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# **COMMUNIST M.P.**

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# **WILLIAM GALLACHER**

**in Parliament**

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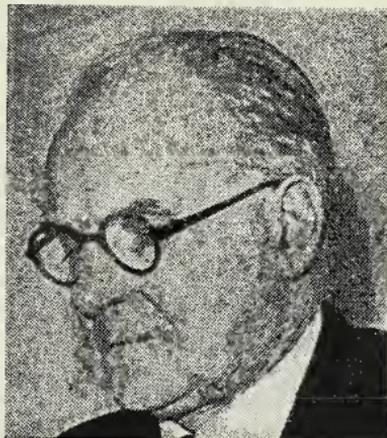
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## BIOGRAPHY

William Gallacher was born on Christmas Day, 1881, in Paisley, the fourth of seven children. Ten years later he started to work, on a milk round, while still at school. He left school at the age of 12, and was a shop boy for two years. At 14 he was apprenticed to the engineering industry. In 1909 he was unemployed, went to sea as a ship's steward and was shipwrecked on his first voyage.



While still young, he became an active member of the temperance movement and joined the Social Democratic Federation. He remained with it when it became the Social Democratic Party, then the British Socialist Party, and finally the Communist Party. In 1913 he went to America, but returned the next year to work in Belfast, and then on to Glasgow, where he became a shop steward in the Albion Motor works. In Glasgow he was elected a member of the executive committee of the United Brassfounders' Association.

In February, 1915, he took part in the famous Clyde strike. He was a leader of the Clyde Workers' Committee Movement throughout the war of 1914-18, and played a prominent part with John McLean in all the working-class struggles of the period.

He took a prominent part in the fight for support of the Russian Revolution, and in 1917 he attended the great Workers' and Soldiers' Convention in Leeds. In 1919 he was a leader in the Glasgow 40-hour strike.

In 1920 he attended the Second Congress of the Communist International, which was held in Moscow, where he held long conversations with Lenin. He was elected a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1921, and has been one of its foremost members since then.

In the General Election of 1935 he was returned for West Fife, having contested the seat in 1929 and 1931. On this occasion his opponents were Mr. Charles Milne, a Tory, who had scraped in at the panic election of 1931, and the Rt. Hon. William Adamson, who had been Labour member from 1910 to 1931.

This pamphlet deals with many aspects of the parliamentary career of William Gallacher, now Britain's only Communist Member of Parliament.

## INTRODUCTION

“It is no use sending one man to the House of Commons; one man will never be heard.” That was the argument used against William Gallacher in his 1935 election campaign. Eight years later he reminded the House of this, and went on to say:

“I think I have been heard.”

He never spoke a truer word, for he has made himself heard on every important issue before Parliament since he was elected. But more than that, he has shown the people of West Fife that, beyond a doubt, they chose the right man to act as their M.P.

To many people in the country his election was a surprise, to some an unpleasant one; but countless workers were delighted, especially those of West Fife. Unlike the majority of the new members in 1935, he was already well known in his constituency, and had earned the deep respect of those he was to represent at Westminster. In the years following the first World War he had shown himself to be a sturdy fighter for the working class during a number of miners' strikes, both national and local. It was his work in the 1921 miners' strike, however, which finally won for him the workers of West Fife. But he was a respected and well known figure to many workers outside West Fife, who remembered his part in the great Clyde strike in 1915, his fight for support of the Russian Revolution, and his leadership in the Glasgow 40-hour strike in 1919. Thus many other workers besides those of West Fife rejoiced at his success in the election and looked to him for help. They had confidence in the fighting capacity of the Communist Party, and they saw in William Gallacher a man who would stand by the working class on every issue.

William Gallacher brought to his new task a wealth of experience and general knowledge, and, above all, a real understanding of working-class conditions and needs—an invaluable background for his parliamentary work. For example, when Parliament was discussing the question of merchant shipping late in 1939, he gave vivid accounts, from his own experiences, of the foul conditions found in many ships. In his appeal for pit baths early in his parliamentary career, he gave members a sympathetic and realistic account of conditions in the miners' homes and of the struggles of their wives to keep things clean, and thus added emphasis to his demands. Again, he has always been able to use his trade union and industrial experience to give expert advice and information when needed.

# COMMUNIST M.P.

## WHAT AN M.P. MUST DO

In his first speech to the House of Commons, on December 4, 1935, William Gallacher pointed out that he was "the representative of a great working-class constituency," and that all his work must be consistent with that. At the same time he made it clear that the defence of working-class conditions in Fife, and in the whole of the country, could not be separated from a fight against the foreign policy of the National Government at the time—a policy of co-operation with fascist powers which must inevitably lead to war. How could we combat the war spirit in Germany? he asked, and answered himself: "By denouncing the German Naval Treaty and then, associated with that greatest peace power in the world, the Soviet Union, associated with and supporting the Franco-Soviet peace pact, and around this building all the peace nations of Europe. If you have fifty nations co-operating for peace and carrying forward a steady policy of peace and disarmament, through their economic and financial power you can force the other nations to disarm also. If you use your economic and financial power over Germany and Japan they will be forced to disarm. The National Government, composed of Tory diehards, with the discredited remnants of other parties thrown in, will never lead the fight for peace" (Dec. 4, 1935).

Then he said, in sharp contrast: "Have you ever defended the miners' family in Wales, Lancashire, on the North-East Coast and in Scotland? Have you defended these places—go and look at them—which give the appearance of a country that has been devastated by the enemy? Have you defended the unemployed? We have heard about the Means Test. Yesterday, there was not one member on the other side prepared to stand up for the Means Test as it was being operated in any industrial constituency in the country" (Dec. 4, 1935).

As he has constantly made plain, the struggle for the working class here must be part of a struggle for all workers everywhere.

"I represent the working class of West Fife and I do my utmost to carry out my responsibilities and to represent them properly. I make this declaration. If I were not true to the working class whenever they are in conflict with the representatives of capitalism, if I were not in every case true to the working-class people, wherever they are, I could not be true to the workers of Fife" (Jan. 16, 1940).

William Gallacher's speeches and his work throughout illustrate a broad conception of policy, which necessarily draws him into every issue of foreign policy and every important stage in social legislation at home. It does not mean, however, that he has neglected questions which affect the daily life of his constituency. The flow of resolutions, complaints and questions from all sorts of organisations and individuals in West Fife, and outside, are all carefully considered and dealt with in appropriate ways.

## WORK FOR FIFE

West Fife is a scattered constituency with about 45 towns and villages; such a constituency only in rare cases knows its member. Yet in West Fife there is hardly a person who does not know "Willie," and moreover that he is always ready to listen to their troubles.

But the rights of the working-class *as a whole*—their interests at work, at home, at play, in the services—these are, and have always been, the great concern of William Gallacher. His untiring vigilance, his alertness to the cunning moves of opposing class interests, and his outspoken and hard-hitting championship of the common people are clearly revealed in a record second to none amongst members of the House of Commons irrespective of party.

A few instances are given in this pamphlet. But it is interesting to note that in one year alone, in addition to taking a prominent part in the most important debates in Parliament, he asked over 100 questions and supplementary questions, covering an immense field, and has taken up well over 1,000 cases with various Government departments. During the same period he created a record in reporting to his constituents, thereby allowing the constituency to examine his work in Parliament; he addressed 24 meetings of his constituents, and many meetings of local organisations.

His record is one which points to the inestimable value to the working-class of returning at the General Election not only William Gallacher himself, but a *whole group* of Communist M.Ps., each fired by the same clear perception, zeal, and devotion to the cause of the Labour movement.

## HOUSING

What are some of these questions on which William Gallacher has worked for Fife? It is a constituency consisting mainly of miners, fishermen and agricultural workers, for all of whom he has carried on a struggle to improve conditions of pay and work. There are, too, questions which they have in common—rural housing, for example, which he has taken care to keep before Parliament. Housing conditions, he said in July, 1938, give an indication:

“not only of the bankruptcy of capitalism but of the terrible price people have to pay for its bankruptcy. . . . I have seen houses which people have tried to keep nice and clean and inhabitable. They papered the bedroom, but a day or two afterwards the paper was hanging off the wall because of the damp; and here and there in the walls were holes which the rats had eaten through. It is an absolute crime that people should be condemned to live in such houses.”

In November, 1937, he had stated:

“No matter where a house is, it is reasonably possible to instal a bath and a water closet. It may cost money to do so, but we are starting to build houses for the agricultural population to bring them into line with what is recognised as modern civilisation.” This principle in the form of his amendment was accepted.

Year after year, at every opportunity he returned to the question of housing. The war-time crisis in housing and post-war building plans saw Gallacher continually demanding action and positive plans for better houses. On November 30, 1944, he protested that “Thousands of soldiers are fighting who have no homes to come back to;” while a few months earlier, on June 20, he had declared:

“The basic trouble in the housing problem is land and materials. We will get the labour as the clouds of war pass. Labour is organised, and through an understanding between the Unions and the Government, it can and will be directed. . . . It is because of the difficulties with land and materials that you get the price of £1,800 which the Minister mentioned instead of £900. . . . Unless we get rid of the right of anybody to charge big prices for the land or to hold up materials and charge big prices for them, we must expect the high prices mentioned.”

In June, 1944, he suggested that “a fund should be allocated by the Government for the purpose of providing interest-free loans to local authorities;” and in August of the same year he asked, in connection with the temporary houses, “will it not be necessary for a certificate to be issued with each house, giving the date at which it was opened and the date at which it must close, so that it can be made illegal for rents to be drawn from them after that time?”

Scottish housing, of course, comes into many of Gallacher’s questions. A typical query is that of February 15, 1944, when he asked whether the Minister did not “consider it his responsibility to requisition all houses in Scotland and allocate them to the best advantage of the people?”

## RENTS

As well as that side of the question, he has also kept a watchful eye on rents, especially those demanded on new estates. He gave a

vivid description of what happens to people when rents are increased:

“Week after week they carry a terrible burden of rent and the paying of instalments, and on housing estate after housing estate they have to go short of food. That is the penalty they have to pay for a better house. Every week-end the shilling-a-week men descend on the housing estates like locusts and they do not leave a green thing there. They empty the cupboard. The furniture and clothing instalments and the rent have all to be paid, whether the mother or the children have food or not” (July 20, 1938).

Housing and rents directly affect health, and Gallacher has fought hard for better health services, especially in Scotland.

In the debate on June 20, 1944, after stating “It is almost incredible that in such a country as Scotland we should have such infantile and maternal death rates and such a high incidence of tuberculosis,” he declared:

“Someone has been to a sanatorium and come back to the slums or crowded streets. No proper arrangements are made for accommodating these people when they go to a clinic and there is a tendency for the disease to come back. Every large house in the country districts should be taken over and used for rehabilitation or cure. . . . Many may have been taken over for military purposes, but the owners are eagerly waiting to regain possession. . . . The people at Gleneagles are eagerly waiting to get it back from the very valuable service it is giving now, for the use of the parasites who will occupy the golf course. All that the Minister can say is, not that we can keep Gleneagles as a rehabilitation centre, but that if he does not keep it he will seek a building equally suitable.”

Three months earlier, on March 17, 1944, he had greeted the White Paper on a National Health Service as “the finest conception which has been put forward yet in connection with the care of the health of the people of this country,” but had attacked “all this compromise, to safeguard the freedom of the doctors for fee-grabbing; let us have freedom for the doctors to give the greatest possible service to the people of this country. Make it clear to the doctors and nurses . . . that, wherever doctors and nurses are brought into the scheme, they are going to get a remuneration that will not be under, and may be over, the general average of the fee-grabbing general practitioner. Make it clear that there will be no attempt to get cheap service or cheap labour on the part of doctors and nurses, but that they are going to get every possible encouragement to advance their work and to make the scheme a real success; to ensure that the health and well-being of the people of this country will be safeguarded for the future.”

Modern conveniences in rural houses are one of Gallacher's strong points, as instanced by his speech on the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Bill, June 8, 1944:

“There are those who see sewerage as something of the greatest value to the health and well-being of the people of the country; others think how some money can be saved on sludge. . . . We should not concern ourselves with whether the farmers have been getting sludge, but with how soon we can bring recognised civilised standards to the country districts. . . . It is not enough to give priority where there is not an undertaking to supply water . . . if we are to get this problem effectively dealt with, we must have the grant taken out of the hands of the landowners, the supplying of water taken out of the hands of private enterprise, and Tories taken off local authorities.”

## UNEMPLOYMENT

Gallacher has never forgotten the unemployed. In the Beveridge Report Debate on February 17, 1943, he demanded the right to work, and showed that “The right to work will determine the character of social security when the war is over. If a man has not a right to work he has no right of any kind.”

And 20 months later he said, in the debate on the Unemployment Insurance (Increase of Benefit) Bill: “I am very disappointed with this Bill. . . . Time and again we have heard it stated that we are never going back to the old conditions and standards of life that applied in 1939. . . . And what do we get? Twenty-four shillings a week. . . . The Hon. Member for Wrekin (Mr. Colegate) said that there will be short and sharp bursts of unemployment. . . . Why was it when there were short and sharp bursts of bombs, hon. Members on the other side were so anxious, even prepared, to wreck a Bill, that they forced the Prime Minister to come down here in order to ensure that those who had their property blasted by the war would not suffer any drop in income? Why is it that men who have their property blasted by the war must get every penny returned, and maybe a bit more, but that men who have their jobs blasted by peace—not by war—skilled men, anxious and willing to work, ready to serve their country, but denied that right, get 24/-?” (October 11, 1944.)

Prior to this, Gallacher had stated that the Government’s White Paper on Employment Policy was “important for the fact that this is the first time the Government have taken upon themselves the responsibility of seeing that the citizens of the country are provided with continuous employment,” but had added:

“I am not satisfied that the conditions as presented in the White Paper are capable of doing the job . . . On page 16 of the White Paper, in paragraph 41, I read: ‘The Government are prepared to accept, in future, the responsibility for taking action at the earliest possible stage to avert a threatened slump.’ Not to stop unemployment, but to ‘avert a threatened slump.’ When we have got to the

stage when the disease will spread all over the country, the Government will take steps to try to avert it. Is that the attitude to adopt? Is that giving a guarantee of security to the citizens of the country? . . . The appendix, in paragraph 4, says: 'Should it occur that, in a period of difficulty, average unemployment changes by four points from 8 per cent to 12 per cent.' If unemployment goes from 8 to 12 per cent, what does it mean? It means 2,500,000. How does that square with the Introduction? . . . The home and a decent standard of life depend on the first fundamental right of all—the right to work . . . I like the White Paper because of the Introduction and because of the spirit which, I feel, is behind the Introduction, but I say to the Government and to this House of Commons: 'If you are going to do justice by the lads who are fighting and the people of this country . . . the Government, backed by the House of Commons, representing the people, must take possession of the land and the principal industries of this country, and so organise and direct our resources, as to ensure that the whole of them will not be drawn away by a privileged few, but will be expanded so that the mass of the people will be able to enjoy what they are entitled to—a healthy, a happy and a peaceful life.'

## TAXATION

Gallacher has made great use of Debates on taxation to show the nature of capitalism and the burdens thrown on the working class, who reap no benefits. In July, 1940, he said of the interim budget: "It brings out clearly the terrible impasse to which the capitalist system has brought the people of this country, and the utter impossibility of extricating them from it while the capitalist class and capitalist property relations continue to determine the fate of the country." There is the fundamental point in all his Budget speeches—that the poor are always paying beyond their capacity, and wealth is never really tapped.

"I have said, over and over again, that until every penny has been taken from those who can pay it and still have sufficient left to live on, the Chancellor has no right to levy taxes, direct or indirect, on the poorer people." He pointed out in April, 1939, that there was an increasingly heavy burden of taxation on the poor—"A terrible burden arising out of a war that is past and preparations for the possibility of a new war, because of the policy of the National Government"—that the need of greater expenditure on the Social Services could not be met, yet "there is no other source of wealth but the Labour of the working class." Why, he asked, did we not get something in the Budget about taking the land out of the hands of the private owners and making it the land of the people, of taking industry and wealth out of the hands of private owners and putting it in the hands of the people?

Throughout he has condemned the concessions made to big business, as is shown clearly in such steps as the modification of the Excess Profits Tax. To bring this down to a very practical level, he is found always among those who bitterly oppose increased taxes on beer, tobacco and sugar. In 1939 he opposed the purchase tax as a "tax on the poor" and maintained the principle that: "The Chancellor has no right to impose a tax on the poorest of the poor while there are masses of wealth capable of taxation," while in 1914, in supporting retrospective legislation to deal with tax-dodgers, he declared: "There is nothing so criminal and despicable as moneyed men grabbing at every penny they can get, utterly regardless of the welfare of the country, and of the sacrifices other people are making."

## PENSIONS

The burdens of high taxation, William Gallacher constantly pointed out, fell especially hard on pensioners. A large amount of his time has been devoted to the struggle to gain adequate pensions and allowances, especially for the aged and for dependants of Servicemen.

He has dealt with manifold individual cases of especial hardship, approaching Ministers, asking questions and then bringing them up in the House in general debate if he could not gain satisfaction. Some of his most impassioned and bitter speeches are on behalf of the old people. He has criticised every form of Means Test very strongly on many occasions, and tried to show to the House their duty towards the old and to stir up some kind of sympathy. "Surely," he pleaded, "the men who have worked in the pits, kept the railways running, kept the engineering shops going, who have contributed so much to the wealth which other people enjoy, should in their last years be treated with the consideration they deserve" (Feb. 20, 1940).

Gallacher's work for the Old Age Pensioners' Association is another example of the way he fights injustice wherever he finds it. He has addressed dozens of meetings for the movement, and has spoken for its policy consistently in the House. His demand has always been for a flat rate increase in pensions all round, and what small improvements there have been are in no small part due to his efforts.

## SERVICE GRANTS

In the same way he strongly opposed any form of Means Test in Service grants. From the outbreak of war, he fought for better pay and allowances, and a typical speech is that of December, 1942, in which he condemned the Service grant as a form of Means Test, and again demanded increased basic rates of pay:—

"We should take note of the fact that before the war there was

the utmost poverty among the working classes of the country. The lowest possible wages were being paid and a great mass of men and women were registered at the Employment Exchanges. It was upon these very low rates that the conditions now in operation were based." His demands always have been "that soldiers should get not less than 5/- a day, their wives £2 a week, with 10/6 for every child up to 14, and 16/- for those between 14 and 16 still going to school, 25/- for mothers with sons or daughters in the Forces, without a Means Test" (Nov. 19, 1942).

In June, 1944, Gallacher took part in the conference between Ministers and M.P.s on service pay and allowances, at which he advocated the rates demanded by the Communist Party and other organisations of the Labour movement.

On the question of pensions for parents, Gallacher could speak from intimate knowledge of working-class families in his own constituency. Here is what he said on June 27, 1944:

" . . . The mother has her son taken away and he is killed; she is then asked if he has been contributing to the maintenance of the home. Maybe she has been sacrificing herself to try and train her son for a profession. In another six months, if he had not been taken away, he might have been in a position to make some recompense to the mother for all her sacrifices, but he is taken away and killed, and she gets nothing. These mothers say: 'They have taken away my son, my son is dead, and now I am forgotten.' Do hon. members ever think about the thousands of forgotten mothers of this country and about the effect of a contribution from the Exchequer—something from the country? . . . It would mean that these mothers, every week, as they went to collect the 10s. or whatever it might be, would have the feeling 'My lad is not forgotten and I am not forgotten.' "

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William Gallacher, as we have seen, has dealt by Questions in the House with a wide range of issues, from equal pay for equal work in government war work, to pigeon breeding in Scotland. It has often been his only means of keeping an important matter before the House. For example, he used a question sent by soldiers in Brompton Barracks on basic rates of pay and dependants' allowances to air general feeling on the subject. It is at Question Time that William Gallacher shows his tenacity for the workers' interests—using unimportant and often apparently flippant points to bring out basic issues and putting up strong fights for individuals, and forcing Ministers to give definite statements in place of vague evasions.

## **A.R.P.**

As early as 1937, Gallacher was insisting on the importance of efficient A.R.P. and evacuation schemes; and nowhere is his tenacity of purpose seen more than in his struggle to get good protection for West Fife. He went carefully into every possibility of the locality, with the help of officials and people living on the spot, especially in North Queensferry, which, as he pointed out, was a dangerous spot because of its proximity to the Forth mouth. The question of the use of an old railway tunnel was investigated and then the possibility of small shelters being built in the rock surface of an old quarry. But, as he told the House, cold water was thrown on the question by officials, and finally bomb-proof shelters were refused.

While other members were playing with the idea of a nine days' war, Gallacher drew from his knowledge of events in Spain and China and pointed out the part that the bombing of civilians plays in modern warfare. By questions and letters to Ministers he pressed for good shelter provision and for unified control in the localities. He asked questions which forced the Minister to give figures of the numbers of proposals for heavily-protected shelters received from Local Authorities, and brought up examples of badly provided areas. After the air attacks on Coventry and Birmingham, he made an impassioned speech showing how these great concentrations of wealth had been neglected—how the wealth which should belong to the country had not been used to protect its people. The same situation arose over evacuation, and when he revealed the failures of the scheme in Scotland and called for the requisitioning of large houses, he did not fail to point this out to members.

## **FOREIGN POLICY**

As Gallacher has explained, the defence of the interests of the British working class was identical with the defence of working-class interests all over the world. His first few years in Parliament were devoted to efforts to preserve the peace while there was still time. His speeches are full of warnings on the inevitable results of the policy of the Tory Government, and of explanations of the reasons for that policy. In his first speech in 1935 he said:

“The Government are travelling the road of 1914, which will surely lead to another war and to the destruction of civilisation.”

That this was the exact opposite of what the people needed he made plain on many occasions:

“The people do desire peace, and if they are dragged to war as a result of an evil pro-fascist foreign policy, then it will mean the final and complete collapse, not only of the Government, but of all those associated with it” (Feb. 25, 1937).

Throughout this period much of his attention was devoted to attacks on the Conservative Party's attitude to the League of Nations—whole-hearted support of which was inconsistent with Conservative leanings towards the Fascist countries:

“Is the Government co-operating with the League of Nations?” he asked. “. . . The Government is playing a double game, and if the opportunity presents itself, preparing for what the Americans call a “double cross” (in Abyssinia).

He went on to show how, in the Manchurian crisis, the Foreign Secretary (Lord Simon) had become “The spokesman for Japan against the League of Nations,” because——” He was trying to get a deal with Japan that would guarantee British railway interests in Manchuria and China (Dec. 4, 1935).

In February, 1937, he again showed the House how the whole policy of the Government had been one of support for reaction in Europe, and later in the same year he showed why it followed this policy, when the Foreign Secretary openly gave as the excuse for supporting Franco, “our great commercial and financial interests” in that country.

“There is no more talk about the League of Nations and Collective Security,” he said. “He (the Foreign Secretary) tells us that in Spanish territory which is occupied by Franco there are great commercial and financial interests. Yes, but he does not tell us that one of the most important financial interests in Spain, the predominating power in the great iron mines in Spain is Messrs. Guest, Keen and Nettlefold, and that several Members of the Cabinet have big interests in that organisation” (Nov. 11, 1937).

How prophetic was his warning to Parliament:

“. . . this step that is being taken by the Government without the consent of the people of this country . . . is already a recognition of Franco. . . . It will have serious effects, not only against the Spanish people, but against the people of this country” (Nov. 11, 1937).

Gallacher had made clear the alternative to this “rush to war” on Feb. 25, 1937:—

“If we had a Labour Government, or a People's Front Government, of which the Labour Party was a strong driving force, representing the peace desires of the people, and not the war desires of the fascist financiers, what would such a Government do? It would immediately have a meeting with France, where the people are for peace, with the Soviet Union, with Czechoslovakia, and with the Scandinavian countries. Then it would formulate a peace declaration, and on the strength of that peace declaration make collective security, which is pooled security.”

In his first speech he had explained the sound logic of collective security and the practical way of achieving it. At the same time he kept the real nature of Fascism clearly before the House, in an effort to make it aware of the dangerous alternative it was choosing.

As early as 1935 Gallacher was calling the attention of Members to the aims of fascist Germany and the seriousness of the situation, especially for this country. Again he stressed this in November, 1937, when he was opposing recognition of Franco Spain. He always kept the real nature of the Spanish situation closely before the House. He gave a stirring account of the real struggle against Fascism in Spain, and contrasted the attitude of Conservatives in the National Government:

“Men in this House gloated when the fascists were bombing the defenceless people of Spain. They defended the sinking of British ships and sacrifice of British seamen. These men would sell out if they had a chance” (Oct. 21, 1937).

That the Government he was up against was no weak and spineless one, he well realised:

“I object to the attitude sometimes adopted by some of my own friends who suggest that this is a weak and spineless Government. It is a very strong and dangerous Government” (Oct. 21, 1937).

How dangerous, he showed when he recounted the Government's policy of support of Fascism. It was in his fine denunciation of Chamberlain's betrayal of Czechoslovakia that he showed how Germany had been helped to gain the position which the Great War had been fought to prevent:—

“Germany now dominates Europe, and in dominating Europe has placed France in an impossible position” (Oct. 4, 1938). He pointed out that the Chamberlain Government was leading Britain to peril:

“The Government is not isolating Soviet Russia. They are isolating Britain” (Oct. 4, 1938).

The only solution for the people lay, as he so often explained, in alliance with the great socialist power which must have peace “for the building of Socialism” and did not covet an inch of anybody else's territory.

During the days of the “phoney” war, Gallacher showed how many in the Government wished to continue the policy of Munich and support for Fascism. He constantly pointed out that the Government was deliberately offending the Soviet Union, the one ally that had real strength, and called for a Government that would build up a strong alliance with that country. In March, 1940, he showed to the House how his policy had remained consistent and where the roots of his opposition to the Government lay—in the fact that the Government were deliberately neglecting the interests of the mass of the people and were relying on powerless allies, because they still hoped to build up a capitalist bloc against the Soviet Union.

“I said, on September 2, in connection with the calling up of the lads of this country, that in no circumstances could I support it under such a Government, or under the control of such a Government.

I stated then whatever Government was to be responsible for the control and development of this country, one thing was certain—that the men of Munich would have to be cleared out without any concern or consideration. I was the same on September 2 as I was when the Prime Minister went to Munich. I am the same now. I have always been prepared to form my own opinions, and to fight to maintain them, no matter what opposition or resistance I might meet. I have never been the hireling of anybody . . . I consider that it would be the most ghastly calamity that ever took place if a Government of this kind was to drive the people of this country into a war with the great socialist country, the Soviet Union.”

In 1940, when Britain stood alone, he returned to the attack, time after time, showing that the blame for our peril lay on the shoulders of those who had robbed us of Russia’s friendship. Even at this time, he said, a campaign of slander and lies against the Soviet Union was still receiving official support:

“The most filthy, vile and slanderous anti-Soviet propaganda is being published, some of it under the auspices of the Ministry of Information. Take, for instance, the Polish Press published in this country. In one of the Polish papers, the so-called Foreign Secretary declares that the Polish Government in this country are conducting a war against the Soviet Union. One of these Polish papers is continually filled with anti-Soviet and anti-semitic propaganda. You could not get anything more Fascist than that propaganda, and it is supported by the Ministry of Information” (Aug. 20, 1940).

Declarations of intentions to make war with Russia a principle of policy are no new thing for the London Poles.

How could the people of Britain be defended properly if the Government still continued with a policy which was unfriendly to a great and powerful anti-fascist country? Britain, he declared to Parliament, needed:—

“A Government composed of people whose one and only concern is the welfare of the people, a Government that would take over everything in this country—the land, land values, everything for the defence of the people. Such a People’s Government, acting in friendship and union with the mighty Soviet Union, would end forever the menace of Fascism and the dread scourge of war, and would bring a lasting peace and a high hope to the people of this country and the people of Europe” (Aug. 8, 1940).

The Conservative reactionaries, whose guilt Gallacher was always exposing, naturally singled him out for their attacks. They attempted to misrepresent his policy in every conceivable way, even stooping to the assertion that Communists would not fight. Coming from those who had given way to every demand made by Hitler, and who had left Britain practically unarmed, this was, indeed a classic piece of hypocrisy. But Gallacher, who had helped the Communist Party

to organise the International Brigade to fight Fascism in Spain before the war, remained undaunted. He said:

“I want to make this declaration, and in view of this unscrupulous campaign it is necessary to make it. When the immediate danger faces the people in any district of this country, the Communists in that district, with the spirit and courage which they showed in Spain against the Fascists when those who are slandering them now were aiding and abetting Fascists, will be the bravest and most fearless defenders of the people of this country.”

“The Communists and the *Daily Worker* are deeply interested in the welfare of the people. They will fight by every means to save the people of this country from the menace of Fascism, whether it be from within or without.”

Later in the war, as Europe was being liberated, Gallacher criticised the policy carried out by the Government, as regards Greece, Poland, Yugoslavia and Belgium. During the Greek crisis, at the end of 1944, he made constant appeals to the Government for a change in its disastrous policy. On December 20, he declared:

“I say to this House—and I challenge the Foreign Secretary—that lies, distortion and slanders have been sent across from Greece. What is wanted is a declaration from the Foreign Secretary: ‘Cease fire.’ Then demobilise all the forces, and let the police, the national guard, and the army be made up of groups called up according to their ages; let there be immediate trial of the traitors, and an opportunity for a National Government that will represent, in every sense, the masses of the people in Greece.”

Similarly, on Poland he has countered the attempts made by a number of Conservative Members to foment discord with the Soviet Union. On September 29, 1944, he stated:

“Thirty-five or forty years ago, I was speaking at mass demonstrations in different parts of the country, fighting for freedom and independence for Poland. . . . No people has such a bitter history of struggle; much of it has been against the Polish gentry. . . . No one can say that the partition of the Ukraine and the partition of White Russia are essential to Polish independence. We have seen what partition means in Ireland. . . . Can we get friendship between Poland and Russia if there is partition of the Ukraine and of White Russia? Does anybody suggest that the partition of these countries is essential for Polish independence? It is not. . . . Polish independence depends not on a bit of territory in the East, but on a real opening-up of the country so that it has a clear passage to the sea, an open connection with all other peoples and is not hemmed in between a group of neighbouring States. . . . I am certain that these matters can be ironed out in such a way as to bring about a real chance of lasting peace in Europe so that there is a free, independent Poland with its own Government, living in the closest harmony and friendship with

its mighty neighbour, the Soviet Union, with Great Britain and with its other neighbours.”

On Yugoslavia, Gallacher pointed out that: “The only paper in this country a year ago that tried to give a lead regarding Tito and Mihailovitch was the *Daily Worker*. . . . The Government now accept the line and the attitude which the *Daily Worker* took a year ago. The people in the country understand that the Conservatives are anxious to maintain things as they are, not only in Europe but in this country” (Feb. 22, 1944).

## RELATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION

Gallacher has always fought hard for friendship with the Soviet Union. All through the Chamberlain era when it seemed that the Government was bent on insulting and isolating the Soviet Union, all through the Finnish campaign when reactionaries were calling for war with Russia, Gallacher never faltered in his struggle for better relations between our country and the land of the Soviets.

He persisted in his demands for a full alliance with the Soviet Union and showed how the Cripps' mission of 1940 was deliberately sabotaged at home:

“Sir Stafford Cripps is sent to Moscow—he is supposed to work there to get better relations with the Soviet Union. Yet in this country the most filthy slanderous propaganda against the Soviet Union is being published, some of it under the auspices of the Ministry of Information.”

Some of his best speeches at this period are those devoted to explanations of the policy of the Soviet Union. Of the correctness of his views there is no longer any doubt.

He showed the House that Finland was a fascist State, and that the pro-fascists in a number of countries hoped to use Finland as a springboard for attack against Russia.

Mannerheim's army, he pointed out, was independent of the Government and was owned and controlled by bankers and outside Imperialists. When the Soviet-Finnish Peace treaty was signed, he said:

“Anybody, no matter how prejudiced he may be, can see from the map the whole purpose of the treaty is to ensure the defence of the great socialist country. In November, after the Soviet Union had made agreements with the Baltic States, she offered to come to an agreement with Finland. Why were there provocations on the part of the Finnish Government? As soon as the Finnish representatives were invited to peaceful discussions in Moscow, they mobilised all their forces in Finland. That was not helpful to peaceful discussions” (March 19, 1940). He went on to say: “I am positive that an amicable understanding could have been come to with the Finnish people had there

not been outside influences at work, just as it had been come to with the Baltic States."

## "DAILY WORKER"

In January, 1941, the Government banned publication of the *Daily Worker*. In his speech on the suppression (Jan. 28, 1941) Gallacher accused the Government of taking advantage of the war situation to suppress a political opponent . . . "the only daily newspaper in the country which was definitely opposed to the Government. Every other national daily newspaper in this country is in the hands of the big millionaire financiers, and this is the only daily newspaper owned by the workers, run by the workers and maintained by the workers."

He summed up the policy of the paper as follows:

"It has worked consistently on the lines set out by the Hon. Member for Llanelly when he spoke the other day in the House about the fact that big monopolies were stepping in everywhere and getting a death grip on the state and the people of this country. . . . It has fought for a clear policy in relation to food instead of the disorganised food control that is depriving the people of the necessities of life. . . . There is not a grievance of any kind affecting workers, soldiers and their dependants, the aged and the impoverished, which the *Daily Worker* has not ventilated and for the remedy of which it has not put forward concrete proposals. Because of this, the influence of the *Daily Worker* has been growing throughout the country. . . . "I charge the Minister with having allowed political prejudice and the drive from the big millionaire press and from big monopoly capitalists to affect his judgment. He has taken a step that can easily lead to disastrous consequences as regards the freedom of the press in this country" (Jan. 28, 1941).

Following the suppression, William Gallacher kept the House well aware of popular feeling on the subject of the *Daily Worker* and of interests struggling against the lifting of the ban. He constantly pointed out to the House that the ban was "sheer political victimisation."

## SOVIET UNION IN THE WAR

When the Coalition Government rejected the Hess offer of a separate peace and declared for alliance with the Soviet Union in June, 1941, Gallacher showed that this was the policy which he had been advocating ceaselessly, ever since his election to Parliament.

How could real co-operation with Russia be established? He urged changes in the Government, pointing out that it contained strong influences which were still working against this. The reasons for this he stated plainly in January, 1942:

"If the main line of strategy is the war against the Nazis, what is the main political line? Is it not the closest possible alliance with the

Soviet Union? You put America first, why? Because it is in accordance with our strategy? No, because it is in accordance with our political prejudices. America is a capitalist country and this is a capitalist country. The alliance with the Soviet Union should be carried out in the most effective manner, so as to secure the speediest possible end to the tragedy of this war."

In the Debate of July, 1942, when a group of reactionary Conservatives, led by Sir John Wardlaw Milne, attempted to bring about the overthrow of the Coalition Government, Gallacher gave full support to the Government and showed the real source of opposition in the country:

"Behind this campaign," he pointed out, "is a desire to prevent the Second Front in Europe—the only way of bringing this war to an early end. Behind this campaign is an attempt to weaken our alliance with the Soviet Union."

## **SECOND FRONT**

Gallacher was in the forefront of those who pressed for a Second Front in the House and who kept the demands of the mass of the people in the Services and in industry in that matter well before Parliament. He always showed that there could be no victory without the Second Front. In May, 1942, he put the alternative clearly before the House.

"This question of the Second Front is put as though it were for a Second Front or no Second Front, but that is not the issue that is before us. Anyone who has discussed how this war will end has always pointed out that before it could end in victory for the Nazis, this country would have to be defeated. There has to be a Second Front, either on the continent or in this country." In previous debates he had answered every argument put up against the Second Front, while time and again he drew the attention of the House to the importance of the part to be played in the Second Front by the people of Europe:

"There is great hope among the people of Europe. There never was such hope among those distressed and suffering people that the Government of this country will do something effective, but day passes day and week passes week and hope begins to fade. But if action were taken, what a surge would go through Europe!" (Oct. 23, 1941).

## **CRITICISM OF THE CABINET**

Gallacher spares no one with his criticisms. Early in 1940, he had made a spirited attack on Neville Chamberlain's Cabinet, when he said:

“There is a whole group of failures sitting on the Government Front Bench. Let me take them. The Minister of Food—he tried to organise the fish industry. What happened? He simply paralysed it and starved the people of fish. A failure. The Secretary for Mines—he tried to do something. He paralysed the coal trade. Where is coal rationing now?” So he goes on with the Minister of Labour and President of the Board of Trade, and finally, the Prime Minister (Chamberlain)—“the most ghastly failure there has ever been in trying to pursue a policy. . . . Time and again he has been on the edge of the precipice” (Jan. 16, 1940).

Later, in 1944, after the Coalition Government had been in power for several years, Gallacher brought criticism on it for refusing to change with the times. On April 22, he said:

“We have to remember the heavy task and the heavy sacrifices that lie before the people of this country. Go among the workers. What do you find? Suspicion and distrust of the Government, and a feeling of frustration. What do they say of this House? They say it is overloaded with Conservatives and that the Government are also overloaded with Conservatives. The people of this country have advanced far away and beyond anything in the nature of Conservatism, and it is very necessary that the Prime Minister and those closely associated with him should see to it that the necessary changes are made in the Government and that speed should be made with the reconstruction policy of the Government.”

## **ELECTORAL REFORM**

When the question of electoral reform came up in the early months of 1944, William Gallacher saw the opportunity to put forward suggestions which would make the franchise and electoral machinery of the country much more democratic and ensure that Parliament was more representative of the opinion of the people. Among the proposals he made to the Speaker's Conference in February, 1944, were: Support for proportional representation, the right to vote at 18, the abolition of the university and business man's vote, and the replacement of the £150 deposit by 150 signatures to the Nomination Paper. He also showed the connection between Government policy on reconstruction and the machinery of elections, when he asked:

“How is it possible for the Speaker's Conference to decide on redistribution (of seats) unless they know what the Government's plans are in connection with the location of industries?”

## **MINERS AND MINING**

There has been much work to do for each individual community in his constituency, and none has been neglected. We shall see later

how the whole problem of the mining industry has been Gallacher's special concern, but he has also attended to the more detailed problems of the miner. His first opportunity to move a resolution came in December, 1936, when he demanded pit-head baths. He made an unusually long speech. He was on ground with which he was really familiar, and knew he had the whole of his constituency behind him. He could quote letter after letter from branches of the Fife Miners' Union and from individuals to drive home his point. He made his appeal not only for the miners, but said also:

"I make an appeal on behalf of the wives and mothers. They deserve our consideration. We should always be prepared to appreciate their qualities, and we should see that whatever we can do we shall do to make their toil easier and to guarantee that the work which they do to brighten up the home is appreciated, not only in the mining areas, but here also" (Dec. 16, 1936).

Gallacher has often raised points affecting individual pits and has succeeded in getting local grievances settled, such as the Aitken Pit of the Fife Coal Co., and the question of victimisation in Bowhill Pit in 1943.

This work for West Fife is part of Gallacher's fight for the miners all over the country. He has given the House many pictures of their conditions and forced Members to be conscious not only of the workers' demands and interests, but also of their growing state of organisation. He has never failed to support any advance—a little here and there where possible, because, as he said of the 1942 Coal White Paper:

"Nevertheless, it represents a step forward—not a very big step, and we have to use that step forward to try to get further steps. Either we have to take a short step forward or we stay where we are. If we take this short step, we can try to take a bigger step and many bigger steps will have to follow."

On many occasions he has pointed out the need for Parliament to concern itself about "those who are down the pit all the time making sure that the coal comes to the surface," although, he said, "Hon. Members on the other side . . . will express nice sentiments, but they have proven by their conduct that profits are more important than human life" (Feb., 1938). At the same time, he declared that "taking the average group of mine-owners in this country, they have already taken out of the pits far more than they ever put into them; but day after day, the miner is putting in his strength and his health and risking his life in order to produce coal." This question, he has shown, is closely linked with that of control of the industry, and the close of his speech in July, 1942, reveals the real issue:

"In this country the mining industry is on a semi-feudal district basis, and the owners have fought with the utmost tenacity against anything in the nature of treating the industry as a national unit.

The Miners' Federation come forward with a suggestion to set up a national board to organise and control the whole of the industry, but the 1922 Committee and the mine-owners have prevented that, and we get instead a national miners' board of an advisory character and executive control in each region."

At the end of 1943, when Parliament was taking upon itself the credit for improved social services for the miners, Gallacher showed that the miners had had to fight for every bit of advance:

"This progress up to where we are just now with the pit-head baths, rehabilitation, and the rest of it, has been one long struggle on the part of the miners and the miners' organisation" (Dec. 16, 1943).

A year later, when the reorganisation of the mining industry was being discussed, he again demanded: "Why do not the Government come forward with a clear policy on this question of the mining industry? There is continual crisis on the coal question. Why not put an end to dual control and take over the industry, the life-blood of every other industry of this country!" (Nov. 30, 1944).

William Gallacher has worked with the same enthusiasm for the agricultural population of Fife. He has kept the question of agricultural workers' housing conditions prominent as we have seen. The other important issue has been that of wages. He constantly pointed out that the whole agricultural situation in Scotland could be solved only when the wage question was tackled. In May, 1940, on the Agricultural Bill, for example, he said: "It is only so far as the Bill will be used to improve the position of the agricultural labourer in Scotland that you are going to retain the agricultural population," and asked "all Hon. Members to give some consideration to the men and women who work so hard and get so little of the pleasures of life, and to support the amendment and guarantee those workers 40s. a week."

## FISHING

The herring industry is also his concern. In May, 1935, he made an appeal on behalf of the small fishermen, whose difficulties he described to the House, against "the monopoly called Unilever," and demanded organisation of the markets to prevent the dumping of fish overboard.

He frequently returned to the subject from year to year, and in July, 1944, he said:

"Not only were the fishermen neglected between the wars, but the Conservatives in this House, the Conservative press, and the Conservative Government did everything humanly possible to destroy the great Russian market. . . .

"The fishermen can never get justice and security, and the people of this country can never get the food which they ought to get, unless

there is control and direction of the industry in this country. The present position is chaotic. . . . The fisherman is at the mercy of all kinds of middlemen. . . . What sort of justification can there be for a statement such as the Scottish Secretary made today, that between the first lot of herring that came in and were bought and the last lot that came in and were bought there was a difference of 26s. per cran? That is private enterprise. It is anarchy, chaos."

## EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS

In preparation for D-Day, Gallacher made every suggestion he could to speed up production, and here his wide experience in industry stood him in good stead. One major task was to bring about an entirely new situation in industry and end the position where employers "are concerned about maintaining their power over the working class through managerial control, and think of the men as minders of machines or as parts of the machine" (Jan. 28, 1942). He went on to suggest a solution:

"There will have to be active shop stewards in every factory, active committees in every factory, breaking the bottlenecks and allowing work to go on" (Jan. 28, 1942). As he said later:

"You have masses of people in industry, the greatest possible reservoir from which to draw for initiative. You have to encourage them, and the more you encourage them, the more they will feel that they are brought into the struggle, and the less you will hear of absenteeism or other similar complaints."

There was one very concrete suggestion which he never failed to make as a means of increasing production. "Give us," he said, "the *Daily Worker* and we will see to it that you get an inspired and generous response to every demand you make for production in industry" (March 24, 1942).

## RECONSTRUCTION

By early 1944, a start was being made on the post-war reconstruction programme, and on February 22, Gallacher described the position in the following terms:

"All kinds of discussions are going on just now in Tory quarters and certain sections of the Tory press about getting rid of controls at the earliest possible moment after the war. In face of all the problems that confront us, the problems of demobilisation the problems of the transfer from war to peace industry, there will be greater need for control than ever there was . . . I say it is necessary for the Government not only to have a sound line on foreign policy. . . but a sound line on domestic policy, and that the policy carried out in relation to Europe will be determined by the policy carried out

in this country. . . . If the Government of this country are prepared to pursue a policy of reconstruction without regard to ancient privilege, without regard to the maintenance of a wealthy, parasitic class in this country, but only concerned with the well being and the health of the masses of the people of this country—if they are prepared to do that, they will be capable of pursuing a sensible and useful foreign policy with regard to the other countries in Europe. If they are determined to maintain wealth and privilege in this country at the expense of the people, that will guide and determine their policy in regard to the various countries in Europe.”

Later in the year, he was scathing on the question of progressive legislation being retarded. “When we discuss this question of carrying through and finishing the war,” he declared, “we often find it made a pretext for holding off the speedy realisation of essential legislation. The necessity of winning the war is being made an excuse for holding up various features of legislation that are necessary for this country—necessary not only in the sense that the people require their conditions ameliorated, but necessary as one of the most important factors in bringing the war to an early and victorious conclusion. The remedying of grievances by progressive legislation has a terrific inspiring effect on the soldiers at the front and the working men and women in the factories” (Nov. 30, 1944).

The next month found him asking, with biting wit, whether the Minister was aware “that the workers in a big West of Scotland factory, faced with redundancy, make the statement that when the Russians have a victory, they fire 300 guns, but when the British have a victory they fire 300 workers?”

## SHIPBUILDING

Shipbuilding and cheap travel will be of vital importance to this country. Gallacher was anxious that plans should be made before the war was over. In January, 1945, he asked:

“Will the Minister take note of the need for encouraging and developing shipbuilding after the war, and will he recommend to the Government the appointment of a special committee to deal with the development of travelling facilities for the people of this country to the Dominions and other countries?”

## MERCHANT NAVY

“Always there exists this human element, which must be remembered; it is not just a matter of tonnage.” This was the theme of Gallacher’s speech on the Navy Estimates on March 7, 1944, when he demanded that “there should be a guarantee for the future, not only for those in the Navy, but also for their companions in danger,

our Merchant Seamen, and the men and women in our shipyards who make it possible for them to carry on."

"They are all complementary," he argued, "they all fit into a pattern. The men who are serving in the Navy will be guaranteed employment, but there is no guarantee for the Merchant Navy, no guarantee for the men and women in the shipyards. The reason is that the State owns and controls the Navy and can guarantee employment to the men who are serving in it, but it does not own the merchant ships, and when the war is over, shipowners, concerned only with profits, will heave them out by the hundreds and thousands."

## **TRADE UNION RIGHTS**

Gallacher's special task as a Communist M.P. and a member of the Labour movement has been the guarding of Trade Union rights and, closely allied with that, efforts to get workers' representatives on various boards and committees. By using individual cases at Question Time he helped to obtain recognition of the right of Civil Defence workers to Trade Union organisation. He asked for Trade Union and Co-operative representatives on the Food Control Committees, and for an old age pensioner on the Assistance Boards, pointing out that these were the people with real experience and knowledge. He has brought before the House on several occasions the attitude of the Government inspectors to reports from workers' inspectors, and gained general recognition from the Minister of the principle that workers' inspectors should be invited to accompany Government inspectors when investigating on the basis of the former's reports. He used Question Time again to insist on the importance of Shop Stewards in production and to ask whether the Minister had considered enlisting their help in the control of armament prices and profits. He has always firmly demanded the repeal of the 1927 Trades Disputes Act.

## **LABOUR UNITY**

As the spokesman of the Communist Party in the House, he has worked continually for Labour unity, realising that without it the reactionaries are at an advantage.

He points out that his Party belongs to the great Labour movement. He himself is a careful and jealous guardian of the traditions and dignity of the movement. He has often related to the House past struggles and achievements. We have already seen how he drew their attention to the results of the struggles of the miners.

His attitude was clearly shown when, after he had been invited to stand for Parliament, he suggested to the West Fife Divisional Labour

Party that an all-in conference should be called to which both candidates should be submitted. The suggestion was rejected and a contest became unavoidable, in which the people of West Fife endorsed the stand he had made for unity.

In the House he has always worked closely with the Labour Party on every occasion possible. Many among the best members of that Party gave him a splendid welcome to the House. They saw in him a strong reinforcement in the ranks of those who could be relied on to fight on every working-class issue that arose.

He told Parliament, before the war: "The (Labour) Party here represents the Co-operative as well as the Trade Union movement and my Party is in complete agreement with their policy, the unity of the peace forces in Europe, built round the League, forming as a consequence a powerful basis for collective security" (Oct. 4, 1938).

From his early weeks in the House, he began to carry out his policy of working in unity with the Labour Party. He fought alongside Labour Members for improved social services and every measure which was calculated to improve the lot of the worker at home. He worked in close unity with the Labour Party over foreign affairs, because in unity he saw the only hope of peace, and the only opportunity of emancipation for the working class:

"Let us understand that the friends of Hitler in this country have got to be cleared out of office, that the Government that has destroyed the League and that has continually associated and played up to the fascist power and jeopardised the very existence of democracy, has got to go. When I use the word "democracy" I am not speaking of some magic cabalistic word; I am thinking of the rights of Trade Unions, of the rights of Co-operatives, of free speech of public meetings, of the right of the Labour movement to lead toward the emancipation of the working class. . . . I want to fight with all my power to preserve these liberties and to carry them forward to better things. We can only get them on the basis of unity of the peace forces. Let us get that unity in this country and Europe" (Oct. 4, 1938).

## INDIA

Gallacher has kept a close guard on the democratic rights of peoples wherever they are—in Palestine, Cyprus, Syria, India, and elsewhere. He has given to the House vivid accounts of the economic situation in India and shown how they condemn British Imperialist Rule. He has revealed the political bankruptcy of the Government's Indian policy by showing how the communal issue is used to sidetrack the main question of self-government, and how efforts at negotiation have been deliberately sabotaged. He has described to

the House the nature of the Indian Congress and the great support it has, and asserted his belief that India could solve her own problems. He has never left in doubt the need for independence as the first step in the process.

He discussed the importance of India in the war against Japan, and stated :

“ An essential feature of the fight against Japan, or a factor that would greatly shorten the length of the fight against Japan, would be for the Government to liberate the Indian leaders, and solve the deadlock and bring about unity between the forces of this country and the Empire and the great masses of the Indian people. I know there are many Indian volunteers, but because of the failure to end the deadlock, because of the failure to recognise the just demands of the Indian leaders and the Indian people, we have a situation which is bound to hamper and hold back the possibilities of an early victory against Japan ” (Nov. 30, 1944).

## BLUNT WORDS

Gallacher does not hesitate to use hard words against those members in the House whom he considers to be fighting for their own selfish interests and against the best interests of the country. Here is a sample of his fearless denunciations:

“ When some of the Members on this side proposed that the mines should be transferred from the mineowners to the State, we were told by no less a person than the Prime Minister that we could not discuss that because it was controversial. We cannot discuss the transfer of private industry to the State because it is controversial; yet we can discuss the transfer of national property to private enterprise. That is not controversial. Can anyone explain that difference to me? That smug complacency of the Conservatives in this country! Their whole moral concept is based upon the assumption that anything which is in their interests is right while anything which is in the interests of the mass of the people and against their interests is wrong. . . . The Government owe something to the lads who are fighting. . . . The Government have in their possession at the present time, the means of providing jobs for many thousands of these lads. Hon. Members are asking the Government to give it away so that the Government cannot provide jobs for anyone, but must leave the lads at the mercy of the monopoly interests of this country. I say to the Government: ‘ It is your duty to the people of this country, and above all to the lads, to hold on to the factoriees and the assets that you have and to use them in such a way as to provide the maximum opportunity for the lads who have been doing the fighting, and also to the maximum advantage of the people of the country ’ ” (July 25, 1944).

## **FASCISTS**

At the time of Mosley's release, he showed that this was the kind of action that would lose the confidence of the people of the country:

"The mothers of this country are sending their boys to bloody battlefields to fight against the Fascists, and Mosley's associates are slaughtering them. Does that mean anything? Mosley is not just a symbol, he is an actual enemy in our midst" (Dec. 1, 1943).

## **EDUCATION**

On the subject of education, Gallacher has always spoken for more and better schooling for the people of this country. Whenever the subject comes up in Parliament he has something constructive to say. The Education Bill of 1944 gave him many opportunities to put forward progressive ideas.

"This is the first time we have had a real approach to education of a non-utilitarian character," he stated when supporting an amendment for fixing a definite date for raising the school-leaving age to 16. "One of the decisive tests whether we are in earnest or not is this question of the raising of the school age and of taking children up to 16 entirely out of the labour market and away from the exploitation that goes on" (March 21, 1944).

A week later he gave strong support to the amendment on equal pay for women teachers, declaring that "women teachers are not paid less than men teachers because of any lack of quality; whether they are better or whether they are worse is not taken into account. The Minister did not make out a good case. It is possible to pay high tributes, but the Amendment dealt with the paying of higher wages to women teachers and not high tributes, and it would be more desirable if the Minister were less concerned with paying high tributes and accepted the principle of equal wages for all."

In February, when arguing for reduction in the size of classes, he stressed the need for the greatest co-operation between teacher and pupil "which is impossible in classes where the teacher is overburdened with work" and which is necessary if we are to get "what we want in the country when the war is over, the greatest possible encouragement for initiative and for the development of character among the children."

## **"MONEY-GRABBERS"**

It is perhaps on his speeches on the Budget that Gallacher excels himself. He can, and does, let himself go, disclosing all the inequalities of taxation, the pandering to financial interests, and the utterly selfish

interests of the Tories. Here is what he said of the Budgets for 1944 and 1945:

“The danger of inflation arises when the fighting is over because, when the fighting is on, an attempt is made to organise and regulate and control production and distribution, and, when the fighting is over, we are left at the mercy of a gang of money-grabbers—not concerned with the brave lads who fought in the war, only concerned with grabbing profits. . . .”

“Hope for the future lies not in making concessions to Toryism, the City of London, monopoly capitalists or the ancient aristocracy; it lies in co-operation between the Government, Trade Union organisations and the mass of our working people. An Hon. Member opposite a short while ago said that in Russia they can organise their economy so that the question of foreign trade does not matter. He said that while that was possible in Russia it was not possible to do it here. Why not? Because the people here do not own and control the means of doing it. It is not possible because a few robbers have control of the land and the industries of this country. . . .”

“We have always been faced in this country with the fact that accumulation of capital has increased year by year at a greater ratio than the spending power of the masses of the people. Although there was a continual increase in workers’ wages, capital was increasing at a far greater ratio than were the wages of the workers, and so, sooner or later, the crash had to come, and from cycles of unemployment, through the continual increase in the accumulation of capital, a stage was reached where there was permanent mass unemployment in this country. That is what the Chancellor and his friends on the other side of the Committee want to go back to—investment capital at the expense of the spending power of the people of this country. . . .”

“The Chancellor said that we would have to get back to good housekeeping. Good housekeeping before the war—a few people in this country, with abundance on top of abundance, masses of wealth which they could not use, one luxury on top of another, money wasted while masses of people in this country were starving. The Chancellor says we must get back to the starvation of children, back to increased infantile mortality, back to the unemployment of the masses. How is it possible for anyone to talk in such a manner? That arises from the fact, not that we are economising to build up our industry, but that always, under this system, unless the Government take control, investment capital is bound to accumulate at a greater ratio than the spending power of the working class. That is why we get mass unemployment. Any Chancellor who takes on the job of building up prosperity in this country must see that the spending power of the people increases at a greater ratio than investment capital increases. This will mean prosperity for the people, but it will also mean the end of profits and the profit-making system” (April 27, 1945).

## DUTIES OF AN M.P.

William Gallacher has on several occasions been stirred to criticise Members of the House for their irresponsibility. On March 24, 1942, when "production" was being debated, he said:

"The absenteeism that you get in the factories is nothing compared with that at this institution here, and if you put penalties upon anybody, you should put penalties all the more on fellows here who are drawing money under false pretences."

Such a charge never could be brought against Gallacher himself. His idea of the relationship of a Member of the House to his constituents was clearly given in a June, 1938, Debate:

"We are discussing here privileges of Members of the House of Commons, but as Members of the House of Commons, we are only entitled to privileges while serving the people. Although we are above the brass hats and are responsible to ourselves only so far as the various Governmental administrations are concerned, we are not above the people. Our privileges come from the people, and our privileges are also their privileges."

All the time his work has been based on the only sound foundation, but one sadly lacking in the House—a wide personal experience and a true sympathy for working people. He has proved the value of a Communist M.P., and although alone, he has not lacked strong allies. He has his constituency firmly behind him, but also an ever increasing number of workers outside who support his fight.

We have seen, then, that William Gallacher has fulfilled his aim of fighting for all workers. He has used every means available in the House to that end. He has attended regularly and has never missed any vital issue. In his frequent speeches in debates he has widened the issue and made the House face the true position. He has used Question Time and his right to place amendments to raise neglected issues and to get grievances of individuals adjusted.

He has always been ready to receive delegations and individuals, and to give help whenever possible, and, in the House on several occasions he criticised other Members for not fulfilling their duties in this respect. Here is one occasion which shows how every workers' delegation looks to William Gallacher:

"Last Thursday a deputation came here from the shipyards. Being an old shop steward, they came to see me. I told them they would do far better to meet the shipyard Members. While I am on the job doing my best to get those shipyard Members to see them, a policeman comes to me and says there is another deputation waiting. It is a deputation which has come from the Midlands with a terrible story—not only of idle machines, but of several thousands of skilled men actually unemployed. I had not finished with the deputation from

Coventry when the policeman said: 'there is another deputation.' It was a deputation from the aircraft factories" (January, 1942).

Never any question of whether he should see them. Contrast this with the attitude of Ministers as he describes it in March, 1942, and the attitude of many Members as well:

"The idea of Ministers, whether it is the case of deputations coming here or of the activities of shop stewards in the factories, is not to encourage but to stifle initiative. Deputations come here to see Ministers. They are told that they cannot see a Minister unless they have a national Trade Union official with them. They go back to the Trade Union officials who say, 'We will not come with you.' They go back to the Minister and they are told: 'We cannot see you. That is the understanding we have with the Trade Unions.' Perhaps the deputation have the most important material imaginable to put before the Minister. He says: 'I refuse to look at it. There is a chalk line which I dare not cross.'"

Here then is the record of the work and achievement of one man. If in the short space of ten years he has been able to accomplish so much, what could not be done if there were more such men in the House, with the same aims and the same ardour in pursuing them?