THE SEVEN PILLARS OF LABOUR:

When Mr. Attlee (right) went as one of the British Delegation to San Francisco, Tom Driberg, M.P., gave this picture of him in the "Leader."

IT is, personally, characteristic of Clement Attlee that he should have agreed to take second place to Eden in the British delegation to San Francisco—an arrangement criticised by some members of the Labour Party, who saw in it a slight to their party's leader, since he is, after all, Deputy Prime Minister. Unassuming . . . retiring . . . modest: none of these conventional adjectives quite conveys Attlee's singular unobtrusiveness of behaviour. At the root of this —and therefore behind the fact that non-political people in the country are only vaguely conscious of him as a major political leader—lies, his friends insist, the fact that Clem Attlee is, quite simply but intensely, shy.

The Game of Snap

As is often the case, shyness (combined with great quickness of brain) sometimes makes him seem brusque, almost rude. At question time in the House, there is neither the Churchillian expansiveness and wit, nor the Sinclairian drama, nor the Andersonian methodical thoroughness, about his answers. He sits huddled as though trying to hide behind the dispatch-box; half-rises gingerly from the front bench, his bird-like head slightly on one side; spits out "No, sir," as though he were playing a game of snap; and sinks quickly back as though the game had changed to musical chairs. Mr. Speaker may have called the next question before the indignant backbencher's lips have opened for his supplementary. This all saves time.

Time is also saved when deputations go to see him. He will have grasped within a minute or two of their arrival the main points that it will take their spokesmen 20 minutes or so to make. He then doodles; listens; and interjects staccato comments which — even when the subject is one in which he is deeply interested—may give an impression of unforthcomingness.

Attlee, in fact, is not much of a talker. Churchill himself would testify that there is no member of the War Cabinet who works harder, or more effectively. He sleeps four or five nights a week at 11 Downing Street, normally the official residence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the morning, Mr. Finucane, the porter (an uncle of the air ace Paddy Finucane) takes him a cup of tea. The Deputy Prime Minister is always out of bed, and climbing the uncarpeted stairs to his bathroom, by 8 sharp. He breakfasts at his club, the Athenaeum, skimming (and digesting) a number of newspapers at lightning speed. His driver, Mrs. Bird, is waiting to drive him to his office, where his working day usually starts at 9.30. It may continue, off and on, till midnight or after; apart from attendance at the House of Commons, it consists mainly of presiding over, or sitting on, committees, including the Privy Council itself. (Lord President of the Council is Attlee's official, constitutional title.) On the numerous occasions during the war, totalling nearly a year, on which Churchill has been away from this country, or ill, Attlee has functioned as Prime Minister; the war effort has not suffered noticeably. Those who have sat in committees with him testify to the strength of his influence.

The Litter is Under Control

For so neat and mouse-like a man, he keeps a curiously untidy desk. But the litter of papers on it is of the strictly masculine sort—the kind from which its owner can always disentangle the required paper in a flash. Until recently, when he was persuaded to allow a secretary to do it for him, Attlee noted all his engagements himself, in a small pocket diary; this was apt to add to his elusiveness. He types all his speeches himself, composing them as he types.

Not only is he a steady and rapid worker; he specialises in streamlining the machinery of governmental work generally. He is no slave to the higher bureaucrats. On the contrary he has often opposed them with success. One notable example of this was in 1931, when he was Postmaster-General. The Post Office was unpopular with the general public. Rude things were always being said and written about it. In the teeth of strong opposition from high-up civil servants, Attlee — this shunner of publicity for himself—called in the most eminent advertising and sales experts of the day, introduced night-letter and greetings telegrams, and launched a great public relations campaign.

Attlee has little time for home life. When he can get to it, he has a comfortable villa at Stanmore; he is married and has four children. He dashed home on the very day that he left for America —to lunch and to look after the packing of his luggage; he wanted to make sure that they hadn't left out *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, which he has read 17 times; or Trevelyan's *English Social History*. To supplement his official reading on the journey, his Parliamentary Private Secretary, John Dugdale, M.P., also packed a volume or two of Boswell and Proust and some new American novels.

Attlee's taste is what is known as good. He dislikes light musical shows. He likes 18th-century architecture, and fine antiquities generally. When he was last flying over Italy, he made the plane dip low and circle over Assisi, so that he could satisfy himself that little damage had been done. He smokes a pipe, and likes an occasional glass of claret.

ERNEST BEVIN (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), was described by the BBC in "Radio Newsreel," with some hesitation, as "a rather large, bull-like man." His face is fairly well-known to most New Zealanders, even to those who did not see him when he spent a week here in 1938. He has been Minister of Labour since 1940.

From humble beginnings as a farm boy he has risen to his present great responsibilities through proven merit as a trade union organiser and administrator. Trade Unionism has been his life.

Bevin is a huge man with a voice to match. He has always been a fighter of redoubtable quality, and was once the implacable political enemy of Winston Churchill. Personally, however, they have respected each other, and Churchill once described Bevin as the ablest figure in British industry. His biggest single achievement perhaps was the amalgamation of innumerable separate unions into one huge body called the Transport and General Workers' Union, a task which took him some years of ceaseless fighting. There are now more than half-a-million members in it. Another achievement partly his was the improvement and growth of the Labour paper, the *Daily Herald*, which was poorly run before Bevin and others took it in hand, and now has one of the biggest circulations in England.

He was an orphan from the age of eight and was brought up by a sister, but she was very poor, and in 1894, when he was ten, she sent him to work on a farm, where he got his board and 6d. a week. Soon he left for the city (Bristol) and became in turn page-boy at a restaurant, tram conductor, shop assistant, and van driver. He was dismissed from the trams for making an excited speech at a Sweated Industries Exhibition.

In 1920, having had success with his effort to amalgamate the multiple unions, he went to London, and delivered his famous 11-hour speech before the Transport Workers' Court of Inquiry, which resulted in the dockers receiving a standard minimum wage.

Bevin has been assailed both from Right and from extreme Left. In 1933 he received £7,000 damages for libel from the Communist paper the *Daily Worker*, which had accused him of betraying trade union interests.

HERBERT MORRISON (Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons) belongs to the people you saw or will be seeing in *This Happy Breed*. He is a Cockney, and proud of it. The stocky figure, jaunty quiff, brisk head movements—he moves his head a good deal because he likes to see you and only one of his eyes is any good — all these suggest the London sparrow. But there is a chin on Herbert Morrison, a chin that speaks of the doggedness that brought the errand boy to the Privy Council.

He is 57, and there is something exactly right in the fact that this son of a London "Bobby" owes his fame to his leadership of the London County Council. He came up, not through the Trade Union movement but through the secretaryship of the London Labour Party which looks after the election strategy of not only the municipal but also all the parliamentary seats in the County of London.

Morrison did a good job as Minister of Transport in the second Labour administration; he sorted out the tangle of London's competing passenger services and created the great public utility trust known as the London Passenger Transport Board. Not many people know that when, shortly after Labour went out into the political wilderness, Morrison was offered the job of running Britain's Central Electricity Board, at about £5,000 a year. He preferred to stay in politics, and in his little semi-detached villa in the suburbs. He continued taking his holidays through the Workers' Travel Association and buying his navy blue suits at the local Co-op. He does not let himself—or you—forget that he is where he is because of the workers and for the workers.

His great achievements in Housing and the Green Belt round London have now been eclipsed by five terrific years as Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security. For that he needed every ounce of his phenomenal energy and organising drive. When I was working for him before the war, a small group of us used to lunch regularly in his great room at the County Hall, Westminster. He was then running four jobs—Secretary of the London Labour Party, Leader of the L.C.C., Member of Parliament for Hackney, and a member of the Council of Labour Party. Few people

(continued on next page)