

Labour Party and its Famous Clause 4

By the CN Political Correspondent

This is an age of "revisionism". The word simply means revising or reconsidering political ideas which may have become out of date.

Political parties everywhere, in the East as well as the West, are now trying to adjust themselves to new conditions—to the consequences of two world wars, of nuclear power, electronics, and new discoveries in medicine.

Such things all mean changes in the thoughts of people and in their way of life. And just as people change so we must expect political parties and governments and their policies to change also.

To many people's surprise the executive committee of the Labour Party recently decided against changing its official attitude to nationalisation. The decision follows a long dispute about the proposed revision of Clause 4 of the party's constitution.

The Labour Party was founded in 1900, though it did not formally take that name until nearly six years later. It was to be a partnership of trade unions and socialist societies. A chief aim was to help to build a better world and, to that end, to ensure that labour was better represented in Parliament.

A 'national' party

At first there were long arguments about whether the new party should represent only the "working-class" and send only working-class M.P.s to Westminster. The 129 delegates who attended that foundation meeting decided that the party must be open to all classes—a "national" party, in fact as well as in theory.

It was in 1918 that the Labour Party's constitution, as we know it today, was drafted. The famous

Clause 4 of this constitution reads:

To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.

Sacred principle

The words "distribution and exchange" were added in 1929. The clause thus gave a future Labour Government the authority of the party to take over every privately-owned industry in Britain. In the view of many Socialists, all such nationalised industries and services should be run by the workers themselves.

Whatever political opponents may say about all this, or however divided on details members of the Labour Party may be, once this clause had been written into the constitution it became for Socialists a sacred principle. For them it was more than a policy; it was an expression of faith.

So say those who now have saved Clause 4 from revision.

It was certainly regarded as a sacred principle in 1945, when the Labour Government under Mr. Attlee came to power with a large majority. They immediately proceeded to nationalise the coal industry, the Bank of England (in Clause 4 the word "exchange" is used in the sense of finance), the cable and wireless services and the railways.

The private enterprises which distribute our goods were not nationalised, but a national health service was set up (another form of nationalisation) and a big land reform was put in hand which fell just short of land nationalisation. Legal steps were taken to nationalise Britain's steel industry, but when the Conservative Government returned to power in 1951 they "de-nationalised" it.

Lost elections

Labour men have been among those who say nationalisation has not produced the benefits expected of it. Many of them, too, have tried to link the "failure" of nationalisation with the fact that, following a drastic cut in their parliamentary majority at the 1950 General Election, the Labour Party lost the 1951, 1955, and 1959 elections.

After the last election defeat the party executives adopted a new form of words. This broadly proclaimed belief in both private enterprise and public ownership.

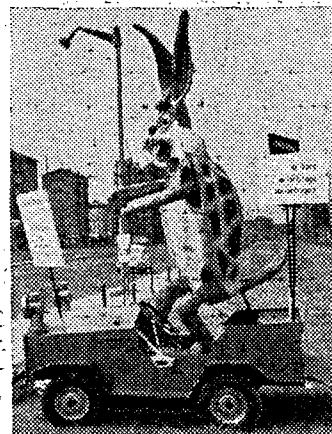
Now the executive has returned from this revised version of Clause 4 to the original wording. The party conference will make its views known to the leadership when it meets in the Autumn.

NEWS FROM EVERYWHERE

Over seventy Guides from ten overseas countries will be guests of British Guides in camp at Donnington Castle, Newbury, this weekend.

Last Autumn a Spaniard attached a message to one of three swallows which nested every year in his porch. He wanted to know where they spent the Winter. This year the bird brought a reply recording that it had wintered with a blacksmith on Grand Canary Island.

Safety mixture



A weird figure by the roadside warns Milan drivers against the dangers of excessive speed. Notices on the little car announce: "Hasten Slowly". "Neither hare nor tortoise but tortoise-hare."

An American geologist prospecting for oil on a Canadian Arctic island has found documents placed in cairns over 100 years ago by a party searching for the explorer Sir John Franklin.

NEAR THING

Paratrooper Ralph Caute of Gosport, whose parachute failed to open over Lüneburg Heath, Germany, released his reserve parachute only 75 feet from the ground and escaped with a broken leg.

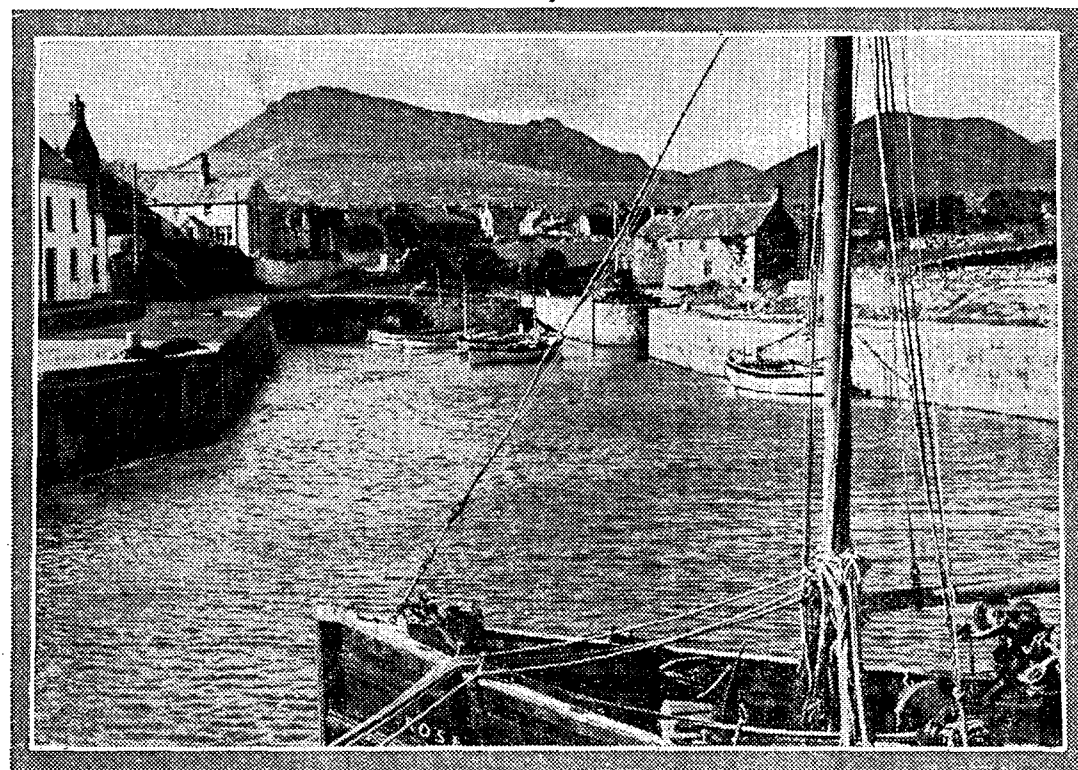
Sixteen-year-old Ysra Lannert took a British cycling proficiency certificate and pennant home with her when she returned to her native Finland recently. She passed the test set at Hove.

NEW FERRIES FOR OLD

The four paddle steamers of the Woolwich free ferry on the Thames are to be replaced by three diesel-engined boats each capable of carrying twice as many cars. The three old steamers of the Gravesend-Tilbury service are also to be replaced.

THEY SAY...

My first swim for 20 years. An 80-year-old Australian after saving her grandson from drowning.



OUR HOMELAND

Annalong, Co. Down, a pretty fishing village from which dressed granite is exported.

The Gay Princess



Warm-hearted, friendly—full-of-fun and laughter... yet she's a Princess. Read about her in this delightful picture-story in colour. In...

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