

The Glossy Election

The British electorate awaits the coming contest in the mood of a man who has put a pound on the Derby. He looks forward neither to wealth nor to ruin; his life will go on much the same after the race; other hopes, other anxieties touch him more nearly and more importantly. Still, he does not pretend indifference. On the day of the race, and perhaps for a few days before it, he feels a certain mild excitement.

Gone -to drop the metaphor - is the passionate involvement of the 1945 election and the early days of the Attlee Government, when people saw a real chance of reshaping their conditions of life. Gone, also, is the disgusted turning away of the early 1950's - mis-called 'apathy' by the professionals - when they were filled, by the identity of the parties on great issues, with a painful sense of being cheated. In 1959 the mass of voters, too wise now to look for a really deep significance in the political game, takes a proper interest in what significance it has.

The signs that warn of the morass where French democracy perished are discernible, but Britain is far from the end of the road. The poll may not be higher than last time (though it probably will be, if only because the result is uncertain), but it will again be higher than before 1939 and higher than in most other countries. Party appeals on radio and television receive dutiful attention; meetings once more draw audiences of modest but respectable size. And the Labour Party's glossy prospectus, *The Future Labour Offers You*, has sold a million copies.

Of course, the figure represents the bulk orders placed by constituency parties and other organisations. The million pamphlets are far from having reached the 'average family' so revealingly pictured on page 3. Never mind; the 'glossy' is assured of a warmer welcome and a bigger circulation than any manifesto from either party since 1945. And it is the party stalwarts in the constituencies who have placed the orders and voiced the welcome - those same stalwarts who have voted at conference after conference against the policies it embodies, and repeatedly vowed their attachment to the conception of Socialism which it abandons.

Why? Partly, to be sure, because the old firm has at last turned out a saleable product. The turgid prose and drab appearance of past manifestoes have long been a justified target of criticism by active party workers. The glossiness causes some misgivings, but on the whole the use of journalistic skill and liveliness is taken as a sign that Transport House is waking up.

Then, the points of policy are stated clearly and with an **air** of boldness that contrast with the mushy generalisations of **the** last

three election appeals. The style and presentation hide the gaps and contradictions that we shall analyse later. Labour, the rank-and-filer is moved to think with surprise, seems after all to have a plan, even if it isn't the one he wanted.

And here we come to the chief explanation of the paradox. The Labour Party member, like the voters at large (and why should he be so very different?), considers *The Future Labour Offers You* as the best future anybody is likely to offer him in present or foreseeable circumstances. Socialism is not on the menu; let us, therefore, stave our hunger with what is.

The acceptance of the pamphlet, and the possibility that it may play a real part in winning the election, is itself a piercing commentary on the political situation of 1959. Look again at the man on page 3. He is not, as the *Observer* acutely remarked, inclined to innovation or individuality. He wears a neat, quiet suit; the dresses of his wife and daughter are everything the French regard as English. His furniture would be scorned by the Design Centre, but he's used to it. He has no pictures on his walls, but the electric clock on the mantelpiece doubtless keeps time. His family gathers round what seems to be an open fire, though the edge of the picture leaves a smokeless fuel stove a possibility.

This man doesn't want to change the world, but to feel safe in it. He asks for a set of workable proposals, not for a guiding theory, still less for moral principles. He does his job well (he looks like a meter-reader), and he wants to be securely and usefully employed in decent conditions, not to run the show. Cooks, he would say, should cook, not rule the State. He looks forward to a well-earned pension for himself and a fair start in life for his children, but talk of 'boundless horizons' or 'a world transformed' leaves him cold.

He leaves 'foreign affairs' to specialists, but he is all for peace and regards the United Nations with the same casual goodwill as the Church. He wishes that nuclear weapons would disappear, but thinks it silly to give them up until the others do. He will accept the necessity of letting our colonies run their own affairs once they are properly qualified. When reminded that people in 'backward areas' are starving, he thinks it a pity, and agrees that one per cent, of our national income could be spared to deal with the situation.

'Mr. Gaitskell,' the political correspondent of *The Times* wrote recently, 'seems to have been the first to see that Socialism of the gradualist reforming sort practised between 1945 and 1951 ... begot a bourgeois or rather an industrial society in which bourgeois standards were widespread; and it followed that the old left-wing appeals of deprivation and under-privilege had lost their force.' Throughout the 'glossy', indeed, runs the assumption that

Socialism (in the *Times* sense) has, like a political Professor Higgins, transformed the old unregenerate Liza into a fair lady.

Unluckily for the priority here accorded to Mr. Gaitskell, programmes very like those he now advances were worked out, on the same assumptions, in the 1930's by the gradualist reforming Socialists grouped round the late E. F. M. Durbin; Mr. Gaitskell formed his ideas as a junior luminary of this circle. 'Deprivation', for some, was out-dated even then. But, as Peter Townsend and Brian Abel-Smith have reminded us, it is still a reality. The real question, moreover, remains: who is being deprived of what, and by whom? Poverty has been wiped out, and bourgeois standards made widespread, before; there was a great deal of re-thinking in the late Victorian boom times, when living standards were indeed greatly changed from those of the rude pristine years of the Industrial Revolution. Yet, if the man of 1858 was deprived of the standards of today, is not his successor just as greatly deprived of the standards that could be ours in the age of automation, nuclear power, and the scientific revolution? And by what deprived, if not by social forces?

This, in any age, is the very A.B.C. of Socialism. And the Socialist, in any age, expounds a promise that leads people to transcend the limitations of their accustomed thinking. The basic fault of the 'glossy' - of glossyism, for such a term is needed - is to scale down its policies to fit within those limitations.

II

When he commended *Industry and Society* to the Brighton conference, Mr. Gaitskell said: 'We need reasonable, practical policies that will appeal to ordinary decent people who are not Socialists.' This novel division of mankind is central to the appeal now made by Labour propaganda. There may not be much in it for Socialists; there is plenty, it is claimed, for ordinary decent people.

The lip-service paid to Socialism in the pamphlet is the most perfunctory since the Labour Party became officially Socialist in 1918. It is, in fact, a genuflection to tradition, like that of the Elizabethan divines who inserted in the new Anglican creed the words: 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.' In his foreword, Mr. Gaitskell says of his plans: 'They are democratic Socialism in action.' After this, the word Socialism occurs once in the body of the pamphlet and again in the concluding summary, where the reader is told: 'We in the Labour Party are Socialists' - a startling discovery, when this nomenclature is the rule in the Beaverbrook papers.

'The first Socialist ideal', says this summary, 'is mutual service - the story of the Good Samaritan in terms of everyday political

life.' One had always supposed the point of this story to be that the Good Samaritan's service was not mutual; but let that pass 'Mutual service' is a notion vague enough to be commended by any political party. 'We aim at a community of free men and women working together for the common good,' Sir Anthony Eden declared in his foreword to the Tory manifesto at the last election.

The 'glossy' continues: 'The second great Socialist ideal is the enlargement of personal freedom.' No details are provided. As a matter of fact, though the 'glossy' was presented as a popular condensation of the ten policy pamphlets adopted in the preceding three years, the only one which has vanished without a trace and cannot be turned up by the questing thumb is - *Personal Freedom*.

In realistic terms, of course, the 'glossy' is far more than a mere abridged version; it is the decisive guide to the intentions of a Labour Government. Quite properly, it deals with matters not covered by the ten pamphlets - in particular, with international affairs. In making a general survey of the future Labour offers us, it may be convenient to begin with this.

Since the Blackpool conference of 1956, Labour has taken up foreign policy positions that make a welcome contrast with the years when German rearmament was the ark of the covenant. The young voter of 1959 might well imagine that Labour had never supported German rearmament at all. He is now urged to favour a neutral zone in central Europe wherein 'armaments would be reduced, nuclear weapons banned, foreign forces - Russian and NATO - withdrawn'.

The 'glossy' also comes out squarely for the admission of China to the United Nations and the evacuation of Quemoy, with a U.N. trusteeship over Formosa. On the Middle East, it is equally positive. It favours a guarantee of existing frontiers, an Economic Council, and 'a fresh attempt at an Arab-Israeli settlement'; it omits, however, to mention an arms embargo. It does say firmly: 'Labour will no longer rely (for oil supplies) on force or the threat of force, or on political pressures. In particular, we shall abandon attempts to prop up outdated and corrupt Middle East governments against popular movements inside their own countries.'

Logically, this would mean a repudiation of the Eisenhower Doctrine. Nobody, of course, expects to find that in the policy pamphlet. One has a right, however, to ask for a reference to the South-East Asia and Baghdad Pacts - especially the latter, in which Britain was the prime mover and America is still too canny to be a full member. Would or would not a Labour Government continue to keep Britain in these moribund, divisive, and harmful alliances?

Similar and more crucially important is the matter of NATO.

General Norstad has made it very clear that he opposes the proposals advanced by the Labour Party, and considers atomic weapons in Germany a necessity. How far would a Labour Government press these plans in opposition to the NATO strategists, to Adenauer, and above all to the U.S.A.?

The answer might be an encouraging one, if based on the ringing statement in the pamphlet: 'Because there has been no political settlement between the West and the Communist Powers, the Cold War continues ... It is essential that one Great Power should break through this deadly circle. We believe that Britain, rid of the Tory Government, can do so.'

The section on *Peace*, however, is succeeded by that on *Defence*. 'So long as the world is split into two hostile camps,' it says, 'we must contribute our share to the defence of the West through NATO ... We shall at once work for a proper balance within the NATO alliance between nuclear and conventional forces.' General Norstad would have no quarrel with that. He has never asked to station only nuclear forces in Germany.

Mr. Gaitskell would argue, no doubt, that British support for NATO is a temporary necessity pending the attainment of settlements that will wind up the Cold War. The trouble is that NATO strategy, and the policy of deterrence of which it is the expression, is itself a major factor in prolonging the Cold War. The pamphlet says truly enough: 'Because of these nuclear deterrents, mutual fear and suspicion grow and political settlements become even more difficult to achieve.'

What, then, about these nuclear deterrents? To begin with, there are three subsidiary, though highly important, issues, on all of which Britain can act in advance of an international agreement. The declaration issued by the Labour Party and the T.U.C. on March 6th, 1958 (the premiere of *The Plan that Never Was*, or *The Campaign that Had to Die*) demanded that Britain should 'at once suspend thermo-nuclear tests unilaterally for a limited period', that H-bomb patrols be 'discontinued forthwith', and that 'no physical steps should be taken to set missile bases in Britain before a fresh attempt has been made to negotiate with Russia.' The two former of these demands are reiterated in the glossy; the third, though a matter of intense concern and protest, has disappeared.

The big issue is the bomb itself. The pamphlet, of course, comes out against unilateral renunciation, adopting the fashionable tone of pious regret: 'We share the passionate desire of millions of people to see this awful weapon outlawed. The only argument is about the best method of achieving that result.' The only argument? There is also an argument over what can be the purpose, and what will be the result, of retaining the bomb for the time

being. There are two possible justifications for doing so. One is the theory of deterrence by 'mutual intimidation', to use the phrase of the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, which can be upheld by intelligent men and is indeed the core of the controversy; the other is the notion that the bomb is a defence, which is totally fraudulent and was surrendered in Mr. Sandys' White Papers. The glossy adopts the latter: 'Labour fully accepts the duty to maintain the military defences of Britain ... This is one reason why the Labour Party has rejected unilateral disarmament.' If there is another reason, it is not given.

The policy stated is: 'Labour will propose a fresh disarmament conference.' The resolution accepted by the Executive at Brighton called for an agreement to ban nuclear weapons, ahead of conventional disarmament; but the March, 1958, declaration reverted to the old insistence on the *quid pro quo* of removing 'Soviet preponderance in conventional arms and forces.' Now the glossy comes out with an ambitious plan for a treaty to reduce arms, manpower, and military expenditure; destroy all nuclear stockpiles, missiles, and bombers; abolish chemical and biological weapons; provide safeguards against surprise attack; and 'above all' introduce effective inspection and controls. Any realist would be glad enough to see an end to the production of nuclear weapons, for the destruction of stocks will demand a yet unseen level of international trust; but such caution is brushed aside in favour of an agenda that would make the conference last as long as the next Parliament. The policy, in fact, is: no unilateral action until there is agreement about everything.

Colonial policy will bring a Labour Government many testing times. True, the advance to independence goes on more or less uncontested, even under the Tories, over most of what remains of the Empire - West Africa, and apparently even Uganda and Tanganyika. The conflicts will arise over the areas of European settlement - Kenya and Central Africa - and the strategic flashpoints - Cyprus, Malta, Aden, the Gulf protectorates.

Labour's policy is firm enough for Fenner Brockway to say that it 'can win the goodwill of Africa'; it has even brought Mr. Gaitskell the vital assurance of help from Paul Johnson. The immediate - and highly important - point is the pledge, made in the policy pamphlet *The Plural Society* and repeated in the glossy, that there will be no granting of Dominion status to undemocratic societies.

However, Colonial Office control is a barrier to settler ambitions, not a policy; and Africans in both Kenya and the Federation are talking nowadays of a fairly rapid advance to full freedom. *The Plural Society* states Labour's aim: 'to lay the foundations of full democracy.' This, it declares, means universal adult suffrage, a common electoral roll, and 'unqualified African equality.'

The latter, let us note well, is the final objective, to be secured in the happy future when every resident of Kenya thinks and votes as a Kenyan. 'Parity of franchise and representation is, therefore, the first immediate aim.' And there is much adumbration in *The Plural Society* of schemes for balanced racial blocs in Legislatures, guarantees for minorities, experiments on the lines of the elections which have now been held in Tanganyika, and so forth.

There need be nothing sinister about this. African leaders themselves have recognised the wisdom of an advance by stages, and it is desirable, after all, to avert an Algerian war. The absence of a time-table in Labour's policy can be honestly accepted as allowing the flow of history and African leadership to decide the pace.

All the same, this flexibility means that we must expect conflicts as each forward step is taken, and Socialists must be alert to see that compromise never obscures the stated aim. This is the more essential because *The Plural Society* is vague, and the glossy is silent, about the question of land ownership, which may turn out to be more critical, especially in Kenya, than any directly constitutional issue.

III

'Socialism is about equality,' Mr. Gaitskell said a few years ago. Among the first group of policy pamphlets, issued in 1956, was *Towards Equality*. It contained a pretty incisive description of the inequalities and injustices - of reward, of conditions of work, of income, of power, of opportunity, of life as a whole - that stamp our society. It ascribed them, moreover, to 'the workings of two great institutions: first the capitalist economic system which ... provides the economic basis for a class society; second, the educational system.' It declared: 'In our view, these institutions can and should be transformed.'

There is precious little about equality in the glossy, or in the recent utterances of Labour leaders. This cock won't fight - or, perhaps, will do too much damage if he does. Socialism, in 1959, seems to be about expansion. *Towards Equality*, like *Personal Freedom*, has been condensed into nothingness; or rather into vague rhetoric about 'a Britain where men and women live their lives to the full in freedom and dignity ... a full, free, satisfying life ... the vision of a just society' - phrases that have value only when born of serious intentions.

Towards Equality was quite precise about the schools: 'A classless society and our present pattern of education cannot be reconciled.' (For we live, the authors thought, in a class society; according to Mr. Gaitskell in the glossy, the trouble is merely 'outdated social distinctions.') True, it rightly chose as the chief target the segregation into grammar school and secondary modern

pupils. But it found the division between the State system and the fee-paying schools 'scarcely less important'; the latter, it said, 'have very important social implications'.

For Socialists, there are two roads to the goal of full and equal opportunity: by improving the content of education and by wiping out privilege and the power of the purse. Not only are both essential on grounds of principle, but they intersect in various practical ways; for example, to recruit the teachers in private schools into the State system, even allowing for those who would refuse to serve and those who are incompetent, would sensibly lower the size of classes. But when it came to drawing up the policy statement *Learning to Live*, all this was set aside. What had been 'scarcely less important' became, delegates at Scarborough were told, a side-issue, only affecting the small minority of children who attend fee-paying schools. The abolition of fee-paying was even represented as an alternative to improving the State schools.

Nor is this all. Within the State system, though Labour promises to abolish segregation at the age of eleven and establish comprehensive secondary education, there is a good deal of hedging about both the nature of the proposed change and the time-table. Labour now accepts the thesis that to introduce comprehensive schools by law would violate county autonomy, though hitherto each successive type of schooling - the Board School in 1902, or the universal provision of secondary schools in 1944, for instance - has been nationally mandatory. *Learning to Live* gives a nod of approval to the Leicestershire High School, the Junior College, the bilateral school, the 'campus'. It does argue forcibly in favour of the true comprehensive school; but this, in the glossy, has become merely 'an outstanding example'. As for the timing: the establishment of comprehensive education, with these variants, is 'an objective to be pursued both in the first five-year period and beyond' (*Learning to Live*). The next Labour Government will require the county authorities only to prepare their plans and to 'adopt the comprehensive principle with all reasonable speed' - the formula, interestingly enough, applied by the Supreme Court to integration in the schools of the South of the U.S.A. Whether there will be comprehensive schools in Bournemouth before there are schools open to all races in Alabama is an idle but amusing speculation.

This said, it must be stressed that *Learning to Live* commits Labour to making important headway in education: to replacing the slum schools, to cutting classes to a maximum size of thirty, to a new deal for handicapped children, and to abolishing the rural all-age school (the last of these is not mentioned in the glossy). Though it is not found practical in the next five years to raise the school-leaving age to sixteen - a step which Ellen Wilkinson urged on the Cabinet in 1946 - at least the leaving age of fifteen is to be

made a reality by rounding off the last full year at school.

All the considerations that urge progress in the schools - whether we think of the rights of modern man, of the demands of a scientific age, or of social equality - apply just as forcibly to the universities. If expansion is needed anywhere, it is here. But *Learning to Live* merely endorses the present Government's aims (124,000 students by the mid-1960's), and says that Labour would 'seek to go beyond them. On our present knowledge,' it adds, 'it would be wrong to say more than this.' As for the reform of the means test system that now applies to grants, this calls for 'immediate action' - so Labour will appoint a Royal Commission!

Pride of place in the 'glossy' is given to *Your Home*. In 1945, the cry was 'Houses for need, not for sale.' It was assumed that the great majority of those affected by the housing shortage - and of potential Labour voters - would want rented houses or flats. Now, the man to be won over is among 'the growing number of people who want to own their own homes', and Labour's first aim is to help him. The second aim is 'to provide good homes at fair rents for those who live in rented houses or flats'. Nothing, at this stage, about those on the waiting list.

House-building, indeed, is only fifth among the six proposals listed. There is no target, which surely ought to be possible in 1959, but only a promise of lower interest rates for Councils. The first proposal is to 'encourage home ownership' by easy mortgages; this garment, unluckily, has already been stolen by the Tories.

Point three is the now famous dilution of the proposal made in *Homes of the Future* to transfer rented homes to municipal ownership. That policy statement, though it rejected the idea of a national Vesting Day for the six million homes in question, was fairly clear: 'The Minister will lay down dates by which time each local authority will be expected to complete its programme of acquisition', and he will make alternative arrangements if he finds that any authority 'is falling down on the job'.

The 'glossy' rests its case for acquisition solely on the poor condition of the houses; nothing is said of the social injustice intrinsic to landlordism, or the profit still being made on houses that have repaid the building cost many times over. 'We shall tackle the problem of improving their homes,' it says, 'by empowering local councils to buy rent-restricted property.'

As it stands, this would mean that Tory Councils, however empowered, would do nothing, or take over only the houses which landlords would happily get rid of; and that even a Labour Council would be authorised only to take over houses in need of improvement, for such are the houses here referred to. Without acquiring houses on which a fair rent would produce a profit, the

Council would find its modernisation fund the poorer. Here, applied to housing, is the old Morrison concept of public ownership - take over the property that the capitalists don't want. After several painful days, during which the Tory press exulted over the discrepancy, Mr. Anthony Greenwood spoke up to insist that *Homes of the Future* still represents Labour policy. Time will show: but the version in the 'glossy' at least shows the sort of thing it is thought prudent to tell the voters.

It may be added that the section on town planning in *Homes of the Future*, timid though it was, finds no place in the 'glossy'. What interests the man in the semi-detached castle is 'your home' - not your shopping centre, your civic buildings, your park, your town square.

IV

Where, in all this, do we find 'the capitalist economic system' which, according to that 1956 pamphlet, 'can and should be transformed?' Nowhere. It now appears in the neutral guise of 'British industry', to whose expansion Labour 'is determined to give top priority'.

In time of trouble, however, capitalism has always given top priority - whether the man in charge was Philip Snowden or Peter Thorneycroft - to its financial sacred cows. Mr. Bevan, for one, is well aware of the dangers here. He wrote recently in *Tribune*: 'The ambitions of the City of London to be a centre of world banking are in conflict with the position of Britain as an industrial nation ... At some time or other, this conflict between the financial and industrial communities of Britain will have to be resolved.'

Mr. Macmillan, adds Mr. Bevan, hopes 'that the British electorate will not be able to understand these recondite economic arguments'. Possibly Mr. Macmillan is not alone in this hope. For Labour's 'glossy', on the page headed *Expansion*, promises: 'Labour is pledged to maintain the value of the pound and to keep Britain the financial centre of the Commonwealth and the sterling area.'

The rest of this page consists of an attack on Tory stagnation and of insistence on the need to 'get the machines and the factories working at full capacity', put the unemployed back at work, raise productivity, and increase capital investment. Not a word suggests that capitalism is inherently unfitted in any way to follow the path blazed by Mr. Gaitskell and Mr. Wilson. The worst to be feared is 'timidity on the part of managers and investors'. This is to be dealt with 'through the budget and key controls'.

The controls in question were described in some detail in *Plan for Progress*. This is not the place for any detailed discussion of their adequacy. Even in purely electoral terms, however, it may

prove a costly blunder to keep them out of the 'glossy', and not to distinguish them from snooping, form-filling, and all that 'controls' can mean to the Tory propagandist. There is all the difference in the world between controlling the daily life of the citizen and controlling the capitalist to enforce a policy he opposes. This kind of nasty thought, however, would fit uncomfortably in the 'glossy'.

But can the community really control 'British industry' without owning it? Here, of course, we are down to fundamentals. The official Labour line is to defend against Tory criticism such nationalisation measures as were carried out after 1945. *The Future Labour Offers You* does this in some detail, remarking: 'Public enterprise has played a great role in our post-war recovery.' Here, also, we find firm pledges to renationalise steel and road haulage (but nothing on the vexed question of compensation).

There was no room for any discussion of working conditions and industrial democracy within the national industries. This was the topic of one of the more scandalous of the policy pamphlets, which concluded that all was well and scouted any idea that real changes were needed to bring about participation by workers in management. The 'glossy' - in a section called *Your Job*, which refers to industry in general - offers the worker a Code of Industrial Conduct, which will 'give him and her a sense of pride and partnership in the job'.

This Code was first suggested (aside, of course, from being a favourite theme with Mr. Iain Macleod) in *Industry and Society*, the pamphlet whose adoption at Brighton was the decisive victory in the advance of glossyism. It began, as readers will recall, with a long analysis of the state of affairs in the 600 companies that dominate the British economy; the accuracy of this analysis, and the relationship of shareholders and directors, were matter for much controversy on the Left. The controversy, however, was academic, for Mr. Gaitskell had never proposed to do anything to the 600 companies. They crop up once more in the 'glossy', where we read: 'Labour believes that the time has come when public control must be extended, so as to ensure that the decisions of these Boards ... are in line with the nation's interest.' The form of control is a matter for conjecture.

The feature of *Industry and Society* that attracted most notice was the buying of shares in private industry by the State. This was attacked by Socialists because it was advanced as an alternative to nationalisation, and because effective control over the industries concerned was excluded. It was also attacked by the Tories, who sounded the alarm that 'no company would be safe'. Today, one feels inclined to shed a tiny tear over this scheme. It provided the one possibility, in all the verbiage of *Industry and Society*, that Mr.

Gaitskell might find he had extended public ownership despite himself; it was a poor thing, but it was his own. Anyhow, to judge by the 'glossy', it had not the strength to survive in this rough world.

Since the idea that there is anything incurably wrong with capitalism has been jettisoned as unlikely to appeal to ordinary decent people, glossysism must avoid any suggestion that there is anything necessarily better about public than about private ownership, or that the public sector ought to be enlarged as a matter of principle. All that remains is the threat of nationalisation as the ultimate punishment - rarely and reluctantly used, like the cane in a modern-minded headmaster's cupboard - for an industry which 'after full and careful inquiry' is found to be 'failing the nation'. However, no inquiry was needed for the assurance in *Industry and Society* that 'large firms are as a whole serving the nation well', so the cane will only be used, if at all, on very small boys.

The more the 'glossy' is studied, the truer appears Ian Mikardo's dictum that Labour Party policies these days are decided on the basis of the Gallup Poll rather than on that of principle. For this is a prospectus which conceals from the voter all the harsh realities of modern life. Expansion, not to mention the defence of the pound, depends on Britain's position in the rat-race of the capitalist world. Social and educational progress demand a cut in armaments. Maintaining the deterrent will soon be a back-breaking load on our economy. The industries that Labour proposes to control without owning, and to compel to expand, are more and more closely integrated (witness the Aluminium affair) with American industries now following a restrictionist policy. Of all this the reader is told nothing. He is presented with a world devoid of conflicts or dangers. He has only to vote for the sensible, brisk, up-to-date Mr. Gaitskell to receive the benefit of the 'reasonable, practical policies' which those stupid old fuddy-duddies of Tories are too old-fashioned to have discovered.

There is, in fact, an Iron Law of Glossiness. The more simple, attractive, and easy-sounding the proposals in the prospectus, the more unanswerable are the questions to which they give rise. The shinier the cover, the hollower the contents.

V

What then should be the attitude of Socialists, faced with a general election which the Labour Party enters with a policy that cannot in any serious respect be called Socialist? It should be one of active support for Labour candidates.

For this there are a number of good tactical reasons. If Labour loses, the party is more likely to fall into despairing apathy than to be roused by a revolt of the Left. It is not another five years of

Tory rule that will demonstrate the fallacies of glossysism, but a confrontation of a glossyite Cabinet with events which force a choice between Socialist measures and an abandonment of their stated programme. Socialist ideas will gain support, not through theoretical disputations in the wilderness, but through immediate arguments over what a Labour Government ought to do with the power it possesses.

Such considerations, however, are secondary. Labour's policy is not Socialist, but that should not lead us into the facile conclusion that it is indistinguishable from Toryism. The truth is that it is a policy of Liberal social reform - a policy that could be advocated by Lloyd George if he were alive today.

Social reform, and the conditions in which the British people live, are not matters of indifference to Socialists. Let us suppose that a Labour Government implements the most obvious and categorically pledged items in its programme - all of them policies to which the Tories are firmly opposed. The pensioners get an immediate rise of ten shillings, pensions tied to the cost of living, and a scheme which really will abolish poverty in its strict sense. The Rent Act is repealed, control restored, and at least a considerable number of houses transferred from the landlords to the Councils. Health Service charges are removed. Slum schools are replaced. Do these things matter, or do they not? There is only one honest answer.

Of course, hostile pressure, the demands of the arms race, and economic difficulties will tempt a Labour Government to go slow. But that is just where the political battle begins. With a further instalment of Tory Government, the fight for progress cannot even start. The voters, and the Labour Party rank and file, who look with favour on the 'glossy' are not deluded fools - nor is the choice any less real for being limited.

We have a duty, too, to people overseas. Nobody can guarantee that a Labour Government will settle the Cyprus problem, resist Sir Roy Welensky, and press for China's admission to the United Nations. But no rational person thinks that the Tories are more likely to do these things. If a Labour Government did only one of them, its return to office would be justified in the eyes of history.

Above all, the danger of nuclear war is real and pressing. It is simply irresponsible to think of leaving the Tories, with their blank refusal even to consider steps toward peace, to stay in office and risk our lives while we try to convert the Labour Party to Socialist principles that it may never have a chance to put into effect. Though we may never know it, the mere fact that a Labour Government grounds the H-bomb patrols may save us.

Perhaps a Cabinet headed by Mr. Gaitskell will not insist on a peace policy in the face of American opposition - though that,

again, depends on us. But American opposition is not a certainty. Even now, the assumptions of U.S. policy are coming in for a certain amount of reappraisal, this time of a hopeful rather than an agonising sort. Given favourable developments in the Communist world, and given the increasing influence of the neutral nations, a genuine *detente* and a period of peaceful co-existence are far from impossible. This is the moment at which it would be vital for Britain to press for disengagement in Europe, a new policy in the Middle East, disarmament, and the other planks in Labour's programme. Nobody can seriously argue that it would make no difference whether Selwyn Lloyd or Aneurin Bevan were at the Foreign Office.

The course of the Socialist, then, must be very exactly and responsibly charted, for it will have to be followed in difficult situations - for instance, when working in support of a Labour candidate who is obviously not a Socialist. It is to urge people to vote a Labour Government into power, not in a sardonic spirit of giving them enough rope to hang themselves, but because this is truly and in a vital measure preferable to a Tory Government. It is also, however, to abstain from any tempting rhetoric which might fool people into thinking that Labour's present policy is Socialist.

Finally, we have to be clear in our own minds that a vast work of thought and action, of explanation and persuasion and political struggle, lies ahead to ensure that the kind of Labour Government that may be elected this year fulfils its own programme, and yet more work before such a Government lays the foundations of Socialism. There is far to go. What matters now is to start.

Mervyn Jones.