

# THE NEWSLETTER

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## SEAMEN & PORTWORKERS UNITE DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

By W. HUNTER

RANK upon rank of Merseyside workers gave their answer to the shipowners last Tuesday morning. Six thousand marched in protest against the legal intimidation of striking seamen. Building workers, ship repair workers and engineers showed their solidarity with seamen. Dredgemen and other workers employed by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board took the day off to join the march.

Over 10,000 dockers also stopped work. They struck for a day to back their demands for a 44-hour week and a 25s. increase. Thousands of them joined the march or swelled the huge meeting at the end of the demonstration.

In his brief speech to the meeting a ship repair worker spoke for all these men he said: 'I am proud to have taken part in this march, and I would climb that Cunard building and shout it from the top if I thought that Yates could hear'.

Bill Hart, ex-seaman, who was six months in jail for his part in leading the 1947 seamen's strike, told the meeting: 'After 150 years of struggle the Labour Movement cannot tolerate a situation where workers lose their democratic rights.

'This iniquitous Act of 1894 gives a master the right to use any method, almost to killing, to get men who are said to have deserted, back to the ship.'

### All trades march

Bill Hart, who is a member of the Executive Committee of the Liverpool Trades Council and Labour Party had marched under the banner of the Merseyside District Committee of the Constructional Engineering Union.

When I asked his opinions of the demonstration he said: 'This is like an old dream. I keep remembering '47, but there is a difference today. This is the biggest demonstration the seamen have ever had. All trades are represented here.'

The Vice-President of the Liverpool Trades Council and Labour Party—Eric Heffer—who also spoke at the meeting, told The Newsletter, 'If the entire Labour Movement is not brought into action against these injunctions and against the 1894 Act, then such methods will be used against other workers'.

'The last Trades Council and Labour Party meeting in July decided by an over-riding majority to protest at the injunctions. The fact that the strike is unofficial is of no consequence. We should be under no illusions that legal intimidation will not also be used in official strikes.'

Among the demonstrators was a large contingent from the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers.

### Link with dockers' struggle

Area Secretary Bill Johnson was one of the seven dockers arrested in 1951 after the strike for the Dockers' Charter. He and his fellow union members were marching, he said, because the imprisonment of striking seamen was a threat to the whole trade union movement.

Dredgerman Joe McLean also spoke for his fellow workers when he commented, 'We have a common interest

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### SEAMEN AND DOCKERS MUST FIGHT TOGETHER

By Our Merseyside Reporter

'Every thinking docker should be ready to give every assistance he can to the seamen', said Joe Cubbin, member of the Liverpool Portworkers' Committee, when asked his opinions on the seamen's strike by a representative of the Newsletter.

'Dockers have their own fight for a wage increase and shorter hours, so they can sympathize with the seamen's demands.

'We can take a lesson from the seamen. In a short space of time they set up their national committee to organize the struggle. When the masters are treating them so ruthlessly, sticking them in gaol, getting injunctions against them and they still continue battling, then that only shows how firm they are and how well they are organized. But I'd like to emphasize the seriousness of what's happening to these lads. Everywhere, trade unionists and rank-and-file organizations should take warning.

'If the shipowners defeat the seamen with the help of judges and jailers then other employers will have the same thing in mind for other workers. Already there are demands that the law be used against other workers who go on strike. The 'Guardian', for example, in the editorial of August 12, said that there was an Act of 1875 which could be used against dockers on strike in the same way that the Merchant Shipping Act is being used to persecute the seamen.

'According to the Guardian the law could be used against a dock strike which damaged "perishable cargo".'

'In 1951 we defeated an attempt to put our unofficial leaders in prison and we forced the repeal of Order 1305. But the employers have other legal weapons which they can only be prevented from using by the vigilance and strength of the rank and file.

'So every docker must realise that the fight of the seamen against legal repression is his fight also.'

**THE NEWSLETTER**

SATURDAY, AUGUST 20, 1960

186 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4  
Telephone Macaulay 7029**FULL SUPPORT FOR THE SEAMEN**

THE seamen must win their great fight with the ship-owners and trade union officialdom. Every trade unionist worthy of the name will applaud their magnificent effort over the past few weeks.

Working under extremely difficult and often isolated conditions, these men have demonstrated for all to see that the glorious spirit of the Tolpuddle martyrs still remains a basic feature of British trade union life.

We invoke the name of the Tolpuddle martyrs because what the seamen are fighting for today is in many respects reminiscent of the struggle of early trade unionism. They are fighting for civilian rights against the feudal law of the millionaire shipowners which tie these men to their ships. This law must be repealed at once.

The Labour Movement must demand with one voice 'Stop victimizing and jailing the seamen'.

Of course, the Fleet Street press as usual is in the vanguard of this rotten witch-hunt. This is all the more despicable coming from the editorial chairs of the same millionaire-owned newspapers which not so long ago, during the second world war, hailed the seamen as the heroes who saved Britain from starvation.

Let all those who are busy slandering the seamen today cast their minds back to the thousands of seamen who—torpedoed at a moment's notice—perished in the cold bleakness of the North Atlantic. It suited Fleet Street to call them heroes then just as it suits Fleet Street to denounce them as a 'mob' today.

The seamen's struggle is part of a class struggle—a struggle for democracy inside the trade union movement and an improvement of living conditions. The employers and their Tory government are opposed to these things.

The Newsletter calls upon all its readers to do everything possible to raise money and support for the embattled seamen.

**AT THE CLUB MIRIMBA**

SIR TOM YATES is General Secretary of the National Union of Seamen. According to the Daily Mail of Monday, August 15, he is also part-owner of 'a plush-lined club on the Dover seafront'.

The Mail reports that the club is especially popular amongst 'South Coast doctors, lawyers and businessmen'. A good meal can be had at the Club Mirimba for the paltry sum of 14s.!

Sir Tom, we are informed, drives in his Bentley to the club on Friday and generally leaves sometime after lunch on Sunday.

Now contrast all this luxury with the conditions of British seamen on board the ships catered for by Sir Tom's union.

The men work a 56-hour week and certainly have no Club Mirimba to retire to for a quiet week-end. On a large number of tramp vessels there are constant complaints about the food and living conditions. At the end of a long life at sea, the average seaman—

unlike Sir Tom—cannot look forward to a peaceful retirement in a luxury flat nestling under the white cliffs of Dover.

In its own way—and undoubtedly for its own ends—the Tory Daily Mail has done a service. It has shown the contempt of the big boss for all the Sir Toms who keep a foot in both camps. Rank-and-file seamen who are not yet on strike please take note!

**WHAT NEXT FOR LONDON BUSMEN?**

By Ian Lamb

For the first time since 1958 the London busmen have given the LTE a resounding slap in the face. The rejection by the delegate conference of the Bonus Scheme (fast becoming known around the garages as the 'Rat Race') was a great demonstration that the rank and file are not prepared to be tricked into a scheme that would worsen the already intolerable working conditions and put up a barrier to any advance on the wages front.

It is obvious, however, that the LTE are not going to see the scheme die easily. Having found that even when they manage to secure the support of the negotiating committee, they have the rank and file to contend with in no uncertain manner, they have adopted a new procedure. Namely, attempting to negotiate direct with the membership. They have posted notices in the garages throughout the fleet, which set out in a very one-sided manner the best points in the scheme, while ignoring all the others. This notice implies that the membership have been hoodwinked by the delegate conference and done out of a wage increase.

The notice sets out to prove that the earnings of crews will rise up to 37s. per man per week if the maximum bonus is achieved. What it omits to point out is that the basic average of £11 10s. 0d., which is taken on a fleet basis, is a little less than that of last year. Moreover, this figure was achieved on the basis of overtime and rest day working due to a staff shortage of up to 6,000.

This practice of appealing to the rank and file against the decisions of the delegate conference is a flagrant attempt to sidetrack the rejection of the bonus scheme.

The Central Bus Committee should pull no punches in its opposition to this latest move. They should make a statement to the effect that the bonus scheme is no longer under discussion and force the LTE to take down the notices.

**A Guillebaud for busmen?**

What is the next step if we are to win a wage increase and an improvement in working conditions? It has been suggested that an inquiry into the wages and conditions of London's busmen should be instituted. Those who suggest this are no doubt thinking of some of the favourable results of the Guillebaud Report which have been gained for sections of the railwaymen, but a warning should be sounded before a great deal of faith is placed in an inquiry.

Firstly, the favourable outcome of the Guillebaud Report was largely due to the possibility of a complete stoppage on the railways. The one-day token stoppage staged by the tubemen was sufficient to prove their power and ability to bring London to a virtual standstill. Secondly, the whole findings of the Report have yet to be put into operation and already the tubemen are getting impatient

and a number of branches of the NUR have gone on record in favour of action to speed up the implementation of the terms of the Report.

Every busmen is well aware that if any inquiry which is carried out is of an objective nature, it will result in the 'discovery' that the London busmen need a substantial wage increase to bring their basic rate up to about £11 10s.—£12 per week. So that the leadership of the Transport and General Workers' Union should now be working out a strategy for the winning of this increase.

Part of this strategy must be the link-up with the tubemen. We have had abundant proof, both in the 1958 bus strike and the wages struggle on the tubes that isolation of one section of London's transport system from another is fatal.

A joint delegate conference should be called between the Central Bus Committee and the London Area NUR on how best to achieve a victory over the LTE on the wages front. Inquiries are very fine as far as they go, but the only thing which will persuade the eminent 'experts' of the necessity to find in favour of the workers in any industry is a knowledge of their potential strength and the fear that if provoked they may use it against their masters.

## JAPAN

### WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST NUCLEAR WAR

By Farrell Dobbs

TOKYO. August 6. On this anniversary date of the 1945 atom-bombing of Hiroshima thousands of Japanese Peace Marchers have arrived in Tokyo after a 6,500-mile trek that began on April 21 from outlying districts of Japan. Along the way some 20 million people had walked part of the distance with them in support of their campaign against nuclear war.

The Peace Marchers are here to attend today's opening of the Sixth World Conference Against Atomic and Nuclear Bombs and for Total Disarmament. International solidarity with their demands for peace is shown by the presence at the conference of 119 delegates from 29 countries overseas. As the sessions began the world received a shocking reminder of the horrors of nuclear war in the death this morning, after 15 years of suffering, of yet another victim of the Hiroshima atrocity.

#### Delegates speak about struggles

The presence of the huge Japanese delegation and the stimulus of the recent mass actions in this country are having an effect on the conference. Sessions in former years had been characterized generally by a call in the name of humanism for an end to nuclear war threats and a pledge by the warmakers to disarm.

This year many delegates are speaking out against the imperialist military treaties and far-flung nuclear bases, pointing to American imperialism as the primary source of the war danger. Solidarity is being voiced with the present Japanese struggle against the U.S.-imposed military pact. People from colonial countries are calling for support to their independence struggles. Attacks are made against imperialist intervention in Cuba, Algeria, the Congo. Demands are being raised for imperialist recognition of the government of Red China.

Significant though it is this trend does not wholly reflect

sentiments among rank and filers in the big Japanese delegation. They want to talk about how to carry on the fight for peace in a more effective way, but it is hard for them to get the floor, except in isolated group discussions. One Japanese delegate protested, 'As Peace Marchers we just walked. We are not given a chance here to fully express ourselves.'

Worker and student delegates in this frame of mind have just gone through a profound series of mass demonstrations and political strikes against the Japan-U.S. military treaty. They prevented Eisenhower's visit and brought down the Kishi government, but they could not block the treaty. Kishi was replaced by the Ikeda regime of the same Liberal-Democratic ruling party that forced through ratification of the treaty in the first place.

#### Fight for peace links with workers' struggles

In the heroic struggle of the Miike miners, backed by the students of Zengakuren, a major action is now being fought against corporation attempts to 'rationalise' industry at Labour's expense. Involved in the struggle is a capitalist threat to lay off 100,000 miners, leaving them to shift for themselves as best they can. Instead of concerning itself with the welfare of the miners, the Ikeda government backs the mine bosses against the strikers.

These experiences are deepening political thought among workers and students. Many militants are beginning to perceive a political connection between the fight for peace and the problem of defending their economic interests. They are giving fresh thought to the question of putting a Labour government into power as the political instrument to achieve their aims.

Although these basic political conclusions are not yet clearly formed in their minds, the young militants seem to have quite firm opinions on one key point. They want a closer examination of programme and leadership to find a way to fight more effectively. They oppose leadership policies intended to stifle mass action and replace it with futile high-level negotiations with the bosses and the capitalist government. They want a programme and leadership that will promote rank-and-file participation on all issues and bring results when the masses act.

The Japanese militants are demonstrating at the World Congress now in session that, so far as they are able, their search for more effective means of struggle puts them in the vanguard of the peace movement in the advanced capitalist countries.

## INDIA

### INDIAN TROTSKYISTS IN FOREFRONT OF STRIKE BATTLE

Report from The Militant, an Indian Socialist paper, August 10, 1960.

Leading members and the units of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India in various States were in the forefront of the recent strike of the Central Government employees (July 11 to 16). Most of the active trade union leaders of the party were arrested and detained.

On the eve of the strike Sudhindranath Kumar, General Secretary of the RCPI issued a statement from Calcutta pledging 'our unequivocal support to the struggle' and appealing to the working people to uphold their de-

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## SEAMEN STRENGTHEN STRIKE IN LONDON

By R. PERRY

NEARLY one thousand seamen in Canning Town Hall on Tuesday evening voted unanimously to continue the strike in the Port of London. Despite one month jail sentences on eight members of the crew of the 'Castillian', and fines of six days' pay imposed on seven young seamen, support for the strike in the second richest port in the world has grown steadily.

Vic Lilley, National Organiser of the Seamen's Reform Movement, speaking at the meeting, said to thunderous applause, 'The shipowners think that by muzzling a few men, they can drive thousands back to work. But this is not so. There are others waiting to take their place, and others after them. They will never break us that way.'

Repudiating the statements of the National Union of Seamen that the strikers did not know why they were on strike, Barney Flynn, one of the Reform Movement leaders, said: 'For years British seamen have been disunited and disorganized. Now we have unity which must not be broken. Seamen must have overtime rates for working hours over the 44, and the power to elect their own officials.'

### False statements by NUS leaders

Paddy Neary, National Chairman of the NSRM, referred to Tom Yates and his 'strike plot' allegations. He said, 'The spread of the strike is not due to hidden mystery men but to the simple fact that seamen have been ill-treated for so many years that there is discontent on every ship. If we wait for the NUS or the shipowners to agree to our demands we will wait for the rest of our lives. We must see to this ourselves.'

With pickets on all gates and regular meetings and leaflets more ships are tied up. All except three of the 'Teano' walked off just before the meeting in Canning Town Hall. One of the crew speaking at the meeting said that when they were in Oslo they were told by American seamen that London was a scab port, but they were determined to correct this situation.

### Dockers vote for one-day strike

A mass meeting in Custom House shouted down the attempt of the NUS officials to intervene. At this meeting dockers, who immediately afterwards voted to strike on Wednesday for 24 hours to press their wage demands, heard the reports of scabs being recruited to man strike-bound ships. The seamen are appealing to dockers to black all such ships.

A mass march through the City of London from the Shipping Federation Offices to Tower Hill, ended with a meeting at the Sailors' War Memorial and a two-minute silence.

### Meeting in Tilbury

Speaking at Tilbury Docks, George Scott, picket organizer from Dock Street, a seaman's donkey greaser for 15 years, who had walked off the S.S. 'Baron Ester', explained their demands for a 44-hour week at sea as well as in port. He said they should also have a £4 per month rise and appointed ship delegates.

'The masters' dictatorial rule must go', he said. 'The agreements and contracting forms of employment need scrapping. They might have been O.K. in Nelson's day, but now there must be a complete change in working conditions and in the union.'

His appeal has won immediate response and the days of strike-breaking organised by the Federation in Tilbury have begun to dwindle.

Delegates and seamen from Avonmouth and North

Shields reported complete shut-down, so much so that in North Shields the Employers' Federation offices have been closed. Meanwhile, in Southampton, the 'Queen Mary' has been unable to get away and 300 of the crew of the 'Queen Elizabeth' have decided to join the strike.

London strikers have been tremendously strengthened by the support which they are beginning to receive from shoreworkers. At the Ford Shop Stewards' Committee a whip-round was taken at their meeting on Sunday after hearing a speaker from the Seamen's London Strike Committee. The sum of £49 2s. 6d. was handed to the strike fund with a promise of a collection in the Ford plant.

The international backing by the £500 donation from the Canadian branch of the International Seamen's Union and the blacking of two ships in Adelaide, reflects the concern of the seamen from other countries who have already won the conditions the British seamen are fighting for. Canadian and other seamen are beginning to see the conditions in British ports as a threat to themselves.

### DUNSTAN STREET TENANTS FIGHT BACK

By Newsletter Reporter

A big movement against rent increases and against the Rent Act may very likely be sparked off by the resistance of East London tenants in Cable Street and Mansfield Street. Here is a tenants' movement which has no illusions and intends to take the gloves off in fighting. They know the fight is hard but they also know they can win. This was the impression I received when talking with Mr. Harry Wood, Chairman of the Dunstan Street tenants.

He told me: 'The forty tenants in Dunstan's Buildings are not paying the increase Benedikt the landlord has asked for and have been given notices to quit by August 29. We have gone through all the procedure. Seen our M.P. (Edwards), the Labour Council, circularised all dockers' unions for support for our action, but now there is only one course open to us.

'The feeling in the docks for action is very strong. They know it can happen to them if it happens to me, since I'm a docker myself.'

The unofficial Dock Liaison Committee are meeting to consider supporting the tenants. In addition, the tenants have leafleted dockland explaining their problem asking for support. A march to St. George's Town Hall, and a meeting was held on Wednesday which rallied dockers and other workers.

The tenants of Dunstan's Buildings are giving a clear lead to London tenants' fight against rent increases.

# THE H-BOMB, SCARBOROUGH AND AFTER

By G. Gale

The campaign against the H-bomb is growing stronger every day. More and more people are joining marches and demonstrations against nuclear madness. And the Labour Party Right wing faces certain defeat on the issue at the coming Scarborough Conference. How do these two things link up? What is being achieved by the CND marches? Are the activities of the Direct Action Committee an effective means of fighting the bomb?

It is the view of the Socialist Labour League that these demonstrations are a useful way of expressing opposition to the Government's policy, and they have undoubtedly attracted many people—mostly students—who see no other way of expressing their dissatisfaction. Direct Action, in particular, captures the imagination of many of them.

But the arrest of Direct Action members is now becoming something of a ritual. The police are notified in advance of place, time and approximate number to be arrested; one suspects that the authorities arrange a lorry to arrive at the appropriate time; the police officer gives a formal warning; a Direct Action spokesman reads out a prepared statement; the demonstrators are carried unresisting to a waiting police van; and life continues as normal.

This is not to pour scorn on people who are prepared to suffer imprisonment for their beliefs. Prison is no joke, no matter how much we disagree with those who court arrest in this way. But The Newsletter does not seek easy friends by uncritical praise of those with whom we disagree.

## Where next?

There are three main arguments put forward to justify Direct Action. That if enough people joined in, it would make the Government's policy physically impossible; that growing demonstrations will persuade the Government to change its ways; that it is a satisfying individual gesture.

In our opinion the first is unrealistic, the second false, and the third futile. We believe that the opponents of the bomb must turn to the working-class movement. And that means, in particular, taking part in the struggle going on inside the Labour Party.

There are, of course, those who say that the marches are meaningless already, and therefore we should do nothing except contact one or two 'influential' people. We want nothing to do with such an attitude. The marches must continue—but with a different emphasis. More and more trade unions and Labour Parties must be brought in. And the hills and dales and pleasant valleys green should be given a miss. Despite all the best efforts, the cows and sheep have remained unmoved. March through the industrial cities—Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Glasgow.

At Finningley recently an effort was made to draw in workers. Mining villages were leafleted and the banners of two Miners' Lodges—Edlington and Bentley—were on the march, which went through the mining village of Armthorpe. This is a turn in the right direction (although much of the work was negated because the organizers chose Bank Holiday Saturday—of all days—for the march, and Armthorpe pit had been closed all week).

The Socialist Labour League participates in these

marches as a contingent carrying political banners, shouting slogans and selling literature. (At Finningley our contingent was 50 strong.) This has two effects. A number of people come up and march behind our banner with us. Others resent us. They feel that the marches should be strictly non-political and conducted with more decorum. But if the campaign is to be effective it must be political. Recognition of this is growing—as the attempt to draw in NUM branches shows. The churchgoers, pacifists and political abstainers who have been most prominent so far can take the movement no further. Left to them, it will simply march around in circles—like the dog that disappeared in its own kennel.

## For a massive demonstration at Scarborough

There is to be an anti-bomb demonstration in Scarborough on Sunday (October 2), the eve of the Labour Party Conference. This must be a tremendous political demonstration. Union branches, Labour Parties, Young Socialist Sections, Student societies and all socialist organizations should be present. Every banner should be a political banner. Coachloads of demonstrators must be brought in from all parts of Britain. And any attempt to impose silly bans on this or that banner, or on political literature, should be swept aside.

This is a demonstration which can have a real and immediate effect. It could politically demoralize Gaitskell, Brown and the rest of the bomb lovers. Scarborough is a real landmark in the fight against the bomb. When a unilateralist resolution (the famous 'Norwood Resolution') was first put before a Labour Party Conference, in 1957, it was overwhelmingly defeated. Now, only three years later, a similar resolution is almost certain to be carried. **This change is a result of a growing consciousness in the organized Labour Movement—brought about by people who have turned their ideas towards the working class.**

The Aldermaston marchers have had a big effect, particularly in the field of propaganda. They have proved a valuable but not a decisive supplement to the long, patient work that has been carried out inside the trade unions and Labour Parties.

## Fight against Right-wing policies

The growing opposition to the bomb in the Labour Party and trade unions is not an isolated development. Parallel with the demand to get rid of the bomb is the demand to keep and extend nationalization through the defence of Clause Four. Both are part of the growing understanding in the Labour ranks of the need for Socialist policies. The change of heart about the bomb has thus been a **political development within the workers' organizations.** It could never have been brought about by people who wanted nothing to do with politics.

Of course, the struggle will not end with the passing of a resolution at a Conference. It will take more than a vote to get an anti-bomb policy adopted in the Labour Party. An intensive struggle will follow between those who want Socialist policies—on the bomb, nationalization, party democracy, etc.—and those who are Tories at heart. Unless the present leadership of the Labour Party is thrown out, there will be no effective opposition to the Tories and their H-bomb policies. All who want to get rid of the bomb must join in the political struggle to get rid of Labour's Right wing.

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mands. He also warned the government employees 'to remain vigilant so that the vacillators and the enemies of the struggle may not be able to subvert their movement at a crucial stage'.

The Maharashtra and other State Committees of the RCPI also issued similar statements. A leaflet exhorting the entire working-class movement to support the strike was also issued in Bombay.

In Secunderabad, Mallikarjun Rao, Secretary of the Central Railway Mazdoor Union and member of the Central Committee, was arrested on July 12, and detained along with other trade union activists of the region.

Kishorilal Sharma in Ajmer, member, Central Committee, was also similarly detained, he being the office-bearer of several central government employees.

Arrests of the RCPI workers were made all over Gujerat. They included Vithalbhai Gurjar and Hargovind Thakkar in Ahmedabad, several leading members of the Western Railway Mazdoor Union at Hapa, Jamnagar and Bhavnagar.

In Bombay, Rasik Bhatt, MLC, member, Central Committee, was arrested by the police after his announcement to break the police ban on public meetings at Lal Baug. Gulabrao Mandrey, a leading member of the Girni Kamgar Union, was arrested on July 15, when he tried to address a public meeting at Lal Baug. He was awarded 10 days' imprisonment.

Most of the RCPI supporters among the Southern, Central and Western Railway workers as well as among

other Central Government employees, have either been dismissed or suspended from service for participating in the strike, along with other militant strike leaders.

The State units of the RCPI have now undertaken the task of combating the victimization drive of the government by united action of the various central trade union organisations.

In Tamilnad, more than 1,000 militants have been arrested in connection with the strike. Unlike other provinces, Madras Government are proceeding to prosecute the arrested leaders and get all of them convicted under the Essential Services Ordinance. All the resolutions and appeals to the Government urging leniency towards the employees have fallen on deaf ears.

The leading members of the RCPI were in the forefront of this historical struggle and many of them have been suspended or dismissed from service.

M. Krishnan, a leading member of the party in Madurai, was arrested by police on July 14 under section 151 Cr. P. C. in connection with the strike. He had not been released till July 30, 1960. The police have filed a case against him under Section 5 of the E.S. Ordinance. Hundreds of employees have been arrested in the city by the police, including Subramaniam, Secretary, Joint Council of Action of Madurai City, for having organized and taken part in the 'illegal' strike. The police have charge-sheeted all these militant workers who have overnight become 'under-trial prisoners'. In many places the courts have convicted employees to undergo imprisonment ranging up to six months.

## Bevan and Bourdet

By TOM KEMP

The many appreciations which have been made of Bevan since his death tell us as much about those who make them as about the man himself. There is little doubt that accredited spokesmen of the ruling powers genuinely regret his passing. At first sight that may seem strange, since Bevan was for a long period the focal point of the Labour Lefts and we might have expected them to say good riddance to a dangerous rabble-rouser. In fact, they knew that he did not make the storm, but was the lightning conductor which directed it into the safe channels of Parliamentary discussions. There all storms can blow themselves out in safety.

There remains the question of how Bevan could acquire this position and act in a way quite contrary to his intentions. It would take a long analysis of the British Labour Movement to answer it at all adequately. A recent article by Claude Bourdet, editor of the French 'New Left' journal 'France-Observateur' (July 14), casts some interesting light both on Bevan and the movement in France. Bourdet is a man of great intelligence, for long near to the seats of political decision-making but for much longer gyrating in the outer darkness of Left-wing politics, where, between confessions, he plays the role of a particularly subtle oracle.

### Bevan the improviser

Bourdet not only knew Bevan, he and his friends were to some extent consciously seeking to create a French 'Bevanism' in the 50s which could steer a course between

the Right-moving leadership of Social Democracy and the isolated Communist Party—and perhaps bring them together in a resurrected 'Popular Front'.

From this vantage point he is able to put his finger on a number of Bevan's weaknesses. Bevan could not work in or with a team; he was surrounded with admiring yes-men; his approach to policy questions was to improvise. We might add that he thus combined the characteristic traits of English empiricism—so corroding in its effects on leaders of great personal merit—with Celtic sound and fury—which often deceives both speaker and audience into thinking that the revolution is already afoot.

We can broadly agree with Bourdet that cut off from any close knowledge of the motives of his followers, lacking in real theoretical grounding and fundamentally impatient of theory, he was unable to give real leadership or even to know where he was headed personally. All that became pathetically clear in the later years when he became a yes-man of the machine, playing with phrases and witticisms, a caricature of his old self combined with what he had once stood out against. We may recall that from time to time he seemed to catch a glimpse of himself in the mirror and say, regretfully, that if he were a younger man he would be stumping the country on a socialist campaign, i.e., not doing the job which he had been tamed into doing through his own inadequacies.

### Doctrine—and the New Left

But back to Bourdet, who does not say all this, though the conclusion seems to follow. He draws a moral, and

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## Constant Reader | Master and Servant

RECENT events have brought it home to the working-class movement that seamen are still subject to the same sort of regime which the whole class lay under before the repeal of the 'master and servant' laws in 1875. And there are signs (such as the editorial of *The Guardian* for August 12) that some people would like not to remove this historical anomaly but, on the contrary, to start extending the regime to other groups, such as the dockers, with a view eventually to putting the whole working class back where it was before 1875.

The essence of the matter is that the worker (the 'servant') should be liable, when he 'breaks his contract', not just to a civil action on the part of his employer (his 'master'), but to prosecution by the state and punishment as a criminal. Here is an extract from the report of the case of a young coach-builder, James Mason, brought before the Wrexham magistrates for 'deserting his employment.' This was in 1864, during the American Civil War. The case was heard by the Mayor of Wrexham and a certain Captain McCoy (whether the latter was ex-Army or ex-Navy is not known).

'Defendant: I left under peculiar circumstances. The shop has been blacked.

'The Mayor: Then it is coming to that, is it? That a lot of working men, fellows like you, are to dictate to masters who shall work for them. That may do in France in time of a revolution. You have united yourself with an illegal society, therefore you must take the consequence. You seem to say that there was no contract. Were you paid your wages weekly?

'Defendant: Yes.

'The Mayor: Very well. That is a contract all the world over. If such a state of things as this is not to be stopped, I would no longer sit here as a magistrate. It is worse than the disunited States of America.

'Captain McCoy: It is worse than slavery. It makes the servant master.'

And Mason was sent to jail for a month.

### Campaign to change the law

While the law was like this, real trade unionism and the right to strike could be effectively nullified by the courts. In the same year as Mason's case, a campaign to change the law was initiated by the Glasgow Trades Council. They organized a national conference of the trade union movement (which some historians see as the beginning of the Trades Union Congress). Local committees to fight the 'master and servant' laws were set up all over the country, and the Glasgow trade unionists' weekly *The Sentinel* acquired a national circulation as the organ of the campaign.

But it was 11 years before the workers succeeded in getting the law changed. The delay was due to their mistake in allowing themselves at first to be drawn into long drawn-out proceedings before a 'Select Committee' of Parliament, which merely played with them. Only when, in 1873, they changed their tactics and boycotted a 'Royal Commission' which was offered them, concentrating on demonstrations and other independent activities, did the government of the day begin to take them seriously; and in 1875 the law was changed.

'It was the angry pressure of the trade unions which was decisive in pushing the reform through,' writes Daphne

Simon, from whose essay in 'Democracy and the Labour Movement: Essays in Honour of Dona Torr' (edited by John Saville, 1954), the above facts are taken.

(Continued on back page)

### BEVAN AND BOURDET (continued from page 246)

the moral is interesting. Seeking the reason for the failure of Bevanism he finds it in the 'lack of a complete political doctrine, experts and studies', which Bevan's individualism aggravated, but did not create. Therefore, what the Left needs in Britain—and in France—is just three things: a complete doctrine which has to be drawn up by a team of experts and handed to the movement as a pep pill to energise it out of apathy. And, of course, Bourdet tells us, it now has the basis for such a revival in—'The New Left Review'!

It would be invidious to discuss whether Bourdet's informants have not, shall we say, slightly over-rated their importance and their historical mission. Let us content ourselves with noting the fact and match Bourdet's logic with our own.

If a complete new doctrine is needed and the effort to compile it 'has scarcely begun', what happens in the meantime? After all, it is all very well to know that a collective Marx is carefully piercing together its data in the coffee houses, but meanwhile life goes on. And a part of life is the struggle of the classes, the growth and disintegration of movements, all sorts of political and industrial hurly-burly teaching rough lessons not to be learnt in the text-books.

### The respectful Bourdet

Taking a look at Bourdet's own policy is not encouraging. Obviously without the 'complete doctrine' he often goes astray. At every decisive turn Bourdet's own policy has been wanting: at the time of the collapse of the Fourth Republic ('defend the republic'), at the time of the Algiers insurrection (for de Gaulle against the ultras), constantly in relation to the Algerian war (negotiate, negotiate, negotiate—but don't do anything which might be illegal). No wonder that some impatient spirits have inscribed Bourdet's name high on the list of the 'respectful Left'—respectful in their attitude to de Gaulle and to the rules of the political game as conducted in capitalist society. As a matter of fact, for all their talk about the 'Establishment' some of our 'new Left' friends are also conspicuously 'respectful' of the rules which it makes and the theories which it teaches. For proof one need only look at what they do and say.

They, like Bourdet, for all the big talk, have not sloughed off the kind of weakness to which Bevan was prone. They form coteries instead of making a bridge to the masses. They indulge in mutual self-praise and are scornful of the theoretical work already embodied in the Marxist classics ('dogmatism'). They are attracted by the accomplished fact and the big name. They seek short cuts around difficult stretches of the road to socialism. And so on. Unlike Bourdet their influence is as yet limited and their mistakes are mostly buried in the files of magazines. Bourdet's are still potent: they continue to prevent many sincere young socialists from finding a way forward through a living movement rooted in the working class.

### Council of Action

August 13 this year saw the 40th anniversary of the setting up of the Council of Action to prevent, by industrial action, a renewal of British armed intervention against Soviet Russia at the time of the Russo-Polish war of 1920.

This is often quoted as an example of how the working class of an imperialist country can stop even a war which the ruling class is fully determined upon, just by exercising pressure and without need for actual revolution. Not going into all the questions involved, and not wishing to reflect on anyone's celebration of this anniversary, I nevertheless wonder whether the sequence of events in August, 1920, is always fully appreciated when the Council of Action is discussed.

At the time the Council was set up, the Red Army was still advancing, and it seemed certain to both capitalists and workers everywhere that Warsaw would fall, the reactionary Polish state would collapse, Soviet troops would appear on the border of Silesia—and revolution would break out in Germany. It was a situation which might well be seen as a life-or-death challenge to the imperialist powers—go to war to save 'White' Poland, or you'll soon be finished yourselves. But on August 15 there occurred what Polish nationalists call 'the miracle on the Vistula', when their forces, helped by a French military mission (which included, I believe, a certain Cap-

tain de Gaulle), threw back the Soviet advance and began a counter-offensive which soon compelled an armistice and then a treaty of peace establishing Poland's frontier well to the east.

Once the Red Army's advance had been checked it might well seem to some, at any rate, of the imperialist statesmen that armed intervention, with all its costs and risks, was no longer immediately necessary for the defence of capitalism in Europe. At all events, in considering why Britain did not go to war with Russia in the summer of 1920, one ought not to leave out of account either what happened in London on August 13, or what happened in front of Warsaw two days later, especially if one is going to draw far-reaching political conclusions.

This passes over, incidentally, the opinion of John Maclean ('Russia's Appeal to the British Workers') that Lloyd George never meant to go to war with Russia at all, and only issued his ultimatum to please the French, at the same time giving Arthur Henderson the cue to threaten a general strike!

Some illuminating remarks on the war with Poland as seen from the Soviet side are among the many fine things in Trotsky's 'My Life', originally published in 1930 and long out of print, which is now available once more, as a paper-back (Universal Library, Grosset and Dunlap, New York, 20s.).

BRIAN PEARCE.

## RENTS

### DUNSTAN TENANTS HOLD SUCCESSFUL RALLY

By Reg. Perry

Speaking to a mass demonstration of tenants, organized by the Dunstan Buildings Tenants' Association, on Wednesday evening, Dave Finch, Chairman of Lambeth Tenants' Association, said: 'Have your petitions if you like, and your lobbies and your meetings with MPs as long as you remember that in the end only the strength of the working class can defeat the landlords.'

He went on to remind the tenants, most of whom were dockers' families, of the first struggle against de-control, rent increases and eviction. 'That was in 1915, in Glasgow on the Clyde. Tenants were in court under the threat of serious sentences. Their wives went down to the shipyards and docks and called for the help of the workers, who downed tools and marched on the Sheriff's court. Under the guidance of Lloyd George the tenants were acquitted and soon after rents were once again controlled by Act of Parliament. We are told times have changed', he continued, 'but how much difference is there between the Clydeside landlords of 1915 and the Benedikts and their ilk who today demand such fabulous rents for such dilapidated buildings?'

#### Dockers support tenants

Jack Dash spoke on behalf of the Portworkers' Liaison Committee. He attacked the Tory Government and thought that so long as the tenants united they could resist the increases. He said that he was not yet in a position to authorise strike action by his committee. This opinion was echoed by Max Levitas from Brady Street Tenants' Committee, who were also resisting increases. He thought the committee of five Labour councils could do what was necessary and not strike action. But the meeting, which was thoughtful and attentive throughout,

roared their applause when Jimmy England, a local dockerman, said: 'I have just been on a one-day token strike for our wage demand, and I would gladly strike again against rent increases or to support tenants against evictions.'

After the meeting the tenants formed up and marched back to Dunstan Buildings carrying posters reading 'For Trade Union Action Against Rent Increases' and 'Tenants and Dockers Unite'.

Harry Wood (Chairman) had the last word: 'We must go on to the end. If we continue in the way we are going and we get your support, we must win.'

#### SEAMEN (continued from front page)

with seamen and our conditions are based on National Maritime Board Agreements just as theirs are.

'There is strong feeling against legal persecution because the same measures could be taken against us under the 1894 Act. The great bulk of our men have stopped today despite the short notice.'

A special meeting of the Executive Committee of the Trades Council is being held this week. The Area Committee of the Electrical Trades Council have already decided to ask all its branches to call for an emergency meeting of the full Trades Council.

As Dennis Kelly, Chairman of the Merseyside Port Workers' Committee, said to the meeting last Tuesday morning, 'Order 1305 was smashed by the action of workers. We can also smash this'.

## KENYA—The Corfield Report and the Present Situation

By James Baker and Masinde Moto

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