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*Met zijn maar zeer oppervlakkige
stukken, deze Engelse M.O. 5.*

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THE BRITISH COMMUNIST PARTY

SEPTEMBER 1950

The Fight for Peace

Throughout the month the Communist Party has continued to emphasise the importance of the Peace Campaign. The British Peace Committee is still trying to widen its appeal by gaining the support of individuals and organisations not associated with the Communist Party. The number of signatures on the Peace Petition has passed the million mark, but this is not considered satisfactory in Party circles, and the low number of signatures obtained in this country, as compared with the 13 million obtained in France, indicates the comparative failure, so far, of the British Peace Campaign.

Preparations continue for the organisation of the World Peace Congress which it is proposed to hold in the United Kingdom from 13 to 19 November, but the British Peace Committee has experienced great difficulty in finding a suitable hall for this Congress. No success attended their efforts to obtain a hall in London, and it has now been decided that the Congress will be held in the Sheffield City Hall. Meanwhile the British Peace Committee has been perturbed by the refusal to allow Jean LAFITTE, Secretary of the World Peace Committee, to land in this country on 13 September. Similarly the refusal to grant visas to Ilya EHRENBURG, Alexander KORNEICHUK, Nicolai TIKHONOV, Nicolai MATKOVSKI and Panteleimon GOULAEV, who compose the Russian element of the Preparatory Commission of the World Peace Congress, cast a gloom over the Committee, even to the point that the abandonment of the plan to hold the conference in the United Kingdom was discussed.

Communist Party Policy towards the Labour Party

The statement in the House of Commons by the Minister of Labour on 15 September, suggesting that there was a Communist plot to create disputes in industry, had an immediate effect upon the leadership of the Communist Party who feared that the statement foreshadowed the banning of the Party. With this fear in mind the membership is being constantly urged to implement the new policy outlined by the National Executive Committee on 8 July: namely, to step up the development of factory branches and to take a more active part in trade union and Labour Party affairs. Further, comrades are encouraged to point out that the Communist Party does not propose to put up a large number of candidates at the next General Election, and to stress that the Communist Party shares with the Labour Party the intention of defeating the Conservatives.

Discussion continued in all Communist Party branches of the Executive Committee's policy statement of 8 July. At the Extended Executive Committee meeting to be held in London on 14 October the policy will be discussed in the light of comments and suggestions received from the District Committees. In the Party itself there has been dissatisfaction with the national leadership and criticism of the excessive number of past mistakes which the Executive Committee has had to admit. This is reflected also in the National Executive Committee itself where there are elements who, it is reported, would be glad to see Harry POLLITT removed from office.

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Communist Participation in Strikes

The bus strike lasted from 13 to 17 September and at its peak involved some 15,000 bus and trolley-bus workers. The dispute was primarily caused by resentment against the refusal of the Transport and General Workers Union to consider an application for a £1 a week rise in pay. This grievance took the form of an objection to the employment of new women conductors ("clippies"), and this was the immediate cause of the strike.

Before the strike had actually begun and while some garages were working to rule and banning overtime, Communist Party headquarters and the London District H.Q. of the Party were already displaying a lively interest. It was considered there that "work to rule" was not the right policy to adopt as it caused little or no inconvenience to the public and that only a full strike with consequent dislocation of public transport would be of real use in demonstrating the men's grievances.

The strikers set up a Central Strike Committee, consisting of about ten delegates. It is not known that any member of the committee was a member of the Communist Party. Bill JONES (Communist Party member), a leading figure in the strike, was not elected as Dalston garage representative on the committee. He was, however, in touch with Party officials about the strike and helped the Strike Committee; and Jim HARDING (Communist Party member), of Dalston garage, also came to notice when speaking at meetings to advocate strike action.

The strike ended after delegates from bus, tram and trolley-bus and country service branches met at an official T.G.W.U., Three Section Conference (buses, trams and trolley-buses and country services) and voted by 101 to 25 to resume work. Bill JONES anticipating this decision was strongly in favour of the Strike Committee bowing to the majority vote, but at the same time making the best of a bad job by encouraging the strikers to accept the return to work and by complimenting them on their struggle.

The Party much regretted the sudden end of the strike, but recognised that, with only a few active Communist Party members in the bus world, they had little or no chance of assuming effective control.

There has been much recent activity amongst various unofficial bodies existing in certain dock areas throughout the country mainly in London, Birkenhead and Liverpool, where unofficial Port Workers or Defence Committees formed from dockers at each of these ports have held numerous meetings to discuss implementation of the "Dockers' Charter". This calls for pay to be raised to 25/- a day, two weeks paid holiday a year and pensions for the sick and the old. A delegation from Birkenhead was present at one of the London Port Workers Committee meetings and Ted DICKENS and Albert TIMOTHY of the L.P.W.C. attended a meeting of Birkenhead dockers. Of these DICKENS is a Communist Party member and TIMOTHY is a fellow-traveller. Although 10 of the 13 members of the L.P.W.C. are known or suspected Communists, there is no evidence that any members of the Birkenhead P.W.C. are members or associates of the Party.

"Defence Committees" have also been set up in Manchester and Hull. A petition is being circulated amongst these and other northern ports calling on the T.G.W.U. to carry on with the implementation of the Charter. The preamble to the petition states that, "having explored every constitutional avenue, we intend, in agreement with our brothers in other ports, to take whatever action we deem necessary to serve our just and reasonable demands". The Communist Party, while sympathetic to these activities, cannot be shown, except in London, to control the unofficial bodies which are initiating and pursuing them.

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Communist Activity at the T.U. Congress

The annual Trades Union Congress was held this year at Brighton from 4 to 8 September inclusive. George ALLISON, Communist Party National Industrial Organiser, and Fred EASTWOOD, London District Industrial Organiser, attended the Congress as Party observers. T. F. McWHINNIE, a British official employed in the press department of the World Federation of Trade Unions, was also present throughout the Congress.

On Sunday 3 September, a small meeting was held in Brighton at which Communist Party delegates to the Congress were briefed on the attitude they should take to various resolutions. George ALLISON and George HARDY of Sussex District of the Communist Party attended this meeting.

The Party were pleased at the defeat of the Executive Council's policy on the "wage-freeze" and equal pay for women. Both matters concern grievances with which the Party have long identified themselves. On the other hand, rejection by Congress of the resolutions demanding cessation of hostilities in Korea and banning the atom-bomb represented Party setbacks. They are likely to result in increased activity in the Peace Campaign.

The four Communists nominated for election to the General Council of the T.U.C. were all defeated. They were Arthur HORNER (N.U.M.), J. GARDNER (A.U.F.), W. C. STEVENS (E.T.U.) and John HORNER (F.B.U.). Arthur HORNER received 1,601,000 votes this year, last year he had received 1,339,000 votes.

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