London Letters

The Conference (of the Socialist Party of Great Britain) was the best for years... We discussed the Speakers' Test which a few of the members think unnecessary. It was a valuable discussion because those of us who do the examining were able to explain the purpose and merits of having a test like this... We discussed whether or not to retain the principle of having an internal journal and the Conference decided to recommend the Executive Committee to provide for occasional publication of controversial issues as and when there is suitable material. We also discussed the Correspondence Column in the SOCIALIST STANDARD. Most of the time, however, was spent in discussing the STANDARD itself... Some really constructive suggestions were made.

The tape recording from the Boston comrades were played on Saturday afternoon, and they really meant something to all of us assembled in Conway Hall. The voices were a tonic sound. The Annual Conference is not simply a matter of Party policy and decision; it is a yearly reaffirmation, a coming-together of socialists — and on this occasion and in this atmosphere the recorded voices of our transatlantic comrades brought all of you in among us to share this knowledge of being united and affirming together, in William Morris's great words, that:

The Cause alone is worthy
Till the Good Days bring the Best

There was the Conference Rally meeting, the best for many years, with Ted Wilmott pulling out all the stops in an incisive smashing analysis of the "bomb" issue. (See the complete speech in this issue of the WS).

The realities of capitalism are making themselves felt now to a whole generation who had believed there could never again be a slump. It's nineteen years since there was unemployment in Britain on a great scale; now, the shadow is falling over all the industrial areas. The postwar years have meant that to anybody under, say, thirty-three or four, unemployment is either an old woman's tale or past history. I have often told younger people about the struggle to live in the thirties and seen them half-incredulous but sure, at any rate, that nothing like it could happen again. Indeed, times are suddenly growing hard all round. Hardships, which were thought of as being all past tense, have been reinstated. There is always the temptation to a Socialist to say "We told you so"; in fact, however, one feels rather sad that the working class must go on apparently testing the limits of error before they will see the only answer to all of this.

* * *

I must admit that things certainly seem to be up at the moment. I feel that the economic upheaval which is threatening us at the moment may have something to do with it, but whatever it is, it is a good thing that we are beginning to get back into our stride. THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN today reports that 447,000 workers are now unemployed in this country. This, of course, has a lot to do with the Bus strike which is now going on in London. And we can be sure that on the outcome of this strike depends the approach and attitudes of the capitalist class towards the workers generally throughout the country. With a market growing bigger every day (labour of course) they will not be inclined to treat workers with kid gloves. They are intent on disciplining the Bus workers as an example to the rest. Up to date the Bus workers have been solid, and I would say, a proud example to the rest of the workers. I only hope that they can hold out, although I have my doubts unless they can extend the strike and get the underground railway workers to join them in sympathy.

Attend

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

of the W. S. P.

— at —

11 Faneuil Hall Square
Boston, Mass.

AUG. 30 to SEPT. 1, 1958

(Labor Day Weekend)

Saturday Afternoon: Conference
Saturday Evening: Social
Sunday All Day: Conference
Monday Morning: Conference

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DE GAULLE, THE SAVIOR?

Faced with the imminent alternative of civil war and a possible Communist-controlled uprising, the French capitalist class through its political representatives, acted to protect its interests in the only way left open. They acquiesced to the demands of their mutinous officers in Algeria and called upon General De Gaulle to lead them out of the political wilderness in which they find themselves. The Chamber of Deputies, its back to the wall, promptly abdicated its power, invested the General and his government with full authority for a period of six months and called for a referendum to alter the present parliamentary basis of the Fourth Republic.

General De Gaulle, on the other hand, just as promptly demonstrated whose interests he means to protect by naming civilian politicians to head important cabinet posts and himself as Minister for Algeria. He wasted no time in putting his military leaders in Algeria in their proper place. "You have no more revolutions to make," he told his disappointed Committee of Public Safety, "because the revolution is already accomplished." General Massu, M. Soustelle and M. Delbecque were informed in no uncertain terms who their boss happens to be. But on the other hand, if he is not fully aware already, General De Gaulle himself will discover soon enough that the orders and dictates he is scheduled to utter will not be of his making. The needs of French capitalism must in the final analysis determine his action to the same degree as they have influenced the 25 governments of the Fourth Republic.

Economic Decline

Despite popular belief to the contrary, France's continuing troubles at home and throughout her diminishing empire are not in any way directly due to the multi-party system and lack of strong government which their present Constitution guarantees. In fact proportional representation is in many ways more democratic than a two party system and despite the continuing upset of French regimes in recent years, the successive governments were always pretty much made up of the same men. Only the positions were shuffled. The attempt to understand a nation's affair by concentrating upon its politics rather than its economic and financial structure is usual procedure but not sound. In the case of France the Chamber of Deputies, which someone has labeled as "600 screaming anarchists" is not a cause of her woes but merely a reflection. The troubles of France stem directly from her system of society, capitalism.

For one reason or another, France has steadily declined in this century as a world power. Insofar as importance in industry is concerned, she ranks far down the list, even below