

Tasks Before the Party Congress

THE PARTY AND ITS PROBLEMS.

By J. R. CAMPBELL.

WHEN our Party Conference, which assembles in October, reviews the work of the Party since the Glasgow Conference, it will be reviewing the most exciting period in the history of our Party.

The renewal of the capitalist offensive, the repulse of the Government and the mineowners on Red Friday, the Scarborough Trades Union Congress, the Right Wing attack on the Communists at Liverpool, the attack on our Party and the arrest of the leaders, the mining lock-out, the General Strike, the mass recruiting for our Party are but a few of the landmarks on the strenuous road over which the Party has travelled—a road in which its judgment no less than its courage and endurance has been fully tested.

The Party can look back with pride on its tactics during this period. Here and there slight mistakes have been committed but on the whole the Party lead has been as correct as the leads of other parties claiming to represent the working class have been wrong and dangerous.

This is a fact which we would do well to emphasise a little more. The enemies of our Party are constantly asserting that we are merely a small and bellicose group of political mimics, destitute of any understanding of British conditions, subsisting upon foreign political ideas, “relaying the latest noise from Moscow with an extraordinarily bad transmitting apparatus” as the “New Statesman” put it. Yet on every recent issue in British politics, on which predictions were made, the Communist Party supposed to be incapable of understanding British conditions has been correct and the big Right Wing which prides itself on its deep understanding of British peculiarities has been entirely wrong.

Why we were Correct.

Our ability to predict correctly rose from our close and careful analysis of the situation in Great Britain.

The majority of our opponents in the Labour movement make no attempt to understand what is happening around them. Political events are treated by them as events happening in isolation from each other. The various actions of the Tory Government, which to the Communists are but the unfolding of a carefully thought-out class war policy, are according to many people due merely to the deficient intelligence or courage of Mr. Stanley Baldwin or the inherent ferocity of Mr. Churchill. To see events in isolation like this, to refer to them as purely personal causes (Mr. Baldwin's "opinions" or Mr. Churchill's "temperament") is to fail to grasp the significance of events in the most extraordinary manner. Take the programme of the Labour Party as elaborated at Liverpool. What relevance had that programme to the situation of Government preparation to smash the workers, which was in existence when it was elaborated? None whatever. What reference has it to the present situation? Its insistence on compensation for royalty owners makes it a millstone round the necks of the working class in the present struggle. It may be even doubted if a certain section of the Labour Executive who participated in drawing up the programme thought it necessary to understand the trend of the development of the class struggle before drawing up the programme. To them the problem simply appeared to be "Here is capitalism, here are certain measures which have been suggested from time to time to improve the workers' conditions under capitalism and to clear the way for its transformation to Socialism. Let us discuss them in isolation and afterwards assemble them together and then we will have a programme." Surely a brilliant example of how not to do it.

Is Capitalism Stabilising Itself?

Naturally the first task of the next conference will be to examine the world situation, particularly in relation to its reactions on this country.

Is capitalism stabilised permanently? Is it developing on sound and progressive lines, gradually solving its manifold problems? Is it giving fresh hope to the workers everywhere of gradual improvements in their conditions? Or is the "stabilisation" merely temporary and already beginning to break down?

It is barely two years ago since the Dawes Plan was ratified. The nett result is that after a short period of increased activity, German industry has collapsed, the unemployed army has increased to two millions and unemployed and police have been in conflict in a number of centres. To-day not only are the "stabilisation" plans which were applied to the vanquished capitalist countries breaking down, but also the chief of the victorious powers on the European mainland—France—is in the throes of a financial and political crisis of such a character that the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Labour Government, Mr. Philip Snowden, suggests administering to "victorious" France the same medicine as was administered to "vanquished" Germany two years ago, viz., the Dawes Plan.

Truly the stabilisation of capitalism is only "relative."

Is Britain Declining?

Naturally a considerable section of the thesis on the national and international situation will be devoted to Great Britain. I hope a concrete analysis of the factors in the economic decline of Britain will be undertaken. What is the rate of decline, how does it affect the different classes, or different section of the same class, how does it express itself in the politics of the day, what weight have we to give to the various factors, such as the loss of Britain's industrial monopoly, the effect of the shrinkage of the total world trade on a country whose main industries live by export, the industrialisation of the Dominions and Colonies, the revolt of the colonial peoples? A correct estimation of the situation in Britain is not an intellectual exercise for highbrows, but a question of vital Party importance.

It is necessary that the Party should devote special attention to this question, especially in view of the tendency of certain continental comrades to grossly exaggerate the rate of economic decline in Britain and therefore the revolutionary potentialities of the present situation.

The General Strike and its Lessons.

Naturally, one of the most important theses will deal with the General Strike, its lessons and the future policy of the Party arising therefrom. It may be asked, of course, can anything new, interesting or instructive to be said about the General Strike? We

believe so. Every day new materials are accumulating. Leading members of the General Council are beginning to express their point of view. Trades Councils are beginning to compile and tabulate their experiences. Our Party districts and locals are discussing their experience of the Strike in greater detail.

The thesis on the General Strike which will be presented to the Congress will, as the occasion warrants be more theoretical in character than previous Party pronouncements and will consider in the light of our Party experience the various commentaries on the Strike published both in Britain and abroad.

Naturally the thesis of the General Strike must take as its background the facts of capitalist decline in Britain. It will try to show how this decline has affected the various classes of society and what has been their political reactions towards it. In this connection it is essential to deal with the important question of how far the decline has affected the large middle class in Britain and the large commercial proletariat who are intermixed with the property owning middle class. The attempts of the Government and the employers to win over these strata and the role which they played during the General Strike will be touched upon.

The dynamics of the Strike will be dealt with. The effect of the workers' action on the Government. The effect of the Government's action on the workers and the leaders and the question of the effectiveness of strike-breaking in relation to the various industries will be touched upon.

In the section of this thesis dealing with the future of mass strikes the Party's trade union and general political position in relation to mass strikes will come up for review.

A concluding section of this thesis will deal with the theory of the General Strike in the light of the British experience.

Most of the work of our Party since the last Congress consisted in helping to prepare the workers for the struggle which we saw impending and this will probably be presented in an appendix to the report on the General Strike.

Is it a Plot?

The Left Wing of the Labour Party will be dealt with in a thesis which will lay bare the causes of the rise of the Left Wing in the Labour Party and will define the attitude of the Communist Party to this Left Wing. This thesis will expose the brazen impudence of the Right Wing statement that the revolt of the rank and file workers in the Labour Party against their " Liberalising " policy is really a wicked Communist plot.

The thesis on imperialism will deal with the specific problems arising in the British Empire and the tasks of the Party in relation to these problems.

The Mass Party.

One of the most important discussions at the Congress will be that on the question of the creation of a mass Communist Party in Great Britain. A good part of this discussion will naturally centre around the question of retaining the new members which our Party is making. This is an old problem in British Socialism. The late H. M. Hyndman used to declare " There is more floating Socialism in Great Britain than in any other country in the world " —meaning by that that a large number of workers were continually passing through the various Socialist organisations. The problem is not entirely new, but the circumstances in which our Party is struggling to-day are new to a certain extent and we must not assume that our Party cannot establish itself on a more solid basis than former Socialist organisations.

There is one aspect of the question of recruiting which the writer would like to see discussed in greater detail, namely the question of recruiting for the Party the thousands of Left Wing trade unionists who are in sympathy with us. There we have to recognise that it is difficult to recruit many of these men for the Party because of the extra work which they believe it entails. Numbers of them are working from two to three nights a week already in the trade union apparatus and are not disposed to devote any more time to the Labour movement. If we could get them to understand that we desire to get them into the Party so that their trade union work can take an organised Communist form, and not to pile fresh work upon them, I am confident that we could get a considerable influx of new members from amongst them.

The above outline of our Congress Agenda will, we are sure, convince Party members that our next Congress will be one of the most important in the history of our Party and it is their duty to see that in the number and ability of the delegates it is one of the best.

