair depends on the age, character and locality of the premises and he will conclude that the 4½ million houses over sixty years of age can have a lower standard applied than those less than that age.

I say a state of disrepair deliberately, because, according to the Bill, the amount of money the landlord is called upon to spend in order to claim an increased rent will only in a very small minority of cases put the houses into a proper state of repair. The landlord will do that amount of work and no more. He will get his increased rent, and, since the tenants continue to live there, the county court judge will conclude that, as they put up with it, that is a reasonable state of repair, and the appealing tenant will lose his case and pay the costs if he has got enough money.

You Again? No!



The Tories and De-requisitioning

THERE are 109,070 families living in requisitioned property. Any loss incurred on these premises is borne by the Exchequer and covered by the estimates of the Minister of Housing. In the financial year 1951-2 the Exchequer was called upon to bear a net charge of £6,900,312 in respect of this emergency housing. A small sum in relation to national finances, but nevertheless, the Ministry of Housing is striving to find ways and means of removing this 'burden'.

OWNERS DONE WELL

Furthermore, ever since requisitioning began and particularly since the end of the war, the owners of such properties have been exerting the maximum pressure on the government and on local authorities to release their houses.

Many properties have been held on requisition for over twelve years. In point of fact the owner of investment property has generally done well out of the situation. He has drawn a compensation rental without the responsibility

of management or maintenance. Outmoded property has been given a new lease of life by its conversion by the local authority. Often sub-standard property has been kept alive.

THE PROBLEM FOR LONDON BOROUGHS

Under existing law the power to hold property on requisition for housing purposes ceases on the 10th December 1955. It is impossible for the London Borough Councils, even if they so wished to release their properties from requisitioning by that date. All the Metropolitan Boroughs have more than three families per thousand of the population housed in requisitioned property, and in some of them the number far exceeds twenty per thousand. In Lambeth three out of four families housed by the Council are in requisitioned property.

Each authority has to find alternative accommodation for the tenants (or licensees, as they are officially called) of the property it derequisitioned. But already local councils can only house a fraction of their waiting list and many of them are having difficulty in finding new sites to build on.

In one London borough with 11 per thousand of its population in requisitioned property it would take almost two years to rehouse their "licensees" on the basis of present building. And that could only be done if no-one else on the waiting list was housed! Other boroughs are in an even worse plight.

The Working Party on Requisitioned Properties has just published its second interim report. It is obviously sympathetic to the government's point of view but it

is hard put to answer the problem of how to carry out complete derequisitioning. Its members are forced to recognise that those authorities with more than six families per thousand in requisitioned property will be absolutely unable to rehouse the occupants of this property even by the end of 1957.

The Working Party, however, still recommends rapid release of requisitioned property. But then, those members of it "who represent local authorities believe that in some areas housing needs, leav-

By

Cllr. David Finch

ing licensee families out of account, have already been, or will be met; and that the provision of new housing accommodation for the licensee families now living in requisitioned premises might lead ultimately to a surplus of living accommodation." Labour councillors must have no such illusions. We must continue to resist derequisitioning by all means possible.

A SHOCKING CONTRAST

This second interim report declares that "more money is being spent on repair (including redecoration) of requisitioned properties generally than can be justified in present circumstances". What a contrast with the attitude of the government to private landlords in its Housing Repairs and Rents Bill. In the case of requisitioned property it is quite prepared, so long as the local authorities are responsible, to allow the property to rot.

There is to be an immediate

reduction on repair and redecoration dating from the 1st of October. Every local authority is thus faced with an immediate problem. The Labour Council of Lambeth, for example, had provided for an expenditure of £112,500 for the current year, of which sum £47,500 had actually been spent up to the 30th of September last. Now the total permissible expenditure allowed up to the 31st March 1954 will only be £44,675. Which means, among other things, that the council should reduce its building staff by at least fifty.

The council, before taking any action is asking the Minister to reconsider his decision because it operates unfairly in the case of a borough like Lambeth where the majority of properties held under requisition are old and dilapidated. Further, considerable hardship will be entailed by dispensing with building trade operatives at a time of the year when it is difficult for them to secure alternative employment.

A protest of this sort is very useful and very necessary. But more will be required in the future. The Tory Government has obviously decided to stay in power and toughen up. It has grasped the nettle of the Rent Restrictions Act on behalf of the landlords. It is obviously going to increase the pressure more and more on local councils to further cut repairs and to rapidly derequisition.

Labour councils may well be confronted with the necessity of defying Tory edicts in the near future, unless they are prepared to see thousands of families homeless or living in pigsties. Should they decide to oppose the Tories in this way, they could stimulate the whole movement to go into action and bring the Tories down.

There is another clause which looks, at first sight, as if it might help the tenant. It is No. 21. Under this the tenant can at any time go to the Local Authorities and apply for a certificate that the house is not in a proper state of repair. If he gets it he must serve a copy of it on the landlord. (if he can find him) and the landlord can then once again take him to the county court, if the tenant is prepared to risk it rather than pay.

LAWS AND LAWS

Now unless the tenant takes this action in the fourteen days allowed him to appeal, he will have accepted that his house is in a proper state of repair, and having done that it will be very difficult for him to get it put right at a later date. That means that every tenant should go to the local authority within the fourteen days.

But read what Mr. Henry Brook, Tory M.P. for Hampstead, said about that on the 4th of November when dealing with a suggestion that the landlord ought to get a certificate allowing him to increase his rent; these are his words:—"I do not think we should overburden the local authorities in asking them to do the impossible."

BERMUDA

ARE we to allow Labour's foreign policy to become indistinguishable from that of the Tories? That is a question which comes once again sharply to mind after the Labour Movement's reaction—or lack of reaction—to the announcement of the Bermuda conference.

The left wing of the party hailed the Morecombe conference resolution on foreign policy as a big step on the road toward an independent socialist policy on foreign affairs. Recently, however, there have been events which cut across that development.

By a resolution pushed through the Margate conference, without the movement as a whole having had an opportunity to discuss it, we recognise African Federation now that it has become law. We give implicit support to the Tory Government and the white settlers in Kenya.

The N.E.C. now blames the P.P.P. for being responsible for creating a situation in Guiana necessitating the use of troops. Some of our leaders, as in the case of Kenya, turn the full force of their attacks not on the perpetrators but on the victims of Tory colonialism there. Even the minor difference between them and the Government on Guiana—that the Tories suspended the constitution before sending troops—is now being forgotten in the campaign against the P.P.P.

Now comes Bermuda. Churchill makes the bare announcement that the British, American and French heads of government are to meet. The official communiqué covers the reasons for the meeting with an empty phrase. They are to discuss "various matters of common concern to the three Powers".

No doubt the statesmen will seek to find means to help French Imperialism in Indo-China, where a war to crush the population is bleeding French economy.

No doubt they will exchange congratulations on British Guiana, where they hope to have solved the strategic problem of the defence of the Panama canal, and given a warning to other colonial peoples. They will certainly agree together with Mr. Henry Byroade the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs that "there is such a thing as premature independence".

No doubt they will try to resolve their conflicts on European policy. The American Government must persuade and bludgeon her allies into accepting the building up of German monopolies and military strength once again as a bulwark of capitalism in Europe.

No doubt they will discuss Korea and how to escape from the stalemate of peace there.

Mr. Brook is of course quite right. It is an impossible task. But, if it is impossible for the landlord, it is equally impossible for the tenant. Yet, if the tenant does not do it in fourteen days his chances of resisting the landlord's claim has gone.

I hope I have written enough to show that this Bill can have no other result than to force tenants to pay higher rents for houses in a bad state of repair. It will enable the landlord to reap a still greater profit as a result of his past neglect.

WHAT CAN THE TENANT DO?

There is only one form of resistance that can be effective if the Bill becomes law—a general nation-wide rent strike. Just as a few Glasgow tenants in 1914 forced rent control, so can all tenants now defeat the Tory Party. Tenants can only help themselves, as the House of Commons is controlled by Tories.

There is no great difficulty in refusing to hand over the rent to the landlord, it is an action which is simple and it will be effective. Six million families can't be put into the streets, not even by all the bum-bailiffs in the world, even backed by a conscript army.

I suggest that our Labour Party—together with the Tenants Associations—prepare to lead such a real and effective demonstration.

will discuss in secret and behind the backs of the working people of France, Britain and America. What we know for certain is that these three representatives of the old capitalist order meet only because it is necessary to work out a common policy for the preservation of capitalism and its empires, and to work out the next steps in the cold war against the Soviet Union and China. It is thus not a peace, but a war meeting.

Labour has a different aim if it is to remain true to its principals. Our aim is to remove this rotten order of capitalism at home and its colonial exploitation abroad. We must therefore denounce these secret meetings of the foremost representative of British capitalism and colonialism with his counterparts from France and America.

By
Bill Hunter

Not to do so means that Sir Winston goes to Bermuda with confidence that there is no difference between Tory and Labour on foreign policy, and will be all the more ready to commit the British people, behind their backs, secretly, to aggressive moves in the cold war.

But our leaders have made no such denunciation. On the contrary they appear to support Sir Winston's trip. When the news of the conference was given to the House of Commons, one Labour M.P. went so far as to say that the "news would be received with appreciation by millions of people throughout the world".

What exactly have millions of people to be appreciative of when Mr. Laniel, General Eisenhower and Sir Winston Churchill get together? These millions will be asking a very pertinent question—what peppery dish are these three cooking up for us? And that is what the Labour Party should be asking, loud and clear.

The Labour Movement must clearly and sharply differentiate itself from these secret meetings and secret diplomacy. We must unambiguously state that when we take power once again we will repudiate all agreements arrived at behind the backs of the peoples.

Red Robin

"Mr. Thomas White of Indianapolis, who advises the State Education Board on suitable books for American schools, has alleged that Communists had been ordered to 'play up' Robin Hood's story", reported the Manchester Guardian of November 16th.

Mr. White said "That's the Communist line, anything that disrupts law and order is their meat".

The Manchester Guardian declares that the Sheriff of Nottingham is defending the outlaw against American allegations that he is a Communist.

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Is It Back To 'Normal' in the U.S.A.?

INCREASED concern over mounting lay-offs and falling pay is being expressed in the American labour movement. Concern is more than justified by the reports of lay-offs, more part-time work and loss of overtime pay in almost all industries.

In the past week or two, more lay-offs have been announced in a wide range of industries. For instance, West Coast shipyards have cut down their working forces from 30 to 50 per cent from the peak employment of seven months ago.

The American Woolen Co., world's largest manufacturer of wool cloth, is laying off 3,500 workers. A company spokesman said: "Things look dismal". The Caterpillar Tractor Co., of Peoria, farm-machinery manufacturer, is slicing 2,000 off the payroll in addition to 5,000 laid off since Feb. 1952.

The General Electric Co., after getting a million dollars worth of publicity out of giving away five shares of stock each to 95 babies born to employees on the company's 75th birthday, announced a lay-off of 4,000 workers from its Erie, Pa., plant over the next two months. No plan was announced to give any stock to the children of the 4,000 workers about to lose their jobs.

INDICATIONS OF TREND
Indicative of the trend is the Wall Street Journal report of Oct. 26 which states, "In the month to mid-September, factory employment declined by 60,000 persons, whereas a rise of some 200,000 has occurred during that period in other recent years".

Shorter work weeks and loss of overtime pay are reported from many parts of the country. According to U.S. News and World Report of Oct. 23, "Help Wanted" signs are coming down in more and more cities. Unskilled workers are finding it more difficult to find employment and are waiting longer periods between jobs. Starting pay is lower as employers no longer find it necessary to offer inducements to get new workers.

The Federal Reserve Bank reports a decline in retail store sales on Oct. 17 for the fourth straight week from the corresponding weeks of 1952. Reduced sales are also reported by mail order houses, and chain stores. This is one sure sign of lowered mass purchasing power.

GUNS AND BUTTER
J. B. Wallach, business news writer of the N. Y. World Telegram, reports that "one thought permeated the sessions this week of the 25th annual Boston Conference on Distribution — the U.S. must find ways to market its tremendously expanded output despite cuts in government spending and decline in exports. Speaker after speaker acknowledged that our vast productive capacity, a result of our determination to have guns as well as butter, is a cloud on the economic horizon. Should it back up, it was conceded, we're in for trouble".

This explains succinctly enough why American foreign policy continues along aggressive lines. The search for new markets for American products is preceded by diplomatic and military moves that range all around the entire world.

The speaker affirmed that the

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CHALLENGE to Britain declared that with a "slight slackening in American business" a crisis could blow up here at "hurricane speed". There is a warning in this article by an American correspondent that such a slackening may be developing. There is also a lesson for trade unionists here, in the demands that sections of the American Labour Movement are making. It is clear that as this trend to "normality" continues, more and more American employers will favour war as the only solution.

capitalist business cycle is still with us—that is, that swings from depression to boom to depression have not been eliminated from the profit system. He was frankly pessimistic over the prospect of curing this condition with increases in population, "rolling adjustments" by business or government intervention.

BACK TO "NORMAL"
Despite the facts cited above, leaders of Big Business hand out statements for public consumption

that contain a note of "cautious" optimism. The Business Advisory Council of the Commerce Department, made up of top capitalists, "believes we are experiencing a moderate adjustment from an abnormal situation to a normal". To any capitalist, the prospect of several million unemployed workers looking for jobs is, of course, "normal".

THE REAL SITUATION
The real situation is one of over-production for the available

market in almost all fields. Despite drought, the farm crop this year is once again crowding storage facilities. Stores and warehouses are more than amply stocked with every kind of manufactured goods.

We are heading toward a crisis of a glut of materials on the market and rising unemployment and reduced pay. Despite huge government spending, the capitalist "fortress" of America is showing serious weaknesses.

The labour movement, taking note of these developments, has already begun to demand a shorter work week with no loss of take-home pay and other security measures such as the guaranteed annual wage. A number of CIO United Automobile Workers locals on the West Coast and the Illinois State Federation of Labour have recently declared for a 30-hour work week at 40 hours pay. This is the principle of the sliding scale of hours with no reduced income to keep every worker on the job earning an adequate union-scale income.

YOU AND THE FISH WAR

ABOVE all else the dispute between the Iceland Government and the British trawler owners is one that should be dealt with at Government level. However, the Iceland Government are not prepared to agree to talks—and rightly so—with the British Government until the trawler owners lift the ban on the landings of fish at British ports by Icelandic owned vessels.

At this stage of the "fish-war", when sentiment and emotion is tending to cloud the issues involved it is as well we attempt to examine the position from a realistic angle. It is being said that the landing of Icelandic caught fish at British ports constitutes a threat to the living standards of the British fishermen.

If that is so, then the threat was there before imposition of the ban and will still be there if a satisfactory agreement is reached with

By
S. R. Pearson

the Iceland Government, and the ban is lifted. This argument is further weakened by the fact that other foreign owned vessels are still permitted to land fish at British ports.

Add to this the fact that in any case, British trawlers would have been laid up. Crews have been cut on vessels that are sailing, resulting in the displacement of some 600 Grimsby fishermen alone, who are now either unemployed or have taken up other employment. This would have occurred had there been no dispute over fishing limits. It is hard to believe the British trawler owners are really concerned with the welfare of the men they rely on to man their ships.

Now, we have a Grimsby trawler owner Mr. E. Bacon, who by implication is suggesting that the same strong measures being used to crush the aspirations for freedom and independence in our colonies and elsewhere should be used against Iceland. I quote from Mr. Bacon's letter to the Editor in the "Grimsby Evening Telegraph". (12/11/53).

".....the harsh and unconscionable attitude of the Icelandic authorities is endemic in the world today on the part of puny nations and reactionaries such as the Icelanders as witness the turmoil and dissension against the beneficent and just (emphasis mine) attitude of this country in regard to Malaya, Central Africa, Iran, Egypt, Guiana, Kenya and Korea".

He goes on, "All these countries, by their actions, are seeking to subvert by selfish and drastic means, matters of vital importance to the world in general and this country in particular. I therefore again brand Iceland as a culprit, and claim justification for the reaction of British trawler owners in an attempt to check their sinister design."

After this outburst we need not

feel any surprise if the next step is to accuse the Iceland Government of being Communist inspired and another tool of the Kremlin.

Now let us take another extract from Mr. Bacon's letter. "..... some trawler owners are beginning to ask themselves.....whether it would not be of economic benefit to themselves and the industry if the number of (wholesale) merchants were considerably reduced".

The implication here is that the last event I forecast in an earlier article on this subject, is about to come to pass. Namely, the setting up by the owners of their own distributive agency merging with the one or two real large existing wholesale concerns.

The irony of it all. The "faithful" fish merchants by virtue of the fact they have remained loyal to their masters—the owners—are, it seems about to be put out of business by the very people they gave their support to.

The owners can put up a good case in support of action of this nature. The fact is, little can be done under the present circumstances to bring down the cost of operating the fishing fleets. But without a doubt economies can be effected in the field of wholesale distribution of fish, by removing present wasteful methods—an over abundance of wholesale outlets. Two powerful agencies—the trawler owners and the Dawson enterprise—conducting a cut-

throat price-war, can quite likely be of some advantage to the ordinary consumer but can only mean that the British fishermen will be the worst sufferer in the long run. This therefore is not the answer to the problem.

I believe—as all true Socialists should believe—that the first charge on the industry should be assured earnings for the fishermen, commensurate with the risks and hardships they take; adequate provision for the dependents of those who lose their lives in pursuance of their calling; and the maintenance of reasonable prices in the shops. (the latter being assisted by a Government Order laying down maximum prices). I say, emphatically, that the way to achieve those objectives is by the placing under public ownership without further delay, the wholesale side of distribution. The long term policy must be the complete public ownership of the whole of the industry, including the ancillary trades.

The following facts about Iceland should be noted. Iceland ships of comparative size carry larger complements of crews, whose earnings are greater than their British counterparts. Yet, as Dawson has proved, their catches of fish can be sold cheaper than those of British trawlers. So the question of the foreigner working for starvation wages does not arise. And, at the Iceland port of Reykjavik, the wholesale market is municipally owned.

The Industrial Front

THIS is the twenty third week of the lock out at the Medical Supply Association, Acton. Recently a Court of Inquiry sat to consider whether the firm was contravening the 'fair wages clause' in its Ministry of Supply contracts, by locking out trade unionists.

The Court found in favour of the firm on the contention that they were willing to employ trade unionists. The unions argued that the trade unionists employed should also have the right to act as trade unionists.

A full report was given to M.S.A. workers last Friday. Their morale was high and they decided unanimously to continue the struggle. Financial support continues to come in from all over the country, but, of course, more is always needed.

Shop stewards' committees in the surrounding industrial area have sent protests to the management of M.S.A. on their attitude to these workers. The lock-out committee asks other shop stewards' committees to do the same, and thus let the firm see that the locked out workers are not isolated.

It is expected that the Birmingham demonstration for the engineers 15 per cent to be held this Sunday, November 22nd, will

be one of the largest ever seen in Birmingham.

Unions are asked to assemble behind their banners at 6.30 p.m. in Victoria Square for a march around the centre of town finishing up at Smithfield (rag) Market, where they will address at 7 p.m. by J. Scott of the A.E.U. Executive Council and Mr. Doughty General Secretary of the Shipbuilding and Engineering Draughtsmen Association.

SHOP stewards of Standard Telephones and Cables, New Southgate, London, are continuing their fight against redundancy. As reported in the "Socialist Outlook" of November 6th, the management informed the unions that they intended to sack 500 workers between the end of November and the end of March 1954. The reasons given were modifications and deferments of orders from the G.P.O.

The first batch of notices were held up for a fortnight when stewards met the Assistant Postmaster General and were told that if the firm was going to put people off it was in no way due to any action by the Post Office.

The firm have now informed the stewards committee that 120 people would be 'surplus' on November 20th and would be given notice, unless they could

The Real Jamaica

What the B.B.C. Didn't Tell

"THIS is Jamaica" was the title of a half hour programme on the B.B.C. last Friday. Its purpose was supposedly to describe the island which the Queen is shortly to visit.

Listeners heard that it was an island of beauty—clear seas, lovely mountains. But they learned very little about the real Jamaica. A. Banda, in the first of two articles will attempt to give the real picture of Jamaica, first of all its history as a slave colony.

JAMAICA is a little island 114 miles long by 40 wide, a paradise, for tourists, especially the grandest of them all. But for Jamaicans it has been a land of grim toil and sorrow. It is a land whose life is a complete product of capitalism and slavery. It was "acquired" from the Spanish in 1655 by the forces of Crom-

well. At that time there were only 1,500 slaves on the island. By 1838 there were 300,000. For 150 years the system of slavery was maintained with the utmost brutality. To this day the smell of roasting human flesh hasn't quite died out of the memories of the Jamaicans. Some planters went so far as to encourage human studs for the purpose of increasing their labour force. The church would not consecrate the marriages of slaves, with the result that to this day formal illegitimacy is highest in Jamaica.

FLOGGING INTRODUCED

If the church couldn't be bothered then; why should the descendants of the slaves bother to go to them now. Today, illegitimacy stands at the figure of 71 per cent. Many of the children of these "marriages" are vagrants and the burning hunger in their bellies drives them to thieving. So as a cure His Majesty's Govt. introduced flogging between the years 1943-45.

The first slaves were whites, but they could not stand the pace. So they were replaced by West Africans. In the 18th century a British Parliamentary Commission discovered that the total spent on a slave per year was 25 shillings. During the American War of Independence, Jamaica was cut off from its chief source of food. 15,000 slaves died of hunger, and his Majesty's Govt. decided to act. A panacea was discovered.

It was held in high circles that Bread fruit would be an excellent supplement to the diet of the slaves. So bread fruit saplings were imported and the Jamaicans patiently starved until the trees grew up. But they weren't always patient. In 150 years they rose outlast in hand 29 times. Once they even succeeded in set-

ting up a small state of their own under the Maroons.

In 1838 came emancipation of the slaves and with it a period of terrible chaos. The ex-slave owners checked the attempts of the slaves to acquire land for themselves and so ensured that they were tied down to the cane fields, on starvation wages. To add to the misery, they commenced on a policy of importing vast droves of cheap indentured East Indian labour. The Plantocracy grew more jealous of its privileges, more arrogant and more isolated from the process of production. Absentee landlordism became the rule.

BLOOD-SPILLING

1865 is the Great Year in the memory of all Jamaicans. In that year the landworkers rose up under

By
A. Banda

their courageous leader George William Gordon and drove the planters' surveyors and police off the land. They stormed Morant Bay. The rising was crushed in blood. 429 labourers and their leader, Gordon were executed.

After the rebellion only one half of one per cent of the population had the suffrage. After 73 long years, in 1938 this figure had progressed to the enormous one of 6 per cent.

The years following the first world war saw repeated crises in the economy of Jamaica. The Caribbean scene was transformed and a new wind began to blow. A furious Labour movement swept the plantations and work-places. Widespread strikes and riots broke out in the 1930s. By 1937 the tornado struck Jamaica. The Police brutally assaulted a demonstration of unemployed and ex-servicemen.

In January of the following year sporadic strikes broke out. Workers on strike at Tate and Lyle's great factory at Frome were fired on and 4 killed. The Kingston waterfront blew up. By May it had developed into a general strike of all waterfrontmen and dustmen. The masses took over the town. The police fired and fired again. 8 lay slain, 171 injured and 700 were arrested. But the Labour movement had come to stay.

be transferred to other jobs inside the factory.

The shop stewards' committee have issued a leaflet. In it they declare that the Company have stated "that the main reason for the redundancy was no longer deferments of Post Office work but difficulties with export orders.

"In view of all the foregoing", say the stewards "and in view of a previous statement that the loss of export orders are compensated for by other contracts" the shop stewards feel justified in putting a question mark over this.

The shop stewards have followed their Parliamentary visits with a letter to every M.P. pointing out that whereas constituents may be "hammering" them for telephone workers some 500 telephone workers are being declared redundant.

The leaflet points out that there are some 500,000 people on the waiting list for telephones. The management have stated that they may be looking for labour in six months, and have made generally

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unsatisfactory explanations for the redundancy.

The leaflet comments on "... the generous and unselfish manner in which employees, whilst suffering a decline in their own real wages, have earned for the Company gross profits £2,679,622 (1950); £2,863,480 (1951); and up again to £3,785,322 (1952). During the period 1950/51, the directors had an average weekly increase of £6 15s. (i.e. from £60 to £66 15s. per week). The shareholders had a tax free gift of £2,500,000 in the form of a 100 per cent bonus share issue. (This, in effect, was a direct gift to the American International Standard Electric Corporation which now holds all but twenty four of the five million £1 shares).

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Royalty in Ceylon

There is quite some speculation as to whether the Queen will visit Ceylon next year. The more optimistic wishful thinkers in the Government seem to think that the country will be 'quiet' enough by next year, so that they can pay their respects to and incidentally profit from the Queen's visit.

Sir John Kotelawala, the Premier of Ceylon, seems to be aware that port labour in particular could make things unpleasant—hence he has hastened to declare the port an essential service. Labour it seems must lose its rights so that the capitalists can pay their obeisance to the Queen.

The real question is one of subservience to a foreign sovereign. As long as we owe allegiance to a British Sovereign, we are not truly independent.

It is not enough to abolish the use of the British National Anthem and the Union Jack. It is necessary to secede from the Commonwealth. The masses know it, that is why even if no expense were involved they will be opposed to a royal reception.

Ceylonese Student London

Who Are The Barbarians?

Last week, the leader of a Kenya "screening team" which went to Tanganyika in search of Mau Mau suspects was accused of using violence against them. He pleaded guilty and was fined £100 and sentenced to three months imprisonment. Last Sunday's "Observer" reports that there is some feeling in Tanganyika, especially among Africans that the sentence was not commensurate with the seriousness of the crime.

This team had tied up local Kikuyu settlers with leather thongs around their necks. Others had their ear drums burned with cigarettes.

A few weeks ago an African teacher in Kenya—a sufferer from tuberculosis—was beaten to death while being questioned.

These are only two of the many incidents of brutal treatment of the African people who are arrested as Mau Mau suspects. Yet it is the Mau Mau which is denounced as a "reversion to barbarism".

J. Dipple Tottenham

Throw Out The Tories!

May I through the columns of the "Socialist Outlook" protest against the behaviour of Herbert Morrison in the House of Commons?

The voters who sent Mr. Morrison to represent their interests in Parliament must have felt mortified to read about his prolonged amiable exchanges with Churchill, in the course of which each continually patted the other on the back.

The "Daily Mail" gave all this rubbish as much publicity as it could, but when in the same session Bevan, in a speech that packed the Commons, began to demonstrate that there was after

Our Readers Write . . .

all an Opposition present, the most vital points he made were omitted from the "Mail" report. I would remind Mr. Morrison that he is no match for Churchill who sees in Mr. Morrison's unctious amiability an opportunity still further to blunt the edge of an opposition already appallingly lacking in aggression.

The voters outside Parliament have a right to expect Morrison to support Bevan's devastating attack and not take the sting out of it by fooling about with Churchill.

It is Churchill, Butler, Eden and Co., who have deliberately sharpened the class struggle recently. Instead of being pitched out neck and crop by an electorate enlightened and led by Labour's front bench they are actually getting away with their vile legislation because men like Morrison, O'Brien and Co., have forgotten there is a class struggle at all.

The working class of this country are faced with another dose of Butler's hypocrisy in the near future and Churchill has been guaranteed £250,000 for his war memoirs.

There is enough evidence in those two facts to goad every genuine Labour man in the country to rise up and, in the name of common justice and straight dealing, throw these Tory exploiters out neck and crop.

Think of the plight of old age pensioners this winter, Mr. Morrison, and then see if you can still afford to fool away the time with Churchill.

Paton Dene Leicester.

The Fight For More Wages

The local branch of the T. & G.W.U., held a meeting outside the machine factory of E.M.I. Hayes, Middlesex, during the lunch break on Monday, 9th November, 1953.

Bro. E. G. Evans said in opening "I must congratulate the un-

skilled workers of this Factory for the magnificent response to the call by the London District Committee of the Confederation for a walk-out at 12 a.m. on Thursday last. This demonstration will prove that all our people will fight for a just claim".

"In refusing our claim on Thursday last, the Employers' had said to the Unions, "Help us to stabilise the economy of this country and don't press for wage increases": Let us examine how the Tories and their friends are stabilising the economy of these Islands, continued Bro. Evans. Six million rents up next year, Food subsidies cut which has meant an increase in prices, more food coming off the ration, controls off, prices up, petrol up, nursery charges up. I wonder, asked Bro. Evans, if this Tory Government sees the potential danger of too many women in the factories, they might get too trade union minded and once the Ladies are on the move there's no stopping them.

"This is more than just a 15 per cent wage claim, it is a fight

DOCK GATE MEETINGS
"Socialist Outlook" meetings.
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West India Dock gates, London.

against a wage freeze with all its implications" said Bro. Evans. The Tories have learned a lesson from the 30's when they attacked the wages, now they hope to instal a wage freeze at the same time, take prices up. If they are successful, it means a lowering in the standard of life for the workers of this country.

In closing, Bro. Evans said, "Now it is essential that our members attend the next Branch meeting and pass a resolution to our executive calling for a 24-hour strike and a banning of overtime. The Executive of all the Unions affiliated to the Confederation are meeting on the 19th of November, to consider the next move, let us

leave our Executive in no doubt how we feel. The message from the confederation is "Stand firm don't wobble".

Muriel Rayment said, "The employers in refusing our claim based their refusal on the gross earnings which included overtime. They were not prepared to examine the figures submitted on the basis of a 44 hour week.

This is a very dangerous practice, continued Mrs. Rayment, now the overtime our people work is being used against them by the industrialists in their calculations. The claim is based on the recognised working week, of 44 hours and must be answered on the facts submitted.

If our people sacrifice their leisure time it must not be used against them in this unscrupulous manner.

The Employer's claim that 80 per cent of the male workers in engineering work overtime so they have the opportunity of making their money up. This is untrue said Mrs. Rayment. There is very little opportunity for women to work overtime, this is mainly due to the domestic factor. Through the purchasing power of our people being restricted, we find 1 1/2 million butter rations not taken, 2 1/2 millions rations of margarine and 4 1/2 million rations of meat left in the shops. This is rationing by price with a vengeance. The Confederation officials stated quite plainly at Holborn Hall on November 5th that the employers had dug in and it was only pressure from the rank and file that can move them.

"If we all pull together and play our part, victory is assured", said Mrs. Rayment in closing the meeting.

J. S. CURRETT
SEC. 1/690 branch T.G.W.U.

SAYINGS OF THE WEEK
"One is a quorum"—Senator McCarthy.

"In the past, effectiveness of discussion groups has been spoiled by long-winded speakers. Circular from Cleethorpes Labour Party Discussion Group.

The Steel Sell-out

The first sections of the steel industry have now been handed back to private ownership by the "Iron and Steel Holding and Realisation Agency" set up by the Tories.

Labour has promised to renationalise the industry. This did not discourage 52,000 separate applications for the 14,000,000, ordinary shares of £1 each in the United Steel Companies Ltd. The shares were offered at 25/- each and the applications involved £50,000,000.

Oscar Hobson, City Editor of the "News Chronicle" commented that these results "fully substantiate the most optimistic unofficial estimates of the success of the operation".

Such gleeful rubbing of hands over this bit of political horse-dealing is understandable. It is significant that the ordinary applications for shares were met in full for the first 200 shares but those in excess of this number were allotted a mere 11 per cent of the amount applied for.

Thus the Tories did not put all their eggs in one basket. The big investors and institutions took a comparatively small share of the "risk" whilst the "small man" was pushed to the front.

It does not take much imagination to see the line of argument which the Tories will put up against Labour's renationalisation programme at the next election. They will speak up boldly for the "poor widows", the "old retired folk", the "thrifty working men", etc., whose only savings have been invested in steel companies and which are now threatened by the heartless Socialists.

The ingenuity of these tactics is considerable but their morality savours of the gunman who holds a defenceless woman in front of himself as protection against his opponents. It is only what we may expect from the authors of the Post Office Savings scare.

Andrew Kirkby Westminster

Burnham in Birmingham

At their meeting held Wednesday November 11th, the Birmingham Labour Party delegates, by an overwhelming majority, endorsed their Executive Committee's recommendation to hear a Peoples Progressive Party spokesman the next night, in spite of the N.E.C. circular and a letter from Mr. L. Williams, the National Agent which told Birmingham L.P. to cancel the Jagan meeting.

Originally it was to have been a joint Trades Council and Labour Party delegate meeting. But on Saturday November 7th, the Trades Council, because of the T.U.C. bar, decided (under protest) to withdraw from the joint meeting.

The Executive Committee of the Birmingham Borough Labour Party at a special meeting decided to carry on the meeting. The delegates were infuriated that an attempt should be made to suppress the point of view of the deposed British Guianese ministers. If the N.E.C., the T.U.C. and the Parliamentary Labour Party could hear Dr. Jagan and Mr. Burnham then so could grown-up members of the Birmingham Labour Party. Party members have the right to form their own views on all movements—not to have edicts in the Moscow manner thrust at them.

After Mr. Burnham spoke at the private delegate meeting of the Borough Labour Party on Thursday November 12th the attempted ban of the N.E.C. appeared all the more shameful. For Mr. Burnham demolished the Tory White Paper paragraph by paragraph.

The prolonged applause after Mr. Burnham had spoken showed quite clearly that the people of British Guiana will have many active fighters on their behalf among the rank and file of the Labour Movement despite the T.U.C. General Council and the N.E.C. circulars.

Labour Party member B'ham

Jagan in Newcastle

THE decision by Newcastle Labour Party to continue sponsorship of a meeting at which Dr. Cheddi Jagan, sacked Premier of British Guiana, will speak, will receive immense support from Labour Parties all over this country.

Not only that, but the decision challenges the right of the National Executive to gag those who would tell the truth about the crisis provoked in Guiana by Tory interference with democracy.

These were the opinions of Party delegates at Newcastle when they voted 53 to 10 to defy National Executive "advice" and go on with the meeting.

They gave these reasons:—

- (1) They had obligations to Dr. Jagan because they had asked him to speak BEFORE the ban was imposed.
- (2) they were not "providing a platform for Communists" as the N.E.C. circular stated. Both Dr. Jagan AND Mr. John Carter, Opposition leader in Guiana, were invited. Were they now to back out because Mr. Carter refused the invitation?
- (3) If the Parliamentary Labour Party had the right to meet Dr. Jagan, so had other Labour Parties.
- (4) They felt it was time to make a start on the fundamental issue of whether it was right for the N.E.C. to refuse to make a determined stand against "gunboat diplomacy".



by Harold Davies, M.P.

women to those of us who went down to meet them.

All that we want now is to dig up some "Red Plot" and say that the Co-op Women are inspired by the Reds. Mrs. Mabel Ridealgh, who was a colleague in the House after 1945, has done a good job of work and both she and the Chairman of the Rally, Mrs. Frances Hall are to be congratulated on jerking the House of Commons back to the reality of the cost of living problem for our working class homes.

THE STABLE £1?

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury told us this week how the poor old pound was looking. Of course all their cries about how the wicked socialists were sending down the value of the £1 are now forgotten. If we called the £1 twenty shillings in 1945 then in October 1952 its value was 13s. 8d. and in September 1953, the latest available figure, stated the pound was valued at 13s. 5d. compared with 1945. That was another thing that the Housewives' League was flag-wagging about when we were in power. I don't seem to hear a "peep" out of them now. I looked for them in the ranks of the Co-op. Women who brought the petition but no, I swear by St. Pancras, patron Saint of all children, that I could not find the Housewives' League.

BERMUDA CONFERENCE

Bill Warbey, M.P. is back with us in the House and we are all glad to see him. He questioned the Prime Minister on the nature of the subjects that he is proposing to discuss at the Bermuda Conference but we were told nothing of any value by the Premier.

How far will this high-level Conference between the British, French and Americans help to improve the European or Far

Eastern situation? Pressure will be brought on France to ratify the European Defence Community for setting up the European Army. The Bonn Conventions are bound to be discussed because under these it was said that the three Occupying Powers would end their occupation. Dr. Adenauer is up to now not represented at these Bermuda talks, but there is still time and it is certain that pressure is being used from some quarters in the hope that Adenauer will yet go to Bermuda.

The Bermuda Conference will most likely descend into the realms of statistics and diagrams about the defence of Western Europe. The Foreign Secretary told us in the House of Commons that he could see no prospect of unifying Germany now. The Foreign Office and Washington are anxious to give the impression that the Russians do not want the talks but it all amounts to the fact that the Russians want the talks to be held before there is any ratification of the E.D.C.

EAST-WEST TRADE

We keep crying "Trade not Aid" yet the Foreign Secretary goes out of his way to brand the organisation known as the British Council for the Promotion of International Trade as a "Communist front" organisation. Lord Boyd Orr is its president and there are large numbers of business men and some university professors who helped to sponsor the organisation. On November 22 a large delegation of business men were to go to Moscow under the auspices of the British Council for the Promotion of International Trade. Now the Foreign Office has damned the trip.

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