

Neath Campaign THE DEBATE WITH STALINISTS

(Continued from page 1.)

Ness Edwards, M.P., Mary Sutherland, Will Lawther, Arthur Horner (Arthur Greenwood, M.P., and Aneurau Bevan, M.P. were booked to speak but did not appear) etc.—in spite of this bombardment, with the exception of the last two meetings in Neath they were badly attended, and principally by older people.

Questions were restricted and absolutely no discussion was allowed.

The meetings of the R.C.P. varied in different parts. In the mining villages of the Swansea Valley we had better meetings than the Labour Party, and in Neath all our meetings were better attended. We had the additional attraction that the overwhelming bulk of those present were young workers. Lively questioning, interjection and discussion was allowed. Opponents were invited to come onto the platform and oppose the policy of our party. This confident and democratic procedure stood out in sharp contrast to the bureaucratic handling of the Labour Party and Communist Party meetings, and was widely appreciated by the workers.

At our open air meetings held in the streets of Neath, hundreds of workers collected every night to listen to our speakers, and discussions took place with groups of workers until the small hours of the morning. The fact that Comrade Haston was the only candidate to mix among the workers freely, answering their questions and expounding his policy, made a deep impression upon them. After each meeting our Committee rooms were packed to the doors with groups of workers seeking information and discussion.

At most of the pits in the district we had the opportunity of taking meetings with a loud speaker van where the miners listened attentively to our case, which was discussed throughout the campaign down the pits. At Cefn Coed Pit the tubs were coming up chalked "Up with Haston". When we offered the "mike" to Stalinists who had been slandering us in this pit, they got out of the way. This had a profound effect on the workers and considerably increased our support.

At a mass open air meeting at Pontardawe Cross a Welsh Nationalist, Kitchener Davies, took over the microphone for 15 minutes, where he demonstrated the bankruptcy of the Welsh Nationalist case. His principal point was that Welshmen did all the hard work and received low pay, while the English workers received high wages and better conditions. Comrade Haston effectively exposed his case by demonstrating that the English workers suffered under the same terrible conditions as the Welsh. Explaining how De Valera and the Irish nationalists had gained the support of the Irish workers and peasants, but instead of raising the standards of life of the Irish population, they had declined catastrophically with the result that there was a tremendous immigration of Irish workers into Britain to seek a means of livelihood. He pointed out that Welsh nationalism could only find its true expression in a socialist Britain.

PRESS BOYCOTTED US

The press boycotted us. At the first series of meetings we had a reporter at each one—but they were police reporters!

From the standpoint of news the meetings of the R.C.P. were full of lively interest. If any other Party had run such lively meetings they would have been widely reported. And although we had the biggest meetings in the campaign, a tight censorship was clamped down on news about our activities.

The coal owners' press gave a little publicity to the nationalists, but they heavily weighted their publicity in favour of Williams. Unable to put forward a candidate of their own the coalowners supported Williams and opposed Haston. This is ample testimony to refute the credentials of Williams who claimed to stand for the miners' interests. Let the workers take note of these facts for they will show themselves in the activity of D. J. Williams in the future.

On the day of the election the "Daily Worker" carried the following:

"TORY BID TO TRICK VOTERS AT NEATH"

From Ben Francis

Neath goes to the polls tomorrow. A bumper victory for the Labour candidate—Mr. D. J. Williams—is expected, despite local Tory propaganda.

This takes the form of describing "Jock" Haston, the Trotskyist candidate, as a Communist (the Trotskyists are calling themselves the "Revolutionary Communist Party").

As a result, Haston may gain some votes on the strength of the strong support for the Communist Party in the constituency.

The Swansea "Evening Post" is the chief Tory weapon in this campaign. Letters pointing out that Haston is not a member of the Communist Party have been ignored by the Editor.

The Neath workers know this is a lie. They know the Tories were behind Williams. They gave publicity to Williams and remained silent about Jock Haston. This was a most striking feature of the campaign. Furthermore, the Neath workers know that the whole campaign centred on the difference between the Communist Party and the Revolutionary Communist Party, and far from masquerading as the official Stalinist Communist Party, our bitterest attacks were directed against them.

Every worker who voted for Jock Haston, was voting consciously for Trotskyism as against Stalinism. This was a feeble effort in anticipation of a good vote for the revolutionary candidate.

THE ORGANISATIONAL WORK

The bulk of the field work of the campaign was carried out by a handful of six comrades who formed the backbone of the organisation. Their activities were of a most diversified character. Chalking, white-washing and bill-posting, paper selling, canvassing, speaking and endless contact work. They carried out a three months campaign with self sacrifice and devotion in face of the most strenuous physical conditions and against tremendous moral pressure. They have played a valiant and significant role in establishing a splendid tradition for Trotskyism in West Wales.

Comrades from Glasgow, London, Huddersfield, Newcastle, Birmingham, Newark and elsewhere gave up their annual summer holidays to come down for a week and help in the campaign. Without their splendid assistance it would not have been possible to have conducted so splendid a campaign.

In London and other areas comrades made their contribution to the great success. Their efforts in collecting the necessary funds enabled us to fight

From a Neath Labour Worker

Mr. Alun Thomas in his opening remarks in the debate with Jock Haston at the Gwyn Hall, Neath, on Sunday, stated that if he had his way all those who were on the platform would be shot. Now friends, just think of the significance of those words. Do they strike you as democracy or communism, or fascism? Mr. Alun Thomas by those words admits that he would do the same as Hitler and Mussolini did to all those people who opposed their will in Germany and Italy. Mr. Alun Thomas states that his party supports labour in this election. The Labour Party do not want the support of would-be assassins. Our boys fought in Germany for freedom of thought and speech, and no decent, sensible worker will be taken in by the hoodliganism of the supporters of Alun Thomas, who refused to give a fair hearing to Jock Haston in the debate. Alun Thomas was not enough of a man to make an appeal for fairplay for his opponent, which he himself was given.

By a Labour Party Member.

little hampered by financial restrictions. Particular praise goes to those comrades who carried out the addressing and packing of the 41,000 election addresses. (One election statement was sent to each family).

In every aspect of organisation we were ahead in the field. The tremendous Labour Party machine was unable to undertake even its envelope addressing, demonstrating the demoralisation which Labour Party workers had undergone as a result of the coalition politics of the leadership.

WHAT THE CAMPAIGN ACHIEVED

Over £130 worth of literature was sold in the constituency in the three months campaign. 7,500 copies of the special February edition of the "Socialist Appeal" were sold—approximately one to every three houses. Hundreds of copies of the "A.B.C. of Trotskyism"—all we had in print—were sold out before the campaign ended—many hundreds of other pamphlets, and about 2,000 of each issue of the current numbers of the "Socialist Appeal" for the period of three months. 30,000 leaflets were distributed. Contacts and sympathisers were made in every village in the district but the decision was made to bring no members into the party in the heat of the campaign, so that the more serious elements could work closely with us and the party could afterwards consolidate its gains by recruiting classes in the post-election period.

Comrade Jock Haston was mainly responsible for setting the high political standard of the campaign. He mercilessly squashed any attempt at popularising him by referring to the fact that he had been imprisoned last year under the Trade Disputes Act. He prefaced his remarks that such introduction had been singularly unfortunate—that some of the Labour fakery had also been imprisoned; that he hoped it did not foreshadow that he too would sell out the workers as they had done; what was at issue was not the personalities of the three candidates, but their programmes and their policies.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE I.L.P.

At the outset of the campaign we wrote to the I.L.P. and explained the importance of the decision to contest the Neath by-election. We appealed to the leadership of the I.L.P. to

support us in the fight against the coalition and the war.

We were informed by the leadership of the I.L.P. that the question would be discussed by the N.A.C. In spite of repeated requests for a statement on their attitude, the I.L.P. leaders refused to take a stand with the anti-war candidate against the reformist Labour-Tory coalition candidate.

Here was the classic indication of the cowardly and unprincipled manoeuvrings of the leadership of the I.L.P. This was emphasised by their campaign in Newport, where in Bob Edward's election address it is impossible to distinguish between his and the policy of the Labour Party.

He skirted the question of the war; he failed to criticise the Labour Party; he failed entirely to even touch on the central problem of international solidarity with the German working class in face of the hate campaign carried out by the capitalist class and the Labour leaders.

But the Leadership could not be distinguished from the Labour Party in the Newport election, the Neath comrades of the I.L.P. had an entirely different outlook. They gave whole-hearted support to our campaign and courageously defended us and carried the international socialist message to their fellow workers in Neath. The policy of the leadership of the I.L.P. helped the Labour leaders, and by refusing a united front with the revolutionary anti-war candidate, helped the capitalist-class and the Churchill Government.

Our estimate that Neath was one of the most class conscious divisions in the country was entirely correct. The level of the campaign was the highest that any of us had experienced in years of election work for the Labour Party and Communist Party.

The nationalists were pushed entirely out of the picture. We found not a single Labour Party worker who supported the policy of the leadership although hundreds attended our meetings. The discussions with Labour Party members were always on the plane of how best to change the Labour Party policy by fighting from within. Such a hammering did we give the Labour leaders for their betrayal in the Coalition, that the Labour leaders were undoubtedly on the defensive. This could be seen from the local press which carried such headlines as: "Grenfell Answers Communist Charges". In the meetings, the greatest clause was forthcoming when our speakers attacked the policy of the Labour leaders.

The vote does not reflect the feeling of the Labour workers to their leadership; it reflects that great loyalty to "Labour", to which the workers still cling despite their disillusionment.

In Neath itself the Communist Party was thoroughly demoralised, as the result of the campaign and this demoralisation spread into the valleys when the rank and file became fully aware that their leaders were fearful and incapable of conducting an honest political fight defending their party from attacks.

The serious workers asked precisely the questions that we set out to answer when we entered the fight. Why do we contest a Labour seat instead of a Tory seat? Isn't there a contradiction between our policy of calling for Labour to Power and contesting the election against Labour?

We explained that if the Neath Labour Party had issued a declaration opposing the coalition and proposing to contest the election independently on Labour's programme, we would have supported the Labour Party against any possible Liberal or Tory opponent. We explained that in the General Election when the Labour Party was standing on an independent platform we would call on the workers to support the Labour Party and vote Labour. We would not create the illusion that the Labour Party could solve the problems of the working class with its programme of reforms. Throughout the campaign we would put forward our alternative policy as the only solution to the problems of the working class.

By uniting the electoral forces of Labour and other organised workers against the Tories and Liberals we would go through the experience of the workers who still believed the L.P. could bring about socialism. In the course of our common experience and on the basis of the class-struggle we were convinced that the best workers would be won for a clear policy of revolutionary struggle against the capitalists.

What is the lasting achievement of the campaign? It can be seen already in the heightening of the political consciousness of organised Labour in this area. To the older generation of workers, embittered and disillusioned by the repeated betrayals of Reformism and Stalinism our campaign for Revolutionary Socialism brought a new inspiration and revived the will to struggle. To the working youth, from the mines and the factories, hundreds of whom listened with rapt attention to Comrade Haston and our speakers, our campaign came as a rousing call to prepare themselves by study and understanding for the great class-battles of our epoch. Trotskyism has found its roots in Wales. But its richest harvest will be reaped in the years to come. Our campaign has begun the process of unifying the mighty power and fighting capacity of Welsh Labour with the ideas and principles of militant Socialism—of Trotskyism. Out of this combination will be born a new fighting leadership—a tower of strength for the entire working-class movement in Britain in its coming struggle for Power.

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was going round saying that these trials were a frame-up. "That was Hitler's story; that was Rothermere's story; and that is Haston's story."

He quoted, to "prove" that we were anti-Soviet Union, from Comrade Cannon's evidence in the Minneapolis trials which the workers in the constituency have been buying in large numbers under the title "THE A.B.C. OF TROTSKYISM." He read out that section of the evidence in which Comrade Cannon states that we are for a political revolution in the Soviet Union, as distinguished from a social revolution in that we would not change the property forms.

His main emphasis was on the war. "Haston says that this is an imperialist war, but we say this is a people's war for liberation." He said that in Europe we have a great democratic liberation movement of the people which has overthrown fascism. We communists had always fought against fascism, and in this war the glorious Red Army, led Marshal Stalin, had destroyed the fascist army.

"But what does Haston do about it?" He tried to get the miners out on strike everywhere when we were preparing for invasion. His policy was the same as Oswald Mosley, both parts of one and the same policy.

"He comes out against unconditional surrender. Says the German worker is our ally. How can the Russians, who tried to fraternise with the Germans and get them to mutiny, talk about these elements as brothers? Hitler has created a nation of nincompoops and murderers. Haston had to follow in Hitler's footsteps."

"These Trotskyists say the Communist Party has sold the past. We say, until the active left forces unite to crush fascism, any talk about Socialism is sheer tommy rot. It is no good Haston looking at 1945 through the glasses of 1918. Haston says he's a Marxist. Haston says he's a Leninist. He's a liar! One thing about Marxism it is not a dogma, and we have to change our policy on the basis of the facts." In Europe today, he went on, fascism had been destroyed.

"Haston wants to hasten things. He has never said Hitler was wrong. He has never said anything against Hitler...Haston and Hitler are the only two who are right."

"All Haston's talk about socialism and revolution is blowing hot air. We have got to unite the forces of progress against fascism, which has to be defeated before the fight for a socialism can become a real thing." "Haston has come to this election to confuse and split the workers. In Russia they defeated fascism because they shot all the Trotskyists and the Fifth Column scum, and if we had our way, these people on this platform would be shot. In this election the workers can strike a blow at the Fifth Column by polling a big vote for D. J. Williams."

COMRADE HASTON'S CASE

Comrade Haston opened his remarks by saying that Thomas' statement that it was not the usual policy of the C.P. to debate with Trotskyists, was the only true statement he had made in the course of his speech.

"If Comrade Thomas was debating on this platform, it is because of

the complete exposure of the bankrupt policy of the C.P.

"In the course of this campaign we have attempted to raise the fundamental political issues before the working class. Anyone who has studied the literature distributed by "His Majesty's Communist Party" or attended their meetings will find concentrated slander but no political attack."

"Comrade Thomas says that only the backward workers are influenced by the Trotskyist policy, but in this hall are assembled the most class conscious sections of the workers in the constituency, including many who in the past few years have broken away from Stalinism. Thomas refused for three months to take part in a public debate. He said that the C.P. would not give the Trotskyists a platform, but this tremendous meeting has assembled to-night to hear the Trotskyist policy. This is our platform. We have forced Thomas to appear on it."

He then dealt with the Moscow Trials and the glaring discrepancies in the evidence:

He asked Alun Thomas how it was that Socialist and Trade Union International representing the world and trade union movement were refused permission to send independent lawyers to take part in the trial and defend the accused.

He then dealt with the record of His Majesty's Communist Party in relation to the fight against fascism.

Dealing with the C.P.'s anti-war period he quoted Gallacher's statements from the "Daily Worker" in which he demanded peace with Hitler at a period which would have been most advantageous to the Nazis.

"Never let the workers forget that it was Molotov who said when he was fraternising with the butcher Ribbentrop and toasting the newly signed pact that 'Fascism is a matter of taste.'"

He dealt with the Stalinist Third Period when they were calling the Labour Party and Social Democratic Trade Unions "fascist organisations." And pointed to the fact that the Trotskyists were expelled from the Communist Party here and in Germany for advocating a united front with the Labour Parties against Fascism. This was the time when the Stalinists had a united front with Hitler against the German Labour Party in the Hitler's referendum to remove the Social Democratic Government in Prussia in 1931.

He recalled the time when Pollitt in this country wrote an article in the "Daily Worker" on 29th January, 1930, advocating the smashing of Labour Party meetings with physical violence. For fighting against this mad policy the Trotskyists were expelled in 1932.

He dealt with the degeneration which had taken place in the Soviet Union, the abandonment of the ideas of world revolution, and the economic degeneration in the differences in pay of the ordinary Russian worker and the bureaucrats and Generals.

"In 'Soviets at Work' Lenin wrote that insofar as they had to pay managers and specialists higher wages than received by the average workman, that was a concession to capitalism. That the Bolsheviks would not deceive the workers by saying that it was anything else."

100,000 Germans in Nazi Camps

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"What is the writer saying?" says Gollancz: "That in the nine camps mentioned (apart from all the other camps, big or small, the innumerable Gestapo prisons and 'Houses') there were at any given moment from 1933 to 1939, on an average, 100,000 Germans..." Is this not an indication of an opposition in Germany?

And when the Left wing press were exposing these very atrocities which are only now being brought to light, the "Daily Telegraph" (then the "Morning Post") wrote:

"Anything that is not corroborated up to the hilt from other sources will naturally be suspect, and the sane reader will be predisposed to sympathise rather with Herr Hitler than with his accusers."

It is very easy for the capitalist and Labour fakery to blame the German masses for the very thing that enslaved them. None of these gentlemen who have been so shaken by the horrors of Nazi Germany have mentioned the prison camps, the shootings, the massacres and the famine which destroyed 5,000,000 people in British controlled India. The suppression, the pogroms and the lynchings of Negroes in America, or the colossal concentration camps with between 10 and 15 million inmates which spread for 100 miles over the desolate Siberian wastes of the U.S.S.R.

Who is to blame for these atrocities? Certainly not the working masses who are themselves the victims of their rapacious rulers. No more than the British, Russian or American working class are the German workers to be held responsible for the crimes of their rulers.

THE REASON FOR THE HORROR CAMPAIGN

The horror campaign has one significant purpose: to imbue the working class with an intense hatred for their German class brothers. The Allied imperialists and the Soviet bureaucracy have a programme of hunger, tyranny and subjugation for the German masses... Through the medium of hate propaganda, which is, moreover, very much akin to the Nazi methods, the rulers of Britain hope to gain the support of the workers in the carrying out of this programme.

The British workers must reject the foul and lying propaganda of their ruling class. It is essential that they recognise that Fascism is not something peculiar to Germany. It is a form of political rule, resorted to by the capitalist class when it is no longer capable of maintaining its power and privilege within the framework of parliamentary and "democratic" rule.

British workers must learn the lesson of events in Germany. If the British capitalists continue to rule they will perpetrate barbarities and horrors that would make Buchenwald and Belsen pale into significance.

It was the German Labour and Stalinist leaders who capitulated to Hitler without firing a shot in defence of working class rights. Unless the British working class forge themselves a new leadership which will fight capitalism which breeds fascism, and erect in its place a socialist system of society, the British Labour leaders will repeat this performance.

Solidarity with the German workers. The British workers have more in common with their German class brothers than with their own capitalist class.

"Under Stalin these differences have grown enormously."

"A Red Army soldier receives 171 roubles a month, but the Red Army General gets 2,000 roubles a month. The pit manager receives ten to twenty times the wage of a collier. These capitalistic differences are growing enormously, but Stalin and people like Thomas call it socialism."

Yes, he continued, we say the German workers are our allies. Thomas says the Russian tried to get the German soldiers to fraternise and mutiny. This is a deliberate falsehood. Here is what Ilya Ehrenburg, Stalin's spokesman, said when questioned by the correspondent of the "Christian Science Monitor" who asked what the Russians would do in the event of a revolt in Germany which would overthrow Hitler and welcome the advancing Red Army with appropriate banners, he replied: "THESE WOULD BE THE FIRST PEOPLE WE WOULD SHOOT!"

He asked if the German workers could be expected to revolt in face of such anti working class propaganda.

The issue in this election, he concluded, was one of no confidence in the policy of the Labour leaders who have capitulated to Churchill and the capitalist class; was the unity of the workers of Britain with the workers of India, of Europe and the world against the capitalist class. That is why the workers of Neath should vote Revolutionary Communist.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY BOTH SPEAKERS

In question time when the workers had the opportunity of hearing each speaker answer every question, the superiority of the revolutionary communist case was clear. In answer to a query on the wage differentiation within the Soviet Union, Thomas replied that it was from the ranks of the people that these generals and writers had risen and the Russian workers appreciated this and wanted it that way. This obviously did not go down among the socialist conscious workers in the audience (despite the applause of the C.P. members) and the workers there understood well that this was not socialism.

Dr. Jarmin, a prominent Stalinist in the town asked "Mr. Haston what he knew about, and was prepared to do about, the bad housing problem and tuberculosis problem in this division." The workers warmly appreciated Jock Haston's answer in which he stated that unlike the other candidates he promised nothing under the capitalist system. That to do so would be duplicity of the worst kind.

A worker was heard to say: "I'm voting for Haston because he promises nothing."

The loudest applause of the meeting was when Comrade Haston remarked: "There is a Labour Council in this town and every worker will agree with me when I say that it stinks!"

As soon as the debate concluded Thomas and his supporters (under 200) left the meeting.

The rest of the time was spent in questions to the candidate which he answered with courage and confidence. When one worker asked a question about India, Comrade Haston asked with the permission of the Chairman, for Comrade Ajit Roy to answer that question. Comrade Roy gave an inspiring answer calling for the Neath workers to demonstrate their support for the struggle for freedom of the Indian masses who were suffering tortures and starvation equal to those suffered by the European peoples under Hitler. He said that the granting of freedom to India would mean the destruction of Japanese imperialism in the East. He was warmly applauded. He was followed by Comrade Kastinos, a Greek comrade, ex-member of the Y.C.L. whose brother had been killed in Spain. He called upon the workers to demonstrate to the Labour leaders that at least they were opposed to the vile policy carried out by the British Government in Greece.

The meeting ended on a rousing internationalist tone, with comrade Haston saying in a ringing voice: "Long live the International solidarity of the working class! Workers of all lands unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win!"

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