

Weekly Notes

Bevan and Bevanism

One clear fact emerges from the deliberations of the recent Labour Party Conference at Brighton. It will fight the next general election as a strong, united Party. That is not the only reason for evolving a compromise policy. It is evident that the Labour Party's compromises on some of the major political issues are aimed at seducing the uncommitted section of the voters to vote for it in the next general elections. Whether the Party's new policies on nationalisation and the hydrogen bomb will achieve this aim, is doubtful. But its positive plans for pensions and rents are likely to make it more popular with the voters. This is not denied. But there seems to be some disillusionment that, in the interest of the Party, Mr Bevan has ceased to be a Bevanite. From voting results, it is evident that, on both the controversial issues, the rank and file hold pronounced views. Even so, to accuse Mr Bevan of insincerity is to confuse issues. Mr Bevan has lent his weight and authority against any unilateral ban on nuclear weapons or their testing. But he made it clear that, if voted to power, the Labour Government would take the initiative in banning both. Emotionalism in Politics is not necessarily a virtue. And it would be uncharitable to be harsh on Mr Bevan for his sense of political realism.

This year's Labour Party Conference has been a turning point in the history of the Party not because of Mr Bevan's stand on the issue of the hydrogen bomb, but because of the shift in the Party's policy on nationalisation. Mr Herbert Morrison may have been in strange company with Miss Jennie Lee in their joint opposition to the Party's new policy of purchasing shares of key firms as a substitute to its old plans for nationalisation. But those who are familiar with the sad experience of the nationalisation programme of the Attlee Government will appreciate the shift in policy. It would be wrong to assume that the British Labour Party has abandoned its bias against Capitalism. It remains committed to public ownership. But it has changed its tactics to suit

the changing conditions and circumstances. Its new policy is based on the basic assumption that nationalisation cannot, by itself, abolish class rule, with the divorce of ownership from management, nationalisation cannot end class rule. Even in the Soviet Union a new privileged class has emerged in the shape of managers and technicians. Mr Gaitskell claims that his Party's new policy to public ownership is aimed at checking the status and power of this new privileged class. Even those who endorse the basic implications of the new policy will wonder how the British Labour Party expects to achieve the objective as its changed tactics involve merely part ownership of key firms, but not effective control, through voting rights, over management of such partly acquired concerns. On this fundamental issue, both the British Labour Party and Congress in India find it convenient to be vague, though the latter can legitimately claim to have anticipated the former's changed strategy in their common fight against Capitalism.

India and Japan

It would be hasty to expect any basic change in Japan's foreign policy or any Indo-Japanese alliance as a result of Pandit Nehru's visit to Japan. But certain developing events indicate a possible shift in Japan's foreign policy which may have some intriguing effects on her relations with Asian neighbours. Tokyo's foreign policy is based on co-operation with the Western Powers, and particularly with the United States. But it has always been evident that Japan is eager to develop friendly relations with newly-independent Asian countries. Her policy of alignment with Western Powers is an obstacle to her active participation with Bandung countries. But Mr Kishi's recent appraisal that Asian-African powers exercise "great weight in the comity of nations" is an indication of Japan's eager desire to collaborate with her Asian neighbours. Tokyo has been wooing Asian countries since the Bandung Conference' but without much success. She remains suspect among her Asian neighbours.

Intrigued by the cold reception

at Bandung, Tokyo has been eagerly exploring possibility to allay suspicions against her, she has not abandoned her policy of alliance with America and Western Powers. But she relies on two issues, in which Asian countries are jointly interested, for a rapprochement with her Asian neighbours. They endorse enthusiastically Japan's appeal for banning nuclear tests. Japan's vocal stand on this issue is easily understandable. In her clamant demand for banning nuclear tests, she has the active support of all peace-loving Asian nations. Reports so far available of talks between the Prime Ministers of India and Japan indicate a Joint Indo-Japanese move on the issue of banning nuclear tests. Whether or not sponsored jointly by India and Japan, the latter's insistent demand for a ban on nuclear tests will be actively supported by the Asian-African group in the United Nations.

Japan hopes that unity among her and Asian-African countries on this vital issue will gradually lead to a closer political collaboration between her and her Asian neighbours. Japan is aware of Asian democratic countries' suspicions about her internal political set-up, as also of some aspects of her foreign policy. It is not without significance that, despite the possibility of a closer collaboration between India and Japan on the issue of banning nuclear tests, Pandit Nehru has been rather frank in his lack of response to the Japanese-sponsored plan for an Asian Development Fund. Not only India, but many other Asian countries are hostile to any such proposal which may involve Japanese leadership in Asian economic development. Any such plan sponsored by Japan is a painful reminder to Asian countries of her pre-war policy of economic aggression in the garb of the Asian co-prosperity Sphere. Japan's Asian neighbours admire her technical and economic achievements. They are not unwilling to develop economic relations with Japan or to receive help from her in men and money in furthering their plans for economic improvement. But they have no intention to be included