

# T.U.C. PROGRAMME

FRANK HAXELL

**Y**EAR after year there has been developing a realisation that the official policies of the Trades Union Congress on the major industrial and political issues and problems facing the people do not correspond to the needs of the situation. The T.U.C. has in the economic field—with the exception of the year 1950 when the Electrical Trades Union successfully moved a motion against the policy of wage restraint—been advocating a policy of price control, price reductions, a limitation on profit levels and increased wages for the lower paid workers only. The arguments against an alternative policy were many and varied, ranging from the danger of pricing ourselves out of the world market, to the plight of the old age pensioners and others on fixed incomes, based on the assertion that every increase in wages must inevitably bring with it a further round of increased prices.

Since the inauguration of the policy of restraint in both wages and profits, a material change has taken place. An entirely new economic and political situation exists: no longer is a Labour Government in power, but a Tory Government bent, among other things, on a policy of so-called freedom, in which controls have been abandoned, subsidies completely wiped out, and accompanied by the greatest profit-making spree in our post-war history.

The ever-increasing effects on the workers' budgets of Government policy both at home and abroad, the continuing and recurring economic crises, the obvious signs of growing unemployment, and the periodic international conflicts in which the possibility of war becomes a reality, compel both the right and left wing to review and re-assess past and present policies. It is the worsening economic situation which has underlined that however plausible arguments of price control—price reductions—control of profits—may appear to be as the best methods of solving our economic difficulties, they are not practicable of operation in the present circumstances, and the attempt to put such proposals forward merely serves to hold back the movement and prevents it defending the living standards of the people, while the employers make hay and improve their profit levels. In fact the trade unions have in the past few years been advocating one policy and pursuing another. They were bound to

do so. The economic pressure on their members dictated the necessity to press for increased wages.

Congress 1956 represents a decisive change in attitude and approach to the economic issues facing our movement. Its decisions reassert the need for a planned economy and effective economic controls. It makes clear that it is in complete opposition to Government economic policy. It rejects wage restraint as an economic instrument to recover control, and it gives notice that in the present situation the affiliated unions will pursue a policy of increasing the wages of their members. Similarly, on automation it faces squarely the fact that no advantage is to be gained by resisting the application of new processes and techniques to industry, but on the other hand insists that there must be consultation, and adequate compensation and maintenance for workers who through these circumstances become redundant or are undergoing re-training. The demand for the 40-hour week, in spite of the General Council's opposition, gives the movement a three-point programme on which to campaign and fight.

This changing attitude was reflected throughout the debates on many subjects, although not always with the same degree of success as on the economic issues. The arguments for the World Federation of Trade Unions and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to meet and discuss matters of common interest, and on the desirability of establishing British-Soviet trade union unity, were largely bedevilled by the pleas of loyalty to our commitments with the ICFTU—on assertions that the WFTU were undermining the work of the ICFTU to build trade unions in the colonial countries—that the Soviet unions were not free trade unions—and relating to past experiences within the WFTU. On these matters conviction of the necessity to revise our attitude was by no means so pronounced, and as a result the progressive forces within Congress were unable to carry the vote, although they without doubt won the argument.

This Congress has shown that given the opportunity we can unite around and determine a common programme, irrespective of any political or ideological differences that exist within the movement. We have witnessed a demonstration of unity the like of which has not been seen for many years. Congress unanimously declares its policy on wages, on automation and no war over Suez. Who will say now that there is not room within our movement for the accommodation of the various conflicting views, that there is no basis for compromise, or agreement on common policy? If one single lesson is to be

learnt it is that where the material conditions determine the need for unity, for a common programme, and joint action, then that unity, programme and action can be established.

It would be foolish to imagine that complete unity has been achieved or that the present degree of unity is by any means on strong foundations—on the contrary it faces the danger of being undermined and disrupted. Already the jackals of the Tory press are looking for someone to tear to pieces. Denied their prey, the left-wing forces, they are hunting in fresh fields. The General Secretary of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers is accused by the *Daily Telegraph* of using ‘claptrap’ in arguing for improved living standards for his members in a planned economy. They have analysed every word of the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers’ Union in an endeavour to prove, somehow, that he did not mean what he said. In every way attempts will be made to undermine and minimise the outstanding degree of unity achieved.

The 1956 programme decisions were taken in the light of the declared opposition of Government and Employers to increased wages and a shorter working week. Macmillan went out of his way in a pre-Congress statement to plead for wage restraint—the Engineering Employers gave notice that they would reject any further application for increased wages (they had already rejected a claim for the 40-hour week). Nevertheless, it is a realistic programme and conforms for the first time in many years to the needs of the situation. Whatever else may be said by those who wish to water down the open challenge to Government policy, and who make scurrilous attacks on certain trade union leaders as a means of offsetting any real attempt by the unions to fulfil their obligations to their members and the nation, they cannot escape the obvious writing on the wall. The people are awakening to the overwhelming need to challenge the employers, to resist Government policy and for a new approach in our policies both at home and abroad. If the unity so far obtained can be strengthened and extended from the industrial to the political field, the life of the Government will be short indeed and the possibility of the fruits of the new productive levels achieved and achievable being enjoyed by the people as a whole, brought that much nearer.

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# WHITHER GERMANY?

GORDON SCHAFFER

**T**HE banning of the Communist Party in Western Germany represents the culmination of a long process for the restoration of the forces which built up and backed Hitler's regime. Simultaneously, Dr. Adenauer's defence ministry issued an order reinstating former S.S. officers, up to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, in their old ranks in the new German army. Against this background Dr. Adenauer has thought fit to send a note to the Four Powers demanding the reunification of Germany on his terms.

So, after eleven years, we reach the end of the journey. The Chancellor of the Bonn Republic, confident apparently in the support of the Western powers, plans the last stage in the overthrow of the Potsdam agreement. At Potsdam, the victorious allies decided to dismantle the cartels, without whose support the Nazis could never have made war. The cartels are back and their links with their counterparts in the United States more firmly established than ever. The victorious allies decreed the restoration of free political parties and looked to the men and women who had waged the long, lonely fight against fascism to lead in the rebuilding of a democratic country. Today in Western Germany, alone among the leading countries of Europe outside Franco Spain and Portugal, the Communist Party is declared illegal. At Potsdam the leaders of Britain, the Soviet Union and America repeated their pledge to destroy the Nazi Party and all its manifestations as the only safeguard for the peoples of Europe against a repetition of the horrors through which they had passed. Step by step the Nazis have come back. The industrialists, like Krupp, who built up fortunes out of Nazi war orders and the slaves collected by the S.S., have been compensated to the tune of scores of millions by permission of the Western allies. And now the new army, air force and navy are to be officered by the men denounced at Nuremburg as criminals against humanity.

Gerhardt Schroeder, West German Minister of the Interior, who was an officer in the Nazi storm troopers as early as 1933, is in charge of the police raids against the Communists. And just as it happened after the Reichstag fire, the assault on the Communists is the prelude to a campaign against all other progressive movements, including above all the organisations demanding