

Socialist Worker

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WE CAN WIN!



The printers' section of last Sunday's giant demonstration march along the Embankment towards the overflow

mass meeting at The Temple to hear Vic Feather, Tom Jackson and Hugh Scanlon. Another picture: back page.

Mass movement can beat Tory anti-union Bill

140,000 TRADE UNIONISTS on one of the biggest demonstrations ever seen in London proved that there is growing and massive opposition to the Tories' Industrial Relations Bill. The size, the spirit and the determination of the marchers proved the lie that the British working class is apathetic.

If the struggle is stepped up, if a campaign is waged against the Tories in every area, every factory, office and workplace, hundreds of thousands more workers can be brought into action and the Bill can be killed.

The success of that struggle depends on the rank and file of the unions. In spite of the strength of Sunday's demonstration, the TUC leaders still refuse to take serious action to stop the Bill becoming law and defeating the government.

On Monday the TUC's Finance and General Purposes Committee again turned down a call for strike action against the Bill from the Transport Workers and the Engineers. Feather and company say they do not want to alienate 'public' sympathy by going beyond protest marches.

SPECIAL CONGRESS

Yet Feather himself said that every marcher on Sunday represented five workers. That is a substantial section of the 'public' — and the militant slogans and demands for a General Strike showed just how determined they are to fight the Bill with all the power at their command.

The TUC leaders have to face the Special Congress on 18 March. They are so worried that the delegates will vote for a militant policy of strike action that Monday's meeting decided to allow no motions from the floor.

The action of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers is in sharp contrast to the dithering of the TUC. On Monday they stage the first of their one-day strikes against the Bill.

Carr's Bill can be defeated — by strike action and firm declarations now that unions will refuse to cooperate if it should manage to become law.

SHOWDOWN WITH TORIES

As the postmen and Ford workers fight on and are likely to be joined by railwaymen and other public sector workers, it becomes clear that the forces are mobilising and gaining strength for a showdown with the government.

Every trade unionist should support the 1 March and 18 AUEW strikes and show their readiness to fight to defend their rights.

Every trade unionist should redouble his efforts to commit his union to a fighting policy against the Bill and demand that the TUC leaders are forced to call a General Strike until Carr surrenders.

We can win. Sunday's mighty demonstration showed the enormous potential of the labour movement. Armed with a militant policy we can defeat this reactionary bosses' government and begin to lay the groundwork for a movement dedicated to the struggle for a socialist society.

Raise money for the postal strikers!

Socialist Worker

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21 February—not the end of the fight but the start of the battle

SUNDAY'S massive demonstration showed once again that the forces exist within the working class to kill the anti-union Bill. Here was a display of strength in which the traditionally more militant sections — the engineers, the car workers, the dockers, the printworkers — were joined by those with far fewer experiences of struggle — weavers and local government workers, shop workers and teachers.

But it was also painfully clear that those officially leading the demonstration, the General Council of the TUC, had no perspective for taking the movement forward. With only one or two exceptions, they had little to say about what was to be done next. The demonstration was, for them, to be the end of protesting, not the beginning of action.

Their real attitude of disdain for the rank and file demonstrators was revealed by Sir Sidney Greene in Trafalgar Square when, in reply to militant hecklers, he said that the crowd should be grateful to those on the platform who had 'taken time off' to speak to the demonstrators — as if the time and effort expended by 140,000 ordinary trade unionists was less important than that of a dozen embarrassed officials.

Yet even the complacent TUC bureaucrats were forced to admit that the situation for the trade union movement at the moment is serious. They could hardly ignore the offensive being waged by the Tories against many of the gains that the working class has made over the last 20 years. So Vic Feather, who only days before had offered to 'mediate' between the Post Office and the UPW (as if both were equally in the right!) was now calling for collections to help the postmen. It was no longer possible to deny that the postmen are waging a fight for all organised workers.

Not far enough

But such admissions still do not constitute a way forward. They will not defeat the Bill, nor will they do more than marginally ease the hardship of the striking postmen.

The only trade union leader who even began to suggest what needs to be done was Hugh Scanlon of the Engineers' Union. He made it clear that the AUEW national committee is going ahead with official one day strikes against the Bill. He called upon rank and file members of other unions to press their leaders to vote the same way at the TUC special conference on 18 March.

The response to Scanlon's speech and to

the postmen's appeal for financial aid shows that among the 140,000 there was the feeling that industrial action could take on and defeat the government. However, even Scanlon's speech did not go far enough in outlining the policy necessary for this.

It is not difficult to see the lines of action needed. First, there has to be preparation for united industrial action by all militant sections of the working class to force the government to abandon the Bill. If the 140,000 had been told to go away from Sunday's meeting to argue for that policy among the rank and file, they would have done so willingly and with some certainty of success.

Second, the postmen must not be left to fight alone. Those strongly organised sections of workers who are next in the line for the wages struggle must link up their fight with the postmen's. The railwaymen must not wait until the postmen have been forced back to work before moving into action. An alliance between the railwaymen and the postmen to fight together against the Tories is needed now.

Most of the established union leaders shy away in horror from the mere thought of such policies. Instead they beg the government to let them patch up compromise solutions. Only the building of Councils of

Action, based upon representative delegates from as many industries as possible in each locality can unify the rank and file militancy.

The key to a successful struggle within the working-class movement for such policies is the coming together of those militants who reject the existing system of society into a single organisation. The building of a revolutionary organisation, able to fight with single-minded determination in every section of the movement for a coherent set of militant policies, could transform completely the present balance of forces.

It would be able to take some of the initiative away from a General Council that is quite unable to lead the movement forward. We do not deny that at the moment only a small minority of all workers will come to such an organisation. But it is also clear that even if it had only a few thousand members, many of the demands of such a revolutionary organisation could gain a following from hundreds of thousands of workers in all industries who are looking for a way to defend themselves against the government.

The lesson of Sunday's demonstration is that militants have to build such an organisation now, before the Tories once again divide and rule.

Up for grabs: Chataway plans to sell telephones to Tory private profiteers

by PAUL FOOT

THE POSTMEN'S STRIKE is the biggest industrial dispute since the war. What started as a simple exercise in class war by the Post Office and the government has backfired in their faces.

They hoped to pick off in a few days a group of men and women who had no experience of industrial battle. After nearly five weeks, they are stumbling back to their first defences and mumbling about courts of inquiry.

The strike was anticipated by the Post Office as early as last August and the plans were laid for a 'short, sharp fight' soon afterwards.

Chief hatchet man throughout the operation was deputy (now acting) Post Office chairman Bill Ryland.

Late last August Ryland went on a tour of the country, talking to telephone managers and senior post office executives. He explained that the 9½ per cent 'return on capital' previously planned by the Post Office was being 'upgraded' to 10½ per cent.

There was no reason or logic in this upgrading. It was simply a hunch of Mr Ryland's. What it meant was, as Mr Ryland put it to a telephone managers' conference at Windermere last August, that 'there was very little left in the kitty for wages'.

Behind the union's back and without even a pretence of 'consultation' Ryland set in motion an emergency procedure whereby executives and supervisors could maintain as many services as possible in the event of a strike. Ludicrously unnecessary 'control centres' operating for 24 hours a day were set up in key centres.

All this took place before the negotiations with the Union of Post Office Workers were completed. By this time the bumbling and ineffectual Lord Hall, chairman of the Post Office, started to ask questions. He was told about the plans to smash the workers and did not like what he heard. He protested to the Minister about so crude an effort to defeat the workers and was instantly sacked. Ryland was left in sole command.

Every effort was made to corner the UPW in the most difficult situation possible: to force the union into an all-out strike at the most difficult time of year, at a time when the government could be relied upon openly to support the employ-

But Ryland and his master, Christopher Chataway, Minister of Posts, see the strike as something rather more important than a battle exercise. Their eyes are fixed on a big, ripe, profitable plum — the telephone system.

The statistics of Post Office finances are simple enough. Postal services make losses (£24m in 1969-70). Telecommunications make vast profits (£61m in 1969-70).

The more the postal service is run as a service, the more losses it makes. If postmen do not deliver daily to every house in rural areas, if they do not climb to the top of blocks of flats but leave letters at the bottom, the postal services will gain accordingly.

The British postal system is the best in the world because until recently the 'profit' men who control it have been balanced to some extent by others who believe that the profitable sections of the industry must finance less profitable services elsewhere.

Chataway, Ryland and Company Ltd. know of no such principle. They know only that telephones make huge profits and that the more automated the telephones, the bigger the profits.

Almost deliriously, they have watched the fantastic increase in the use of automated telephones during the postal strike, estimated by one spokesman to be more than 60 per cent.

Huge increase

During the strike, the Post Office has paid only a tiny amount in postmen's wages. Costs on stamp-printing, transport, heating, lighting and the like have all been saved.

In the meantime, with hardly an extra man being employed, there has been a huge increase in the profits from automated telephones.

Another man who has been watching these developments with interest is Geoffrey Finsberg, the Conservative MP for Hampstead.

Finsberg is a prominent member of a Tory-front organisation called the Telephone Users' Consultative Council. He received an ovation at the Tory Party Conference in Blackpool last October when he spoke of the 'great opportunities' the telephone service offered to 'private enterprise and initiative'.

Finsberg, like so many similar businessmen, sees the state making profits and wants to get in on the act. He has drawn up elaborate plans for 'hiving off' sections of the telephone service to businessmen.

The fact that Finsberg's name has been seriously mentioned as a contender for the Post Office chairmanship shows how much the government likes his ideas. (He won't get the job: Hampstead is too marginal a



RYLAND: not much in kitty

constituency).

Hiving off, however, cannot begin until the problem of the Post Office 'losses' is to some extent solved. For the excellent service provided by the Post Office is used to a very considerable extent by industry.

35 million units are posted every day in Britain, and not all those are from sweethearts or holidaymakers.

The fact is that more than half the deliveries and collections of postmen are in the direct service of industry, commerce, the banks and the civil service. All these deliveries and collections are heavily subsidised by the ordinary people who pay the full amount for their stamps.

From striking workers at a big London postal sub-headquarters I extracted the following remarkable figures for deliveries in a typical week last year:-

'Metered' letters:	194,111
'Metered' packages:	36,716
	230,827
Ordinary letters:	188,819
Ordinary packages:	18,131
	206,950

'Metered' means franked, or, in plain language, subsidised. Most business letters are not stamped but are passed through a franking machine.

Any firm that posts more than 5000 units a day (on average) can apply to the Post Office for a frank, and a rebate on all its letters. The exact amount of the subsidy can vary but it is never less than an old

4d (second class) letter. It is likely to go up to one new pence on the new 2p (5d) second class rate.

The extent of this subsidy to industry is in the region of £100,000 a day! Of course, it is available only to firms.

There is no subsidy for old age pensioners, the disabled, the unemployed or the sick.

If the subsidy to industry was abolished the extra revenue to the Post Office would be enough to pay the post office workers 15 per cent claim within a year, without the Post Office spending an extra penny.

It would be a continuing gain to the Post Office, for industry must continue to use postal services at an ever-increasing rate. The Post Office's attempts to prove that postal traffic is lost forever after price increases is simply answered by the traffic figures for 1962 to 1970.

In that time postal traffic rose from 10,500m units posted a year to 11,500m, despite 60 per cent price increases. The growth of technology and the growth of mail order and pools firms will mean more traffic, not less, and there are no 'competitors' to take that traffic away.

Yet the Post Office's response is not to abolish the subsidy but to increase it. At the same time, they have already raised the basic postal price by another 30 per cent.

Ryland has also announced plans for abolishing the Saturday post and the parcel post, cutting down on rural services and deliveries to high flats.

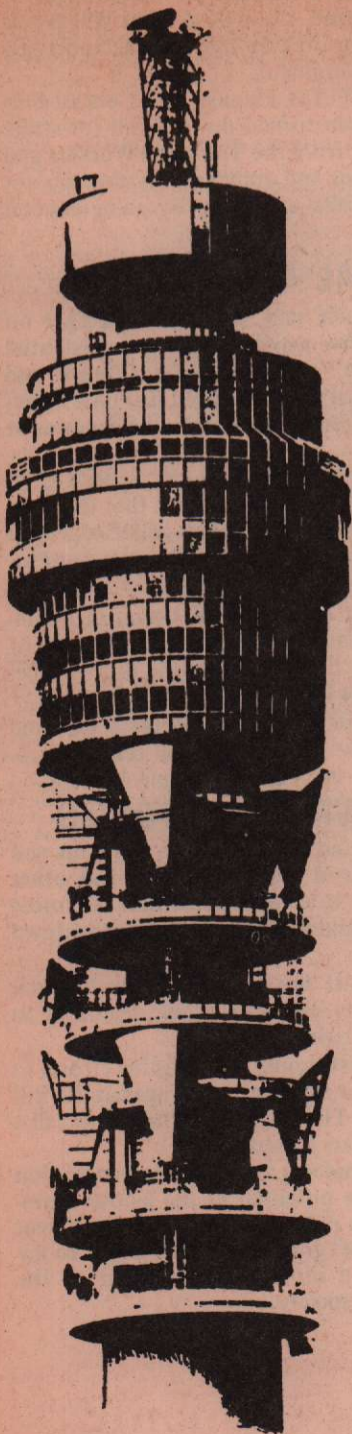
More sackings

These are directed at the ordinary people who use the service and subsidise the members of the Telephone Users' Consultative Council. And the cuts must result in greater redundancies for postal workers.

All these methods are useless for Ryland and Chataway unless they 'control' the workers in the industry. For so long, the workers in the Post Office have been cogs in the machinations of their masters. For so long, their union was no more than a name, its leaders voting fodder for Labour's right wing.

No group of men and women can be held down like that for long. And the reply of the post office workers to decades of exploitation has astonished and frightened their masters.

The plain fact is that without funds and without experience the UPW can claim less scabs in the fifth week of strike than in the first. And the way in which local union officials have rallied their members and encouraged them to further efforts will be a lesson for many years to other groups of workers with much more militant histories.



Dagenham shop floor leaders talk to Socialist Worker

Rank and file unity can win key fight for parity

THE RESPONSE by workers in the Ford strike, now in its fourth week, was described as of a 'magnitude that had never been seen since pre-war days', by Sid Harraway, AUEW chairman of the Ford National Convenors' Committee.

Attempts by the Ford management to falsify facts about the amount earned by the workers has only served to make the men more determined to continue their fight for parity — equal pay — with those doing the same jobs for other car companies. Ford has the highest profits in the car industry, yet their workers are the lowest paid.

'One year ago, in the 1970 campaign for parity, the men were willing to settle for £4 without a fight' said Tommy Osman, AUEW member of the Joint Works Committee, Ford Dagenham Body Plant.

'They were therefore thinking of getting at least £4 this year. Now that they're in a fight their sights are even higher. They've been out four weeks and there is no sign of weakening.'

The difference in the scale of protest and intensity of feeling between the 1969 strike and this one has been shown by the fact that Dagenham workers lagged behind other Ford factories in Britain and that many sections waited for official backing before coming out.

Dagenham has moved along with other Ford factories in Britain at a pace that has even been ahead of the stewards and convenors, who claim they have learnt something from the men's spontaneous militant action.

In most plants, mass meetings were a pure formality and lasted only a few minutes. Tommy Osman and Charlie James, AUEW shop steward in the Body Plant Press Shop, said: 'This time, the men have been educating us.'

As Tommy Osman said: 'It is very significant that at the moment no one is asking "when do we go back?"'

Arrogant

Sid Harraway added: 'It was a unique experience to see meetings of thousands of workers at Dagenham solid in their feeling to come out whereas the number of people expressing opposite views could be counted on one hand. The company completely misunderstood the mood of the workers. Their earlier propaganda was similar to that in 1970 when the men did not support their shop stewards.'

'They felt that they could isolate the shop stewards and convenors and that the mass of workers would respond to the Ford management,' he said.

Mick Murphy, TGWU convenor of the Export Packing Plant, said the foremen had released informally the Ford management decision on an offer of £2. This showed the arrogant attitude of the management who were completely out of touch with the mood of the workers.

Smash

Mick Murphy said: 'I think the management only offered £2 for the following reasons: they have a dubious ally in the form of the government and it is no secret that Bill Batty, Ford's managing director, had discussions with Robert Carr, and arising from that they decided to offer 8 per cent.'

He added that Robert Carr is pushing the idea that something has to be done about inflation and the Ford management feel that they will either have to pay up or pay nothing. They feel this is the time to smash parity once and for all.

Sid Harraway pointed out that the parity campaign only started when the National Joint Negotiating Committee was reconstituted two years ago to include rank and file representatives from the factory floor.

'But whether the union officials had moved in and put their seal on this dispute or not,' said Tommy Osman, 'I am convinced that all Ford workers would still be out in dispute. Officials and men have responded better this time than ever before. To my mind this makes us unbeatable.'

Profitable

They all felt that as car workers they were the first people in the private sector to be attacked by the government. 'Ford workers have led the way in many things except in wages,' was the general opinion.

In 1969 Ford attempted to use the courts against the strikers. This was defeated before Barbara Castle's In Place of Strife,' said Sid Harraway.

'We were also out on equal pay for women long before anybody else in the industry,' said Tommy Osman. 'We are in a very profitable business with highly auto-



Dagenham workers demonstrating outside Ford's London office. Sid Harraway is third from the right.

mated techniques of mass production. We must therefore lead not only in the struggle for parity, but in equal pay for women, for mutuality in work conditions, line speed, and so on.'

They all felt that Ford workers realise that the £2 offer was determined by the increased confidence of the management due to the Industrial Relations Bill.

'This will bring many workers in the course of the struggle around to the idea of changing this government and this will bring home its political nature. I think Ford workers realise that this is a political struggle,' said Sid Harraway.

'We have developed ourselves since the

Ford strike, which began unofficially, would have been considered an 'unfair, industrial practice' under the Bill.

'Were the Bill law now it would not have made the slightest bit of difference' said Charlie James. 'How would Carr have dealt with 50,000 militant men who were actually telling the shop stewards what to do?'

They felt that the younger workers coming into the factory had a part to play in the different attitudes in this strike.

'The young people have a different background. They aren't so easily ruled or conned. The older men who came out of the army after National Service, who were controlled by superior officers, have a

different outlook,' said Charlie James.

'These young workers think: Why the hell have we got to work so hard for little pay? They will not accept the idea that a grown man has to hold his hand up before he can go to the toilet.' This view was echoed by Tony Hyatt, a young worker at the Body Plant.

Problems

'Shop stewards at Ford are attempting to form a liaison combine committee within the motor industry, particularly now that British Leyland and others are

trying to kick out piecework and bring Measured Day Work in,' said Mick Murphy.

'There is a real need in the car industry for an organisation of shop stewards and convenors to ensure that we will be informed enough to deal with the many common problems we have to face.'

The parity campaign at Ford can inspire and initiate activity in the working class movement as a whole.

'Parity has tremendous significance for other workers' said Mick Murphy. 'Of course it means something different to different workers. But other workers are using the word up and down the country and our struggle is relevant to their success in their battle for higher wages.'



Ramsey: flippant dismissal

strike started,' he added. 'Swansea led the way in 1970 and we at Dagenham didn't follow but we are getting to their level now.'

Despite labour boss Bob Ramsey's flippant dismissal of the parity campaign as being mere sloganising, the general feeling from all four militants was that the long term agitation on this issue had been effective. One important factor was the effect of publicised rises during the campaign in the pay of workers in other parts of the car industry — for example the £4.50 settlement at Vauxhall and the £5 settlement at Chrysler, Linwood.

One of the aims of the Industrial Relations Bill is to take power away from the shop stewards and convenors and to place more power in the hands of the union officials and attempt to use them as a means of disciplining the workers. The

LETTER

Northern Ireland: who is responsible for the violence?

JOHN SULLIVAN's anxiety to defend the British army of occupation against the charge of provoking the recent fighting in Northern Ireland is both unprincipled and ill-informed (20 February).

He asks why the Stormont government would want to encourage a greater show of armed force in the nationalist ghettos. The answer is best given by the Tory Belfast Telegraph when it said last month that the new 'get tough' policy will 'enable Major Chichester-Clark to undermine the campaign of Mr Craig and the right wing to overthrow his leadership. The moderates have managed to buy time.'

One can get an idea of the right wing Unionist pressure for a blood bath against the nationalist areas by reading some of the articles being written in the six counties by right wing Unionists. One MP in the Belfast Telegraph has called among other things for 'lead, not rubber bullets against demonstrators without regard for age or sex', the use of the 'firing squad' against republicans and 'deportation to Canada' for subversives.

Sullivan would be less complacent about the role of the British army if he had seen the wrecked homes and injured occupants after the so-called searches. It is also not true that the 'official' IRA believes the Provisionals responsible for the fighting.

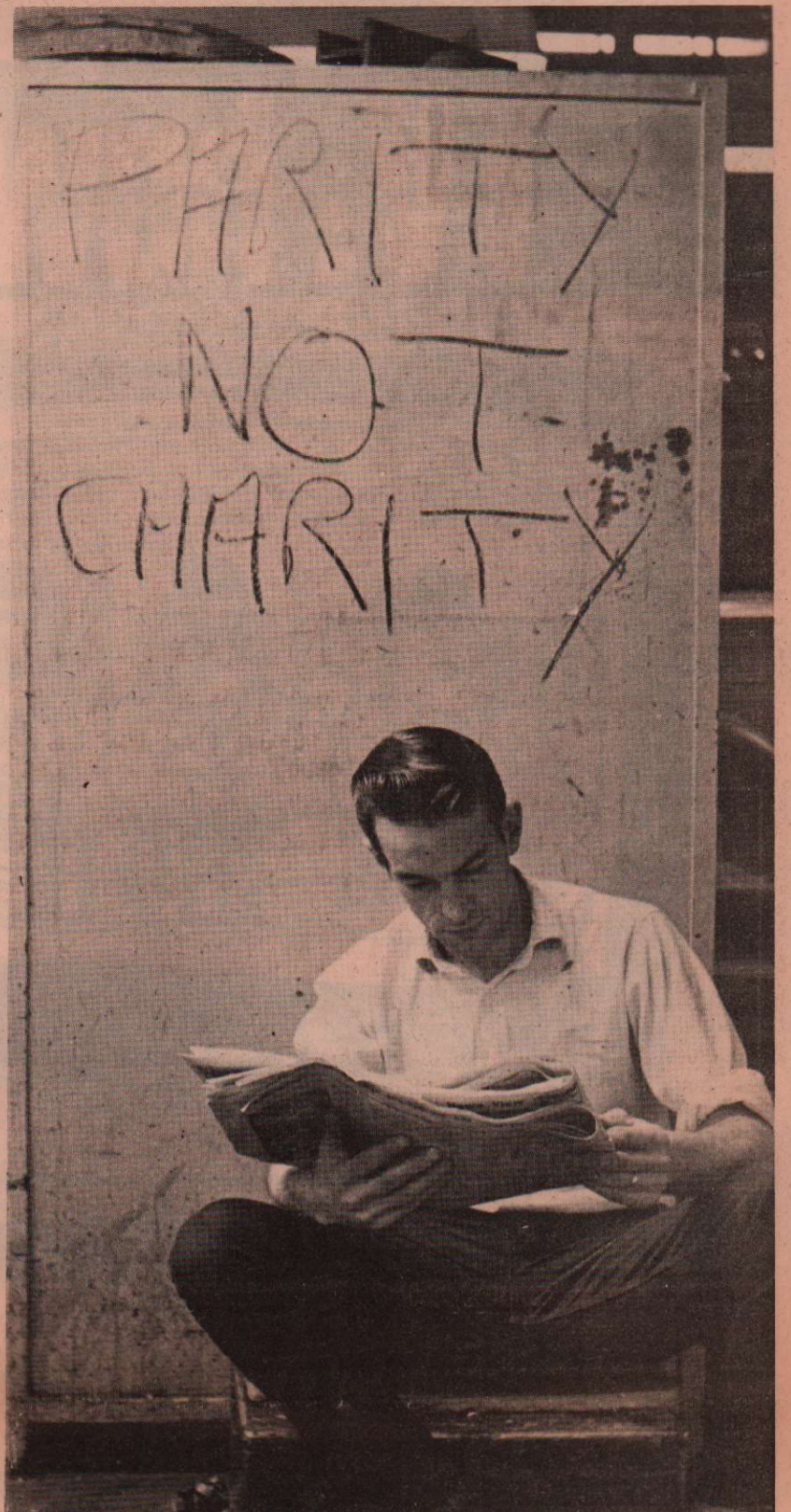
Both Cathal Goulding and the Dublin leadership believe that Westminster and Stormont engineered this to provoke a premature showdown with the resistance in the nationalist areas.

Of course the Provisionals — an organisation of working class militants led by middle class sectarians with a doomed ghetto strategy — cannot provide the needed socialist leadership.

On the other hand socialists, like our

comrades of the People's Democracy, have made it clear that no such leadership will command the support of Catholic workers which does not oppose the operation and the presence of the army of occupation.

Covering up for the British will also not succeed in winning a single militant Protestant worker. Sullivan's refusal to take such a stand has nothing in common with the policies of the International Socialists.— SEAN TREACY.



Dagenham: car man's answer to Carr

Antonio Gramsci
 An introduction to his thought
 by A POZZOLINI
 90p(18s)
 Pluto Press
 6 Cottons Gardens London E2

t-in bias



Post Office strikers: television news programmes played up the number of blacklegs and forgot to mention that 220,000 out of 230,000 UPW members were on strike.

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own bias.

A self-censorship begins to operate so that you bring in stories that you know will please the boss.

Journalists are members of a well-paid middle-class elite and in general they share the assumptions of the privileged class of which they are members or at least pampered servants. When covering industrial stories they forget that they are themselves trade unionists and side instinctively with the power structure.

So you get that hectoring, superior tone taken with trade unionists contrasted with a certain submissive respectfulness towards captains of industry. Also, under pressures of time, there is an unhealthy readiness to accept the views of official spokesmen on both sides of industry as fact rather than opinion.

Not allow

There is another insidious way in which television's need for pictures warps its coverage of industrial affairs. Many firms will not allow you to film on their premises unless they are sure that the comment will be favourable.

How can this situation be remedied?
1. In the short term the unions must put direct pressure on ITV and the BBC by complaining about cases of bias as often as possible. The broadcasting organisations bend to the political winds.

The right wing has always understood this and is good with the telephone call in the right place. Every current-affairs producer in television knows this to his cost. So I hope individual unions and the TUC use the occasion of the ACTT report to complain vigorously.

2. We must fight for the splitting up of BBC News and Current Affairs. I think we must accept that there will

always be biases. The more news outlets we have the more varieties of bias they can contain.

There is certainly a strong case for having a totally separate news service for BBC1 and BBC2 and another one or even two for radio.

3. We must fight for the setting up of elected Broadcasting Councils to put power back into the hands of the viewers where it belongs, to make television our servant, not our master. These councils should open the screen to many more independent voices.

4. The workers in television must take over the industry. The producers, journalists and cameramen can then take responsibility as trade unionists for the programmes they make. At the moment it is too easy for them to dodge that responsibility and shelter behind a higher authority.

But workers' control must not be allowed to degenerate into domination by a small elite of professional communicators. That danger is already only too present.

Workers' control must be a step towards greater democratic control. A new system must be created to heal the growing alienation of the viewer from the programme-maker.

We must build a structure that will allow people to talk freely to one another instead of being talked at by a small elite.

Perhaps we can turn television from a medium of transmission into one of communication. The medium will always be manipulated: what we must ensure is that the people are the manipulators.

Nicholas Garnham is the author, with Joan Bakewell, of *The New Priesthood*, a recently published study of British television - Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, £2.50 (50s).



Gramsci: brilliant contributor to socialist ideas...

ANTONIO GRAMSCI, one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party and one of the most important contributors to marxist theory since Lenin, is only now becoming known to the English speaking world, years after his death in fascist Italy in 1937. Born in Sardinia in 1891, he first became interested in socialism because of the exploitation and abject poverty of the island. But it was not until he won a scholarship to the University of Turin in 1911 and became active in the socialist movement that he grew aware that it was the capitalist system as a whole which exploited both the working class and kept parts of Italy underdeveloped.

In Turin he was impressed by the militancy of a highly organised working class, the most advanced in still predominately agricultural Italy. He joined in the activities of a group of young socialists, most of whom were university students.

They were influenced by Benedetto Croce, the Italian philosopher and by the idealist roots of marxism as they attempted to fight the interpretation of the reformists who thought that the development of capitalism would automatically lead to socialism.

They were interested also in the need to see socialism as concerned with all aspects of man's life and were active in holding cultural discussions with groups of workers.

Gramsci began to write in the socialist press just before the First World War and entered into the debate about how the war should be opposed.

The Italian Socialist Party was the only western social democratic party to oppose the war, but it never went much beyond declaring its opposition. Gramsci wanted a more active position.

After the uprising of the Turin workers in August, 1917 against the lack of bread and the continuation of the war, Gramsci became one of the leaders of the local Socialist Party. He continued his journalistic activity which ranged from political articles to theatre reviews to comments on working class life in Turin.

Translate

He was one of the first to support the Russian Revolution and saw it as an affirmation of the possibility to make history instead of waiting for socialism to come about automatically.

He and a group of young comrades founded a newspaper, Ordine Nuovo (New Order) in the spring of 1919 as part of an attempt to translate the Russian experience into Italian terms.

They were intellectuals but also active militants and they worked to spread the ideas of the factory council movement which had deep roots in the Turin working class tradition.

They also published articles by Lenin and other revolutionary leaders together with reports on international developments such as the shop stewards movement and the British miners strike.

The group around Gramsci and the factory council movement remained quite isolated, however, and both the Turin General Strike of April 1920 and the more general occupation of the factories in September 1920 were defeated.

The leadership of the PSI had done nothing to seize power and Gramsci and his comrades had never fully understood the need for a revolutionary party.

Gramsci had predicted that if the working class were defeated, a terrible reaction would follow. His articles on the class basis of the growing fascist movement were the first to analyse the new phenomenon of fascism and to see it as the tool with which a frightened middle class would try to smash the trade union movement and socialist organisations.

In January 1921 the Italian Communist Party was founded as a minority split from the Socialist Party. Gramsci thought it was a tragedy that only a minority of the organised work-

Marxist voice from a fascist jail

by Anne Shuster

ing class followed the revolutionary leadership.

This tragedy was verified as the Italian CP leaders, including Bordiga and Togliatti, became more and more sectarian and refused to form a united front with other socialist organisations, as called for by Lenin, to fight the mounting fascist menace.

Gramsci was very much in the background at this time and was first in Moscow and then in Vienna from the summer of 1922 to the spring of 1924, when he participated in the debates in the Third International and slowly began to try to form a new leadership to turn the Italian CP away from its sectarian position.

By January 1926, after much debate within the party, debate that was carried on despite the clandestine nature of much of its activities, Gramsci won the leadership.

Important

But it was too late. The back of the working class movement had been broken by a firmly-rooted fascist regime. With Mussolini's 'exceptional laws', Gramsci and other militants were thrown into prison in November, 1926. He was to emerge in broken health and died in a clinic in April 1937.

But despite the inhuman conditions in which he was forced to live and the difficulty he had in obtaining books, the work which Gramsci did in prison in addition to his earlier writings provide one of the most important contributions to the international working class movement.

Asking himself the fundamental question why the revolution had failed and fascism had triumphed, Gramsci examined the basic problems of Italian history which confronted the Italian working class: the lack of a really unified national state or a culture rooted in the people, the predominately agricultural nature of the

country and its exceptionally large lower middle class, and the presence of the Catholic Church.

He went on to try to understand the nature of fragmented consciousness and to see the revolutionary party as the way in which the working class could both organise itself to overthrow the system and to begin to establish a culture of its own in order to break through the domination of middle class ideas.

Marxism, for Gramsci, was a living method with which to understand and change society, and in the notebooks he wrote in prison, he discussed how to analyse different moments and levels in the struggle.

As part of his concern for the way in which the consciousness of the working class is kept fragmented and very much limited ideologically within the system, he discussed how the capitalist state maintained its power through a combination of force and consent. He saw how all types of intellectuals, from school teachers to journalists to civil servants, helped to maintain the ideas of the ruling class.

It was the job of the revolutionary party, which would represent the most advanced elements of the class, to act as a kind of historical memory for the class as a whole and to bring increasing numbers to realise the false nature of the ideology put forward by the capitalist state and its intellectuals.

Remake

Part of this task was to begin to construct a new culture and to see that politics concerned the whole of men's lives. The working class would have to establish its own particular control over society through a socialist revolution, a control different from the capitalist one, based on the fact that it alone had the power to remake society and to solve the problems of all sorts of groups such as the peasantry or the lower middle class.

Gramsci, then, was a revolutionary socialist who used marxism both as an active leader in the revolutionary movement and in prison to understand the capitalist system and to overthrow it.

He posed many of the same questions as Lenin concerning the revolutionary party and consciousness and made new contributions towards an understanding of how the state in capitalist society was able to maintain physical and ideological control.

And despite the greatest deprivations, he made no concessions either to fascist offers of a pardon if he recanted or to Stalinist pressures which isolated him from many comrades in prison because of his unbending opposition to Stalin's 'third period' policies, policies which so closely resembled Bordiga's earlier sectarianism.

Gramsci's work remains a monument to the revolutionary, internationalist tradition of marxism.



Armed workers' guards during the 1920 factory occupations

Tories aim to smash shop floor strength



An interview with **DON COOK**, AUEW convenor, London Transport Acton Works

London Transport workers need links with other public sector workers

THE TORY GOVERNMENT is pressing ahead with its proposed anti-trade union legislation. How would its operation affect the organisation of the factory?

We would be affected in so many ways that it is possible for me to give you only a few examples.

Threatened

In the first place we operate a closed shop inside the works and no one can come in without a trade union card. The Bill would obviously affect us in this vital area, but it is directed mainly against the shop floor organisation, and it is at this level that our struggle to defend and advance the conditions and earnings of our members would be most threatened.

Inevitably there are stoppages in the works over a whole number of issues, ranging from bonus to safety. These are normally short because they

are quickly dealt with through the normal negotiating machinery.

Indeed, many are avoided altogether since the mere threat or possibility of industrial action on the part of the work force is sufficient to bring the management to the negotiating table.

The Bill will not only fail to deal with the basic problems, but by hardening the attitude of management will make for more bitter and drawn-out struggles.

We should not underestimate the serious effect the Bill will have on us. For example, take the work study programme the management are trying to introduce now.

Backed by the Bill, the management could easily deal with our efforts to safeguard the interests of the members.

Last but not least, this is a firm within the public sector. The government has already clearly indicated in the way it has dealt with the council workers, the power men, and now the post office workers that it has made the attack on conditions and wages in the public sector a cornerstone of its economic policies. The Bill will greatly strengthen their hands in this respect.

Do you support the idea of an industrial alliance of the unions in the nationalised industries to counteract the Tory offensive?

Quite obviously we should strive to achieve the greatest unity possible. In London Transport itself we have been fragmented for many years in different philosophies and split in different sections such as the rail-side, the road-side and the depots.

Collective

This has weakened our struggle. Today partly because of rank and file pressure and partly due to the management's own reorganisation and integration at their level of all the various departments, the case has been strongly made for the trade unions to act as a collective, with each section assisting the others when they are involved in dispute.

What do you think should be done to defeat the Bill?

No collaboration is the answer. At the meeting of the works staff against the Bill, for example, a resolution was passed and the management notified that in no way would we accept the

disappearance of the closed shop once the Bill is law.

The AEF nationally has also emphasised that the refusal to register is a fundamental issue. We should insist that no contract should be legally binding.

There should be no dealings whatever with any of the bodies set up by the government to administer the new legislation. We should have nothing to do with these so-called impartial bodies.

It should be made quite clear right now that if any trade unionists are fined or imprisoned, it will be seen as a call for all trade unionists and trade unions to support any action deemed necessary to smash the Bill.

The present industrial struggle in the months preceding the introduction of the Bill is also crucial. In this respect the help which the trade union movement is giving to the postal workers is part and parcel of the struggle against the Bill.

Socialist Worker has emphasised the need to wage the struggle against the Bill at all levels and has called for the formation of Councils of Action in the localities. What do you think of

this call?

I support it. Any step taken to draw together militants in opposition to the Bill must be supported.

The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions has shown the tremendous role that rank and file organisations can play. Councils of Action can make an important contribution.

Militancy

I also think that they should deal — and are particularly suited to deal — with a whole variety of issues: race, rents, prices, etc.

They should be used to oppose all aspects of the present government's attack on the living standards of workers.

To increase the general level of militancy in this period is essential. I cannot see the Bill working.

And therefore I fear that the ruling class will further shift to the right and people like Powell will come to the fore. A greater political awareness is the only guarantee we have that this will not happen.

THE MEANING OF MARXISM

A weekly column by Duncan Hallas



The only way forward: an international strategy

'FOR THE CREATION on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, as well as for the success of the cause itself, it is necessary for men themselves to be changed on a large scale, and this change can only occur in a practical movement, in a revolution. Revolution is necessary not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because only in a revolution can the class which overthrows it rid itself of the accumulated rubbish of the past and become capable of reconstructing society.' — Marx.

This is the essential reason why 'parliamentary roads to socialism' have always proved to be blind alleys. In a capitalist society most of the power is in the hands of the big business bosses. They can't be talked or tricked into giving it up. It has to be taken from them.

This can be done only by working people organised and conscious of their position in society and determined to free themselves, and

the rest of society, by taking power — the power to decide about everything that affects their lives — into their own hands. And they can only become capable of self-government in the course of fighting for it. Participation in parliament may be a useful tactic. It can never be a substitute for direct action.

Rich are richer

We have had quite a lot of experience of 'parliamentary roadism'. Social democratic parties have been in office, at one time or another, in most of the developed capitalist countries except Japan and the USA. In Britain we have had four Labour governments.

The result is that the rich are richer than ever and all the evils of capitalism — intensified competition, meaningless work, head-fixing and manipulation of people, unemployment and increased productivity going hand in hand, growing wealth, growing waste, pollution and growing poverty — are increasing evils. Racial-

ism is rampant. Women are still super-exploited — in January 1971 the average wage of women workers was £13.99 (19 10) per week as compared to £28.4½ (11) for men.

We 'cannot afford' — or so the bosses and their tame mass media tell us — a decent health service, decent housing or a decent educational service. In fact the greater the amount of output the less, apparently, can be afforded for basic social services.

A trivial but significant example. From 1940 till 1969 free milk for all school pupils was the rule. Now, with a vastly greater output than in 1940, it has to be cut out. First by Harold Wilson's 'Labour' government for secondary children then by Heath's Tories for junior children too.

So it is with all the social services. They are even trying to abolish free admission to museums and galleries, something even the Gradgrind capitalists of Victorian Britain managed to afford!

The truth is that we are going backwards in one field after another. Nor can this be simply blamed on the Tory government. In every field, from the decline in public housing to anti-trade union legislation, the Labour government led the way and the Tories have followed in their footsteps.

It is no use blaming this on the 'betrayals' of Wilson and Co. Of course they are traitors but this is not the problem. There are rotten apples in every barrel. When practically the whole social democratic barrel turns out to be rotten there are deeper causes. Reformist policies could never at any time lead to socialism. They could, while the arms boom was flourishing, lead to some reforms.

Not anymore. All the modest gains of the last 30 years are now threatened and they are threatened because the fundamental tendencies of state monopoly capitalism are reasserting themselves. Any government that tries to

keep the system going and at the same time introduce real reforms is doomed. Either it goes out of office or the reforms are junked.

Of course reformism was always based on sectional, purely 'national' policies. They were never realistic but they are less realistic today than ever. We don't live in an island anymore.

We live in a world in which the techniques and resources to give everyone a decent life already exist and in which half the people are on the borderline of starvation. It is a violent world in which the two super-powers, Russia and America, have between them enough thermo-nuclear weapons to wipe out the whole population several times over.

Polluted world

It is a militaristic world in which the military coup leading to dictatorship is now the commonest way of changing a government. It is a polluted world which national economic and military competition threaten to make less and less habitable. Capitalism is international. The giant firms have investments throughout the world and owe no allegiances except to themselves and the system that allows them to plunder the world's resources.

There can be no real socialist organisation that is not based on an international and therefore a revolutionary strategy. Ordinary people everywhere want peace, security, freedom from drudgery, human dignity, a decent life. Yet these things can only be had by the organisation of working people into a decisive force on an international scale.

There are no short cuts. Years ago Marx wrote 'the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself'. Today we can add that the whole future of humanity depends on its success.

This is the last article in the series which will shortly be printed as a pamphlet. Watch out for a new series 'The ABC of Socialism' next week.

Eric Heffer speaks to Socialist Worker



A hard-hitting interview with Labour's spokesman on the Industrial Relations Bill appears in next week's issue

NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN!



'Land is the people's farm'

EVERYONE knows about the Luddites, but fewer people know about the wave of machine breaking and arson that swept the English countryside in the first decades of the 19th century.

'Captain Swing at the Penny Gaff' which opened last week at Unity Theatre, London, tells the story of the wave of protest against the terrible oppression of agricultural workers.

A series of Enclosures Acts had, by the 1820s, made the English peasantry virtually extinct and had created in its place a vast army of agricultural labourers who did not work their own land but were employed for pitifully low wages by big tenant farmers who in turn leased their land from enormously wealthy landowners.

The galloping inflation that followed the Napoleonic Wars ate into the value of the already tiny wages of the agricultural labourers and the introduction of the reaping machine led to wide-scale unemployment.

Faced with starvation, farmworkers throughout the country began to rebel. Reaping machines were destroyed, farmers known to be harsh employers found their hay ricks burnt in the night and received letters warning them to mend their ways — letters signed by Captain Swing. Although, like Ned Ludd, Captain Swing probably never existed, his name struck terror into large tenant farmers and landowners in the early 1830s.

Terrible results

It would have been only too easy for the authors of Captain Swing at the Penny Gaff (Paul Thompson, with Bertram Edwards and Arthur Duncan) to have presented this story as a rather indigestible piece of 'social realist' documentary. Thankfully, however, they have avoided the temptation to do a bit of sanctimonious preaching, while successfully showing the terrible results of the mindless anarchy of capitalism.

They do this by making a 'play within a play'. The whole of the second act is presented as a music hall (or 'penny gaff') featuring a group of itinerant actors performing a play entitled 'The Labourer's Discontent'.

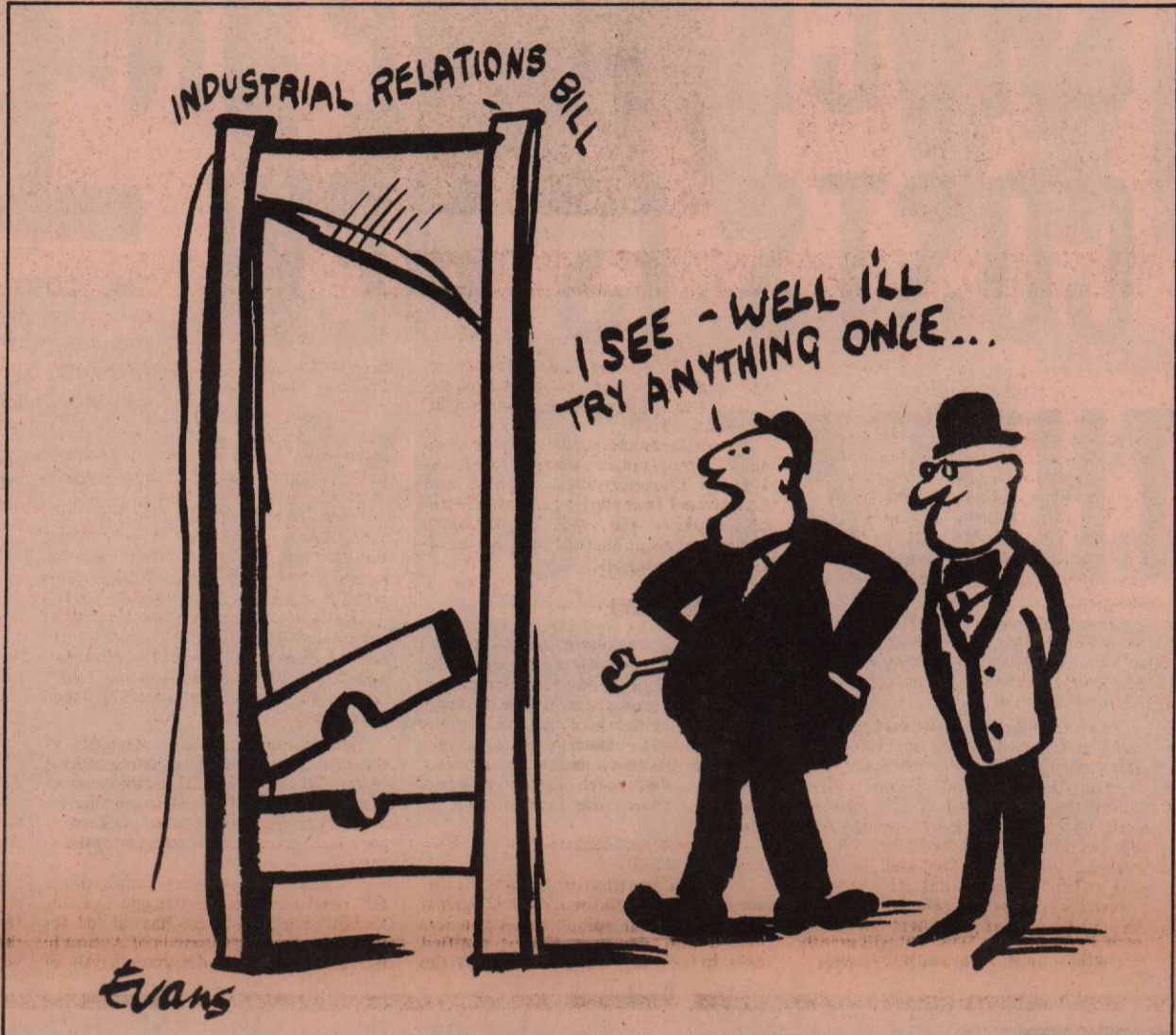
It is this play within a play that rams home the political message of Captain Swing along with some very good songs and two of the funniest villains I have seen since Macmillan and Khrushchev retired.

Political plays seem to be enjoying a limited popularity at the moment among the trendies of NW1. But political plays with a bit of bite, with lines like 'the land is the people's farm', still remain very rare.

Plays like Close the Coalhouse Door that are immensely entertaining while putting across a powerful political message are even rarer. Captain Swing is such a rarity.

Sean Thompson

The play will be performed every Friday, Saturday and Sunday until 28 March. Tickets, 40p (8s) are available from Unity Theatre, 1 Goldington Street NW1, 387 8647. Reductions for block bookings.



COTTONS COLUMN

THE pig-sty press was disappointed at the complete lack of violence on Sunday's mammoth demo against the Bill. What they don't understand is that there was no need for violence.

With 140,000 workers on the streets, the police respectfully kept their place, slinking in side streets, attempting thin smiles at the slogans and jokes from the assembled hordes.

Paper sellers did a roaring trade in Hyde Park and the police made no effort to point out that it is a 'royal' park and such selling is illegal. Had it been a small student affair, there would have been considerable hobbled aggro and many arrests.

But what self-respecting copper is going to mix it with a South Wales miner, a Geordie boilermaker or, least of all, a buxom Wigan weaver?

At Marble Arch underground station, the flood of trade unionists en route for the park forced the authorities to reverse the down escalator. Up moved the workers in mechanised comfort while the Park Lane bourgeoisie, banned from their cars for the afternoon, were forced to use the old-fashioned stairs as they scurried away from the unnerving sight of the people who provide their wealth and flashy opulence.

It was a pleasing symbol, the shape of things to come.

On the march, the colourful union branch banners, many of them decades old, contrasted with clever improvised posters: Don't be a Fair Deal Serf, You need unions, Jack (on a background of the Union Jack), Only the wages of sin would be safe, So this is our Better Tomorrow and — no doubt from the Association of Pest Destroyers — Hands off our



CROSSMAN: Crux of the matter

lousy unions.

On television, a union banner obscured part of the official slogan draped across the platform in Trafalgar Square, shortening it to '...ck injustice'. What could it say? Surely not... no, not the General Council.

OUTSIDE Liverpool football stadium, a Socialist Worker seller, nearer to five feet than six, was suddenly pounced on by an irate soccer fan who ripped up the proffered paper then clubbed the unfortunate vendor to the ground.

Half a dozen more fans jumped from the crowd and set about our hero's attacker. As the dust settled, one middle-aged man emerged from the melee, adjusted his trilby, helped the seller to his feet and said, 'We marxists must stick together.'

Pensioned off

IN last week's New Statesman, Crux, who writes the London Diary, advised his readers to note an article in the magazine Political Quarterly that demolishes the belief that income

tax hits the wealthy and doesn't hurt those below the poverty line.

Says Crux: 'During the last year or two it is those below the poverty line who have been hardest hit by taxation... whenever they do manage to increase their earnings by £1 or £2 a week they find that 80 to 90 per cent of the increase goes as a result of increased tax, national insurance and the loss of exemption from means-tested benefits.'

'What an irony,' says Crux, 'that we should have achieved a system under which the tax raised to relieve poverty actually causes it.'

And what an irony that Crux is the pen-name of New Statesman editor Richard Crossman, government overlord for the social services in the last Labour government and responsible for tax and welfare policies.

LYNDON B JOHNSON (remember him?), now a wealthy Texan farmer, has just bought the most expensive pig ever sold: £14,000 worth of pork, from Midland Industries Inc, a swine-testing station at new Hampton, Iowa.

Blessed are...

A NEW BOOK, The Vatican Finances reveals that His Holiness has a little less than £46,000m invested in a variety of industries, including luxury hotels on the Spanish Riviera, the major European manufacturer of machine guns and a chemicals firm that makes the contraceptive pill and sells it behind the Iron Curtain.

He won't go short of loaves and fishes in his old age.



WHO makes history: kings and queens, a handful of enlightened individuals, or the clash of social forces, workers and capitalists, slave-owner and slaves, landowner and serfs?

The education system and the communications industry both sustain the idea that working people are the mere playthings of history and have no role in changing the world.

Consciously or not, such an attitude is a vital weapon in the hands of the ruling class. If workers can be force-fed the idea that running society is the task of the educated few it will be easier to keep them in their 'place'.

Consciously or not, the overwhelming majority of television programmes rub this message in. Two much-discussed series, Elizabeth R and Civilisation, both excellent in their way, are no exception to this rule.

Elizabeth R, now showing on BBC2 on Wednesdays, follows the highly-successful Six Wives of Henry VIII. Carefully documented, well written and magnificently acted, the plays catch the intrigue and back-stabbing of the Tudor court as the various factions of the ruling class fought for supremacy.

The trouble is that Tudor England is just the court. We rarely leave the cloisters. There is no feel of the masses, how they felt, how they lived and worked. They are reduced to the occasional stock walk-on character, the forelock tugging, 'god bless yer, yer majesty' peasant.

Similarly, the rising capitalist class hardly figures. They had their court mouthpieces, but the religious smokescreen covers their real ambitions.

Of course, drama is never history in its entirety and the demands of the medium necessarily replace large numbers of people with spokesmen or figure-heads. It is the choice of figure-heads that I am complaining about.

What exciting viewing the Peasants' Revolt of the 13th century would make, or the inspiring struggle to form trade unions in the last century against savage repression.

Bestowed

If your immediate reaction to those suggestions is: that's politics, ask yourself what Elizabeth R is really about.

The re-run of Kenneth Clark's Civilisation series (BBC1, Tuesdays) takes us into the arena of the committed reactionary. Lord Clark is an elitist, confirmed in his view that art and beauty alone constitute civilisation and that they are bestowed on the world by a self-perpetuating class of elegant people fighting a rearguard action against the ugly and illiterate masses.

Lord Clark's aim, he says in the Radio Times, is to give us one hero per programme, as people do like heroes. Especially if we can choose them, sir.

He meanders down the centuries, showing us the undoubted contributions that painting, sculpture and architecture have made to the western world. His views are not unpolitical: pointing to a Roman aqueduct in southern France, he blandly informs us that only a 'well-ordered and disciplined society' could produce such towering beauty.

The trouble is that it is sometimes hard to see the objects of his joy: for always in the foreground is the same tweedy figure with the precise hectoring voice. It is a fascinating but infuriating series. As we are allowed no say in the programmes presented for us, it is nice both to enjoy something and passionately dislike the presenter.

David East

Socialist Worker

Ford strikers rattle bosses

TWO MEETINGS in Halewood this week showed that the Ford strikers are more determined than ever to stay out for parity.

On Sunday, at a meeting of 800 workers from the transmission plant, cries of 'Not till Christmas' went up when the platform asked when they should meet again. Finally, a resolution from the platform, calling for a meeting in three weeks' time, was carried.

On Monday, at Liverpool Stadium, 8000 workers from all three plants in Halewood, decided to meet again on

10 March, after they were addressed by Moss Evans, TGWU and Reg Birch of the AUEW.

Ford's propaganda machine changed into a new gear on Tuesday with the announcement that a £30m engine plant had been directed away from Britain by Ford of America.

Ford have a habit of announcing such things when they are involved in a strike. Many Ford workers will remember that during the 1969 stoppage the management claimed that £38m in investment was being redirected from

Britain.

During the present strike there have been expensive newspaper advertisements containing distorted average wage rates. Labour boss Bob Ramsey has made wild claims about Dagenham going the same way as Rolls-Royce at Derby.

Tuesday's announcement shows how rattled the bosses are by the magnificent solidarity of the workers at every Ford plant in Britain.

Shop floor leaders speak: page 3.

UPW needs solidarity action

by Dave Percival

THE FIVE-WEEK OLD postal dispute involving more than 200,000 workers, has become the biggest struggle in terms of days lost through strike action since the war.

For this reason, a defeat would be a serious blow to all workers fighting the Tory offensive. But with each day that passes, the danger is growing of the postal workers being isolated by the Tories.

The bosses' government is determined to put up with the tremendous disruption in order to defeat the efforts by public industry workers to keep up with the rising cost of living.

It is clear that financial aid is not enough. The strike must be spread to the Post Office Engineers and the railwaymen whose own position will be very weak if the UPW is defeated.

Tom Jackson has claimed that this is not a political strike, and this has given Lord Delacourt-Smith (POEU) and Sir Sidney Greene (NUR) an excuse for doing nothing. If Jackson is serious about winning he must call for sympathetic action from these workers, even in the face of opposition from the lords and knights in the trade union movement.

Thursday's solidarity strike by the London region of the POEU shows that rank and file support for the UPW is not lacking.

The UPW has reduced their claim to 13 per cent although the cost of living is increasing more rapidly than ever. It is reported that the executive are in favour of the Labour Party policy of a court of inquiry. This is hardly different from arbitration and would almost certainly involve productivity being dragged into the issue.

It is clear from the reply to the claims of teachers and railwaymen this week that the Tories are continuing the attack on public industry workers. The fight for an alliance of the unions in these industries grows more vital.

SHOCK JUMP IN LIVING COSTS IS NEW THREAT TO PAY

by JOHN SETTERS

THE COST OF LIVING is rising faster than ever. Last Saturday the Department of Employment announced that the index of retail prices had risen by two points between December and January. During November to December it rose by one point.

These increases are nearly double the rate of increase reported in January of last year and it seems likely that the situation will continue to get worse. The cost of petrol has just been increased again for the fourth time in the last eight months. This will clearly result in higher transport charges.

The switch to decimal currency has led to many food prices being 'adjusted' upwards. On Monday British Rail confirmed that, for the third time in 12 months, fares will shortly be increased. In March these will rise by 25 per cent for passenger services in the Southern, Western, Eastern and London Midland regions.

Against this background, the Tories' policy of trying to hold down wages will result in workers suffering the equivalent of pay cuts.

Last year the cost of living rose by about 11 per cent. In order just to keep pace with this as well as paying the extra taxation that results from any pay rise it is clear that on last year's figures alone, wage increases of between 16 to 20 per cent are needed to avoid an actual decline in the standard of living.

The battle for higher wages has nothing to do with 'greed'. Unless workers succeed in winning pay rises their standards of living will fall while the profits of big business will rise.



Trafalgar Square on 21 February: a huge audience listened to the TUC speakers at the foot of Nelson's Column

NOTICES

SAVE ANGELA DAVIS march on Sunday: from South Bank, Festival Hall, at 5.30pm to Grosvenor Square.

AUEW 1 March strike: Demonstration on Monday from Lincoln's Inn Fields, 11am to Speakers Corner, Hyde Park for mass mtg.

SOUTH LONDON IS: John Palmer on Struggle for Socialism, Sunday 28 February 8pm William Morris Hall, Wimbledon Bdw. IS London branch secretaries mtg: Saturday 6 March, 2.30pm, 6 Cottons Gdns E2.

NO PASSAGE FOR THIS BILL - STUC. All Scotland demo in Glasgow on Sunday 7 March. IS assemble John St., 1.45pm.

STOKE NEWINGTON IS: public meeting on Nationalisation - Why Rolls-Royce? Spkr: Sabby Sagall. 8pm Monday 1 March, Rose & Crown pub, (upstairs room), cnr Church St/Albion Rd N16. Bus: 73.

WANDSWORTH IS public meeting at The Spotted Dog, 72 Garrett Lane, nr Wandsworth Town Hall, 8pm Thursday 11 March Valerie Clark on Poverty and the Welfare State.

Poly students start sit-in

STUDENTS at North West Polytechnic, London, started an indefinite occupation of the main administration building in Kentish Town on Tuesday as a protest against the appointment of Professor Terence Miller as director-designate of the new North London Polytechnic.

The students consider Professor Miller unsuitable because of his dubious record in the racist regime in Rhodesia. A similar occupation was due to begin on Friday at Northern Polytechnic.

The students regard their action as a test-case for the gains made in recent years for student participation. Other colleges throughout the country are asked to take solidarity action through sit-ins, collections, etc. Messages of support should be phoned to 01-267 3355.

NO SELLOUT - TEACHERS

by Duncan Hallas NUT

120 members of the National Union of Teachers from many parts of the country attended a conference called by the militant paper Rank and File last Saturday at a critical stage in teachers' pay negotiations.

Progress in the fight against the Industrial Relations Bill was discussed and it was reported that a number of the big key local associations had voted for the Rank and File inspired motion for the NUT annual conference that calls on the union to refuse to register or co-operate in any way if the legislation goes through.

The motion came twelfth in the voting for priority motions at the conference and the matter is certain to be debated at Scarborough.

Reports on the work of Rank and File supporters came from London, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle and methods of strengthening the journal and its influence were discussed.

WARNING

On pay, the conference decided to issue immediately a leaflet warning of the danger of a sell-out and putting four demands:

1. A special salaries conference of the union to decide future policy and action.
2. All available money for the basic scale.
3. Complete rejection of the employers' 'restructuring' proposals.
4. No co-operation in arbitration - required by law in the event of a breakdown of

negotiations.

The employers' offer of 8.8 per cent was conditional on the acceptance of restructuring. So was their later 9.7 per cent 'without prejudice' offer that has now been withdrawn.

The union's negotiators have withdrawn the union claim without authority from the members and substituted a demand for 15 per cent on the present pay structure.

The employers have refused so far to offer a penny on that basis. Restructuring - the creation of five separate scales of pay - is vital to the employers as a long-term means of depressing the pay of those teachers - about half the total - on the present basic scale.

It would splinter the union into feuding groups. The smaller sectional unions - NAS, AMA, Headteachers - have already surrendered on this vital issue. NUT militants are calling on all members to demand that the executive stop a complete capitulation.

MARCH BACKS STRIKERS

FIFTY trade unionists from NW London took part in a march and meeting at Laricot Plastics, Harlesden, last Friday in solidarity with 32 AUEW strikers who have been out for eight weeks. The strikers are demanding the reinstatement of six men, including the shop steward.

The police have harassed the strikers throughout the dispute. 12 arrested pickets were fined £10 each last week.

Roche joins Irish political prisoners

by Brian Trench

IN THE CS-gas trial that ended at the Old Bailey last week, Frank Roche - who threw the gas in the House of Commons - was found guilty on two charges of possession and conspiracy. He was sentenced to 12 months and 18 months, to run concurrently.

Bowes Egan, charged with conspiracy, was found not guilty and discharged. As Roche had been found guilty, his sentence could hardly have been lighter.

The schemes of Chief Supt. Reynolds were foiled not by the course of justice but by the evident desire of the political and judicial establishment to play down the trial. It came at a time when the military commanders in Northern Ireland had decided against further use of CS gas. It would have been an unnecessary embarrassment to have had the CS issue raised again.

Misfired

Reynolds' attempt to stage-manage a show-trial misfired when his efforts to prove Egan a conspirator collapsed.

Although it is unlikely to set a precedent, it was 'helpful' that first the defence counsel and then the judge recognised that judgments on the action must take account of 'sincere, political motives'.

Roche now becomes one of the near-20 Irish political prisoners in British jails. He, and the others, should not be forgotten. We must continue to demand his release, precisely because we take those political motives seriously.

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