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# The Week

**BILL  
EPTON'S  
HEROIC  
COURT  
SPEECH**

A NEWS ANALYSIS FOR SOCIALISTS  
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**STOP  
THE DRIFT TO  
THE RIGHT!**

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STOP THE DRIFT TO THE RIGHT

Professor Robert McKenzie, who is to political sociology pretty much what the Beatles are to pop music, is famous above all for his partisanship for the theory of consensual politics. As he recently summed it up, in Churchill's words, "four fifths of each major British party agree about four fifths of the things that need to be done." The convergence of the great parties towards a mean policy equidistancing the doctrinal extremes is a theme of more than one political commentator. Translated into popular language, this principle of the middle way has become almost a fetish not only for newspapers, but for a whole phalanx of more slow-witted trade union leaders, and even for sections of the working population at large.

In this election, the error of the 'middle way' is becoming completely obvious. The real class interests which have always been expressed, in however equivocal or thwarted a manner, by the parties, have, ever since the war, been bridled in by the need of the ruling group to extend Professor McKenzie's 'consensus' to Labour quite simply as the price of their continued sovereignty. Mr. Wilson, though, acting as if his mission in life was to verify the McKenzie thesis, has in fact quite rudely shattered it. To be sure, the burdens of power, the advice of the bankers, and the weakness of his left wing have all contributed very considerably to a real process of 'convergence.' Mr. Wilson has converged on the Tory Party at frightening speed, and with an almost reckless zeal. But in the circumstances, far from remaining steady to receive and return his opponent's conjugal embraces, Mr. Heath has run for the hills. Labour, for instance, adopted Tory policy on immigration. Mr. Heath's manifesto now gives its answer, which is to raise the barriers yet again, to compel the registration and restriction of immigrants' dependants' entry, as well as to insist on the imposition of "stricter control." Even more pertinently, Mr. Wilson, by attacking the trade unions, displaced the sociological centre of gravity of his vote, and won the liberal middle class of Hull. Does Mr. Heath accept the victory of the logic of convergence which is embodied in the early warning Bill? He does not. Moving out to the far fringe, he now cries out for a new Industrial Relations Act, a war on unofficial strikes, and the legal enforcement of collective agreements.

The two election manifestoes, in short, cannot be seen in any way as a McKenzian convergence on the leaden mean of English lack of principle. Rather they should be seen as a drastic flight to the right, in which Mr. Wilson pursues Mr. Heath at a brisk, if solid, pace, followed rather breathlessly and most reluctantly by the majority of his parliamentary left, always the requisite half-furlong behind him. The only convergence which this represents is on the corporate

Advice which the Minister of Housing and Public Service wants to send to local authorities about application of the early-warning system will be discussed on March 4th, when deputations from all the local government staff sides meet the Ministry's permanent secretary, Dame Evelyn Sharp. A few weeks ago, the Ministry invited the trade unions concerned to comment on the wording of its proposed circular, which would ask all local authorities to notify not only all negotiations affecting rates of pay or hours for significant numbers of employees, but also negotiations or proposals of individual authorities affecting rates of pay or grading of significant numbers of employees- including proposals for a new pay structure or block regrading- or likely to involve substantial repercussions on negotiations by other employers (e.g., where the rates proposed exceed those recommended by the national negotiating committee concerned).

NALGO and the other unions were surprised that they had not been consulted before the draft was prepared at all, especially since the Government's White Paper on the early-warning system says that "detailed arrangements (for the public sector) will be drawn up in consultation with the various organisations concerned". The union's regret at this failure to consult them was the greater since they understood that the employers had been so consulted. The meeting on March 4th results from their representation about this, and the staff side will take the opportunity to raise the principles involved in the proposed circular, as well as its wording.

BRITISH GUIANA GOVERNMENT BACKS U.S. COMPANY'S COLOUR BAR

Over 4,000 workers of the U.S.-owned demerara bauxite company at Mackenzie, British Guiana, are on strike in protest against the company's racial discrimination and dismissal of geologist Owen Younge, after he demanded the same conditions as those given to whites. The walk-out has crippled the company's operations completely. The workers have continued to demonstrate by picketing, demanding the reinstatement of Owen Younge and an end to Jim Crowism as practised by the company. The Government of British Guiana has rushed troops to the area to suppress the strike.

Editorial continued/

gelling of the Labour Movement. This would mark out the final ending of the delicate equilibrium of the system for which Professors have so warm a regard. New and unpleasant books would have to be written to describe the results. What, then, is the answer? A large Labour majority. Paradoxically though it may seem, only this can stop the rot. A Conservative majority would push us all back to square one, with still no credible option but to campaign for the return of Labour to power. The crucial problem now is that of <sup>the</sup> grouping of a Labour left, based upon the unions, which can begin to generate the alternatives in policy and personnel without which the flight to the right can never be stopped.

A massive Labour victory prepares exactly the right soil in which this can grow.

## BERT WYNN - OUR FRIEND, COMRADE AND SUPPORTER

Bert Wynn was a man of many parts. There is scarcely any movement, any campaign or protest movement which the left launched which did not receive the warm support of Bert Wynn. His death is a grievous blow to the miners, who need his wise and deeply dedicated counsel today more than ever they did. To The Week Bert's death was a cruel blow: no request we made to him was too much trouble for him to meet, no problem too difficult for him to tackle.

Outside the offices of the Derbyshire Miners stand two statues, of the founder. Bert Wynn will not need a statue. His warmth, his self-sacrifice, his insight have built him a human memorial of abiding and deep respect.

It is impossible in anything less than a book to record his activities, his contributions and services to the labour movement. The mere recital of the facts would amount to a document of considerable length. We knew him as a man who put principle above expediency and was prepared to make agonising decisions for what he believed in. Many of us knew him first as a member of the Communist Party, then as a founder of the Forum movement which grew into and merged with the New Left, in later years he was the champion of every aspect of the struggle of the left in the Labour Party.

He leaves behind a personal memorial in the form of the Derbyshire Miners' Union. The vigour, the stability, the viability of this section of the N.U.M. owe an immense debt to Bert. They also represent desirable models for other sections of the working class movement.

We hope to play our part in making a real tribute to Bert by continuing the struggle for the principles he devoted his life to. On a more personal level we are certain, and will ensure, that Bert's fine record is accurately and properly documented in the annals of the movement. These are the two things Bert would wish us to do.

### VIETNAM SOLIDARITY MEETING DETAILS

As we announced in last week's issue, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign is to hold a meeting in London to mark the international days of protest against the Vietnam war. The meeting will be at:

The London Welsh Centre, 157, Grays Inn Rd., (between Kings Cross and Chancery Lane tube stations)

on March 25th (Friday) commencing at 7.30.

A very good panel of speakers will represent the various sectors of the movement for Solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution. They include: Raymond Williams, Robin Blackburn and Ken Coates - David Horowitz will be in the chair.

The organisers are determined to make this meeting a success. A leaflet advertising it is available from the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 3 & 4, Shavers Place, Haymarket, London S.W.1. All readers of the Week are asked to give it the widest publicity. There will be many meetings on Vietnam on these two days but this will be the only one in Britain which is in solidarity with the Vietnamese people in their struggle against American aggression. It will be the only one at which the speakers will say that they are for the victory of the Vietnamese revolution - need we say more?

Chris Otley's reply to our articles about the tactics and prospects of the Left is based, we think, on a fundamental misunderstanding of our position, which he sums up as a "quasi-marxist formula that domestic or "class"\* issues are somehow prior to international issues". The phrase which we used "the main struggle is at home" is possibly open to <sup>this</sup> misinterpretation, and perhaps we can attempt a clarification. We see in the approach of Chris Otley and the radical Alliance an assumption that international issues are somehow ('semi') autonomous and 'prior'. In attempting to correct this, we seemed to have assumed the opposite stance. However, our proper position as international socialists should surely be that there is no dichotomy between the two- Vietnam and the attack on t.u. freedoms are both parts of a global struggle. Of course this is not "a simple formula". But to accept "foreign" affairs as autonomous is to accept the mystifying categories of that very unsocialist institution, the bourgeois state.

Chris Otley's view assumes that the state is an impartial umpire, subject to different -ent pressures. If that were correct, it would make sense to work for a strategy which campaigns on single 'issues' such as neutralism, Vietnam, etc. We think that the state is a part of the opposition's defence, and that single-issue campaigns are the product of an idealist view of the state. In the evolution of CND, the protest slogan 'Ban the Bomb' led to a demand for neutralism- it became 'anti-NATO'. This showed a realisation that the bomb was not an autonomous military phenomenon, - that its threat was actually expressed through military alliances which <sup>have</sup> economic and political meaning. CND failed at that point to develop a global view of the political and economics of which NATO is an expression. It assumed too that the agent of a different foreign policy was to be pressure from a liberal-minded idealistic protest movement. There were two reasons why such a view held sway at the time (ie. 1958-62). (A) The cold war presented a convincing picture of a conflict between states-military rivalries appeared autonomous. (B) The class relations in Western capitalist societies appeared to have been harmonised by full employment and rising living standards. Today it is surely possible to show that military rivalries, international crimes such as the US destruction of Vietnam, are not accidental aberrations, not just the by-product of a struggle between states. Today it is impossible to discern the increasing difficulties which American and western European imperialism face in coping with the twin embarrassments to the status quo presented by the struggle between profit and wages (the incomes policy) on the domestic front, and the struggle to hold down anti-colonial and liberation movements throughout the world.

We take Chris Otley's point that a role-call of publications and organisations does not constitute a movement- but surely it is also time for the Left to have learnt that the citadels of neo-capitalist authority will not fall to an a-political protest movement, which discounts the two great forces which alone represent a serious challenge to that authority- the independent working-class movement in the advanced capitalist countries, and the left-wing popular liberation movement in the neo-colonial world. Radical Alliance and the socialist-cum-populist rump of CND continues to assume that the balance of forces have not shifted since 1958, and that an "independent British foreign policy" can confer benefits upon the distorted personality of British society, and upon the poor peoples, without any close association with the immediate mass struggles of the ordinary populace in either sphere.

\* Why does Chris seem so afraid of the term that he has to surround it with inverted commas ?

To be continued next week.

Last week's front page in Tribune started off "For the whole labour movement there must now be one single priority: to win the general election with the biggest possible majority." Should socialists support this line? The assumption is that there will be much more chance of Labour adopting socialist policies with a large majority than with a small one. However, Robert McKenzie made out the opposite case in The Observer: "When Labour had its huge majority after 1945, the Left had no more influence on the foreign policy of Ernest Bevin or the economic policies of Sir Stafford Cripps than it has had during the past 17 months on Mr. Stewart or Mr. Callaghan."

The main point I should make is that it is very dangerous for British socialists to appear to be handing the Labour leadership a blank cheque - and this is just what Tribune looks to be doing. There is not "one single priority for the Labour movement" - but two. The other priority, stated in a general way, must be: the need to campaign fearlessly and outspokenly for socialist principles at all times, and to make clear that we will act against capitalist policies. If we don't write in this other priority, Wilson gets his blank cheque.

At the general election, socialists in each locality should make clear the key issues in their own independent campaign. This can be done quite effectively by a small number of socialists in a constituency - as we found out at the recent Hull by-election. Apart from selling Humberside Voice, we produced brief duplicated leaflets which argued our case. The Voice group (and we hope, local groups of the Campaign for Socialist Education) will be doing the same this month. The kind of literature that we should campaign with includes:

- \*Vietnam, East of Suez and the Arms Bill.
- \*Opposition to Tory, Liberal and Labour policies on trade union legislation.
- \*An anti-profits incomes policy.
- \*Docks - answer to Devlin; CSE document on workers' control.
- \*Steel and Aircraft - nationalisation.
- \*Support for miners and railwaymen.

Anyone interested in obtaining bulk supplies of Humberside Voice election material should write to: Colin Stoneman, Old School House, Swine, Hull, as soon as possible.

#### HULL SOCIALISTS PROTEST AGAINST N.E.C. ACTION ON CANDIDATURE from Kay Wardle\*

The following resolution was passed at the last meeting of the Hull University Socialist Society:

"This Socialist Society protests at the refusal of the N.E.C. to endorse the candidature of Constance Lever because:

- (1) Refusal to accept a candidate democratically chosen by the local party concerned, offends against party democracy.
- (2) The refusal to endorse Constance Lever's candidature is presumably because she disagrees with Government policy on some issues; yet disagreement with Government policy has not in the past been a bar to membership of the Parliamentary Labour Party. (Viz. Christopher Mayhew).
- (3) The National Executive Committee refuse even to give reasons for this action.

\* Secretary of the Hull University Socialist Society.

Nine one-day strikes in nine weeks. Attendances of 2-3,000, out of the port's 4,500 dockers, at mass meetings called by the unofficial port workers' committee of 25 dockers. The committee composed of blue and white unionists with no inter-union squabbles. This is the impressive evidence of a movement amongst Hull dockers which is currently the despair of employers and union. These strikes are against the employer: they are not so much hostile to the Transport and General Workers Union as indifferent to it. Of course the union says the men should resume normal work. (In addition to strikes, they have banned weekend working and overtime) but the achievements of the union so far do not convince the men that their case has been answered. The Blue union neither leads nor opposes the strikes.

The strikers' case rests partly on the discrepancy between piece-rates and time-work rates which has arisen since 1947 so that about  $\frac{1}{3}$  more work is necessary to equal the Daily Guarantee. Advertising in the Hull Daily Mail, in a challenging "open the books" style reply to the employers (not so far from the official TGWU line), the dockers point out that since 1947 piece rates have fallen 25% behind the cost of living and 300% behind the profits of the public wharfing companies. ("If we are wrong let the employers reveal their profits"). They attack the employers for delaying tactics and the union for being caught up in "procedure", and failing to represent the men adequately.

With a huge list of piecework rates, many unchanged since 1947 there is scope for concession. Recent changes include childrens' toy marbles from Japan - 20 tons a year, and loose wet hides which were last handled 6 years ago. The bundled hides rate was unchanged (although <sup>they</sup> are handled regularly). Renaming cargoes after the rate has been raised is another device. Milk powder got this treatment, and a commodity called "Bran" became "Pollard" and then "Middlings" with each change in piece-rates. If it wasn't all so disgusting it would befit<sup>a</sup> subject for farce or comic opera. This is how the Hull docker is treated in 1966. Far from complaining about his militancy, the unions, the labour movement, and the public, should marvel at his long sustained patience in the face of this kind of provocation from such cynical and unworthy employers. The docker's life is hard, unpleasant, and dangerous. Life insurance can only be obtained by him at an extra high premium. He  fights in the control (the pen) every morning for the good jobs - the young ones with families and H.P. usually win. The older docker is pushed and crushed - two have died as a result of this method of obtaining their daily bread. A brick wall was pushed down and collapsed in the crush. The whole system is stupid and primitive - an insult to human beings.

In the light of all this, the dockers' demands in Hull seem modest. £3. 12. a day fall-back rate, instead of the present £2.4.4. At least 25% on the piece work rates for all commodities which have not been adjusted since 1947. Londoner Jack Dash addressed Hull dockers on Sunday last, and found a ready audience for his criticisms of incomes policy and the threatened anti-strike legislation. He described problems not unlike those facing the Hull dockers including the threat of Devlin-style modernisation. A much publicised threat has been that of importers to divert cargoes (in the hope of leaving dockers with the blame for harming the "National Interest") Even with the present troubles, Hull's rate of handling compares well with any other port. It is to be hoped that Dash and other dockers around the country will support the Hull dockers at least by refusing to handle cargoes diverted from Hull. In the past Hull dockers have helped other ports in this way.

SHEFFIELD C.S.E. ACTIVITIES

from Peter Smith

A Sheffield CSE branch has been successfully formed and has held two meetings with attendances of 25 and 35. The first meeting was a forum on 'Incomes Policy and Trade Union Legislation'. Royden Harrison told the meeting that the proposed anti-trade union legislation was a serious threat to the labour movement and that the confusion and exhaustion of the T.U. leadership was partly responsible for this dangerous situation. Dr. Harrison saw the drive towards an incomes policy as the typical response of monopoly capitalism to a full employment situation. However, Roy Harrison argued that the labour movement should develop the case for a socialist incomes policy which would encroach on capitalism. A positive response (such as the demand for the control of key prices) could open up a socialist advance and could also help to unite the working class. Fred Gambles (BISAKTA) accepted the need for an incomes policy, but regarded the issue as what kind of incomes policy was acceptable to the labour movement. An extremely interesting discussion followed.

A second forum was held on 27th February on 'Unions and the National Plan'. Karl Hedderwick (AUT) and Frank Cooper (NUR) argued that the document was not a plan, but only a collection of useful facts. Stan Orme M.P. agreed but saw this as an important beginning. He continued by saying that you cannot plan in an unplanned economy and that it was imperative that there is an extension of public ownership. Stan Orme could not accept that the Government could continue to attempt to please both the employers and the unions. It was the unions that the Government should support.

The next meeting will be on 3rd April on the future strategy of the left.

EAST LONDON CSE FORMED

from John Strauther

The inaugural meeting of the East London CSE was convened in Hackney on 20th February by Fred Lindop. Some 20 individuals attended from various organisations including Labour Parties, Young Socialists, Communist Party, Y.C.L., C.N.D., Y.C.N.D., C.A.R.D., and tenants' groups covering a wide area from Islington and Hackney to Haringey, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. John Palmer of the National Steering Committee described the purposes of CSE and its ways and means, leading to a discussion of activities producing proposals for local action. First priority was given to establishing a working group on housing related to the Islington tenants' movement, in coordination with the tenants' committees. Later projects are to include a forum on Trade Union Legislation and Incomes Policy, directed to the local labour movement, and suggested work on racialism and education. A preliminary task would be the collation of a local directory of all potentially interested local groups and organisations to invite affiliations.

The following steering committee was elected provisionally: Ian Birchall, Peter Gold, Peter Lowe, Bob Rowthorne, and John Strauther (convenor).

Any individual or group wishing to contact the East London CSE should write to:

John Strauther,  
91, Stoke Newington High Street,  
London, N. 16.

Suggestions for further activity would be welcome.



When Bill Epton appeared in court to make his speech before being sentenced on January 27 he reversed his position from being accused to that of accuser. Speaking of the crimes of the Johnson administration he said: "You have judged me 'guilty' and have labelled me a 'criminal' and also 'dangerous'....Now -- let us examine what I have been found 'guilty' of doing and saying. I have been guilty of agitating against the conditions that my people are forced to live under in New York and all over the country. I have been found guilty of organising the Harlem community against police brutality that has been occurring in the black ghettos for hundreds of years. I have been found guilty of standing up for the right of all men - all men - to be free: to be free from this system of exploitation of man by man. I have been found guilty of proclaiming that capitalism is an oppressive system and that socialism is the only solution for mankind to live in peace and harmony.

"I have been found guilty of asking the question of black boys and men: 'What are you doing in the U.S. army, fighting your coloured brothers around the world who are engaged in battle against the same government that is oppressing you?' and 'Is it in your interest to kill and be killed to support a racist government?' And finally I have been found guilty of being a communist, a black one at that! If these are the 'crimes' that I have been found guilty of, then I am guilty - a thousand times over. In fact, I will be 'guilty' of these 'crimes' as long as these conditions exist, and I will fight against these conditions as long as there is breath in my body! Whatever we do and whatever we believe in - we do and believe because it is in the best interests of the people of this country. And yes - we are proud to have done it and to be doing it and we stand behind our actions four-square!

"We offer that the U.S. Government stands naked before the world for what it is - an imperialist-racist government, and since it is in this position it must assure its home base, silence dissent and whip its own people into line. Today it is Bill Epton and the Progressive Labour Party that has stood on trial for our political views and our political activities. This is just the opening shot. Tomorrow it will be other militant voices of dissent - the militant and active student movement; the peace movement; the college professors and teachers who are becoming increasingly more active and outspoken against the Government's policy at home and abroad; and the intellectual community who see the contradictions in what the Government says it is and what it does in fact. And, of course, as it has always been, the pressures on the black people will increase because they are on the bottom and have the least to lose in fighting against this system.

"It is imperative that the student, intellectual and worker unite to stay the hand of the Government before it is too late; and in the same light - the black people must organise themselves to struggle for their right to self-determination and for their liberation. I say here, openly and publicly, that the black people will not walk into concentration camps, the furnaces and the gas chambers. We would sooner die fighting first before we allow this to happen to us. To those who take this lightly I say, if a government uses gas and fire against the Vietnamese people, what's to prevent them from carrying out the same policy here?