

issue of Eastern Pakistan's domination over Western Pakistan, the separate provinces of Western Pakistan were merged into one unit. Even so, Eastern Pakistan continues to have numerical superiority over the combined unit of Western Pakistan. To avoid domination of any wing by another, the parity basis of representation to the Constituent Convention has been fixed. Many political parties in Eastern Pakistan oppose this basis of representation. They claim proportional representation.

With Karachi's support and consent, Mr H S Suhrawardy recently visited Dacca to smooth matters over. He succeeded in wooing Maulana Bhashani's support. Maulana Bhashani's associates now claim that they supported the plan in the knowledge that they would have opportunity to include the policies of the United Front in the Pakistani Constitution as the Convention, as it was then called, would

have legislative powers. It is difficult to appreciate how this can be possible on the basis of parity representation. This is where Mr Fazlul Huq holds the trump card. There is, of course, another theory that Mr Suhrawardy secured the tacit support of both Maulana Bhashani and Mr Huq with the assurance that, when he becomes Pakistan's Premier with their support, he will ensure Eastern Pakistan's claims.

#### ENGINEERED EXODUS?

What has all this to do with the seeming contradictions between Karachi's open assurance to East Bengal Hindus and the continued exodus? Some imaginative foreign correspondents are inclined to the view that the Punjabi element in Pakistani politics is determined to assure its domination. Eastern Pakistan still has a numerical superiority over the merged unit of Western Pakistan. But this advantage Eastern Pakistan will lose if all the Hindus can be driven out of East

Bengal. Eastern Pakistan's administrative set-up is dominated by Punjabi and non-Bengali Muslim elements. These elements have joined in a conspiracy to create conditions in which the Hindus may be forced to leave Eastern Pakistan.

Such an explanation of the continued Hindu exodus, even after Karachi's declared assurance to East Bengal Hindus, is now widely current in Calcutta. Stories told by incoming refugees lend weight to some such assumption. Wider issues relating to the fundamental basis of Pakistan as a future State are involved in these developments. Apart from these wider issues, latest developments in Eastern Pakistan are rude reminders to Mr Suhrawardy, if not to Karachi, that, in winning over Maulana Bhashani, he has won a pyrrhic victory. Fazlul Huq may be old and ageing, but he is still the most popular political figure in Eastern Pakistan. *He* does not accept the parity basis of representation.

From the London End

## The Election that Fails to Wake Up

IT is generally acknowledged that the current election campaign is unprecedented for its lack of public enthusiasm. The candidates are facing a real struggle—not so much against their opponents in the campaign, but in getting the electorate to the meetings. Had it not been for the radio and the television, the parties would certainly be most unsure whether their positions on the various issues are clear to the people. But even here as a survey of the BBC indicates, the electorate tend to switch off the radio or turn on to another programme whenever a party political broadcast is taking place. Those who have television turn on the political "performances" more from want of entertainment than from real interest. Except for the most blatantly partisan press, the daily newspapers are being unusually "objective" about what is going on and in most cases, their commentaries deal with the more comic aspects of the elections. Some of the newspapers give their "objectivity" so academic a slant—lengthy excursions into the statistical probabilities of the situation—that their real value is lost not so much from the layman's lack of enthusiasm as from his lack of comprehension.

Almost imperceptibly, the political

parties are adjusting themselves to the realities of the situation and are therefore forcing through what may be called "shock" tactics to provoke the electorate to take sides. The people, if at all worried, are worried about one thing—the H-Bomb. It is, therefore, this particular worry that the parties are exploiting and although both Conservative and Labour are agreed on the "manufacture" of the bomb, they vary the theme in such a manner as to give the impression that there exists a basic difference in their attitudes on this question. And so, starting off from this alleged difference, all the problems of foreign policy have been thrown into the election controversy, and they have taken precedence over all other issues.

#### THE INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

Most people now recognise that the current dramatic forward march of international events in a favourable direction is linked, in one way or another, with the British elections. The *Times* Washington correspondent was unusually emphatic the other day. Reporting the press conference of President Eisenhower on talks at the "summit", he drew the conclusion that the favourable

reaction of the United States to the British proposal for talk with Marshal Bulganin was more the outcome of the State Department's "desire to see a Conservative election victory" than the reduction of international tension through a Big Four meeting. In any event, the speed with which the British initiative for the talks has proceeded must seem unusual if account is taken of what happened in the past.

The favourable way in which international relations are moving is an obvious advantage for the Conservative party. And while it should by no means be implied that the British initiative is being taken *solely* for election purposes, it is clear from the manner in which the general public are reacting (as shown in the local election results), that Tories are well on the way towards securing the support of the people on questions of "peace through negotiation". With surprising speed, they have welcomed the new Soviet disarmament proposals and they argue convincingly enough to a generally ill-informed public that their past policy of "peace through strength" is bearing fruit, that is, that they have, as one Tory leaflet put it, "frightened the Russians" into negotiating with the West, The

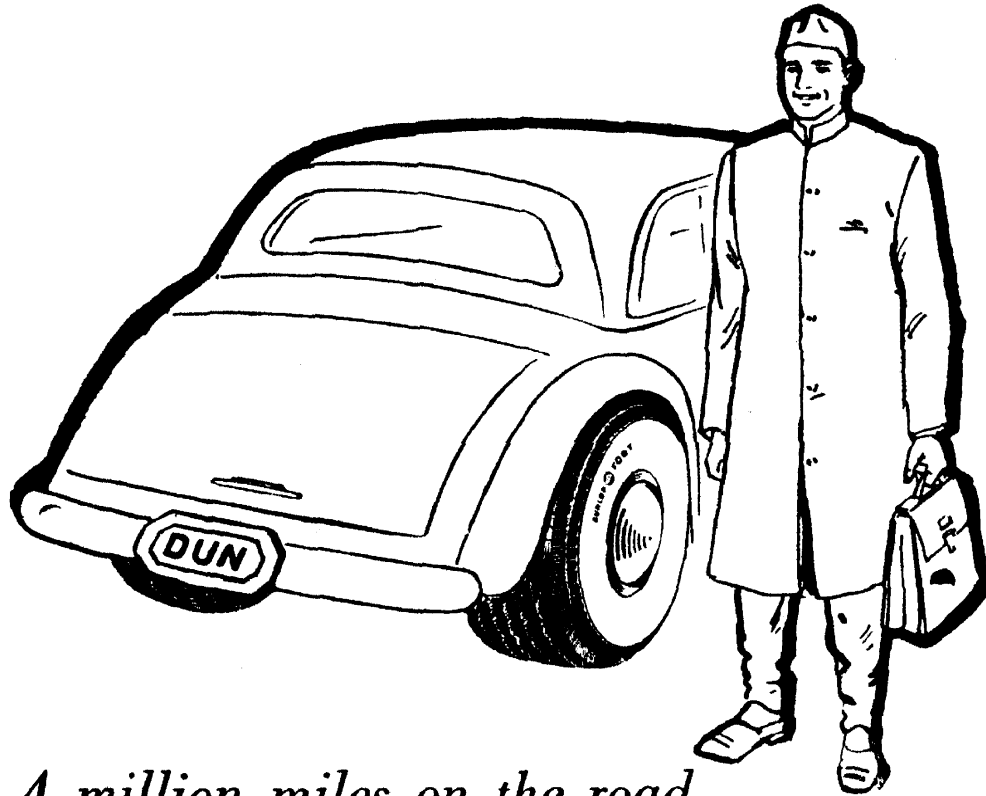
Russians, it is argued, for example, would never have "given in" on the Austrian peace treaty had it not been for the military power of the West (through NATO).

The Labour Party, on the other hand, is not all at one on questions of foreign policy. In the party political broadcast of Mr Griffiths, the question of peace is treated defensively—that, when the Labour Party is returned, it will pursue with "greater vigour" the settlement of

all outstanding questions with the Russians and that efforts will be made to "cut down" on the number of experimental explosions of nuclear weapons. In the constituencies, however, the individual candidates adopt a more offensive and positive attitude to these questions. At one meeting which your correspondent attended, the candidate called for the "banning of all nuclear weapons", pledging himself to strive for it, if returned, Mr

Attlee, however, is content with philosophic generalities, hoping that the electorate will acknowledge his seniority among British politicians. "The problem of the world", he said at one of his major public meetings "was fear". He offered no solution.

One clear picture emerges from the results of the borough elections in England and Wales held last week (two weeks from polling day of the general election). Conserva-



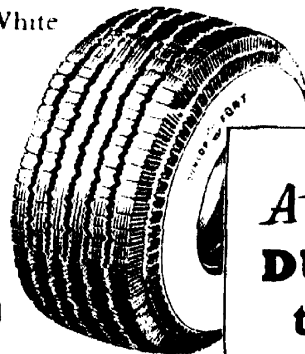
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tives and Independents regained control of many of the boroughs which they had lost in the swing to Labour in 1952, and of the seven councils where the Tories have won outright control from Labour this year, four are marginal Parliamentary constituencies. The Tories made a conspicuous advance in Lancashire where the Labour Party had hoped to cash in on the textile slump. In all, Labour lost control of 11 councils, and in three others where they were previously on level terms, the anti-Labour elements have gained control. Measured in terms of council seats, Labour lost 390 seats and the Tories gained 346 seats.

This trend—and it is nothing less than a trend—should be taken into

account in the general arithmetic of the elections, in particular the relation between votes and seats in Parliament. At the last general election Labour with 48.8 per cent of all votes cast, won 295 seats while the Conservatives with 48 per cent of the votes secured 321 seats. Had the two parties shared the votes equally, it is estimated, the Conservatives would nevertheless have won between 40 and 45 seats more than the Labour Party. To secure parity in Parliament, the Labour Party in 1951 needed at least a two per cent margin of votes in its favour. Thus if the Labour Party were to govern effectively, it would need a majority of at least 5 per cent of the votes cast. The handicap for Labour lies

in the greater concentration of the working class in particular areas, thus making for "safe" seats and accounting for many "wasted" votes.

In this situation, the opportunities for Labour being returned depends on their fortunes in the marginal constituencies, *ie*, in which the difference of the votes cast for the two parties is no more than 2 per cent. It is precisely in these constituencies that the *News Chronicle* Gallup poll is most frequently held and the weekly published results of the poll show that Conservatives are gaining in support—49 per cent of the poll being for the Tories and 48½ per cent for Labour in last week's survey.

## Hock Lee Bus Company and Singapore Riots

(From Our Malayan Correspondent)

THE dispute between the Hock Lee Bus Company and the employees of that company which has resulted in the riots in Singapore during the last few days appear on the surface to be a normal type of dispute over the recognition of two rival unions. One union is called the Hock Lee Bus Employees' Union, the other the Singapore Bus Workers' Union. Although this second union does not cover all the bus workers in Singapore, it certainly has very much more general support than the first. The Hock Lee Company is a Chinese company managed by a fairly recent arrival in the colony. He uses his wealth to run the True Light Church, a self-governing self-propagating branch of the Church of England. The general standard of welfare activities and wages in the company compares favourably with that of other bus companies in the colony. It is only on the issue of membership of the Union that the dispute really turns. Several members of the Bus Employees' Union have given evidence in the courts that they thought that it was a condition of their employment that they joined the tied union.

The newly-elected Singapore government has only just taken office and it is rather a peculiar feature of the whole dispute that it should take place just after the Labour Front has become the government. The Labour Front is a union of left wing parties with very much the same character as the Labour Party in England. To the left of this party is a party known as the Peo-

pies' Action Party, the members of which, although not members of the Communist Party (as it is proscribed in the colony) have a very similar programme. It has been suggested that the Communist Party thought it so unlikely that the left wing parties should take over the control of the government, that all arrangements for this strike had been undertaken before the elections. Whether this is true or not, there is not the slightest doubt that many other people besides the actual bus employees took part in the strike. One of the largest sections of the general community supporting the strikers were the Chinese students of three middle schools, the Chinese High School and the two branches of the Chung Cheng High School. Readers of the *Weekly* will hardly be surprised at the participation of students from the Chinese schools in this dispute in view of my previous remarks about Chinese education (Chung Cheng now has over *four thousand students*, twice the reasonable capacity of the school and many times greater than the pre-war figure). But in the case of this dispute, lorries were provided by a hand unknown to carry the students around, free drinks were offered to them at appropriate intervals and even meals.

There is little sign of the shortage of funds common in industrial disputes. Wherever there is a large crowd there are officials appointed presumably by the strikers (although often non-strikers) to organise traffic and at points in the crowd there are orators from outside,

some of whom play on the theme that the churches and capitalists in combination oppress the workers by forbidding them the right to organise. In addition there is the normal Chinese practice of carrying on a programme of rumours and counter-rumours to confuse the main issues as occurred so successfully with Lin Yu Tang when they wanted his retirement. Just as in China attacks on the churches were supported by photographs and stories of nuns strangling their orphan charges and missionaries secretly murdering members of their congregation for money, so in Singapore we have a charge that the Minister for Labour has received a large sum of money from the Bus Company to get the police to intervene. Up to the present, the number of casualties seems to consist mainly of those outside the ranks of the workers and police. The police have acted with very much more restraint than the organisers of the dispute who seem, in some cases, to have stood by while the mob worked itself up.

I hope I have written enough to show that this dispute is by no means an ordinary one over the recognition of a union. It is of course disgraceful that in a colony as advanced as Singapore, there are still tied unions, but, given that that state of affairs exists, there can be little doubt that that there are strong interests in the colony whose aim is to use any dispute to take control of the colony's affairs, irrespective of the sort of government