

THE CAMPBELL CASE

By J. R. CAMPBELL

IT would be foolish to pretend that the Campbell Case was the real cause of the downfall of the first Labour Government. Nevertheless it is a case of some political significance, and it is as well that the facts connected with it should be stated fully once and for all.

In the first place it should be clearly understood that the articles appearing in the *Workers' Weekly* were not inserted in order to embarrass the Labour Government, nor because of the fact that such a Government was in office. On the contrary, they were inserted as a part of the Communist Party's anti-militarist campaign, on the tenth anniversary of the World War. These direct appeals to the fighting forces were natural and necessary parts of our effort to waken the working class—in and out of uniform—to a realisation of how war can in fact and practice be ended. The Russian workers in 1917 and the German workers in 1918 proved in practice that the way in which a working class can smash their war-makers is the way of revolt.

The I.L.P. official organ, the *New Leader*, has stated that the articles, constituting as they did incitement to mutiny were merely part of a vulgar political stunt. The *New Leader* asserted that it would have been brave to have inserted such articles during a World War, when the editor would most certainly have been shot, but that to insert them in times of peace was absolutely meaningless. This criticism is petty and stupid. If the struggle against war is to be taken seriously then anti-war propaganda must be carried on amongst the workers in the fighting forces as well as in industry, during peace as well as in war time.

To leave the soldiers entirely under the influence of their officers during periods of peace, and then issue appeals to them not to obey their officers when war has actually broken out, would be silly. The people who issued such appeals should be shot for stupidity if not for treason.

A Communist believes that it is necessary to start the campaign amongst the soldiers now. We did not believe that they would act in the manner indicated in the "Open Letter" immediately.

It was merely the start of a serious campaign, using a moment when the minds of people were turned to the horrors of the last Great War.

That campaign we are continuing and shall continue by all the means at our disposal. Those of the Socialist movement who preferred, for no known reason, to hold their anti-war demonstrations some weeks *after* the anniversary of the great war seem to have no good reason for condemning us for the time we chose to launch our campaign.

The article in question was printed in our issue of July 25, and the Communist Party took the necessary step to insure that its appeal reached the fighting forces. As a consequence of this the *Morning Post* called for the arrest of the people responsible for the article. Questions were asked in the House of Commons concerning the *Workers' Weekly* articles on the same day that questions were asked concerning a pro-war speech made by a general when opening a war memorial. The Labour Minister's replies were to the effect that they did not intend to proceed with a case against the general, but were investigating the case of the editor of the *Workers' Weekly*.

A few days later Inspector Parker of Scotland Yard called at the Communist Party office and asked to see the Secretary about the articles in question. When he found that the Secretary was not in the office, he asked to see the editor. Questions were asked concerning the authorship of the article, and I had to say that I would not tell him who the author was. I was further asked whether I was responsible for the conduct of the paper and I accepted responsibility for everything that it contained.

Inspector Parker intimated on leaving that he would call round and see the Secretary, Comrade Inkpin, the following day. That night a special meeting of the Political Bureau decided to accept full responsibility for the article. On the following morning, when Inspector Parker called, he met not only Inkpin, but all the Political Bureau members who were in London at that time, and on being told that they accepted full responsibility he took their names. During this meeting Inspector Parker put a number of pointed questions to Comrade Inkpin attempting to fasten personal responsibility on to him.

There is no doubt in my mind that Comrade Inkpin is the "dangerous person under police suspicion" mentioned by Sir Patrick Hastings in his speech.

The day following the Political Bureau sent a statement to its local organisations calling upon them to raise an agitation against the impending prosecution. It also drew up a statement for the Labour Members who were meeting in Parliament the following week.

On the Tuesday following the interview Inspector Parker again called and asked if I accepted responsibility for six articles of an anti-militarist character in the *Workers' Weekly* of July 25 and August 1.

On my accepting responsibility he then produced a warrant in connection with the article which appeared in the *Workers' Weekly* for July 25, and I was arrested. The night of my arrest Comrade Pollitt interviewed a number of Labour M.P.'s in the House of Commons, and they promised to raise the matter the following day, which they did. In the meantime the news of the arrest had created consternation in the Labour Movement throughout the country. There was a general impression amongst those who had not read the *Workers' Weekly* that the articles in question were merely an appeal not to shoot strikers, an opinion that was shared by most of the M.P.'s who asked questions in the House of Commons.

A full Executive of the Party was meeting two days after my release on bail, and my case was discussed at this meeting. It was decided that we could pick out no legal defence for the articles in question, and that my plea was, therefore, to be one of justification. It was also decided that I defend myself, relying merely on technical assistance from a solicitor.

It was agreed that leading members of his Majesty's Government should be brought into the witness box and examined as to their previous anti-war pronouncements. Comrades were instructed to find the necessary materials from the speeches and writings of Cabinet Ministers and did so. Material was found in the speeches of almost every prominent Minister except Mr. MacDonald. Mr. MacDonald's speeches in the past, like those of the present, are masterpieces of ambiguity. We have no informa-

tion that our decision to call on members of the Government was known to the Government.

The day previous to coming up for trial I heard that Mr. Travers Humphreys, K.C., was going to conduct the case for the prosecution. We anticipated a big case. One does not usually utilise a steam hammer to crack a nut. To our surprise Mr. Travers Humphreys announced the withdrawal of the case, and we were left in a state of astonishment.

When we read over the statement of Mr. Travers Humphreys in the papers that evening, we realised immediately that his statement that "representations had been made" might lead to the conclusion that the Communist Party had made those representations. This we had to deny, and in our denial we asserted what appeared to us to be the only possible explanation for the withdrawal, namely, the pressure which had been brought to bear on the Government by the Labour Movement.

When the Tory Press started to make use of the case in order to bring about the downfall of the Labour Government we had to point out to the worker that Governments have repeatedly interfered in political prosecutions, citing the case of the persecution of our members in 1921.

When Parliament reassembled Sir Patrick Hastings gave a statement which was in some respects inaccurate. Amongst the inaccuracies was the statement that the article was a cutting from another publication. The reason for this statement does not reflect credit on the intelligence of Scotland Yard. After articles for the *Workers' Weekly* are set up in type "galley-proofs" are taken of them. These proofs are then cut and pasted on to a sheet of the *Workers' Weekly* in order to give the compositors an idea of the arrangement of the page.

The detectives while raiding the premises of our printers found a galley-proof of the "seditious article" pasted on to a page of "make-up," with corrections in my handwriting, from which they deduced the fact that it was a cutting from another paper.

As to the significance of the case. It is quite obvious that the case created disquiet amongst the Liberals and Tories. They realised that if such propaganda were permitted, the basis of the capitalist army could be gradually undermined. The *Manchester*

Guardian published a ponderous article in which it talked about the army being a "neutral body" which must be safeguarded from political propaganda. What the *Manchester Guardian* really meant was that it must be safeguarded from working-class propaganda. There is no restriction on capitalist propaganda in the army. The whole atmosphere of military training is impregnated with that propaganda.

The capitalist class realised that the dropping of the case was useful to them in so far as it enabled them to identify the Labour Party with Communism. The Labour Government countered this move by inducing the Labour Conference to exclude the Communists.

Apart from illustrating the fact that the capitalists are not prepared to allow a minority Labour Government to exist except on the understanding that it carries through a policy approved by them, the Campbell Case has another value. It has called working-class attention to the fact that there still exists in the Statute Book laws which restrict working-class propaganda, and still more ugly laws, like the E.P.A., which give the Government the right to suppress any large-scale industrial movement on the part of the workers.

If the "Campbell Case" calls attention to these laws, and impresses the Labour Movement with the necessity for taking them off the Statute Book, it will not have been useless. Meanwhile is there any soldier, sailor or airman who reads a newspaper to whom the message of the Communist Party has not been carried, in some form or another, during the newspaper discussions and the political debates of the last few weeks?