

THE NEWSLETTER

180 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.

Registered at the G.P.O. as a newspaper

Vol. 2, No. 47

Sixpence

April 5, 1958

ALDERMASTON, HERE WE COME!

By FRANK ALLAUN, M.P.

THIS week it has grown still bigger. Bigger than any of us expected. Whatever the weather—even if it snows!—the great Aldermaston march is going to be the biggest demonstration Britain has seen for a quarter of a century or more. I appeal to readers of The Newsletter, who I know feel deeply about the H-bomb, to join in.

Join in—even if it is for only one day. Many of you want to spend most of the Easter break with your families. But it is just for their sakes that you will be demonstrating. The race in nuclear weapons *must* be ended if mankind is to survive.

As we of the Hydrogen Bomb Campaign Committee—a committee of Labour Party members set up to urge a policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament—said in our appeal:

'Let Labour take the lead in this. Bring out your banners. Let us stir the country to abandon the bomb and the missile bases unilaterally, to break through the grip of fear which has overtaken mankind.'

A quarter of a million leaflets have been given out by 150 volunteers in the East End and West End of London, in factories and other places of work. Loudspeaker vans have been touring the city calling for support.

To my list last week of MPs who will be taking part I can now add the names of Walter Monslow, who is a member of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, and Bob Hunter, a member of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, who will be on the platform

NEWSLETTER CONTINGENT WILL BE THERE

Newsletter readers are asked to assemble a quarter of an hour before the moving-off time each morning. Posters will be available to carry, with the slogan 'Black the bases and the bomb!'

A Newsletter van will accompany the entire march, with supplies of H-bomb pamphlets, H-bomb poll forms and other socialist literature.

at Hounslow on the Friday night. James Cameron, the well-known journalist, will be in Trafalgar Square. London Airport workers are sending a contingent for part of the march.

Michael Foot will be appealing to all the thousands who will assemble in the Square on Good Friday morning to march for at least part of the first day.

Here is the programme of the march:

GOOD FRIDAY: 11.30 a.m. leave Trafalgar Square; 1.15 Albert Memorial (lunch); 4.30 Turnham Green (tea); 7.45 Hounslow, Bell Corner (night stop).

SATURDAY: 9.45 a.m. leave Hounslow; 12.15 Longford (lunch); 3.30 Slough (tea); 6.45 Maidenhead (night stop).

SUNDAY: Leave Maidenhead 9.45; 11.45 Knoll Hill (lunch); 2.45 Twyford, "Wee Waif" corner (tea); 5.30 Reading (night stop).

MONDAY: Leave Reading 9.40; 11.50 Burghfield (lunch); 2.45 Aldermaston; 3.0 rally in field opposite Falcon Inn, Aldermaston.

Communist Party Expels Hyman Levy

PROFESSOR HYMAN LEVY has been expelled from the Communist Party for 'conduct detrimental to the party' which has continued despite censure from the Surrey district committee.

In an exclusive statement to The Newsletter, Prof. Levy said: 'I am certain that this will be followed by resignations from Jews and probably also scientists.'

'The last straw was no doubt my little book on "Jews and the National Question", which received a scurrilous and misleading review from R. Palme Dutt in World News and a mechanical reflection of this by Bert Ramelson in the Daily Worker.'

'I have written a reply to Palme Dutt for World News but I do not know whether they will publish it. I understand that Ramelson's review was reprinted in the USA and has aroused anger even among the very orthodox.'

Men with petrified minds

'The main trouble with the party is that it is run by old men in key positions whose minds have become petrified, and who are incapable of creative thinking and unable to exercise any independent critical sense.'

'The young people are either simply loyal—or simply bewildered.'

Prof. Levy is Professor Emeritus of the University of London and the author of many popular books on dialectical materialism and science.

In 1956, after the Khrushchev revelations, he was a member of a British Communist Party delegation to the Soviet Union, and came back appalled at the official attitude to the Jewish question in the USSR.

Censured for Newsletter article

After the 1957 Congress of the Communist Party he was a more and more outspoken critic, and was publicly censured for the crime of contributing an article on Soviet philosophy to the 1917-1957 special issue of The Newsletter last November.

One prominent Jewish communist expected soon to resign from the party in protest at Prof. Levy's expulsion is Chimen Abramsky, who wrote on the Middle East in the Daily Worker under the pen-name C. Allen, and who published 'Jews and the National Question'.

(Top the Poll: back page)

COMMENTARY

BEYOND UNILATERALISM

'How can we explain our position to the Asians?' the Assistant Secretary of State said to me. 'By this move Khrushchev will put us in the position of being the only one who insists on continuing to pollute the atmosphere. We have drafted over 40 possible replies to the announcement we expect from Moscow renouncing tests, and not one is any good . . . We cannot say "Fine! Yours is a good idea", because they will then ask why we do not do something about it' (Observer, March 30, 1958).

This week-end's Aldermaston marchers, and the hundreds of thousands of sane people they represent, hail as a positive step forward the Russian decision to halt nuclear tests unilaterally. It is an example to other nations, and one which the workers have it in their power to compel their governments to follow. Of course it is only a beginning. Nothing less than the utter renunciation of these weapons, the cessation of their manufacture, the destruction of existing stocks and the abandonment of rocket bases will assuage the anxieties of the common people all over the world. But Gromyko's announcement is a beginning. It shows that 'unilateralism', despite all that was said against the Norwood resolution, has become practical politics. The Aldermaston march itself is another powerful indication of how the clamour to get rid of these foul weapons has captured public imagination. Another is the vigorous response to the poll launched by THE NEWSLETTER among workers in factories and pits where this paper is sold. Yet another is the similar poll among the west German workers.

Bevan, the Labour Right wing and the Daily Worker all told us not to act against the H-bomb but to wait for some vague international agreement. While we were waiting the American imperialists were drafting 40 announcements refusing to stop polluting the atmosphere! To hell with such 'statesmanship' and summit-gazing. The Russians have shown that one nation can go it alone. Let Britain follow suit—and go one better. Let the leaders of British Labour prevent any more Torringtons by declaring their intention, as soon as they return to office, of scrapping the bomb and the rocket sites and launching an international working-class campaign for similar action by other countries.

This is the kind of unilateralism the mass of British trade unionists want to see. Not just a grand moral gesture, but a clear lead to the workers of other lands: unilateralism complemented by internationalism, by international working-class action. The west German workers have proved that this can be achieved. Let us act together with them. The spirit of Aldermaston must be taken into every factory, trade union branch and annual conference, every shop stewards' committee, trades council and local Labour Party, so that the voice of the British workers is heard all over the world. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament needs the fire and fury of an aroused working class defending its children against those who are poisoning them with strontium. 'Black the H-bomb and the rocket bases!' is the slogan under which Labour will carry forward the campaign to victory.

INDUSTRY

WE SHAN'T GO BACK TO WORK WITH SCABS

By Bill Caldwell, Chairman of the Moorhouse Strike Committee
THE strike at E. Moorhouse (Apex) Ltd, bedding and furniture manufacturers, Bury (Lancs.) has entered its fifth week.

These have been five weeks of bitter struggle against a management that has made it clear that come what may, with or without union approval, it insists on the right to hire and fire who and when it thinks fit.

The strike began after the firm had refused to implement the national labour agreement in connexion with the wrongful dismissal of three workers.

The original ninety strikers were sacked by registered post, and the management recruited blacklegs to do their work. There can be no resumption of work by the 200 now on strike until these scabs have been withdrawn from the factory.

In offering a basis for a return to work the National Union of Furniture Trade Operatives made this clear. The employers replied that they had made promises guaranteeing the black-legs' employment.

This is surely a return to the thirties with a vengeance. We feel the whole trade union movement should use all means at its disposal to help us win a speedy victory.

We have received financial support from all over the country, both from NUFTO members and members of other unions.

In remaining on strike to keep our factory a union shop we feel we are taking a stand in the interest of all workers.

70 STEEL FIXERS FIGHT VICTIMIZATION

After a long and heated debate, seventy steel-fixers on the Shell-Mex site, South Bank, London, on Wednesday rejected a Transport and General Workers' Union recommendation to return to work.

The men downed tools over the refusal of McAlpines to re-employ a well-known militant, Hugh Cassidy. Sacked soon after he started on the job, Mr Cassidy was transferred to a small contract. The men demanded that he be first taken back—but the firm started four others.

In negotiations, the firm refused to reconsider their attitude. Mass meetings held on the site this week expressed full support for the steel-fixers.

STEWARDS WANT FIGHT AGAINST SACKINGS

Birmingham Amalgamated Engineering Union shop stewards have unanimously expressed 'deep concern at the pattern of settlements by Confederation [of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions] officials which accept sackings with a mere sop of compensation thrown in'.

The resolution declared that when the employers and the Government were deliberately engineering unemployment, merely to negotiate for 'compensation and consultation' instead of fighting for the principle of 'no sackings—workers to be kept on the books until suitable alternative work is found'—was to give employers the signal for large-scale sackings in the near future.

The stewards called on the AEU district committee and executive council to 'reaffirm the union's policy on redundancy by rallying the members against any further sackings through direct action'.

TO DISCUSS BUILDING WORKERS' CLAIM

Hammersmith and Kensington Trades Council is calling a meeting to discuss the building workers' claim for eightpence an hour and the forty-hour week.

London Busmen Will No Longer Carry the Can

WHE London busmen are sick to death of carrying the can back. London Transport is cutting its services in an 'economy' drive—and the public curse the chaps who collect the fares.

On my route, the 113—Oxford Circus to Hendon—they have already introduced some of the cuts. There are gaps of up to fifty minutes between buses. You should hear what some of the fur-coated Selfridges customers say!

Most of the cuts are at peak hours. We have to ring the bell and leave people standing in the queue. Tempers get frayed.

WORSE CUTS COMING. 'Don't blame me,' I tell them. 'Complain to 55 Broadway'—that's the London Transport head office.

But these are only the preliminary cuts. Worse ones are on the way. On April 30, when the new summer schedules come into effect, services will be cut by 4 per cent. (the equivalent of 400 to 450 crews).

Now London busmen have been depending to a great extent on overtime and rest-day working to make ends meet on their lousy pay—a driver's maximum basic wage is only £9 13s. 6d. a week. Now these sources of extra income are to be drastically cut.

This makes our wage claim much more necessary. for some of us stand to lose as much as £3 a week. Perhaps we should have gone ahead for the full 25s. instead of cutting the claim down to 10s. 6d.

At any rate, we certainly shouldn't be satisfied with

a miserable couple of bob all round as a sop. The time has gone by when this kind of thing would keep us quiet.

Many men are beginning to talk about leaving the buses because they are likely to lose their overtime. This would make the staff shortage worse.

Yet, in spite of the 'economy' cuts, they are advertising for more inspectors—non-productive workers who chase the conductors. Why not economize in this direction?

Some of London Transport's high officials recently got an increase of £2,000 a year. It looks to me as if they need a bit of economy at 55 Broadway.

They need a bit of reorganization there, too. Men who have never taken a bus out in their lives are running an immense undertaking in a way that hits at the public and the workers alike.

THE FRONT LINE. For one thing, the new chedules mean there will be more standing passengers. In our view there should be adequate services and a ban on standing passengers. Better conditions for the busmen are in the passengers' own interests.

If we can collect fares smoothly, journeys will be more comfortable.

We busmen are well aware that we are in the front line at the moment. If and when it comes to strike action, we hope our fight will have the support of the rest of organized Labour.

G.F.

NCB 'ECONOMIZES'—NUM MUST FIGHT

By Price Jones

SHOULD a nationalized industry's main concern be making profit? The National Coal Board's answer is apparently 'Yes'.

In its search for economies, the Board's first thought was to stop overtime and Saturday working this summer.

The National Union of Mineworkers, much concerned about the huge stocks of coal, would rather the NCB stopped open-cast mining.

Miners feel that this temporary measure should be the first to go when stocks are high (this sentiment will be echoed by everyone affected or likely to be affected by this frantic search for inferior coal).

However the Board is very reluctant to stop this, because they say it is very profitable. It certainly will be profitable for the private firms who are getting the outcrop coal for the NCB.

The NUM can hardly refuse to agree to ending Saturday winding in the summer, because the original agreement only referred to winter months.

What the union can and must do is to go all out, by all means, to get a substantial increase for day-wage men to compensate for the loss of Saturday wages, and to augment the £8 10s. surface and £9 10s. underground (less stoppages) of most day-wage workers.

ASW RIGHT WING OPENS FIRE ON MILITANTS

Executive of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers has sent a circular to all its London branches attacking the intervention of the rank-and-file committee in the recent Shell-Mex dispute.

Branches are asked to have nothing to do with the committee. Militants believe that this is the start of a Right-wing attack on the committee, and that expulsions from the union are being contemplated.

DOCKERS NEED A MILITANT POLICY TO PREVENT A 'SCRAMBLE' FOR JOBS

By Peter Kerrigan

'HORDES of "work-starved" vessels scramble for the few crumbs of employment currently on offer,' wrote the Journal of Commerce for March 26, in an article on the slump in shipping.

182 ships are now laid up in British ports because they cannot get cargoes. That is already a third of the total tonnage laid up in the worst years of the 1930s.

That can mean 'hordes' of dockers 'scrambling for employment' in the future, unless we resist a return to the hungry thirties.

All of us who were in the industry before the war have our memories of those days, of 500 men milling around the employer's stand for eighty jobs.

In the local ale-house

More often than not a good number of these jobs had already been allocated in the local ale-house the night before in exchange for the foreman's ale. The militant who tried to work to union rule was seldom hired.

To prevent a return to the conditions of those days, to protect the livelihood of all dockers, we must work out a militant policy behind which all portworkers, irrespective of union or port, can unite.

In order to maintain their profits the employers will seek to use mechanization and smaller gangs to undermine the dockers' conditions of work.

Liverpool dockers, like other portworkers, have had experience of this. Even elementary mechanization, such as the use of pallet boards in connexion with stacker trucks, has meant a greater exploitation of workers 'privileged' to use the pallet process. It has made workers redundant and has meant bigger profits.

When pallet boards were introduced in 1949 and the early

1950s there was considerable discussion inside Transport and General Workers' Union branches.

Militants expressed the strongest opposition to the way the speed-ups were being carried out.

Their attitude was that the labour force 'down below' in the hold should be supplemented by those displaced on the

This is the second article by Peter Kerrigan, well-known Liverpool militant portworker, on the problems of the docks industry.

quay. In this way ships would have had a quicker turn-round and the strain would not be placed on the holdsmen.

But the union accepted a lowering of the manning scale on the quay with no subsequent increase below.

Mechanization must be used to lighten the hard work of the docker, not to put workers on the scrap-heap and force others to work harder than ever in worsened conditions.

Inter-port unity is essential, first of all, because of the differences between rates and conditions from port to port. The employers will try to divert shipping to the 'cheapest' ports. In fact, they are already doing that with 'optional cargoes'.

Big improvements in London

It is well known that the London dockers, who constitute a third of the national labour force, have in the past won big improvements in rates and conditions.

Some of these improvements were no doubt conceded by the shipowners rather than have any London stoppage extended nationally.

That would pin-point the anomalies in rates between the ports and bring all the out-of-London ports into a fight for the same conditions.

Liverpool dockers are aware, for example, of the London 'sorting concession' of 5s. per four-hour period on meat boats. The same sorting operation has to be done in Liverpool.

Protest action at a beef berth in Liverpool in November 1956 increased the tonnage rate, but payment here is still over sevenpence per man per hundred lambs, less than in London.

The London docker has won better conditions than exist in the North for the unloading of numerous other commodities such as bulk sugar, timber, butter, copper and steel billets.

No 'scab alley' refuge

The aspiration of northern members of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers (the 'blue union') and rank-and-file members of the TGWU (the 'white union') is to obtain the highest national port rates and conditions. That will eliminate any possibility of the employers having the refuge of 'scab alleys'.

The interests of the London docker are at stake in this. Already the employers are making attempts to lower certain rates in London.

The solution is to fight to bring all ports up to the higher rates. Otherwise the employers will use one section against the other and reduce conditions below the lowest level.

Liverpool men have in the past suggested that representatives from each control should visit other ports to investigate working conditions, rates and so on.

Rank-and-file dockers still think that such an interchange of representatives between ports is essential.

500 STRIKE FOR ROTA

Five hundred workers at the Harland and Wolff foundry, Govan, are on strike against the management's refusal to share work out on a rota system according to a national agreement of 1922.

The firm plans to sack 20 per cent. of the workers, and says the implementation of the national agreement is 'not practicable'.

PETROCHEMICALS WORKERS DEFEATED

By John Connor

Strikers on the Petrochemicals construction site at Flixton, near Manchester, decided on Monday to go back to work, having been urged to do so by Amalgamated Engineering Union divisional organizer Mr H. Scanlon.

The whole site had been called out when the management refused to negotiate on the protest of 200 pipefitters and riggers against the victimization of three riggers.

The men returned on two conditions: (1) that the labour agreement stays as it was before the strike; and (2) that 25 men would be made redundant after Easter. Militants on the site see these conditions as a defeat.

SOUTH AFRICA

DENIED VOTE—BUT DETERMINED TO FIGHT

From Our Cape Town Correspondent

THE general elections which will be held in South Africa on April 16 will decide which of the two all-white ruling parties, the Nationalist or the United Party, will form the Government of the Union in the next five years.

Only the white voters will decide this issue; the so-called Native and Coloured representatives (who must all be white) will not affect the balance at all.

But while the white voters troop into the polling stations to vote Nationalist or U.P., another force will be taking a hand in deciding the fate of South Africa.

The great voteless majority—the Africans, Indians and Coloured people—are determined to play a part in shaping the future of their country. Denied franchise rights, they are resorting to extra-parliamentary activities to achieve their purpose.

Call for a boycott

The South African Coloured People's Organization has called on all voters to boycott the segregationist elections, and there is a growing response to this call.

More and more African and Coloured people are realizing that to vote for the so-called African and Coloured representatives would be playing the game of the white ruling class. Progressive elements among the white workers are also taking a similar line.

The most powerful African organization in the country is calling for a nation-wide 'stay-at-home' to coincide with the elections.

This term is used deliberately because Africans are forbidden by law to strike. There is, however, no law to prevent them from staying at home on any particular day.

It is this more militant attitude of the Congress which provoked the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr Verwoerd, to seek powers to ban the African National Congress.

The women fight back

One of the outstanding features of recent developments in South Africa has been the increasingly militant opposition of the African women to the racial laws of the Strydom Government.

Until recently African women were not compelled to carry passes. Then the Government passed legislation to extend the pass system to the women.

Despite the heavy-handed efforts of the police and the cajolings of the chiefs and headmen, the women have refused to take the passes. This has led to clashes between the police and the pro-Government chiefs on one side and the people on the other.

Constant Reader | Hiding the Face of the Party?

As the movement for the banning of nuclear weapons spreads through the country, a discussion along these lines is taking place in a number of local Labour Parties:

Should party members set up anti-nuclear committees openly in the name of the Labour Party, inviting other groups and persons to join them in a common front on this issue?

Or should they 'keep the party's name out of it' and act as individuals?

The second course is recommended as less likely to drive away Tories, Liberals and others who are against nuclear warfare but not at present pro-Labour.

To some, however, it seems an opportunist procedure, reminiscent of Stalinist 'peace movement' manoeuvres, likely to lead nowhere in the long (or even the short) run.

What do readers think?

Industrial action on rents

THOSE who seem bewildered at the idea of industrial action to fight the Rent Act have perhaps forgotten how the principle of rent restriction was first established in this country.

It happened during the first world war. The leadership of the 1915 engineers' strike in the Glasgow area remained in being after the strike was over, as the Clyde Workers' Committee, and they turned their attention to resistance to rent increases.

I quote the account given by Ralph Fox in his 'The Class Struggle in Britain, 1914-23':

'A rent strike was declared and all efforts of the landlords to collect the increased rents or to evict the strikers completely failed, chiefly due to the activities of the women pickets.

'The landlords attempted to overcome this opposition by summoning the workers in the debt court. The day the first two workers appeared in the debt court to answer a summons for non-payment of rent the Clyde Workers' Committee called a general strike throughout the district and the workers marched in thousands from all directions to demonstrate outside the court.

'The magistrates were completely overawed and rapidly got on the telephone to the Ministry of Munitions in London to learn what they should do.

'They were told to release the prisoners, and a few days later the Government, thoroughly alarmed, passed an Act forbidding the raising of workers' rents for the period of the war.'

Lover of exiles

'It was the fortieth anniversary of Byelorussia's Independence Day yesterday. Celebrants went to the Chelsea flat of Lady (Frances) Phipps. "I love people in exile, don't you?" she said.'

—Evening Standard (In London Last Night),
March 26.

What actually happened on March 25, 1918, which Lady (Frances) Phipps's friends see fit to celebrate was the setting-up by a group of anti-Bolshevik politicians, after the German army had occupied Minsk, of a self-styled 'government' whose first act was to send a message of thanks to the Kaiser for having 'liberated' Byelorussia.

The country's real independence day is January 1, the day when, in 1919, Soviet power was established there.

Well said, George!

'It symbolizes the struggles of trade unionists in peace and war. When Mr Tom Yates, TUC chairman, released the

Union Jack (why not the Red Flag?) which shrouded it, it was on public view for the first time.'

—George Sinfield, in Daily Worker, March 28, on the Epstein statue at the new TUC offices.

Now then, George, what's this? If it's all right to carry the Union Jack in Communist Party processions, why was it out of place on the occasion mentioned?

BRIAN PEARCE

LETTERS

DIRECT LABOUR AND WORKERS' CONTROL

BRIAN BEHAN, in THE NEWSLETTER of March 22, links the struggle for maintaining conditions with the question of who is to control whom in the building industry.

These two struggles can in turn be linked with the demands of all working-class people for a decent home at a rent they can afford, and for schools, health centres and community facilities.

I would say that demands for the nationalization of the building industry, even socialist nationalization, are inadequate demands for a transitional period.

Behan comes nearer to what I am after when he talks of pressing the London County Council to extend its direct labour scheme. The LCC is the biggest building client in the country. If it were to work in conjunction with other Labour councils in London, and with Labour county councils, it could effectively call the tune throughout the country.

But other things must happen as well. With direct labour must go workers' control, otherwise the building department is as 'socialist' as the refuse disposal department.

Likewise a direct labour scheme getting its building components from the private monopolies will pay a heavy surcharge, and a workers'-controlled direct labour scheme must be linked with the demand for nationalizing the materials monopolies: brick, cement, metal windows, glass and so on.

At the same time, why cannot the Labour movement demand that producer co-operatives, financed and aided by the Co-operative movement, be set up to produce alternative materials and methods of construction for building?

It would be a short step from the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society producing furniture to a workers' organization producing components for timber housing.

For large-scale building it is also essential that the plant-hire firms be taken over, or at least that an alternative pool be set up for direct labour organizations.

Above all, land, particularly urban land, must be taken into State ownership with no more compensation than a modest life annuity in cases of personal suffering.

Low-interest or no-interest loans must be made available from central State funds, or from the Labour movement. The financiers and builders must not draw tribute from workers' building.

Paul Simon

THE V F S HEADLINE WAS INACCURATE

I should like to point out that my comments last week on the Victory for Socialism statement of aims were inaccurately headlined.

My point was **not** that 'VFS is lagging behind the working class', for this gives the impression that the consciousness of the working class is more advanced than that of VFS.

All I said in fact was that the objective needs of the working class now are for a unified strategy of struggle against capitalism, and that the VFS statement does not measure up to this need.

Leeds 15.

Cliff Slaughter

'BLACK BOMB AND BASES' IS RANK-AND-FILE MOOD

THIS week, and for several weeks to come, this part of The Newsletter will be written by industrial workers. It will contain **THEIR** views on the H-bomb and the rocket bases, and on what Labour should do about them, as contained in their replies to the poll now being conducted by Newsletter readers in a number of factories.

We are presenting simply the workers' opinions as they themselves have written them on the ballot forms. We are not selecting those views which agree with THE NEWSLETTER's opinions on this question.

Most of the forms are signed, but unless we have a worker's express permission, we are not using his name. The poll is being continued until May Day, when a detailed analysis of the results will be published.

THE FOLLOWING ARE REPLIES RECEIVED FROM MAINTENANCE MEN EMPLOYED BY SALFORD CORPORATION TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT:

'I am in favour of industrial action—a campaign against being governed by America.' (Amalgamated Engineering Union member).

'Withdraw all union labour' (Transport and General Workers' Union member).

'By organizing public meetings and marches, the Labour Party could conduct a joint campaign against the H-bomb and rocket bases, and by a declaration in the House make it perfectly clear where the Labour movement as a whole stands on this issue. I believe that industrial action could and should be used against any government that refuses to accept the will of the people on any major issue, and particularly one as important as this, where mankind is threatened with extinction. Only by example can we negotiate for complete abolition of nuclear weapons, and eventually armaments of all description.' (Electrical Trades Union shop steward and branch official).

'Demonstrations or strikes' (National Union of Vehicle Builders member).

'A large circulation of ballot forms will convince officials that if they don't act they will be outvoted and replaced by true socialists (not of the fence-sitting variety). Industrial action in the way of blacking labour is our only effective weapon' (NUSMWB).

'I would suggest that every trade union branch should make an effort for one demonstration to be held on the same day as a protest against the war-lords' (NUVB).

'I would like to see the Labour movement start by banning all American aircraft from carrying H-bombs over this country. Outlaw the bomb unconditionally' (NUSMWB).

'Bevan's case for the H-bomb should be condemned by the whole Labour movement. The Labour Party and trade unions should organize mass industrial action' (NUVB branch president)

CRUICKSHANK, CROME, LEVY, TOP THE POLL
THREE prominent critics of Stalinism topped the poll in the elections to the executive committee of the British-Polish Friendship Society, the results of which were announced at the society's annual general meeting last week-end.

They are Mr Gordon Cruickshank, Dr Len Crome and Professor Hyman Levy.

The AGM carried unanimously a resolution supporting in general the proposals for broadening the basis of the society made in a message from Professor Levy, and suggesting that these proposals "be accepted as a guiding directive by the new EC".

The resolution added: 'The main task of the new EC is to consider what steps must be taken to redirect and broaden the work of the society, involving individuals representative of wider sections of the British people.'

BOOKS

SATIRE THAT IS SENSITIVE AND PASSIONATE

THERE have been many books on Egypt in war-time, but Dave Wallis's novel, 'Tram-Stop by the Nile' (Heinemann, 15s.) stands on its own as an artistic and political achievement.

Wooing us gently with laughter, Dave Wallis begins his book with the ingenious money-making devices of a Greek merchant. In the next chapter we laugh again, at the meeting of a chic Italian woman with a solemn German who begins every sentence: 'With us . . .'

But the backbone of the satire is passion: a passionate hatred of fascism and imperialism.

The German and Italian, superficially so different, are both trying to write anti-fascist propaganda for their own people, and both being thwarted by the intrigues of British officers whose only thought is how to hold on to Egypt after the war.

The surroundings in which they work are the everyday horrors of Egyptian life:

' . . . The baby's eyes were tight shut and round each of them a black cluster of flies munched at the yellow sores.'

In the third chapter we meet the British soldiers fighting in the desert. A lesser writer would have left this as a perfect short story, which it is. But it echoes the previous chapters, and is in turn echoed by the vital fourth chapter, which takes us for the first time inside the mind of an Egyptian worker.

Woven with extraordinary skill

All these four threads—the Greek merchant, the refugees, the soldiers and the Egyptian—are woven with extraordinary skill into one story.

This book was conceived in a spirit of Stalinist orthodoxy, and the author was wise, on the whole, not to change it very much when he changed his own mind.

The fantasy picture of the Soviet Union, which so many of us held on to in war-time, was a part of the reality of those days. However false, it inspired real acts of heroism.

But there is one conversation which delicately and artistically foreshadows the split in the communist world. A Greek communist tells the German communist that he believes the British have had one of their own intelligence officers murdered.

The German says that despite all these dirty intrigues fascism is being defeated.

'With us we always tried to relate even the most disconcerting incident to the general picture.'

'True,' said the Greek, 'but this young man, who must have been very disconcerted before the end, could not do this.'

Dave Wallis himself is not 'disconcerted', but passionately indignant, at every life thrown away.

He has the sensitive imagination which can make the reader feel what it was like to be each person in the book. Because he can combine such sensitivity with a broad and steady view of a whole country, he has written a great novel.

ALISON MACLEOD

Published by Peter Fryer, 180, Clapham High St., London, S.W.4.
Printed by Plough Press Ltd. (T.U.), r.o. 180 Clapham High St., London.