

Notes of the Month

THE LEFT AND COMMUNISM

'The effective issue that is raised by the discussion in the last numbers of *Labour Monthly* is simply that of the United Front. I take the view that it is morally obligatory upon the Labour Party to enter the discussion with the Communist Party to see whether an adequate common basis of action can be found. At this phase in the history of capitalism it seems to me irresponsible for a party to take up any attitude which divides the forces and so impairs the strength of the working class movement.'

HAROLD LASKI, 'Problems of Labour Policy',
Labour Monthly, March 1936.

December 14, 1965

Is the ice breaking? The French Presidential elections have brought into the forefront the question of socialist-communist and left unity. Irrespective of the final outcome, which will be familiar by the time this is read, it is the first round which aroused universal attention by depriving General de Gaulle of his assumed absolute majority and revealing once again the Popular Front as the most effective challenger to right-wing domination. The significance of this political portent goes far beyond France to all the countries of Western Europe. France led the way with the Popular Front in 1934, barring the streets of Paris to the fascist assault and preparing the Popular Front electoral victory and Government in 1936; followed by the Spanish Popular Front and Government in 1936; the united resistance of the people of London barring its streets to Mosley in the same year, the United Front agreement of the socialist organisations in Britain in 1937, and the Popular Front campaign to defeat the policies of Chamberlain and appeasement. The tide ran high and came near to victory. Had it won, the aggression of fascism would have been halted, and there would have been no second world war. The stakes are higher today. Therefore it is timely that the Congress of the Communist Party in November has raised anew the urgent question of left unity and co-operation to end the domination of right-wing policies of the cold war and subservience to American imperialism, with the accompanying limitations on social advance, and that the discussion has begun.

Some Lessons for Britain

Incidentally, a few pointers from these French presidential elec-

tions of special interest for Britain may be worth noting. First, if de Gaulle had adopted the British electoral system, he would have been home and dry on the first round, without needing to undergo the indignity of initial failure to win and the consequent necessity to face the Popular Front as his visible challenger on behalf of a united opposition. But even so extreme an authoritarian as de Gaulle did not dare to go so far in his anti-democratic procedures as to imitate the supremely undemocratic British electoral system for his presidential election. Second, if the French Communist Party had adopted the type of argument of certain opponents of the united front in this country, they would have called on the Socialist Party, as the smaller party, to disappear in the interests of unity. Instead, after defeating the disruptive attempts of Deferre to establish a 'non-communist left' to split the left, they gave full support to the candidate backed by the smaller party, the Socialist Party, who put forward a programme providing a basis for co-operation of all on the left. On this basis the united result was made possible which aroused such universal political attention. Third, Communist-Socialist unity benefited both parties, and mobilised a wider mass support than the previous aggregate support of the two parties in separation. Just as in the 1936 elections unity brought a large increase in representation both for the Communist Party (73 seats in place of 10) and for the Socialist Party (148 seats in place of 101), so the 7.6 million votes for Mitterand in the first round of the presidential election in 1965 represented an increase on the total aggregate vote of 6.3 millions for both the Communist Party and the Socialist Party in the general election of 1962.

Worsening International Situation

The urgent problem of left unity is still too often discussed in a narrow spirit in this country, as if it were simply an opportunity for indulging anti-communist spleen, or as if the disparate sections of the still far too small left forces in this country could wrap around themselves separate mantles of disdainful superiority. But the clamorous needs of the menacing realities of the present international situation and of the political situation in Britain have to be faced. The present international situation is worsening. Premier Kosygin said as much to Foreign Secretary Stewart on the occasion of the latter's visit to Moscow in December, and referred especially to Vietnam, the moves to give West Germany access to nuclear arms, and the acquiescent rôle of Britain in these reactionary poli-

cies. The outcome of these exchanges *The Times* diplomatically described as only a 'modest success'; the more candid *Daily Telegraph* described it as 'agreement to disagree'; the brutal *Express* described it as 'a flop'. It is a measure of this worsening situation that the Soviet Union, after previous cuts in arms expenditure, which had been met by increases from the side of Britain, has now been compelled to increase the allocation for 1966 by 5 per cent, although even so the proportion of the budget devoted to arms expenditure has fallen from 12.9 per cent to 12.8 per cent. It is significant that alongside 13.4 billion roubles devoted to arms, social and cultural expenditure has gone up to 40.3 billions, or treble the arms expenditure; and that the increase of arms expenditure by 600 million roubles has been accompanied by an increase of expenditure on housing by 1,400 millions, or more than double the arms increase; and on education by 1,600 millions, or nearly three times the arms increase; while industrial production is to go up by 6.7 per cent. Unfortunately we can show no such parallel picture in Britain. All the greater is the urgency to mobilise the forces for a change in policy.

From the Thirties to Today

In Vietnam the United States is at this moment conducting a review of further strategic planning which is reported to be contemplating an increase of the American invading forces to 400,000 or to half a million, and the increase of the present cost of £2,000 million a year for a war against a poor nation of thirty million people to £4,000 million in 1966, for a war whose barbarous brutality exceeds even the records of the Axis invading forces in Spain three decades ago. Last month we compared the record of the British Government in confronting the offensive of the racialists in Southern Rhodesia to the Chamberlainite record of appeasement moving into a peculiar type of phoney war. This has now been carried to a further and still more explosive stage when Britain, at the same time as refusing the insistent requests of all the African states for military action to deal with the proclaimed 'rebel' Rhodesian régime, has instead occupied all the airfields in Zambia with R.A.F. planes and troops, not for action against the racialists, but to prevent the arrival of African troops sent against the racialists.* As in the thirties, so today in relation to Southern Rhodesia every other page

*'Rhodesians welcomed the arrival of R.A.F. units in Zambia, principally because they believed this would prevent the arrival of Algerian, Egyptian or possibly Russian units.'—Sir Roy Welensky, *News of the World*, December 12, 1965.

of the White Paper record of the negotiations reveals the supreme preoccupation of Britain's rulers to be, not with the menace of racist dictatorship, but with what they see on every side as the menace of communism in alliance with African national mass revolt, so that with comical parallelism at each successive step in their interchange Wilson and Smith ceaselessly accuse one another of playing into the hands of communism. The same spurious world picture of the supposed aggressive menace, reflecting in fact the guilty fears of the dying imperialist social order, today as then leads to successive strategic blunders and fiascoes.

A New World

But the world of today is no longer the world of the thirties. All Africa is awake. The complex difficulties and obstacles which the African states and peoples have to overcome in order to fulfil their united aim of effective aid to their oppressed brothers in the southern regions of the continent should not be allowed to encourage the all too easy sneers of Western journalists who fail to recognise the depth of feeling and determination which is irresistibly pressing forward to fulfilment. The tide has moved since those days. Socialism and national liberation have changed the world balance irreversibly. In January 1966, the new initiative is set for the meeting of the Three Continent Conference at Havana, associating representatives of the peoples from countries comprising the majority of the world's population, and convened by the agreement, overcoming difficulties, of the Preparatory Committee in Cairo, which was composed of representatives from six leading countries from each of the three continents; the Soviet Union, China, India, Japan, Indonesia and Vietnam for Asia; the United Arab Republic, Algeria and Ghana among those from Africa; and Cuba and Mexico from Latin America. Whether this Conference will be successfully held will be tested by the event. But the attempt to hold it is a sign of the times. Certainly there is no lack of problems and differences still to be resolved. The path of the world's advance has never been easy or smooth. But it is impossible for anyone to survey the contrast between the era of the thirties and today and fail to see the road which has been travelled or the direction in which the world is moving. And it is the vital need for Britain, with so many problems inherited from its old vanished rôle of world domination, to be moving forward in unity with the new advancing world, instead of squandering its resources and strength in the vain

effort to retain the crumbling fragments of its former empire and still continuing and ever enlarging empire exploitation, and becoming in consequence tied and enslaved to the last fortress of the old dying social order, represented by Wall Street and the Pentagon.

Britain In the Rut

Of what avail for Premier Wilson to fly to New York to proclaim undying devotion to the United Nations, when simultaneously Britain treats with open defiance the overwhelming majority resolutions of the United Nations, as for withdrawal from Aden, or on Southern Rhodesia the resolution of November 5, for suspension of the 1961 Constitution, release of the political prisoners and convening of a constitutional conference to establish majority rule, fulfilment of which would have forestalled U.D.I. It is obvious to all that the visit to the United Nations is the rhetorical flourish, while the visit to Washington is for the real business between satellite and overlord. The discredit of the Government's foreign policy, Rhodesian policy, inflated arms programme and 'East of Suez' strategy is becoming recognised on all sides, including by Government supporters. Even the most skilful manipulation of a television 'bedside manner' or 'elder statesman' technique, irresistibly recalling Bismarck's definition of 'a lath of wood painted to look like iron', cannot indefinitely conceal the real fiascos and incoherence.

Offensive on the People

Most serious and immediately felt by the people are the consequences at home, as the election rosy promises of expansion are replaced by desperate policies of restriction to pay for the foreign imperialist extravagance; Britain falls to near the bottom of the league table of major European industrial countries in the level of social services provisions; and the menace of economic stagnation and deterioration deepens. The unpromising character of the economic perspective for 1966 is examined in the article of Emile Burns in the current issue. Not only in the mining villages or shipyards, but in industry after industry, including the previously booming car industry, the workers are faced with anxiety for the future. Ministerial speeches are increasingly directed against the workers, against strikers, against wage demands (never against soaring profits), and against trade union practices. The Prices and Incomes Board is to be armed with legislative powers, beginning the erosion of the rights of collective bargaining. The offensive against the

unions is in the open, with the Royal Commission as the sounding board. This dangerous situation, equally abroad and at home, calls imperatively for a far-reaching change in Britain's policy, to end the reactionary imperialist strategy and its ruinous home costs, and to enter on the path of advance which is possible. But such an alternative policy can only be realised if all who recognise the need for such a change combine their efforts to ensure its fulfilment.

Against 'Road Hog' Attitudes

What are the obstacles to such co-operation on the left? It is obvious that the most elementary and absolute obstacle would be if each section of the left were to say: 'I alone am in the right. All the rest of you must conform to what I do. I alone must have right of way'. This might be termed the 'road hog' attitude which blocks traffic. The varied and manifold sections of the left who would support a change of policy along the general lines indicated (as proposed, for purposes of discussion, in the Nine Point Immediate Programme suggested by the Communist Congress) would include many representatives in the Parliamentary Labour Party and local labour parties; the Communist Party and broad readership of the *Daily Worker* or this journal; the combined communist and non-communist left in the trade unions and industry; the many sections of democratic opinion and peace supporters, especially among professional people and young people, not yet part of the organised labour movement, but deeply disillusioned by the reactionary policies of the present Labour Government, eager to support such an alternative programme, and sometimes tempted towards bootless isolationist endeavours to give it political expression ('Radical Alliance', C.N.D. candidates, etc.). In wider political outlook and philosophy there are manifest variations between these sections. But this does not prevent a measure of broad agreement in practice on the immediate changes in Britain's policy which are desirable. If, however, each section were to insist on acceptance of its own distinctive position by the rest as the condition for any co-operation, this would be equivalent to refusing co-operation. If, for example, the communists were to say that the non-communist left in the Labour Party should all leave the Labour Party and join the Communist Party as the best solution; or if the non-communist left in the Labour Party were to demand that the communist left should abandon their belief in the necessity of a party of socialism in the broad labour movement: such proposals would not represent pro-

posals for co-operation of the left, but a direct negative and an advocacy of the division of the left.

'Let Them Disband'?

An example of the latter attitude was provided by the editorial in the left weekly *Tribune* on December 3, commenting on the proposals of the Communist Congress under the title 'Wind Up the British Communists'. It is to the credit of *Tribune* to have endeavoured to discuss the problem of left co-operation, raised by the Communist Congress, in place of taking refuge in silence, and to have provided space in its pages for further discussion by correspondents. It need hardly be said that the pages of *Labour Monthly* will be similarly available for discussion of the problem by correspondents; a preliminary formulation of our viewpoint was offered in the editorial 'Future of the Left' in our November issue. Discussion of the problem can only be beneficial, as the first step to promote understanding, and to enable prejudices and misunderstandings to be brought into the light of day. The problem of left co-operation is a real one in the localities and in industry, with plenty of living experience of the possibilities and the difficulties, however much those in high places may try either to pretend that it does not exist or to extinguish it with excommunications. The mass campaign against the war in Vietnam, probably the broadest mass campaign since that against Suez compelled the right-wing top leadership of the Labour Party to perform a somersault and replace its initial support of the Tory Government's military measures by opposition, has illustrated equally the possibilities and the difficulties. In this context the contribution offered by *Tribune* can hardly be regarded as fruitful or realist. It is equivalent to suggesting that the problem of co-operation of two participants could be solved if one participant would disappear.

Questionable Assumptions

This outlook is based on a series of questionable assumptions which are treated as infallible axioms to be regarded as obligatory for all on the left. The first assumption is that the fight for a left policy and for socialist aims can only be conducted, and should only be conducted by isolated individual members of the Labour Party, permanently protesting against the dominant right-wing policy and machine, but without common organisation to confront the right-wing machine; without means of formulating a common programme; without organic contact with the trade unions, that is, the mass basis

of the Labour Party; shackled by disciplinary restrictions from giving full expression to their views; and compelled in their public capacity as endorsed candidates and representatives to uphold and maintain the official right-wing policies which in their personal capacity they deplore. This is an understandable and arguable tactical point of view, genuinely upheld by those who regard this as the best course in the existing conditions of the labour movement in this country; and there should be full respect for their viewpoint from others on the left who have reached different conclusions on the best answer to the common problem. But equally they should respect the viewpoint of those who, precisely from their experience of this struggle of the left within the Labour Party and the trade unions (long before these present critical commentators came on the scene) reached by hard experience the conclusion of the necessity of establishing an organised party of the fight for socialism within the labour movement, not in opposition to the rest of the labour movement, but to co-operate with the rest of the labour movement against the domination of the right-wing machine. As previously noted, the issue between these two main tactical lines on the left is still unresolved, and will only be finally settled by the test of history. But in the meantime this should not prevent the fullest possible co-operation between both sections of the left for the immediate objectives which both sections hold in common. In the words of the editorial quoted, referring to the immediate programme proposed by the Communist Congress: 'The programme for the immediate future outlined contains almost nothing to which a Labour left-winger, inside parliament or without, could take exception'. Then why not co-operate? Why uphold division?

Offspring of the Left

What the advocates of the liquidation of the Communist Party in favour of the supposed preferable alternative of a fight of isolated left individuals within the Labour Party have failed to realise is that the Communist Party is the direct outcome of this fight of the left within the Labour Party, trade unions and old labour and socialist movement. The illusion of these commentators is their blind acceptance (possibly through innocent ignorance of the true facts) of the conventional capitalist and right-wing picture of the Communist Party as a kind of 'Cave of Adullam' of a handful of misguided individuals who, excited by the Russian revolution, founded a little sect on the basis of 'blind loyalty to the Soviet Union', and since

then have tried to 'infiltrate' the Labour Party as the large mass organisation. A fantastic caricature in every respect. Read the Memoirs of Pollitt or Gallacher. Study the life of Tom Mann. The writer of these Notes used to work in the old Labour Party headquarters in Eccleston Square, before there was a Transport House or a Communist Party or a *Tribune*; contributed no small part of the official Labour Party Press Service; and served on Labour Party headquarters Advisory Committee in the days of Henderson and MacDonald and the Webbs. We did not become Communists because of the Russian revolution; we supported the Russian revolution because we were Communists.

Organising the Left

The left fight reached great heights during those years immediately preceding, in the midst of and succeeding the first world war. But that experience convinced us that the left could not rely on spontaneity alone, on waves of mass upsurge rising and falling in ceaseless succession, while the right-wing fortress remained unshaken and entrenched in continuous domination. Hence we drew the conclusion it was essential to found a consistent organisation of the left fight, a political party of the fight for socialism, not as a separate sect, but uniting the militant fighters in the trade unions, the Labour Party and the mass movement to defeat the right-wing domination and carry forward the whole movement. And it was here that the experience of the first victorious socialist revolution taught the militant workers in this country, as in all the countries of the world, indispensable lessons on the character of such a new party, and the need of such a party for the victory of the socialist revolution.

Heir of the Socialist Movement

The Communist Party arose, not as a new 'infiltration' from outside, but as the direct heir of the original socialist movement in this country, which preceded and helped to found the Labour Party. The Social Democratic Federation, the pioneer of socialist organisation in this country, became the British Socialist Party, which, with the addition of the most active elements of the shop stewards and militant trade unionism, became the Communist Party. The British Socialist Party was already affiliated to the Labour Party, at the same time as it was affiliated to the Communist International and openly expressing its Marxist or communist viewpoint through its directly elected delegates in Labour Party Con-

ferences; and no question of its rights was raised. The Communist Party from the outset sought affiliation to the Labour Party in the same way, with due acceptance of the constitution of the Labour Party and the same right as other organisations to advocate its viewpoint and make its contribution. But this is precisely what the right-wing leadership feared. Hence their refusal of affiliation, extended eventually to the exclusion of Communists as delegates or as individual members. Their grounds were the same as that expressed by a member of the General Council, A. Conley, a few years later to justify the banning of the Minority Movement: 'if the Council had agreed to this affiliation, within a short time the Minority Movement would become the majority' (*Daily Herald*, September 8, 1926). It was not the Communists, but the right wing who split the movement in order to maintain their domination. Thereby they destroyed the old basis of the Labour Party as an inclusive united organisation of socialist parties and trade unions, and substituted a doctrinaire basis of denial of the class struggle, which leads to ceaseless conflict with socialists and with the organisational basis in the trade unions. *Tribune* is out of date in describing the Labour Party as 'a wide coalition' affording scope for all socialists. That was the old basis before the right-wing disruption and bans. The task now is to find the best means of co-operation, despite the bans, and eventually to overcome the bans. To uphold the policy of bans and division is merely to act as apologist for the right-wing policy of disruption in place of assisting left advance.

Questions of Size

Similarly *Tribune* argues that because the Communist Party is still a small party and the Labour Party is very large, the correct path of unity is for the Communist Party to disband and for its members to merge into the Labour Party. In support of this argument an analogy is offered from Italy: 'if the project for a single working-class party can be put up even within the Italian Communist Party, the largest and most successful in Western Europe, why is it not suggested in the British C.P., a negligible sect in comparison with the Italian giant?' This attempted analogy confuses two distinct problems: the problem of political unity of the entire labour movement to find expression in a single working-class party, and the immediate problem of left co-operation within the broad labour movement, such as can help to prepare the way for the wider aim of political unity of the whole labour move-

ment. The shortest answer to the complete misconception underlying this argument, and the crushing reply to the rhetorical question posed, is that the British Communist Party does in fact advocate, and has publicly proclaimed in its Congress documents, the aim of a united working-class party, based on socialism and opposition to monopoly capitalism, and not on the 'mixed economy' and co-operation with imperialism. The conditions for the fulfilment of this aim of British Communists to advance to a single united working-class party are not yet within view, so long as right-wing policy and leadership is dominant and able to impose division and repudiation of any class basis or principle of class struggle. Therefore the first elementary step towards this aim is for the existing left forces within the labour movement to co-operate for the common immediate objectives on which they are agreed so as to win the whole labour movement. As soon as this immediate problem is seen in real terms, the question of relative size takes on different proportions. The question then becomes the question of the numbers of active left fighters in the trade union and labour movement.

Two Sections and One Fight

How many in fact are the all too limited numbers of consistently active left fighters in the trade union and labour movement today? The numbers of the mobilised communist left can be estimated in terms of the 34,000 members of the Communist Party and the readership and supporters of the *Daily Worker*. The members of the active non-communist left cannot be so easily estimated save in terms of the readership of *Tribune*, since the left parliamentarians, while exercising an influence on ideas, are not able to count on any mobilised body of support. When we come to these real practical measures of strength in the battle, in which alike the communist left and the non-communist left are in reality fighting alongside one another for common aims, and often achieving a high degree of co-operation, despite bans, especially on the lower levels and in the unions, every one with living experience of the actual struggle in the unions and industry, in the localities and in mass campaigning, is aware that the communist left represents a by no means negligible section of the total forces of the left. It we turn from this to the very large figures of millions of potential left supporters who can be won in the trade union and labour movement for left policies on this or that issue, as shown in the votes ranging from two to three millions in recent Trades Union Congresses and

Labour Party Conferences, then it is a familiar fact that the main volume of these votes has been achieved on the basis of the preceding fight within the unions, with communist participation, and that in these battles the communist trade unionists are usually more strongly placed to exercise their influence than the parliamentarians. All this is not to disparage the weight of any section of the left, or to counter the relative weight of one section against another. All that it shows is that the co-operation of all sections of the left is likely to produce the most effective results for the benefit of the whole labour movement. And what applies within the labour movement applies equally in the general political situation in Britain, in which a united labour movement with a left policy should be able to mobilise the widest sections of the people.

Political Test

The test of value of a given political organisation is not only size, although this is important, but also its political role and impact. Here there can be no question of the lesson of the record. It is true that all of us on the left have no reason to be happy over the record of these past decades in Britain, with continued still unbroken right-wing domination of the labour movement, monopoly capitalism entrenched, official Labour policy sliding to the right, and Britain a cold war satellite of American imperialism. But it is also true that through the whole chequered record all that is remembered and celebrated with pride and honour today by the entire labour movement, during these four and a half decades of the foundation and existence of the Communist Party, such as the *Jolly George* which prepared the way for the Councils of Action, or Red Friday and the militant industrial upsurge which prepared the heroic class solidarity of the General Strike; the Unemployed Hunger Marches (banned at the time by the T.U.C. and Labour Party until the support of the movement compelled a change); the barring of the road to Mosley; the fight for Spanish democracy and the role of the International Brigade; the at first lone stand against Munich; the campaign for the Second Front; the smashing of the wage-freeze after the war; or the at first almost isolated battle against the American domination of Britain and nuclear warfare now taken up on a widely extended front, but still to be won: all these have time and again sprung—not in terms of some sectional claim, but by the demonstrable facts and dates of the record—from the initiative of the Communists and Communist Party. When the *Daily Herald* was

sold out to the millionaires, it was the initiative of the Communist Party which made possible the foundation and maintenance for thirty-five years now, by the infinite devotion and sacrifice of its members and supporters, of the only independent newspaper of the working class. And indeed it is appropriate to recall in the present context that it was the initiative of the party which helped to inspire the foundation of *Tribune*, as previously of the *Sunday Worker*, and still further back, of this journal, all as successive voices of the left, supported by the party. And on the other side of the medal, all that is today remembered with shame and anger by the entire labour movement: the betrayal of the General Strike; the open transition of the principal Labour leaders to Toryism; the support of the ban on arms to Spanish democracy; the godspeed to Munich; or the sell-out of Britain to the United States: all these stemmed from those most prominent in denouncing Communism. Therefore representatives of the left should beware of joining the anti-communist chorus.

Instability of Individuals

There is a further reason why the existence of an organised detachment of the fight for socialism and left policies, closely linked in practice with the working-class organisations, but never allowing itself to be gagged by the threats of Transport House, is of positive value to all on the left in the difficult conditions of their fight within the Labour Party. One of the difficulties of that fight of the left within the Labour Party is that they are in practice debarred from having any organisation to formulate their viewpoint and conduct their fight. The record is littered with the epitaphs of such attempts from the Socialist League to Keep Left to Victory for Socialism, not to mention the successive fates of the Labour League of Youth, the Young Socialists, and now the threat hanging over the head of the Labour Party Young Socialists. Hence the left within the Labour Party is compelled to depend on individual politicians for the voicing and organisation of their fight. This is a very unstable basis. These individual politicians may have all the virtues in the world and the highest certificates of character at a given moment. But individuals are unpredictable; they are answerable to no one but themselves; they may presently move anywhere. The history of the Labour Party is littered with such fallen idols of the left. Ramsay MacDonald was triumphantly backed by the 'Red Clydesiders' as the Hero of the Left after the first world war to oust the right-wing Clynes. Mosley was a Hero

of the Left till he hived off to found his fascist organisation. Aneurin Bevan was the Idol of the Left after his resignation from the Third Labour Government till the unhappy day of his *volte-face* to unity with Gaitskell over the H-bomb struck a dagger through the hearts of his admirers. Harold Wilson, trailing still a slight aura of 'Bevanism', was triumphantly elected by the Left as their champion against the right-wing candidate; although the outcome is causing them less satisfaction.

Individuals and Organisation

To attempt to build the left solely on individual leaders is to build on sand. This is not to say that the Communist Party is infallible or perfect and has not made plenty of mistakes. But there is a difference. When MacDonalld went over to head a Tory Cabinet that was not a 'mistake'. When Mosley set up his Union of Fascists that was not a 'mistake'. There is after all something to be said for the usefulness of a collective democratic working-class organisation devoted to the aim of socialism, not as a pious formula to be ignored, but based on socialist theory, and with policy democratically determined by the delegates elected by the membership. This does not imply that the form of the Communist Party should be the only form of left activity, or that all those advocating left policies in the Labour Party should abandon their positions to join the Communist Party. Communists may certainly hold the view that the most effective way to fight for the aims of socialism and influence the broad labour movement is as an organised member of their party. But they would no more dream of endeavouring to impose such a demand on their fellow left fighters in the Labour Party than it would be reasonable for the latter to demand of the Communists to dissolve their organisation in order to seek admittance to the Labour Party. What is important at the present stage is for all sections of the left to recognise the value of the various contributions that each section can make, and to recognise that co-operation in pursuit of common immediate objectives is more useful than division which only benefits the right wing.

First Steps

Such co-operation requires some measure of agreement on common immediate objectives. Hence the value of discussion of a common immediate programme. Such co-operation would also require a serious attempt to overcome the present unnecessary

mechanical obstacles to association. The time may not yet be ripe to review all the questions of future relations, although these wider questions may come to the forefront in proportion as co-operation develops. But it should be possible already to get rid of some of the most elementary bans on common working, such as joint association in mass campaigning, tenants' committees, taking up of local issues, and the like (in practice such co-operation does go forward, but always with a certain atmosphere of overhanging threats). Similarly in those unions where bans are still maintained, and to ensure full democratic rights of election of delegates by unions to all labour conferences. Left representatives in the Labour Party widely declare in private their detestation of the whole crippling system of bans and proscriptions. Why not in public? Is it not time to make it a recognised plank of the public common platform of the left to end the whole McCarthyite system of bans and proscriptions which hamstring healthy democratic development in the labour movement? Such a step forward would not only be a democratic gain, but would strengthen the common fight of all on the left for those progressive changes in policy which are so urgent today for the future of the labour movement and for the whole future of British politics.

R.P.D.

There's a little slice of America that's not all green . . .

You can take a look at this other America through the pages of the progressive newsweekly

NATIONAL GUARDIAN

- a dead-end foreign policy
- frustrations in the fight for Negro rights
- the crisis in jobs, housing, schools
- who's for progress, and how

Subscribe to NATIONAL GUARDIAN today
through the London Bureau, 67 Covington Way, London, S.W.16.

1 year sub. - - - 60s. 1 year student sub. - - 36s.
13 week introductory sub. 10s.