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T U ACTION CAN GET HIGHER WAGES NOW Productivity up, Profits up – Bosses Can Pay

By our Industrial Correspondent

ALL current demands for more wages can be won. On their own admission the employers never had it so good; and not only in the City of London. The great lesson of the American steel strike is that the men won substantial demands from Wall Street where big business has also been enjoying high profits.

The Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions have wisely decided to press for wage increases as well as a reduction of hours to the 40-hour week. However, it is claimed by informed circles that this request by Mr. Carron is a bargaining counter to gain a small concession from the employers who have offered the 42½-hour week. If this is the case then it should be roundly condemned by all engineering workers.

The cost of living has increased, but during 1959 wage increases were slower than at any time since the end of the wage-freeze. Sales of engineering products like motor cars have been booming. Millions of pounds have been ploughed back into such industries in order to increase productivity, yet the engineering worker has had no increase of importance since 1957. Carron should be told plainly that he has either to fight or the rank and file will go it alone. No other section of the working class is as well organized with its shop stewards' committees as the engineers. A powerful rank-and-file movement in the engineering industry today would quickly by-pass Carron and force the engineering bosses to give way as the steel employers did in the United States.

London railworkers can also win

Mr. Greene of the N.U.R. has criticized London members of his union for calling for a 24-hour token stoppage to press their pay claim. What will eventually happen to Mr. Greene is a matter of concern only to members of his own union, but it

has been fairly obvious since he took the high office of general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen that he has not the slightest ability to win anything substantial for his members. London rail workers are to be congratulated for their initiative.

However, it will require more than a 24-hour stoppage to force the government to grant concessions to the railwaymen. The lesson of the London bus strike was that where you have a divided transport industry then the employers always stand to gain. The Central Bus Committee of the Transport and General Workers' Union has forced a demand for a wage increase through the union. Now is the time for London rail and bus workers to stand together. There should be immediate liaison between the Central Bus Committee and the London rail workers. On the day of the token strike the front must be solid.

If one stops all should stop. This is the only way a real victory in the wage struggle can be won.

TRAGEDY AT BARTON BRIDGE TWO CEU MEMBERS DIE

By HARRY RATNER

On Wednesday, December 30th, two spidermen hurtled to their deaths as a girder toppled from the high-level Barton Bridge being erected over the Manchester Ship Canal. This brought the death roll on the job to six. Four men were killed in an accident last February. At an inquiry held after the February disaster the scaffolding construction was criticised.

The alarm and anger of Manchester spidermen at this new tragedy was expressed by Eddie Marsden, Chairman of the Manchester Branch of the Constructional Engineering Union. "This accident would not have happened if the men who knew the conditions of the job had not been sacked and had been allowed to continue it."

In conversation with spidermen it became clear that they cannot dissociate these new deaths from the sacking of 96 steel erectors two weeks previously.

The main contractors, George Dew of Oldham, had just terminated the sub-contract for steel erecting given to Samuel Butler & Co., of Leeds, and had given it to a new firm, United Steel Structural Co., of Scunthorpe.

The contractors' explanation, widely blazoned across the pages of the Press, was that work on the contract had been held up by 'exorbitant pay demands' and other disputes. 'They are asking for the moon' was the comment of one boss's spokesman. The Press with its usual concern to build

up anti-trade union and anti-worker sentiment splashed stories about the 'fabulous' earnings of £30 to £50 a week enjoyed by the workers. One paper even quipped that a special car park had had to be built to accommodate the workers' cars.

A spiderman with 15 years at the game said to me in disgust, 'Some of these b— —s who print and lap up this stuff wouldn't do what we have to do for £100 a week. They treat us just as they treat the miners. When there's a pit disaster everybody's sorry, but when the miners ask for a wage increase it's another story.'

Another steel erector added 'What this proves is we've got to insist from the start of each job on proper safety regulations.'

The death roll in steel erection is the highest in industry in proportion to the number employed. Bro. Patterson, General Secretary of the C.E.U., has stated that last year they

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AMERICAN STEEL-WORKERS' VICTORY

ON January 6 the leading United States steel companies agreed to a new contract which means an increase of 39 cents (about 2s. 9d.) per hour. More important, the employers had previously provoked the great strike of 1959 on the grounds that no increase could be discussed without a revision of 'work rules'. This meant in fact an attack on trade union shop practices and organization to facilitate speed-up and increased exploitation. In the new contract, the bosses have had to drop this demand, and the wage increase is virtually unconditional.

Developments in the economy and in the class struggle in the United States are of great importance to the British and European labour movement. Not only is our economy closely bound up with that of the United States ('when the U.S. sneezes, Britain catches pneumonia'), but the strength of the American working class is a crucial force in the international struggle against capitalism and war.

From this point of view, there is a number of very significant factors in the steel settlement. The Taft-Hartley Act, an employers' measure to help them defeat striking workers, was used to send the steel strikers back for the 'cooling-off' period of 80 days. Every attempt was made to starve out the steelmen, but by September the bosses in other industries demanded that their government invoke the Act. Naturally they hoped that the return to work after a strike lasting many months would demoralize the workers and weaken their resistance.

But the end of the cooling-off period in January brought every prospect of a renewal of the strike, and the capitalist State, via Mr. Nixon as leading negotiator, intervened in its role of arbiter on behalf of the interests of the employing class as a whole. The steel employers would no doubt have preferred a complete showdown, but as The Guardian of January 5 pointed out: 'There has been growing apprehension recently lest a resumption of the steel strike should halt the industrial recovery and throw the entire American economy into disarray. Business men have been ruefully counting the cost of the prolonged steel famine, which turns out to have been much heavier than was at first thought.'

● **Barton Bridge**(Continued from front page)

had 43 deaths, 30 the year before.

There was also criticism among Manchester C.E.U. members at the failure of their Executive to **immediately** black the job when the 96 local spidermen were sacked. True, the C.E.U. Executive did black the job but only after the disaster. The C.E.U. men feel that the cancellation of the Butler's contract and the taking over of the work by the new firm from Scunthorpe, accompanied by the sacking of the 96 local men and the bringing in of the Scunthorpe firm's own men was a thinly disguised attempt to break down the trade union organisation built up, and to worsen conditions. 'If not, why did the new firm bring their own men instead of keeping on the local men who'd worked the job right from the beginning and were familiar with the conditions,' argued Bro. Wright, the sacked men's convener. There have been no stoppages of

However, the steel bosses are well-known for using wage increases as the excuse for boosting steel prices. Of course, steel is such a basic commodity that an inflationary spiral is almost inevitable. This will be helped along by a round of wage demands encouraged by the steelmen's victory. We hear a lot nowadays about the State's ability to regulate the economy. But will the Federal Reserve authorities set about restricting credit in an election year? Mr. Nixon's part in settling the strike is no doubt expected to win votes for him in the Presidential elections. The same political considerations which influenced the settlement of the strike might also prevent the decisions necessary to halt inflation!

Once again the contradictions within capitalism show through. Certainly the increasing role of the State in economic and class-struggle decisions enables temporary solutions to be found more easily than in the old laissez-faire capitalism. But these decisions often pile up problems for the future whose solution will not be so simple.

This strike has been a trial of strength. Even with a leadership which accepts capitalism lock, stock and barrel, the steelmen have rolled back the employers. The government tried every formula short of encouraging a severe slump or indulging in direct repression before taking its political decision to bring peace.

During a period of boom and prosperity, the State may step in successfully in those disputes where an ultimate arbiter is required between highly concentrated employers' associations and well-organized trade unions. But once such a three-fold relationship is placed in the context of economic recession the question is raised of who controls the State. The working class of the U.S.A. has much more to lose than it had in the 1930's; it will take only a relatively minor decline in their standards to provoke a big explosion, and we can expect political developments in the near future which correspond to the outstanding industrial militancy of many sections of U.S. labour.

This, of course, is the haunting fear of the Republican and Democrat politicians. It is largely their dread of the rise of a Labour Party representing the American working class that makes them so sensitive in an election year. But the formation of an American Labour Party will bear little resemblance to its counterpart in Britain. Just as the C.I.O. was founded out of mass action of a new kind in the giant plants of the modern American city, so the American Labour Party will be a worthy opponent of the concentration of capital's power in the modern centralized and militarized State.

work on the job since last April and all differences have been settled by negotiation at site level.

Constructional engineering workers, and in fact, all building workers must take warning from these events. Is the new tactic of the employers going to be to blackmail workers who insist on adequate wages for risking their lives, by terminating and altering sub-contracts? Finally the Barton disasters underline the lessons of Shell-Mex and other sites where workers have fought for the establishment of workers' safety inspectors and adequate safeguards.

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**WHAT IS MARXIST THEORY FOR?**

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(SOME ANTI-LABOUR TENDENCIES—1)**MORAL REARMAMENT EXPOSED**By **BOB PENNINGTON**

The first of two articles on 'Moral Re-Armament' deals with the supporters and finance of this organization. Next week's will show how Moral Re-Armament operates in the Trade Union movement.

According to Moral Re-Armament, 'where God guides, He provides.' If so, the good Lord will require plenty of well-placed investments to do all the providing M.R.A. requires.

With headquarters in 12 countries—their London office is in swanky Hay's Mews, Mayfair—M.R.A. is extremely wealthy. Its brainwashing centre at the Mountain Hotel, Caux, Switzerland, costs over £1,300 a day to run. It also owns the Hotel Maria and the Grand Hotel at Caux.

Militant shop stewards, socialists, communists and trade union officials are regularly offered free jaunts to Switzerland and the Mackinac M.R.A. centre in America. There, they live expense free in the most lavish and sumptuous surroundings. Mountain Hotel, with its sweeping panorama on to the Swiss Alps and beautiful Lake Geneva, is a gourmet's delight. The hotel's cellars are plentifully stocked with the best of foods; donated by considerate industrialists. The V.I.P.s' dining room provides guests with silver service.

**Accounts strictly private**

Some years ago a Scottish business man presented M.R.A. with the Westminster Theatre—a gift that is estimated to have sliced his bank account by £132,500.

In contrast to its open-handedness with 'God's provisions,' M.R.A. keeps a tight grip on its financial records. Their accounts are strictly private and not available for public inspection. Nor does M.R.A. publish financial statements.

No wonder. Despite all its blarney about 'uniting all men above their differences of class, race and nation,' M.R.A. is in business to maintain private enterprise. Mr. Buchman's real providers are the industrialists. Employers see M.R.A. as a good, sound, investment. The company that M.R.A. keeps and the record of its activities, demonstrate that.

**Associates of M.R.A.**

Ever since its founder, American-born, 82-year-old Frank Buchman, formed the Oxford Group—M.R.A.'s forerunner—he has worked with the most reactionary and anti-working class elements.

Pre-war, Buchman was an admirer of Hitler. Arriving in New York on August 26, 1936, he told reporters: 'I thank heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler.'

Tom Driberg related in the House of Commons debate of July 5, 1946, how Buchman used to say to English visitors to Germany: 'You ought to know Heinrich. He is a great lad.'

That was in 1936, when for three years Heinrich Himmler's Gestapo had been herding thousands of trade unionists and Jews into concentration camps.

**No change**

Have Buchman and his crew changed in the post-war years? Hardly. Amongst their supporters they now number Premier Kishi of Japan, a minister of Commerce and Industry in the Japanese war-time government. Another enthusiast of M.R.A. is Mr. Sumitomo. Employer of over half a million textile workers, Sumitomo is known as 'the Japanese Rockefeller.' Members of the powerful Mitsui combine and the Shibusawa family, both long-time exploiters of Japanese labour and supporters of Japanese militarism are chums of Buchman.

Felixberto Seranno, Foreign Secretary of the Philippines, recently presided over a meeting of the South East Asia Treaty

Organizations and then went to an M.R.A. Assembly. 'Guns and God' is presumably Seranno's motto.

Shah of the Persians, Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, is claimed to subscribe to the M.R.A. creed. Persia with a population of 18,994,821 has 159 hospitals with 11,000 beds. Only 40 per cent. of the population are literate. Yet this believer in 'absolute unselfishness' spent £20,000 on his third wife's diamond-studded wedding gown.

Chiang Kai-shek and his former military commander-in-chief, General Ho Ying-chin are two other adherents of M.R.A.

Dr. Adenauer has sent messages of support to M.R.A. In 1953, the German Republic conferred the Order of Merit on Buchman. Perhaps Buchman may be embarrassed about his pre-war eulogizing of Hitler, but he has never been known to criticize Adenauer's penchant for surrounding himself with ex-Nazis.

One of Adenauer's Ministers without Portfolio was Robert Tillmans, a one-time private secretary to the notorious Nazi, Friedrich Flick. A close personal aide of Adenauer is Robert Pferdmeiges, a man who made his fortune by 'aryanizing' the Jewish Cologne Banking House of Oppenheim.

**A friend of Henry Ford**

Buchman received his first invite to California from multi-millionaire, William W. Manning, president of the Manning coffee and restaurant chain. An old buddy of Buchman was strike-busting, union-hating Henry Ford.

Harry Truman, ex-president of the U.S.A. and once the protégé of racketeer Tom Prendergast is a proudly publicized appreciator of M.R.A.'s work.

Nixon, America's Vice-President, and Senator Mundt were co-authors of an anti-Civil Rights Bill that was so vile even the American Congress would not stomach it. However, along with General Douglas MacArthur they are known to be admirers of M.R.A.'s four absolutes—'love, unselfishness, purity and honesty.'

Included in the M.R.A. clan in Britain is James Haworth, once a member of the Labour Party executive. Addressing an M.R.A. gathering in France, Haworth said: 'If we British had not been so bound up in ourselves and our attitudes of superiority, we could have created a spirit of friendship with General de Gaulle.'

**Friends together**

Like his fellow Labour Party members, M.P.s MacGovern and Oswald, Haworth finds no difficulty in rubbing shoulders at M.R.A. sessions with John S. Craig, secretary of the £20 million concern of Colvilles Steel. Investment banker Stanley Hoar, James Coltart, managing director of Kemsley Newspapers Ltd., Tory M.P.'s Patrick Wolridge Gordon and Sir Hamilton Kerr are other M.R.A. fans that McGovern and Oswald consort with.

In France, General Jean Valluy, N.A.T.O.'s Central European commander, and General Edward Jouhand, Chief of Staff of the French Air Force agree with M.R.A. Buchman's statement that 'the only sure victory lies in the compelling answer backed by the sure right arm of military control' must have assured the two generals that M.R.A.'s principles still do not exclude imperialist generals from earning a living.

The above are the advocates and spokesmen for M.R.A.—employers, Fascist politicians, militarists, Tory statesmen and extreme Right-wing Labour leaders.

**(To be continued.)**

## HAS CAPITALISM CHANGED?

By TOM KEMP

**(This is the second part of a discussion between a worker (Q) and his friend, a Marxist economist, who has explained so far the way that capitalism is a system of exploitation of the worker for profit. This is true whatever the apparent differences between pre-war days and the contemporary scene.)**

**Q.** But I still don't see how you fit in all the improvements that have been made. When I listen to the old man telling about his hard times in the thirties, or to the old-timers who tell us what wages and conditions were like in **their** young days, it does seem that capitalism has been responsible for many benefits. There was something in the Tory claim that you'd never had it so good.

**A.** Well now, you are asking for rather a lot all at once. We shall take up much of our later discussions explaining what has happened. Marxists anyhow have never denied that capitalism has brought about a vast development of the productive forces. They do also say however that the capitalist system has outlived its usefulness, that it cannot ensure that new inventions are used rationally or fully or for the good of mankind, that it cannot raise men to their full dignity as human beings. Indeed the continued existence of capitalism has now become a menace to humanity.

**Q.** Well, that's all pretty general. I could accept it in principle but it still has to be backed up by argument.

**A.** That is quite so. We can't settle all problems at once; indeed we don't claim to have all the answers. I think we might look at this question of higher living standards. First, human productivity has risen, and the workers have had to fight for these higher levels. And even so, the workers' share in what is produced has not risen, it seems. Further, these higher levels are now built into the situation; they are now necessary. To carry on under the strain of modern working conditions and modern life in general, the workers intake of food, his education, his leisure and conditions of life have to be different from those of workers a century ago. Those workers couldn't do a modern worker's job on their old level of wages and conditions.

Second, this has not been a uniform movement. Periods of improvement have been followed by depressions and no one should neglect the tremendous human and material costs of the series of wars into which capitalism has plunged mankind. All this must be included in the balance sheet.

Finally, capitalism is an international system. If we take into consideration the wage levels of the backward capitalist countries and colonies the world average is very much below that prevailing in privileged countries like Britain.

**Q.**—That still leaves me unsatisfied on certain points. On the post-war situation, for example. But I do agree that the intensity of work seems to go on increasing. It is certainly a strain, too, for many of the lads who are up to the neck in H.P. payments and rent or mortgage charges; it's like being on a treadmill with more than half the pay packet dead money. How far do you think that further gains are possible within the system?

**A.**—That depends on many factors. In general terms the possibilities are set by the nature of the system itself. For one thing, as we shall see later, it is a system subject to ups and downs and generates drives to expansion and aggression. But even in the ups what can be won within the system is limited. While the demand for labour power is high, because surplus value can be realised comparatively easily, concessions can be won, but it is a condition of production that profits must be made; employers will resist inroads into their profits. Of course some of the fruits of technical progress will be reaped in the shape of new and better consumer goods. On the other hand the displacement of workers by new techniques will spread. It seems certain that capitalism will be unable

to automate without throwing the burden on the working class. And that is just an aspect of the system. It does not exist to satisfy human wants. It exists to make profits for the owners of the means of production through extracting surplus value from the workers. Turn capitalist relations whichever way you will, their essential nature remains the same through all the changes in form which have occurred.

**Q.**—But what has been happening to capitalism since the war? After all, there do seem to have been some remarkable changes and we can no longer point to two million unemployed as a mark of its failure. Why has there been 'you've never had it so good' prosperity?

**A.**—Once again you want a lot all at once; let us try to sum it up as concisely as possible. Basically we have seen the working out of tendencies in capitalism which have been visible for a century or more—such as the growth of monopoly, the rise of giant firms, a closer tie-up between the State and business. These processes were accelerated by the Second World War. They are changes in line with the nature of the system, not alien to it, and necessary for its survival—such as nationalisation and social concessions to the working class. The central feature of capitalism remains intact: only the forms in which it works itself out have altered. If you don't see this, you get an entirely false impression of the changes.

**Q.**—I think I see the point as far as the power of big business is concerned, or about the State looking after the welfare of the bosses. But full employment and prosperity do exist— isn't capitalism working better and solving its problems?

**A.**—Many right-wingers—or even lefts—are very impressed by this and draw comforting conclusions about gradual reforms being all that is necessary. Some have become reconciled to capitalism and it is dishonest for them to pretend otherwise. Others just misunderstand the situation. Let me try to give you my assessment.

Clearly capitalism has done what many socialists in the '30's believed was impossible. It has been able to expand for a long period and the expected post-war slump did not take place. Why is this?

In the first place the long pre-war period of stagnation and depression left big openings for profitable investment. The war gave the boost which was necessary. Hefty profits were made during the war, and war destruction left further big gaps which invited large-scale investment, this time with the State playing a powerful role. Remember, however, that after the war capitalism in a number of countries outside the U.S.A. was on its knees. The whole international trading system was in ruins. The colonial world was aflame.

The capitalist ruling class was demoralised, discredited, its confidence shaken, its fear of the working class at its height. With correct policies and leadership the workers could have overthrown the system and we might now be discussing the problems of socialist planning.

Things didn't happen that way. Labour and Communist Parties now turned themselves to rebuilding the economy. Not only that, the Labour Government's methods of salvaging capitalism discredited socialism in the eyes of many people.

**Q.**—So if capitalism survived the war in Europe it was because the reformists and the Communist Parties propped it up rather than through its own virtues?

**A.**—Yes, though there were other factors such as U.S. aid, and I would like to talk about these in our next discussion.

## INDUSTRY

### THE MINER UNDER FIRE

From our Mining Correspondent

'The Miner', rank-and-file paper published by the Bradford (Lancs.) branch of the National Union of Mineworkers, has been officially severed from the branch as a result of threats of expulsion from the Union by the Lancashire area leadership.

Unable to show the slightest sign of fight against the latest round of pit closures in Lancashire or the attack on wages in Yorkshire, the leadership turns viciously on the paper which has laid the basis for rank-and-file unity in action.

The Bradford branch was asked three weeks ago to stop its association with its own paper, despite the fact that in a ballot of all workers at the colliery earlier in the year there was an overwhelming majority to keep the paper (856 for, 195 against). It was only when the Area Executive threatened expulsion of the whole branch and the cancellation of all benefits and pensions that a majority at the branch meeting felt obliged to break connections with the paper.

In point of fact the Executive has no right whatsoever under the rules to carry out such expulsions, yet it did not hesitate to get its way by baseless threats.

Edwin Hall, Lancs. N.U.M. boss, began his attack by saying that he had a letter from his Yorkshire counterpart, Machen. In this letter Machen spoke of complaints of interference by 'The Miner' in a Yorkshire branch.

The background of this 'complaint' is interesting. 'The Miner' recently took up the case of well-known Brodsworth miner Curly Owen, who had been publicly attacked as 'malicious and anti-social' by certain fellow committee men. This public attack was also signed by the colliery management. After a bumper 'Miner' sale, a branch meeting of 500 men instructed the committee to conduct a pit ballot of all 3,750 men to judge this scandalous action.

But there has been no ballot, and furthermore the officials concerned are now under fire at Brodsworth for running to complain to the Area E.C. without any reference to either the Branch or even the Branch committee.

When the Brodsworth men have had their say about the actions of their leading officials, no doubt the Bradford members will vigorously press Hall and Machen for an explanation of their conduct.

Both at Brodsworth and at Bradford, as well as many other pits, 'The Miner' has the support of the men for its outspoken and fearless exposure of the plans of the N.C.B. and the paralysis of the Union leadership. It will continue to appear fortnightly as before, to take its part in the big struggles ahead. How typical that the bureaucrats in both Lancashire and Yorkshire are more concerned about helping each other to suppress their own rank and file than preparing to fight the government and the N.C.B.

### LORRY DRIVERS FIGHT LOCK-OUT

By G. Gale

A mass meeting of B.R.S. lorry drivers in Leeds today decided to continue their fight against the new 30 m.p.h. speed limit. The men are willing to work on the old 20 m.p.h. limit, or on the 44-hour basic week, but they have been locked out by the employers who insist on enforcing the 30 m.p.h. limit.

This new limit is nothing more nor less than a speed-up. It means more production with no extra pay.

Also, since there is no reduction in the basic working week, it means that drivers lose an hour's overtime per day—a loss of about 25s. per week.

The new conditions of work would also involve losing the overnight subsistence allowance.

About 300 drivers are affected, and when I spoke to pickets at the Brown Lane and Marshall Street depots, they told me that not one lorry had been taken out. Leeds pickets covered other Yorkshire depots carrying the slogan, 'We're locked out, Jack.'

### STRIKE SPREADS AT BRADWELL

By Bert Hayes (C.E.U. member)

The strike of Constructional Engineering members at Bradwell Power Station has now been joined by pipe-fitters and mates.

The dispute started on November 20 when Shaw Petrie sacked C.E.U. member and secretary of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, Tom Keen. The firm claimed that Keen was unable to do the work, although he had worked for them for seven months prior to his sacking.

The union consider that Keen was sacked because of his trade union activities on the site and particularly his constant fight for improved safety conditions.

Following Keen's sacking the three C.E.U. members employed by the firm immediately took strike action. After a week John Baldwin, C.E.U. area official, instructed his members to return to work to allow negotiations to proceed.

Shaw Petrie, however, remained adamant and refused to reinstate Keen. The C.E.U. members, with Baldwin's support, again stopped work.

The strike of the C.E.U. men who are employed as riggers has now practically brought the Shaw Petrie contract to a standstill. As a result the management declared some 30 pipe-fitters and mates redundant last Friday.

The pipe-fitters and their mates, members of the Heating and Domestic Engineers and the Transport and General Workers' Union, have decided to strike because Shaw Petrie have broken the redundancy agreement. The agreement supposedly guarantees that in the event of such sackings the men laid off will be guaranteed reinstatement as soon as the dispute is over.

Both the C.E.U. and the H. and D. have declared the strike official, and the union leaders are meeting the management this week-end to discuss Keen's reinstatement.

### EMPLOYERS GRANT TUGMEN'S DEMAND

By our Industrial Correspondent

Following a two-day strike, London tugmen have forced the employers to grant their demand for more deck boys.

Tugmen in the Silvertown pub, The Rose of Denmark, told me: 'Most firms supply a deck boy. Only a few firms have been refusing to do so. Their excuse was: "We have not got enough boys to spare. The Union will not allow us to increase the intake of apprentices."'

Entry into the trade is governed by the control committees of the two unions, the Watermen, Lightermen, Tugmen and Bargemen's Union and the Transport and General Workers.

One tugman explained: 'What the employers are really trying to do is break the unions' control over the intake of labour.' This point was borne out by the terms of Tuesday's settlement.

After discussions between the unions and the Master Lightermen and Barge Owners' Association, the employers agreed to redeploy 22 boys who were being employed on other work.

The stoppage, which involved over 700 men, had already affected 10 ships. Another two or three days and the Port of London would have been brought to a virtual standstill. The economic pressure brought to bear on the employers made them decide in two days an issue which, according to the secretary of the W.L.T.B.U., Bill Lindley, had been a matter for negotiations since last April.

# Shell 'Sparks' Fight On

By BRIAN BEHAN

**'We are staying out until we win.'** This was how a member of the F. H. Wheeler strike committee greeted the announcement that the Ministry of Labour hoped they would return to work pending the outcome of a committee of investigation.

After 12 weeks of strike action the sparks are as determined as ever to win their demand for an average site payment to bring their earnings in line with the other trades working on the site.

A striker spoke bitterly about the seven long months they had negotiated with the firm before taking strike action. He pointed to other trades on the site who with standing bonus payments of a shilling an hour, plus target earnings draw as much as £4 and £5 a week more than the electricians.

Though they are not on a bonus scheme, the electricians are pushed along by the other trades working bonus. A skilled electrician gets a basic rate of 5s. 5½d. an hour. As one electrician put it: 'We are expected to keep ahead of the other trades and if we don't, it creates bad feeling as they think we are stopping them from earning their money.' This has been going on for years in the building industry affecting every contracting electrician.

The National Federation of Electrical Contractors is notorious for its stubbornness in resisting wage increases. Last year the employers after lengthy negotiations coughed up a miserable penny an hour. Such resistance to wage increases pays the employers quite well. For example Wheelers have had steadily increasing profits from £19,000 in 1956 to £173,542 in 1958.

## E.T.U. leaders vacillate

The fighting spirit of the men is severely handicapped by the vacillating policy of their leadership. But the strikers are reluctant to express their criticisms because of the spate of Right-wing attacks on the leadership of the Electrical Trades Union. However it is clear that on the one hand the strikers are told by their union that they are the spearhead in the fight to lay the basis for the next wage increase. At the same time, the leadership tell the employers that if they pay up, it will not be used as a precedent to force the same claim on other sites.

This has the effect of narrowing the support for the electricians and of stopping the extension of the dispute to both MacAlpine's maintenance and Wheeler's other sites.

The strategy of confining the dispute plays right into the hands of the employers who, being very class-conscious, back Wheelers to the hilt. It creates the fantastic position on the site of the maintenance electricians keeping the lights going full power while the Wheeler's men picket the gate. This division suits the employer very well as he can use one section of the union to keep the major part of his contract going. Almost 70 sparks are still working on the site, including 50 working for the sub-contractors Waygood Otis on lift erection. Building trade workers are told in their branches that the E.T.U. leadership has indicated that the pickets are not there to prevent other workers going to their jobs.

Working hours have been reduced and it is clear that it is becoming an uneconomic proposition to keep the site open.

Right at this time the government steps in and sets up its committee of investigation. In its natural desire to help the employers, the government is aiming not only to prevent the extension of the dispute, but also to provide a face-saving formula that the employers can use to creep out of their predicament.

John Roy, Federation steward at Laings, Great Queen Street, gave some straight answers to the questions I put to him about nationalization of the building industry.

'Taking all things into account the E.T.U. lads are putting

up a great struggle against all odds. It seems to me as if there is an attempt to starve them into submission. I do not think they can win if they are left to fight alone. The E.T.U. leadership should bring out the maintenance men on the site and all the building unions should support them by withdrawing labour from the site. That is the way I see the lads winning the dispute. It is shameful to see other trade union members passing a picket with the blessing of their unions.'

John Roy then spoke of the need to nationalize the building industry so that 'we won't have to spend our time fighting the employers for elementary rights.' I asked him what type of nationalization he favoured, was he in favour of the type operating in the mines or railways? 'No, I am not,' he said. 'I would be opposed to paying compensation to the master builders as I was to paying it to the old coal owners, who had more than their whack. I favour nationalization with workers' control from site level up.'

Chris Ferguson, former carpenters' steward at Shell Mex House and a member of the A.S.W., agreed with Brother Roy that it was very necessary to work for united action behind the electricians. The more building jobs that held mass meetings to discuss the electricians' case the better.

## Beware of the Tory enquiry

There is a growing movement amongst contracting electricians to convene a conference of workers in the London area to discuss action by other electricians in support of the dispute. On one site the electricians, after deciding on a token stoppage in support of the Shell men, were told by their executive to defer any action until after the committee of investigation had made known its findings.

To prevent a sell-out of the committee the striking E.T.U. members should insist that there be no return to work without a full settlement of their claim. This cannot be won by the Wheeler men alone. Such a stand would need the full backing of every building trade worker.

One of the lessons of the struggles in the building industry is that united solidarity action from site to site can force the employer to yield. During the strike at Shell Mex House for the recognition of the site committee one of the strongest cards was the simultaneous stoppage of six building sites and the march of 2,000 building trade workers to the N.F.B.T.O. offices. A similar stoppage and march now by the Shell Mex workers would be a powerful demonstration of solidarity with the striking electricians.

An important lesson from past struggles is that the workers gain nothing in the long run by remaining at work while a key section is in dispute. As in the case of the earlier steel benders' strike for the reinstatement of Hugh Cassidy, former chief shop steward at South Bank, all that happens is that the job comes to a standstill and the men are sacked at the whim of the employer. Far better for the workers to remain united and to refuse to pass the picket line.

Another danger of remaining at work is that the men begin to turn against their fellow-workers on strike, seeing them as their enemy instead of the employer who by refusing to pay the increase is the real culprit.

This type of activity weakens the working class and leaves years of bitter recriminations between one section and another. It is to avoid this that the slogan of solidarity action, linking site to site and strengthening the class consciousness of the workers in struggle, is put forward by the Socialist Labour League.

At the same time the League recognizes that the official trade union leaders are not going to wage a real struggle against the employers. They will do nothing to mobilize such solidarity



action; on the contrary, they will do their utmost to hinder it through threats of expulsion and discipline. On no occasion in the course of a big building strike have the trade union leaders called a mass meeting of either stewards or the rank and file with a view to bringing the whole weight of the members in behind the struggling section. This is because they are reformists who want 'peace at any price.' The price is the sacrifice of the wages and conditions of their members.

This reformist leadership is not confined to the trade unions and the Labour Party. The Communist Party is supposed to be an independent socialist party with an independent socialist policy. But in practice, when it comes to mobilizing the rank and file in support of their brothers the Communist Party does nothing. Not one leaflet has been issued by the Communist Party calling for the extension of the strike, although they are in a particularly strong position to do this by virtue of their position in the E.T.U. and in some of the building unions.

If they don't do it, it is because the leadership of that party is no more for fighting the employers than the leadership of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress.

### The policy of the Socialist Labour League

The Socialist Labour League stands four square for bringing the whole weight of the trade unions in behind the Wheeler strikers. We are for the immediate calling of an all-London conference of building trade workers to discuss the dispute. This could be called jointly by the Shop Stewards of MacAlpines and the Wheeler strike committee.

This conference could be the rallying point of all building workers to step up the fight for the increase in the basic rate.

The building trade workers have tabled a claim for a wage increase which is due to come up for discussion this month. A powerful, united movement which was capable of closing down Shell Mex House and forcing the granting of the electricians' claim would be a powerful way to show the employers that they have to pay up.

At the same time it is obvious that workers need an organization that will campaign and seek to unite the struggles of all workers as part of a drive to end the capitalist system that gives rise to such struggles. The Socialist Labour League believes that it is perfectly possible for us to manage without the employers. It is their greed for profits that gives rise to struggles like the strike at Shell Mex House. We want to re-organize society on a socialist basis. We want to ensure that the factories, mines and mills are placed under workers' control for the benefit of the working class.

We see the struggle against Wheelers and MacAlpines as part of that struggle. On the one hand the employers are attempting to drive us back to pre-war despite the great new means of wealth that now lie at the disposal of man in the shape of atomic power, new machinery, etc. We on the other want to prevent this and end the employers' grip on society. We ask you to join the Socialist Labour League and help us to lay the basis for a revolutionary party that will do this.

## RENTS

### ST. PANCRAS' TENANTS STAND FIRM

By Alf Hardy—(St. Pancras Tenant)

The rent strike of St. Pancras Borough Council tenants began on Monday.

That day I visited the Long Meadow Estate where there is very strong opposition to the increases. At least 75 per cent. are refusing to pay. The collectors are taking the old rent and marking down the increase as arrears.

On the large Cromer Park Estate it seems that something like half the tenants have withheld the rise. Here I met

an old-age pensioner going to pay his rent. He said: 'I have to pay £2 5s. 2d. a week rent. My wife and I will have nothing left.' I urged him not to pay. He shrugged his shoulders saying: 'If I don't they will throw me out.'

There is a rumour that those who do not pay will be evicted.

A number of tenants were given verbal assurances that they would be entitled to a rebate under the new scheme. Now they find they are being presented with a 10s. increase.

Despite being told by the Council's collectors: 'You might as well pay now, you will only have to pay later in any case,' tenants on the Regents Park and Crown Dale Estates are in the majority not paying the new rent.

Secretary of the Central Tenants' Committee, Don Cook, estimates 3,000 of the 3,700 tenants have refused to pay the increased rents.

This is a good stand. However, the real battle has yet to come. At the moment the Tory Council have taken no action, but it must be anticipated that they will attempt evictions. These will probably be aimed at older people and the hope will be to intimidate them.

The Central Tenants' Committee must ensure that the tenants receive some protection, which means a campaign to ensure that any attempts to evict are met by mass picketing and industrial action.

The stand being taken by the St. Pancras tenants deserves the backing of the entire London Labour movement. It is the duty of very trade unionist, socialist and Labour Council to see that the St. Pancras people get the maximum support.

## ANTI-H-BOMB CAMPAIGN

### CAMPAIGN AGAINST ROCKET BASES GOES ON

(By a member of the Direct Action Committee)

The intention of those who threw the original six members of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War into gaol was to prevent the demonstration at Harrington on January 2, organised by the committee, from taking place. They did not succeed. On Saturday afternoon over 400 members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament marched from Rothwell to the rocket-site, including 80 prepared to risk arrest by obstructing the entrance. Within two hours the 80 were in Northampton police station charged with the 'wilful obstruction of a police officer when acting in the execution of his duty.' It took a 100 assorted varieties of policemen and three great barricades of barbed wire to carry out this manoeuvre against 80 non-violent demonstrators!

The actual charge brought against these members of C.N.D. has absolutely nothing to do with the real reason for their arrest; the actual reason for the arrest of the previous six and the quick arrest of the Harrington demonstrators was fear, fear of the truth.

Whatever its limitations, the great value of the Direct Action Committee is that it tells the working class of this country: 'these rocket-sites which are being constructed in your name and are supposed to defend you are useless. H-bomb testing must stop, American rocket bases must go, and we must get out of N.A.T.O.'

The ages of those who took part covered a considerable range, but the whole group was characterized by its youthful enthusiasm. The main difficulty is that the origins and interests of most who took part are essentially middle-class and thus this enthusiasm tends to lack a full sense of direction. Nor is it true that this method of action will itself get rid of the H-bomb.

This does not justify us being too disparaging about the Direct Action Committee: its importance and value consists in that it is one of the few groups in this country which is not afraid to reveal the lies of the ruling class about nuclear

armaments for what they are. Secondly, it quite clearly tells workers that if we are to get rid of the bomb it must be through workers' action. It is only when workers refuse to work upon these weapons and sites that the real struggle can begin.

Thus the personal sacrifice made by these 80 people, whilst not in itself decisive, may not be wasted if it helps to show to the working-class the role of the police force in capitalist society and the fear that the Tory government and the Right-wing non-nuclear club advocates have of the truth.

## Constant Reader Slump Nonsense

Interviewed in the Observer of December 20, Gaitskell remarked: 'It is true that in the new situation the Opposition cannot expect the kind of automatic escalator to power which a major slump often provided in the past.'

What does this mean? If by 'major slump' Gaitskell has in mind the whole period between the beginning of the depression after the first world war in 1920, and the beginning of the rearmament boom in 1937, how are we to explain that of the six general elections held in those years only two returned Labour majorities?

Moreover, the first Labour government was elected at the end of 1923, in a period of relative recovery of Britain's heavy industries (largely due to the French invasion of the Ruhr, which hindered German competition). The second Labour government was elected in May, 1929, at a time of semi-boom which induced such Labour publicists as H. N. Brailsford to write that Marx was being refuted by economic facts. The Wall Street crash came several months later; and the worst moment of the ensuing 'major slump' saw the election of the anti-Labour National Government of 1931.

It is curious how both Right-wingers and ultra-Lefts—each for their own reasons—go in for this 'vulgar Marxist' treatment of the connexion between economics and politics. For a corrective, may I refer Gaitskell and co-thinkers to Trotsky's two speeches on the world economic situation given at the Third Comintern Congress, 1921? They are in Volume I of 'The First Five Years of the Communist International'.

### That Constitution

The insertion in the Labour Party's constitution of that phrase about common ownership of the means of production was one of the moves undertaken by the bureaucracy of the British working-class movement in the 'dangerous' years after the first world war in order to retain the confidence of the workers by seeming to be more Left than in truth they were.

Characteristically, it was accompanied by some quiet organizational steps aimed at making the party less open to socialist influence than hitherto. The 1918 constitution ended the situation whereby to belong to the Labour Party you had to be either a trade unionist or a member of one of the societies of convinced and active socialists which had combined with the trade unions to set the party up in the first place. Henceforth, 'individual membership' became possible.

The real focal points of party activity in the localities ceased to be the Independent Labour Party branches. The local Labour Parties which came into being under the new constitution led in the main a much less intensely political inner life—and they had no autonomy, either separately or together, so that party headquarters could keep them much more firmly under control.

At the same time the original system of reserved places which had ensured that there should be representation of the affiliated socialist societies on the National Executive Committee was abolished. And it was laid down that the Parliamentary group should 'give effect' only 'so far as practicable' to 'the principles from time to time approved by the party conference.'

### Up The Republic

It is already clear that we are in for a real sousing in monarchist propaganda in 1960, in connexion with the tercentenary of the Restoration. This anniversary will be linked up, no doubt, with all manner of ballyhoo about the royal baby. And if it's a boy and the Queen names him James, or a girl and she names her Mary, this, coming after Charles and Anne, will put our present sovereign's sympathy for her pre-

decessors of the house of Stuart quite beyond a doubt.

During a recent session by The Critics, when they were discussing a film about the American civil war, Pamela Hansford Johnson remarked: 'There has been a plot to cover our civil war up.' How true this is struck me when, during the Christmas break, I was in Cambridge and walked through Market Passage, where the Arts Cinema now stands. Here stood in former times the Bear Inn, which during the civil war served as headquarters of the Eastern Association, the grouping of advanced and thoroughgoing revolutionaries of the East Anglian area that was the nucleus of Cromwell's New Model Army. Such a historic spot deserves some monument, but there isn't even a plaque on the wall.

Mention of Cambridge and the Eastern Association recalls the splendid letter which Peter Cadogan contributed to the discussion columns of the Communist Party's weekly World News for March 9, 1957, debunking the alleged historical precedent for the revolutionary role assigned to Parliament in the Stalinist fantasy-programme 'The British Road to Socialism'. Cadogan showed how the driving force of the English bourgeois revolution lay outside Parliament, and dealt brusquely with Parliament when it tried to obstruct—as it inevitably did. 'A Parliament bred in the old order cannot of itself create a new one.' This important point from English history had, incidentally, been already made in the document called 'The Communist International Answers the Independent Labour Party,' first published in 1920 and reprinted in 1932, but now, of course, practically unknown to rank-and-file Communist Party members.

### The Daily Worker and Bob Edwards

'M.P. Franco sentenced to death goes back.' That was the headline to the report in the Daily Worker of December 22 of Bob Edwards' visit to Madrid in connexion with a trial of Franco's opponents.

As it was so near Christmas I let myself speculate dreamily about what would be at the end of the report. You know how they sometimes have a star after the straight news, followed by a bit of background information, in italics? Perhaps there would be a piece like this: 'We take this opportunity to retract with apologies the charges we hurled at Edwards and his comrades, to the effect that they were in cahoots with Franco, at the time when they were earning a death sentence from him.'

Bob Edwards led the contingent of volunteers organized by the Independent Labour Party which went to Spain during the civil war and fought on the Aragon front with the militia of P.O.U.M. (Workers' Party of Marxist Unity). When the Spanish Communist Party launched its Barcelona coup d'état against P.O.U.M., the British Communist Party broadcast the wildest and foulest accusations of treason by these alleged Trotskyists, in which the I.L.P. men were also supposed to be involved. Harry Pollitt refused to speak on the same 'Aid Republican Spain' platform with representatives of the I.L.P., and sellers of their paper were beaten up by the Stalinists.

The truth about the Barcelona events of May, 1937, has long since been well established. Indeed, the Stalinist version was refuted very rapidly and effectively by one of the I.L.P. volunteers, Eric Blair, who happened to be on leave in Barcelona at the time, in a book called 'Homage to Catalonia', published over his pen-name, George Orwell. But the Communist Party, while not publicly maintaining (since a certain speech in 1956) their legend about 'Trotskyism in the service of Franco', have never withdrawn it, much less apologized for it.

Of course, my dream was just a dream. No star. No italics. The Daily Worker is a leopard that doesn't change its spots, even at Christmas.

BRIAN PEARCE.