

# The Newsletter

WEEKLY ORGAN OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

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## Vietnam — no secret diplomacy

NEWSLETTER REPORTER

RECENT air strikes by United States' aircraft were a desperate act against a force on the verge of victory. It was also an act against what is 'part of the biggest change ever to take place in world history', said Cliff Slaughter at a Socialist Labour League meeting on Vietnam in London last week-end.

Many people, he said, had been shaken by the turn of events in Vietnam. In the South Johnson had now stationed 24,000 U.S. troops, costing a million dollars a day, to prevent the country 'being overrun'.

These troops were not in South Vietnam to prevent it from being overrun by anybody. Their presence was part of a world position—two million U.S. troops are stationed throughout Western Europe and South-East Asia.

This was a bigger question than South Vietnam. 'It is part of the biggest change ever to take place in world history,' said Slaughter.

Since the beginning of the century capitalism had been a world system. It had arrived at the point where it had nowhere to expand except by re-dividing the world between the capitalist powers.

### REVOLUTION

The revolution in Russia, Eastern Europe and China had taken large areas from capitalism.

'This revolution continues,' said Slaughter. People throughout the world were involved in wars and civil wars to liberate themselves.

'The two and a half million U.S. troops with weapons that can destroy the population of the world twice over are there to preserve imperialism when it is threatened,' he added.

The struggle by the working class in Britain and the United States was the same struggle as that carried out by the Vietcong, Vietnam and all those forces struggling against capitalism all over the world.

The Labour government had been asked to take a stand against the American offensive in Vietnam, but Michael Stewart, the Foreign Secretary, said the United States was not breaking the terms of the Geneva Agreement of 1954, which divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel, since they were not a party to that agreement.

### AGREEMENT

Johnson had decided two months ago, on the air attacks, said Slaughter. Wilson was there at the time and had come back to the Labour Party conference at Brighton to say he had agreement with Johnson.

'I don't know whether Wilson was consulted about this decision, but he does back Johnson and he did get agreement on his policy "east of Suez",' Slaughter added.

The reason that the bureaucrats in the Soviet Union were giving aid to North Vietnam was only that, with their policy of peaceful co-existence, they would have a stronger bargaining position at the conference table. This had been their position at Geneva, he said.

The cost to the working class through this kind of policy was very clear—11 years of war and the danger of a full-scale conflict with even more deadly weapons.

The fact that world Stalinism held back the struggle against the social democrats, meant they stood against the real struggle to support the Vietnam people.

There was no defence of Vietnam except by demanding the withdrawal of the imperialists.

Slaughter said the labour movement must campaign against a settlement of the fate of the Vietnamese people through secret diplomacy by the big powers.

## RACIALISM USED TO SPLIT WORKERS

THE present Labour government is a most reactionary government, Gerry Healy, national secretary of the Socialist Labour League told an audience of 70 trade unionists, students and Young Socialists in Glasgow last Sunday.

He said that everything was being done to create racialism in the present situation and this was designed to split the working class.

The Labour government had the support of the Tories on the question of stricter immigration control.

Racialism was developed as the weapon of reaction, he said, because the working class was becoming increasingly class conscious as a result of the present economic crisis.

At the trade union conferences this Easter there would probably be a massive movement for wages and the ruling class were afraid of this.

'The Labour government is not pursuing socialist policies. They could have brought the Tory government down over the Profumo crisis. Instead the Tories were allowed to rig a crisis and Labour allowed them 10 months from the Profumo case to present this crisis.'

### Devaluation

Now a new problem has its roots in France. General de Gaulle wanted to return to the gold standard and the danger was that the pound and the dollar would then be devalued, which would present a catastrophic crisis for capitalism.

On the question of the aircraft workers, he said that the Labour Party leadership could clear the confusion. All that it had to do was to open the books of the aircraft companies.

Instead, the reactionary right-wing leadership had split the aircraft workers, hit at the old age pensioners, lost the seat to the Tories in Leyton and paved the way for the return of the Tories.

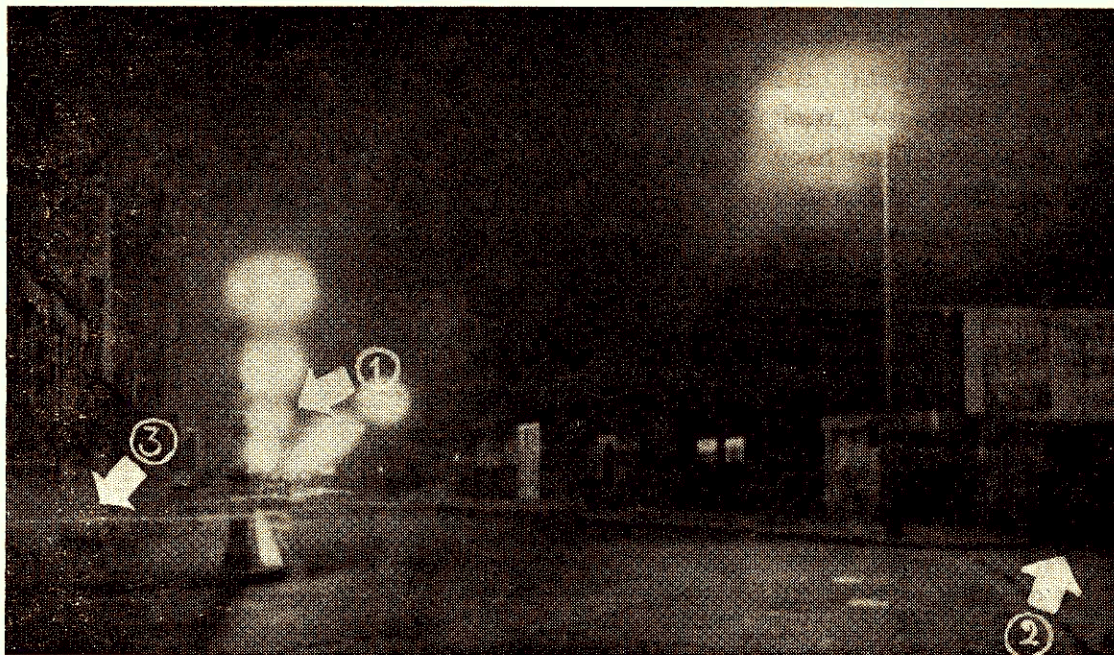
That was why, Healy stated, it was not correct for workers to abstain in the elections.

Workers had to be brought out on demonstrations to unite in action. The fight against the right wing was not just a question of resolutions or simply casting a vote, but encouraging the Young Socialists to help build the adult movement.

So far the Socialist Labour League was the only organisation to do that.



AMBUSH SCENE (right)  
1. School where dance was held.  
2. Some attackers probably waited here.  
3. Point of attack at junction (seen left).



## Savage attack made in KENSINGTON

### Young Socialists ambushed by racials

# Drive out the Fascists!

by Robert James

A SAVAGE, premeditated late-night attack on Young Socialists in a lonely West London road last Saturday ended with one being taken to hospital with severe head injuries.

All this week doctors have been fighting to save the life of 17-year-old Roy Smith following an emergency brain operation at the Whittington hospital, Archway.

Schoolboy Roy and six of his friends—all young immigrants—had just left a Young Socialists dance when they were ambushed in Barlby Road by a gang of about 20 armed fascists. In the attack Roy was hit over the head with a pick. He and another boy were taken to hospital. Others received minor cuts and bruises.

Young Socialists are planning a mass rally and demonstration against the attack. Their main demand will be: 'Clear the fascists off the streets'.

One of the injured seven told The Newsletter that the man who hit Roy had a weapon 'with points on both ends'. Emerson Moore, a tall 16-year-old, told how he, Roy and another boy were walking ahead of their mates. They were about 20 yards away from the school, where the dance had just ended, when three men overtook them. One asked for a light for his cigarette.

'I didn't hear what they said properly, but before we could answer one shouted "lead", another took out an iron bar and hit me across my shoulder. I saw the bloke who hit Roy. He was quite old,' he said.

Austin Rollins (18) told our reporter that other men joined the first three attackers. They were all aged between 20 and 40.

'Six rushed round from a dark corner and others joined in from behind. We were caught in the middle.

'One of my friends went to help Roy and he was hit with a bottle. I tried to get the bottle but the man threw it at me. I ducked and it hit a shop window.'

Then, the attackers ran off leaving Roy lying on the ground bleeding badly from a head wound, and the others battered and shaken.

What was the reason for this brutal and bloody attack on a group of immigrant youths and the sadistic beating down of a small, intelligent, well-liked 17-year-old?

### 'Quiet bloke'

As one of his friends commented: 'He was a quiet bloke. He would not trouble people for spite.'

And why should he? In what can be a rough and tumble existence for immigrant and white youth in schools under the capitalist system, Roy is surviving. He is a fighter.

Pupils and teachers at the North Paddington Comprehensive School hold him in high esteem. Two days after the brutal attack, he was to have taken his mock General Certificate of Education examinations in Maths, Chemistry, Physics, Technical Drawing and other subjects.

This is quite some achievement for someone who has lived in



Blood stains the pavement where Roy Smith fell injured (No. 3 in picture above)

Britain for only seven years after being brought up in the West Indies.

At their home in Portnall Road, Maida Hill, his distressed parents asked frustratedly why should their only son be attacked.

Like many young immigrants Roy had recently been attracted to the Young Socialists who have fought strenuously over the years for unity of white and coloured youth in the struggle for their socialist policies.

Young Socialists, to the anger of local fascists and racials, have carried out successful campaigns in supporting strikes like that at the Woolf Rubber factory in Southall, which employs many

Indian workers.

Earlier last Saturday Roy and his friends had joined in a march along the Portobello Road and Ladbroke Grove in North Kensington demanding 'Increase Pensions Now', 'Down with police violence', 'Landlords out', and 'Racialists out'.

In this area where the Notting Hill riots and still unsolved murder of immigrant Kelso Cochrane occurred, this show of solidarity and unity by white and coloured youth clearly angered the racials and fascists.

In the evening they were out in force patrolling the road outside the dance in cars.

One girl member of the Young Socialists was asked by one of

## One hundred resolutions on agenda YS CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHT FOR YOUTH

Newsletter Reporter

WITH an agenda of 100 resolutions, the Young Socialists go forward to their fifth annual conference at Morecambe on February 27 and 28 for a week-end which promises to be of immense importance for the labour movement.

Organised by the National Committee Majority this conference takes place at a time when the right-wing leadership of the Labour Party betrays the

working class to the mono-

polists on every front. The Young Socialists have continuously opposed the right-wing policies of Wilson and company and in a four-year history of socialist campaigns on unemployment, low wages, and backdating the old age pensioners' increase, this forthcoming conference marks the highlight of the socialist youth movement.

Contrast the packed agenda of this Morecambe conference with the last-minute efforts of Transport House officials to call a rally in the same place a few months later, and a national conference later in the year.

The resolutions put forward by branches reflect the deep consideration young people up and down the country are giving to the formulation of socialist policies which will lead the working class in struggle.

Prominent in the list are resolutions on racialism and immigration. COVENTRY HILLFIELDS Young Socialists say: 'The employing class will attempt to divide the working class on the basis of race, by laying the blame for unemployment, bad housing and other problems which face working-class people upon the shoulders of coloured immigrants.'

### NATIONALIZATION

REIGATE Young Socialists call for the repeal of the Tory Immigration Act, the nationalization of all the basic industries, and call on the Young Socialists to recruit immigrant workers.

Many branches condemn police violence against youth, recognising that the police force is used by the employers to regiment young people throughout the world.

Demanding that the old age pensioners' increase be backdated to November 1, 1964, a number of resolutions condemn the Labour government for its capitulation to the pressure from foreign banks.

Support is given in many resolutions to the fight of the Manchester Direct Action Committee and apprentices throughout the country, in their struggle for higher wages and a shorter working week.

As well as opposing the re-introduction of conscription, some resolutions call for the

(Cont. p. 4, col. 3)

### British Alexander Defence Committee

DEMONSTRATE YOUR

OPPOSITION TO APARTHEID

South Africa House

Friday, February 26,

5.30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

followed by

PUBLIC MEETING

'Recent developments in South

Africa and the Alexander

Appeal'

Unity Hall, N.U.R.,

Euston Road, 7.45 p.m.

(Cont. p. 4, col. 3)

## About turn on steel by Wilson?

From JOHN CRAWFORD

DESPITE all his reaffirmations, Wilson is looking for ways to dodge the only public ownership measure left in Labour's programme—the renationalization of steel.

While the steel barons step up their press campaign against nationalization, Woodrow Wyatt and Desmond Donnelly pursue their fight for Lib-Lab unity, and declare their intention to vote with the Tories and Liberals if the Steel Bill is pushed to a division.

Other Labour MPs, Fred Bellenger and George Strauss, are expected to abstain. (Strauss was the minister in the 1950 Labour government responsible for carrying through a form of steel nationalization which allowed the

steel monopolists, after being handsomely compensated, to pick and choose which plants they wanted to buy back when they were de-nationalized.)

The Steel Bill, in muted form, may be published after some delay. Wilson could then allow it to be further emasculated in the committee stage.

The steel masters would not necessarily be averse to some state intervention in the industry. This could be used by them to assist in the huge expenditures involved in keeping up to date with international developments in steel manufacture, controlling the workers and so safeguarding their enormous profits.

But if, as seems likely, unemployment develops in a few

months, the outright nationalization of the industry is vital to the working class.

By sliding closer and closer to an effective coalition, Wilson betrays 12,000,000 Labour voters and paves the way for the return of the Tories.

On pensions, on economic policy and now on steel, the Labour leaders have thrown overboard even the meagre programme on which they were elected. In the Far East they show their adherence to the NATO imperialist alliance.

In this week's Defence White Paper they declare the continuation of the H-bomb policies of Macmillan and Home. This even slaps those 'lefts' in the face who helped Wilson to power and have

since covered up for him.

Malaysian fighting makes conscription a possibility.

Meanwhile, prices continue to rise and George Brown does the employers' work by getting a wage-freeze agreement under way.

This administration is threatening the whole future of the labour movement.

The working-class movement is strong enough to force Wilson to act on his election pledges on steel as on pensions. But this strength must be organised. The Young Socialists in their campaign to backdate the pensions increase have shown the way.

This is the only way to stop the Labour leaders from destroying the Labour government and breaking the unity of workers.



**WE** have much to learn from the disaster that overtook the German working class in 1933. After the world slump of 1929, the slump that brought the MacDonald government to its knees, the dominant section of the German monopolies, headed by the coal and steel barons, made plans to liquidate the entire working-class movement in Germany.



## The meaning of LEYTON (ii)

The failure of the Labour government to face up to the racialists and fascists at Leyton and Smethwick is closely related to the disaster which overtook the German working class in 1933. Then, social democrats who had supported Hitler were eventually jailed or murdered (left). In Britain today youth are uniting coloured and white workers (right) to answer the racialists and fascists and the betrayals by the Labour leaders



They took this step after much hesitation, having already experimented with social democratic coalitions and short periods of semi-military dictatorship.

Neither had proved workable for the employers—a social-democratic government required concessions to the working class which the employers could not give, while military dictatorship on the lines of the Kapp putsch of March 1920 lacked any popular support and drove the masses further to the left.

### Filled bill

The German bosses had to set in motion their own mass movement of a reactionary, nationalist character which, while making vague promises about social justice, would be used against the organisations of the working class.

The Nazi party, its leader jailed in 1924 after a premature attempt to seize power in Bavaria, filled the bill. Its social demagoguery and violent anti-semitism concealed the class aims of its backers and won 13,765,781 votes at the elections of July 1932.

Only four years before, in May 1928, it had scraped a miserable 810,127 votes and was the laughing stock of the German political scene.

The anti-semitism, anti-communism and nationalism of the Nazis, of little value in times of

relative prosperity, was used during the crisis of German capitalism to break down all conceptions of belonging to an exploited class, this being replaced by the idea that Germans were an exploited race, and that therefore worker and employer should unite against both the internal enemy, Jewish Bolshevism, and the external enemy, international Jewish finance.

Like the Labour right wing, the German social democrats stood full square, as they proved in 1914, for the defence of private property, even though their party's programme was formally Marxist.

**Unwilling and unable to fight fascism, the German social democrats and trade union leaders made plans to preserve their bureaucracies under a fascist regime. Rather than stand with the working class and fight the fascist menace, the social-democratic leaders prepared to sell out the workers in order to save for themselves their widely spread privileges and wealth.**

### Revolution feared

The staff of the German labour bureaucracy was three times as large as that of Krupp's huge enterprise, numbering over 300,000 in all. It published over 200 periodicals, two-thirds of which were daily papers.

All this, and a lot more, the leading social democrats stood to lose if the employers decided to bring in the Nazis. And fearing revolution more than fascism, the bureaucracy in

# The example of Germany

Germany began negotiations with the Nazis on the position of labour under the Nazi regime. As if there could be more than one position!

The existence of social democracy, whether in power or opposition, means that the working class maintains a degree of organisational independence from the employers and the state.

When the ruling class decides, as it did in Germany and Italy, and is now considering in Britain, to end this organisational independence, the fascists are used to wipe out the whole workers' movement that has been built up over a century or more of class struggle.

The fascists sweep away not only the most class-conscious workers—this has sometimes been the role of social-democratic regimes—they murder and imprison even the most craven of right-wingers—even those who seek to do a deal with the fascists at the expense of the workers.

But no deal is possible with fascism. It aims not only at the elimination of the revolutionary party of the working class, but at the very existence

by **ROBERT BLACK**

of the proletariat other than its function as a source of profit to the employer.

**Social democracy cannot exist when all forms of class organisation are denied to the workers. So it would be a great mistake, if, out of hatred for the right wing and its betrayals, workers were to fail to distinguish between Gunter and Brown with all their plans for a wage freeze and state unions, and fascism, which is implacably hostile to any form of labour organisation—even of the Gunter-Brown type.**

This sectarian error was utilised to fantastic lengths by Stalin in his fight against the right opposition of Bukharin in the Comintern after 1928. After the wild swing to the left during the forced collectivisation of the peasantry in the Soviet Union, which Bukharin opposed, Stalin equated fascism and social democracy.

In Germany, because they both upheld the capitalist system, fascism and social democracy were said to be not antipodes but twins.

Even more extreme Communist Party members were encouraged to direct all their abuse not only at the fascists but at social democratic workers, alliances being made with the Nazis for this purpose.

Thus both Stalinist and social democratic wings of the German labour movement came together to hand over the working class, bound hand and foot, to the Nazis. Perhaps the two most humiliating documents of the

labour movement were published at that time.

One, by the German trade unions, celebrated the victory of the Nazis and called for May Day collaboration:

'We certainly need not strike our colours in order to recognise that victory of National Socialism, though won in struggle against a party which we used to consider as the embodiment of the idea of socialism (the S.P.D.) is our victory as well because, today, the socialist task is put to the whole Nation.' [My emphasis—R.B.]

### Bureaucratic paralysis

The Comintern bulletin 'Rundschau' provides the other example of this bureaucratic paralysis that gripped the German working class. A week after the complete triumph of the Nazis, 'Rundschau' bragged on April 1:

'The momentary calm after the victory of fascism is only a passing phenomenon. The rise of the revolutionary tide in Germany will inevitably continue. The resistance of the masses against fascism will inevitably increase. The open dictatorship of fascism destroys all democratic illusions, frees the masses from the influence of the social demo-

cratic party and thus accelerates the speed of Germany's march towards the proletarian revolution.'

Both Stalin, the ultra-left, and Leiber, the ultra-right trade union leader, accepted as inevitable the victory of fascism.

Stalin, safe in the Kremlin, had to wait until 1941 to admire at first hand his own handiwork, but Leiber, despite all his belly crawling before the Nazis, despite his own 'declaration of intent', finished up in a Nazi gaol.

All the organisations of the German working class were closed down. Trade union buildings were occupied on May 2 and declared Nazi property. In their place, state trade unions, the Labour Front, run by employers and fascist stooges, supervised the increased exploitation of the working class.

According to Nazi figures, accidents at work increased from 827,000 in 1932 to 1,766,800 in 1937, while hours worked went up in the same period by 15 per cent. Wages fell by 3 per cent even with the increased hours worked while food prices rose by 19½ per cent.

### Strike offence

To force similar conditions upon the British working class, the employers will have to break down all organised resistance by the working class. Actions such as the postmen's in the summer, and now the bus workers, become capital offences under a fascist dictatorship. And there is a great similarity between the retreats of German social democracy before Hitler and the anti-working class and racialist measures introduced by the Labour government over the last three months.

In each case, where the Labour government retreats before the Tories, where it supports the bankers against the old age pensioners, the violence of the police against the youth, it prepares not only another 1931 but a 1933.

The Young Socialists know that the biggest blow struck against the racialists in Southall was by the immigrant and British workers at the Woolff rubber factory in defence of their trade union rights.

### Override racialism

Their strike, successful after two weeks in the face of bitter opposition from union officials and Stalinists as well as the racialists, was worth a hundred speeches or laws against race hatred.

This victory proved that in struggles against the employers, class consciousness can override racial feelings, however deeply ingrained.

After Leyton, more and more adult members of the Labour Party and trade unions, who, out of class solidarity, were willing to 'give Wilson a chance' against the Tories, will see that the only way to hit back at the Tories and their racialist allies is to fight for socialist policies and leadership inside the Labour Party.

In this fight, they will receive tremendous inspiration from the example of the Young Socialists, who, in their campaign to back-date the old age pensions, have given new vigour to older layers of workers who for many years have become reconciled to the right-wing dictating terms in the Labour Party.

Given this leadership, the working class can be united against its enemies both within the movement and outside it, and so prevent the disaster suffered by the German workers in 1933.

# Sterling's world role under pressure

**THE** measures taken by the Labour government to resolve the problems of British capitalism have so far had little effect. That is the message of the latest trade figures for January.

Exports have failed to revive, the import surcharge has not had the desired effect on checking imports sufficiently to close the trade gap and the 7 per cent Bank Rate has failed to pull back to London the funds which poured out during the autumn.

The balance of payments crisis thus asserts itself with growing force, restricting every action of a government unable to move outside the limits set by the City of London and the big foreign banks.

It now seems certain that the April budget will bring measures to cut demand in the home market, reduce earnings and raise profits. Notions of a 4 per cent rate of growth, or the maintenance of full employment will have to go overboard.

The goal of maintaining the world position of sterling, which the Labour government has accepted at the behest of the City financiers, in fact makes it more difficult for British industry to adapt itself to hold its place in world markets.

As a writer in the current 'Times Literary Supplement' puts it: 'The time for the breathing space that a devaluation might have given has now passed and there seems no alternative to fairly steady stagnation and decline.'

De Gaulle chooses the moment of British capitalism's deepest crisis since 1931 to chime in with a call for a return to the gold standard. The Bank of France has continued to

change dollar reserves for gold. This French attack on the present world monetary system has met with a solid wall of opposition in Britain and the United States. But why has the challenge been made at this time, and what does it signify?

### The gold standard

Before 1914 the City of London dominated world finance and trade, despite the growth of powerful industrial rivals to British capitalism. The pound sterling was convertible into gold at a fixed rate and all the major currencies were linked with gold.

The gold standard, at this time, was really a sterling standard, since the pound was by far the principal currency used in international financial transactions. London was the great creditor, and its financial institutions waxed rich.

Under the gold standard each country had to adhere to 'the rules of the game'. If it lost gold, owing to a balance of payments deficit, it had to raise interest rates and reduce the supply of credit to business through the operations of the central bank.

This encouraged its exports, discouraged imports and brought about movements of funds which tended to re-establish equilibrium. This was brought about through the market, not by state intervention. In fact, under the full gold standard, internal economic policy was not controlled by the government at all.

That was not so bad as long as capitalism was expanding on a world scale.

After 1914, however, the system became subject to shocks and crises which made it impossible to restore the gold standard in its pre-1914 form. Sterling had lost its former position; the dollar emerged as a serious rival and New York became the main

source of new loans. Monetary stability was temporarily restored on the basis of the gold exchange standard. The main currencies were still valued in terms of gold, which remained the ultimate means of settling international payments, but each national currency was now managed by its central bank.

It was now possible, therefore, for internal policy, to a certain extent, to be disengaged from the foreign payments position.

In short, the internal note issue was no longer linked to gold;

by **TOM KEMP**

the gold reserves in the central bank were used to underpin the external value of the currency only.

Under this system sterling and the dollar assumed the role of 'key currencies', used alternatively with gold.

Countries without much gold could thus back their national monetary unit with sterling or dollar balances.

### The International Monetary Fund

Under the pressure of the world economic depression of the 1930s, the international monetary system plunged into chaos. Exchange rates fluctuated as each country sought to gain trade at the expense of its rivals.

Any idea that the internal position should be subject to gold movements became unacceptable. Exchange controls and trade regulations were adopted. This tended to depress the total volume of trade and prevented the recovery from the depression being more than partial.

In the closing stages of the Second World War a meeting was held at a place called Bretton Woods to consider the post-war monetary set-up, under the auspices of the United States and Great Britain.

The idea was to ensure the predominance of the dollar and the pound while restoring some measure of stability to the world's currencies.

At the same time, it was seen that owing to the war and the great disparity between the economic strength of the USA, and the lack of gold or foreign exchange on the part of most other countries, something would have to be done to inject some new purchasing power into the capitalist world market.

This was the origin of the International Monetary Fund

(IMF) and the World Bank.

The IMF re-established and underwrote the gold exchange standard. The gold value of the dollar remained as it had been before the war; other currencies were aligned with the dollar and thus with gold. Only limited changes in these exchange rates were permitted without prior consultation with the Fund.

At the same time, the Fund, and the Bank, could pump a certain amount of fresh purchasing power into those countries which had exhausted their credit and had balance of payments difficulties.

In the immediate post-war years the dollar assumed a dominating role in world economic relations based on the fact that only the USA could supply the commodities and purchasing power required by countries whose economies had been disrupted by the war.

A large proportion of the world's gold stock was drained away to Fort Knox before, during and after the war. The U.S., to support world capitalism, made loans and, when it was clear that her creditors could not borrow any more with any prospects of being able to repay, made gifts such as Marshall Aid.

This was the ransom paid to stave off the revolutionary threat in Europe and elsewhere.

### Changes in the 1950s

In the 1950s, however, things began to change. Britain recovered a large part of her world financial position through the role of sterling, with the approval of the U.S.

The industries of Germany, France and other continental countries were rebuilt and modernised with the direct help of, or under the umbrella of, big dollar inflows.

Dollars had also to be found to finance the Korean War, the U.S. puppet regimes—Formosa, South Korea, South Vietnam—and to extend 'aid' to various underdeveloped countries to prevent them from becoming lost to world capitalism.

Massive spending overseas was also called for to supply the huge military and naval forces extended out across the world: a further price which had to be paid to prevent revolution.

Finally, faced with the pressure on profit rates at home and growing competition abroad, U.S. business set out to buy a bigger stake in industry in the other capitalist countries.

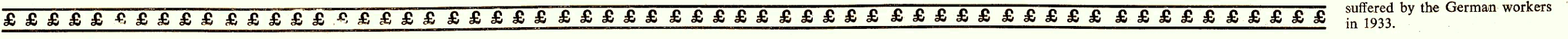
The resulting outflow of dollars has shown itself in what in the early 1950s would have seemed impossible: a U.S. balance of payments problem. In the last decade the Fort Knox gold stocks have declined by 40 per cent.

At the same time, European industries have grown considerably in output and efficiency. Countries like Germany and France now have strong balances of payments.

Moreover, they have greatly improved their position relative to Great Britain, with whom the United States government continues to retain a special association.

It is still concerned, for example, to bolster up sterling as a key currency. All the more, in fact, as other countries now have more dollars than they need—and might seek to change them for gold.

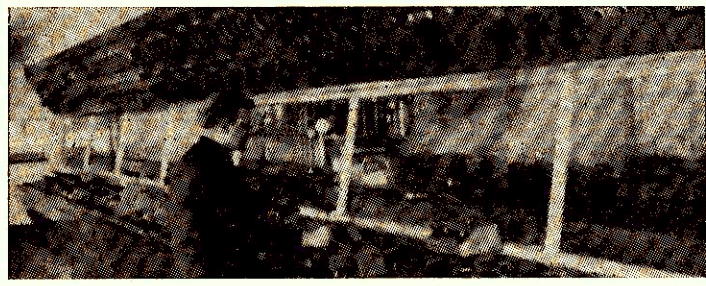
If there was a flight from





# BELGIUM

## PART ONE



# by Peter Arnold

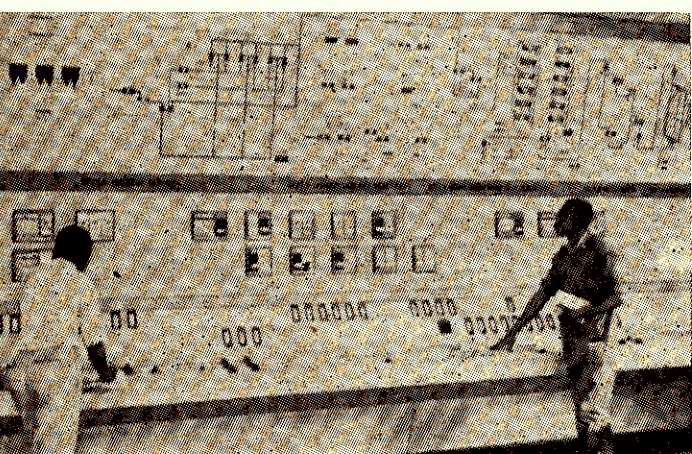
## Changing face of industry

At its conference last December, the Belgian Socialist Party proscribed the two left-wing papers 'Links' and 'La Gauche' as well as the semi-nationalist syndicalist 'Mouvement Populaire Wallon', which describes itself as 'neither a party nor a trade union'. The 'Links' group in Flanders and the Mouvement Populaire Wallon quickly came to terms with the party bureaucracy while the 'La Gauche' group in Brussels and Wallonia struck out to set up a new party.

The Newsletter intends to evaluate the importance of the split in a series of articles, beginning this week with an examination of the development of Belgian economy.



Next week, we will deal with recent developments in the working-class movement, and the role of centrism in that movement. The week after, we will examine the role of 'La Gauche' in the conflict.



The miner (centre), once the basis of Belgian industry is at the end of the road. The steel industry has been automated (top) and firms like Bell Telephone, Antwerp, move to the fore. In the Congo, automation (above) and the brutality of the mercenaries ensure the continued flow to Belgian capitalism of the profits which it needs for its own modernisation.

**L**ARGE-SCALE investment, involving the very rapid introduction of automation is radically transforming the Belgian economy.

The old industries, like coal mining and textiles, are being swept away to be replaced by the assembly lines of the automobile industry, chemicals and oil. The small factories, employing highly-skilled craftsmen are giving way to giant automated steelworks and engineering firms.

The process of monopolisation has speeded up so that the Belgian economy is now virtually the fief of one giant finance company, the Société Générale.

This company controls the Union Minière, the Forminière, the BCK railway and the cotton industry in the Congo. It controls the shipping lines that have a monopoly of the Congo trade, the shipyards which repair and build these ships and the industries that process the metals brought to Belgium in them.

In Belgium itself it controls 14 banks and finance companies, four insurance companies, 13 coal mines, five steelworks, including the giant ACEC electrical engineering works and the FN arms factory) as well as a considerable number of chemical, oil, glass, civil engineering, cement, textile, paper, sugar and other industries.

The annual report of this company is, in fact, a report on the Belgian economy. The one which it issued barely two weeks ago is entirely devoted to automation, the effects it will have on the Belgian economy, and the measures which must be taken to speed up the process.

It calls for greater monopolisation, necessary to take advantage of the latest industrial techniques, and greater co-operation between those giant monopolies already in existence; (what parts of the Belgian economy are not controlled by the Société Générale, are controlled by four or five other giant trusts like Solvay, Bruhna and the Banque Lambert).

It also calls upon the government for more direct co-operation between the state and private industry.

It warns that despite the enormous expansion that has taken place since 1959, profits have not expanded and that far closer co-operation is needed if the process is to continue, especially as competition from Germany, France and Italy increases as the Common Market barriers are lowered.

### Oldest European Capitalism

Belgium is the oldest capitalist country on Continental Europe and its industry was centred on the coalfields in the south in the regions of the Borinage, the Centre, Charleroi and Liège.

The high quality anthracite mined in this area quickly attracted to it steel and engineering industries. Liège and Charleroi developed into major industrial towns. This area remained until very recently the only really industrialised part of the country.

Flanders, with the exception of Antwerp and Ghent, remained rural and backward. What coal there was in Limburg, East Flanders, did not give rise to any major industry, but went to supply the blast furnaces of Liège.

The superficial division of Belgium into Flemish-speaking North and the French-speaking South, with Brussels as the administrative capital, obscured the real division of the country into the heavily industrialised south and the agricultural and Catholic north.

It is precisely this division that is being swept away by the new industries created in Belgium today, industries that are not based upon coal and steel, but upon electronics and modern production methods.

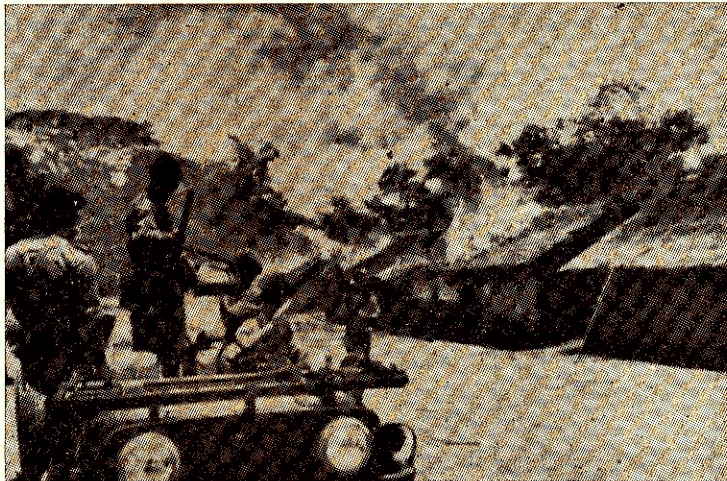
By far the greater part of the new investment is taking place in Flanders. The reasons for this are not difficult to find.

Industry grew up in the south at a period when capitalism was developing. The working class there has a long history of organised struggle—the Belgian Socialist Party antedates the British Labour Party by a considerable period.

The struggles of the workers in this area have forced the capitalists to grant some real concessions, at least as far as wages are concerned. Liège, for example, boasts some of the highest wages in Europe.

The ruling class were able to grant these concessions to the organised workers in the south on the basis of the super profits drawn from the Congo.

These concessions, in their turn, enabled the ruling class to control the labour movement to some extent, through the bureaucracies in the Belgian Socialist Party and in the trade unions, which also rested on the proceeds of the super-exploitation in the Congo.



The Congo: mercenaries burn a village

The army and the missionaries in the Congo, the priests in Flanders, and the labour bureaucracies in Wallonia maintained the rule of Belgian capital.

High wages of the Walloon workers rested on the brutality in the Congo and the ignorance of Flanders, and in their turn prevented the Walloon workers from freeing themselves from capitalist exploitation.

### Profits From the Congo

The regime in the Congo was particularly brutal.

Large concerns there operated on a basis of forced labour, the tribes having to surrender men for certain periods. These unfortunate were subjected to such intensive exploitation in the mines and plantations that by 1919, barely 30 years after Belgian occupation, and only 13 years after industry started there in a big way, a special commission estimated that the population of the Congo had fallen by one-half.

Skilled labour was imported from Europe, the Africans being reserved for sweated jobs, until the railway strike of 1920, when the white railway workers formed a trade union. The strike was won, but the workers concerned were soon despatched back to Europe, and African workers taken on to do more skilled work.

After this, the most repressive measures were used against any attempt by the workers to organise. Trade unions were not recognised by the employers in the Congo until 1959, just one year before 'independence'.

Strikes were put down with the utmost ruthlessness.

In December 1941, when the miners of the Union Minière at Lubumbashi struck for higher wages, the 'force publique' intervened, killing 60 of them. When the dockers at Matadi struck four years later, a similar intervention was made, and seven strikers were killed.

The trade union bureaucracy in Belgium tolerated these conditions in the Congo.

All white unions were formed in the Congo during the war, but these often took the side of the employers against the black workers.

After the war, the Socialist 'Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique' (FGTB) set up the FGTB-Congo, but this aimed to set up separate unions for African and European workers. It was not until 1956 that the FGTB even declared its intention to create 'mixed' unions.

In 1958 the ratio of wages between black and white workers was 33:1, and the average wage of a black industrial worker was 908 francs per month (about £6 10s.). The wages of agricultural workers were even lower.

These methods enabled companies like the Union Minière, the Forminière, the BCK railway, Unilever and others to make enormous profits. The Union Minière, which is a combination of Belgian, British and American capital made between 2.5 and 4.5 billion francs profit per year. It stretched over an area bigger than Belgium and Luxemburg combined.

Whilst the Congo was directly under Belgian rule, the Belgian government had theoretical control over these big firms through the Comité Spécial du Katanga (CSK).

In fact, it did not exercise any control, merely allowing the firms a free hand.

With the rioting that led up to independence in 1960, and the likelihood that Lumumba would use the CSK, which was to revert to the Congolese government on independence, against Belgian interests, the Belgian government dissolved the CSK on June 27, 1960, three days before 'independence'.

This was the first move in the struggle to retain the vast wealth of the Congo by Belgian capital. The murder of Lumumba, the secession of Katanga, the intervention of the United Nations, and finally the installation of Tshombe as prime minister were continuations of this.

Profits of the Union Minière continue to flow into Belgium. There has been some drop, but the company's reports see this as a temporary phenomenon, produced by the 'disorder' rather than a long-term trend.

Heavy investment in automation in the Congo, combined with repression by the mercenaries against the Congolese ensure the continuation of the profits and the flow of cheap copper, cobalt,

tungsten, cadmium, germanium, radium and other rare metals so important to modern electrical, electronic and nuclear industries.

### Transformation of Flanders

The Congo continues to play an important role in Belgian capitalism, supplying cheaply the materials for the new automated industries. The spectacular rise in productivity in the Congo (over 100 per cent in the tin industry, 89 per cent in copper) are the pre-conditions for similar processes in Belgium.

Except for the ports of Ghent and Antwerp, which depended on raw materials from the Congo, there was no appreciable development of industry in Flanders.

Whilst Wallonia has the oldest working class on the continent, and a long history of struggle, Flanders remained essentially a peasant area, with low wages and strongly in the grips of the Catholic church. The lack of traditional raw materials in the area (except for the Limburg coalfield, which supplied Liège) made it unfavourable for traditional capitalist development.

But it is precisely these disadvantages which make it so attractive to capitalists today. Cheap labour with no experience of struggle, controlled by the church, seems ideally suited to the production lines of Ford and General Motors.

In fact, the transformation of Flanders is spectacular. Modern factories are springing up everywhere, rapidly reversing the old situation in which the south was the industrialised area.

The port of Antwerp, which prospered after 1945, because it had not been destroyed during the war and was thus able to capture much of Hamburg and Rotterdam's trade, is now being modernised.

An entirely new section, almost as big as the existing installation, already the second biggest port on the continent, is being constructed, stretching right up to the Dutch border.

When complete, it will be the most modern port in Europe. A Bill has just been voted through Parliament to construct a canal linking Antwerp to the Rhine.

The shipyards have already been modernised, being fitted out with ultra-modern cranes, capable of lifting entire sections of prefabricated ship into place, electronic devices for programmed plate cutting, entirely welded shipbuilding and so on.

In Ghent, the most modern steelworks in Europe, Sidmar, is under construction. Built on the banks of the ship canal, it will have a port inside the works and will have every latest device in steel making from the very beginning.

Even the mines in Limburg have undergone intensive modernisation, making them competitive with the most modern German coal mines.

### End of the Coal Industry

In Wallonia, the same process gives rise to very different superficial effects. Instead of new industries springing up everywhere, there are dying villages, closing mines and factories and the fear of coming unemployment.

The Borinage coal mining area was the first and hardest hit. After the defeat of the 1959 strike against the closures, nothing held back the capitalists.

In the one year 1959-60 20,000 jobs were eliminated in the mines. Over 30,000 have been eliminated to date in the Borinage alone. Only three pits are left in the area and they are scheduled to close before long.

In the Centre there were 18,700 miners in 1956, but only 4,600 last year. Last month it was announced that 8,000 jobs were being suppressed in the Liège area through pit closures, and the process goes on.

The pit closures are the centre of a vast speculative racket, with the giant trusts playing a big part.

Just before the closures were put into effect, intensive modernisation suddenly began to take place. The company owning the mine bought expensive equipment, at inflated prices with a government subsidy, from firms which, though on paper independent, are in fact owned by the same company.

The mine was then closed and inflated compensation paid for the now 'ultra-modern' mine. (This could reach ridiculous proportions: in 1960 the pit at

Wandre was closed while the modern equipment was still being installed!)

The material was then sold back to the original manufacturer, who, naturally, would only take the 'second-hand' goods at rock bottom prices.

Fortunately, the government intervened here again to compensate the company for this grievous loss! 60 billion francs were paid out in these subsidies.

For the miners, the picture was quite different. Money wages in the Borinage dropped by 9 per cent between 1957 and 1961.

When the mines closed, many of the foreign workers simply moved back to their home countries.

Of the native Borins, many moved out of the area altogether. Of those who stayed, 4,200 commute to work every day across the border to France and 5,000 to Brussels and Charleroi and even to the new industries in Flanders.

This can add up to six hours travelling time onto the working day of these commuters.

The Borinage today is a series of villages, old and decaying, completely deserted by day. Wasmes, for example, once a prosperous mining village of some 13,000 inhabitants, now has 80 per cent of its male population pensioners.

New industry is moving into the area, with the same characteristics as 'directed' industry in this country.

Only 3,000 jobs are provided by the new firms, which use all the latest techniques, and wages in them are low—under 30 francs an hour (whereas a miner would earn more than twice this amount).

Recently a new firm in Ghlin advertised 10 jobs—and received 70 applications.

These firms, mostly light industry and mostly American capital, like the Weyerhaeuser cardboard box factory, the Verlica bottle factory, the Bell telephone, and Warner Bros. underwear, do not attract the former miners.

They mostly employ women, and the former petty-bourgeoisie of the area, the cafe owners, grocers and others, ruined since the miners moved out.

For those who remain in the mines throughout Belgium, exploitation has increased greatly. The total number of miners has dropped from 105,588 in 1958 to 64,400 in 1963. But production per man shift has risen from 1,262 kilos to 1,820 kilos in the same period.

The mines in the Centre have suffered the same fate as those in the Borinage, as has the traditional industry of the region: the manufacture of railway rolling stock.

In 1945, the traditional markets for this industry, in Eastern Europe, were lost, but the effect was not immediately felt, as the entire railway system of Western Europe needed re-stocking.

There was work not only for the firms in the Centre, but also for the modern factory built by the Société Générale, 'Brugoise et Nivelles'. This period ended in the fifties, and by 1956, there were only 1,500 jobs left in the industry in the Centre.

Some medium-sized works, like Boël and Gilson, still remain, but modernisation has been limited by the size of the plants, and workers in the area fear that these firms will not survive another depression.

Here, too, assembly line factories have moved in to take advantage of the suppression of jobs and Rover, Moskvitch and Skoda cars are assembled at Senefle. Another rolling stock works has been converted to produce half-track, anti-riot vehicles for the police.

About 9,000 workers are estimated to commute from this area to other parts of Belgium and to France every day.

### Development of Giant Factories

In Charleroi and Liège, the closure of the mines and of the small old-fashioned factories has gone hand in hand with the enormous development of the big firms in these towns, especially of the big five—the three steelworks of Cockerill-Ougrée (Liège), Esperance-Longdoz (Liège), and La Providence (Charleroi), and the FN arms factory (Liège) and the ACEC electrical engineering firm (Charleroi).

Investment in the steel firms has been enormous. Cockerill-Ougrée have just completed an investment programme of 12 billion francs.

New automated blast furnaces have been installed, as well as continuous process plant, new processes using pure oxygen are being experimented with, and by mid-1965 the firm will open a new mill using the LD process which will be the largest and the most modern to date.

Production has risen continuously and manpower has dropped from 21,000 in 1948 to 15,000 this year.

Mechanisation has not been confined to the sheds—one man now prepares the wage packets for the entire firm. The same processes have been taking place in the other two big firms.

When taken in conjunction with the construction of Sidmar, this represents a formidable change in the steel industry.

In ACEC and the FN the

pattern is similar. Production rises, whilst the total number of workers is falling.

Because the re-equipment of Belgian industry has coincided with the continued boom in Europe, it has not been accompanied by any major unemployment.

But those who take this to mean that it has not involved any suffering by the workers and that 'neo-capitalism' has solved the problems which obsessed nineteenth century socialists, are closing their eyes to reality.

So far, the boom has prevented any of the underlying tendencies from manifesting themselves. But once the boom ends, the changes that have been quantitatively building up over the past few years will appear as a full qualitative change in the relation between the classes in Belgium.

Those ex-miners who commute to France, Holland and Germany for work will be the first declared redundant when the industries in these countries contract.

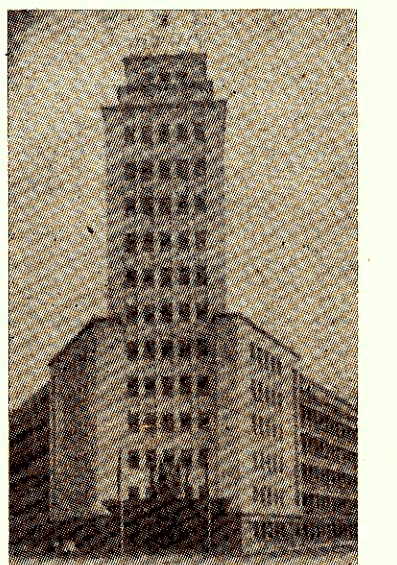
Similarly, those workers who are employed, and who continue to find employment in those small and medium-size firms which exist, despite technological backwardness, thanks to the high prices that accompany the boom, will also soon find their way to the dole queues.

And there is every likelihood that these firms will not reopen after the depression.

### The Assault on Wages

At the same time, the employers are rapidly creating a stratum of 'under-workers', composed of women, youth and foreigners.

These workers, hired either at lower wages or with no security of tenure or, in the case of youth and foreign workers, no political rights, are part of an offensive to break the organised, militant working class of Wallonia and transform them into docile material suitable for assembly line production.



Flanders: Bell Telephone Co., Antwerp

The run-down of manpower in the large plants that were automated, for example, hit hardest at the youth and at the older workers as well as at the militant trade unionists.

In Cockerill-Ougrée in Liège, no actual sackings as such took place. But older workers were retired, forcibly, five years prematurely.

The company boasted of the pension received during those five years as being 'far higher than the normal retirement pension given by the state'. This is perhaps true. But it was also far lower than the wages those workers would have received had they remained in employment.

The run-down has also been accompanied by an offensive by the employers against 'the rigidity' of the 45-hour week—with constant attempts to impose excessive overtime working.

Just as in the Antwerp shipyards, the building of entirely welded ships has led to welders working shifts of 16 hours and even more at a stretch, the same process is true in the 'agglomeration' shops in Cockerill-Ougrée.

Shift work is almost universal throughout Belgian industry, even for women, although they do not have to work the night shift.

The youth were affected by the great contraction of new jobs offered by the firm. Many have to go to find work in small firms—yet these are the very firms that are being forced out of business by automation of the big ones.

The youth are used for the most intensive work that accompanies the introduction of new processes. In the FN factory, young girls earn about five shillings an hour working five machines at the same time.

In the Bell telephone factory in Antwerp, cutting machines which make one cut every two seconds are operated by one youth, where previously two skilled men operated a machine that made one cut a minute.

Greater 'flexibility' is gained by the metal factories in Liège by the use of women workers. Not only are their wages much lower than men's wages, but they can also be hired and fired much more easily.

In the Cuivre et Zinc works, women workers do heavy work, straightening defective tubes for

(Cont. p. 4, col. 1)





# Call for united action against compulsory overtime Mersey dockers protest at suspension

## Pattern changed in clothing pay award

**C**LOTHING workers have just been awarded a meagre pay increase of twopence an hour for women and twopence threefarthings for men.

Whilst clothing workers welcomed the reduction of the working week from 42 hours to 41 hours they recognise that the pay for a straight 41-hour week is inadequate and that overtime has to be worked so that they can take a reasonable wage home.

This time the pattern of the wage increase has changed. In the past the executive board have called district meetings of the members so that the members can discuss the recommended increase and then vote for or against the acceptance of the increase.

This time the meeting in Leeds was called, after some delay, and at the beginning members were told by the chairman that an executive board representative would make a statement and then there would be questions and discussion but that no vote would take place.

The excuse given was that the executive board had already accepted the increase on the members' behalf.

This, the meeting was told, was done in order to save time.

### OPPOSED

During the discussion speaker after speaker opposed the recommended increase. Many pointed out that once again less had been accepted for the women than for the men. This they said was against union principles.

The chairman accepted a resolution from the floor that deprecated the action of the executive board in accepting the increase over the heads of the members.

It insisted that in the future such decisions should be taken by the members.

It was pointed out that the executive board's excuse of time saving was rubbish.

Later in the meeting supporters of the executive started to boo and catcall at a speaker who was supporting the resolution.

The chairman, instead of calling them to order, used the disturbance as an excuse for losing the meeting even though demands that the vote be taken were made.

## Belgium

**From page 3**  
little more than three shillings per hour. If they are under 21, they earn a mere two shillings. Also, whenever there is no work, when a contract is completed, they are simply sacked until the next contract begins. Some women in this factory are unemployed for two months out of every eight—and the pattern is the same in the FN, where large-scale sackings follow the completion of each jet engine. As these workers then return to being 'housewives', they do not appear on the unemployment statistics, and everyone's conscience is clear.

In Brussels, some of the new one-man buses and trams are operated by women. These women are taken on as 'temporary' workers, which means that they can be fired with no notice, they do not benefit from the automatic pay rises given to the 'permanent' workers, neither do they have any pensions rights.

A woman only becomes 'permanent' after five years 'temporary' work!

The foreign workers are used in the same way. Although they are often paid the same wages as adult Belgian workers, they too enable greater 'flexibility'.

They have virtually no rights in Belgium. Their passports, in many cases, are removed by their employers to prevent them from leaving to take jobs with higher wages (this is particularly true of the Turks employed in the mines).

Unaccustomed to industrial work, they do not have the same traditions as the Belgian workers. In the FN the girls say that 'the

## suspension

By Peter Kerrigan (NASD)

**D**OCKERS throughout the Merseyside ports stopped work on Wednesday this week to join a demonstration of protest whilst an appeal against the suspension of 12 men was being heard.

The gang of 12 were given seven days' suspension some weeks ago after refusing to accept Saturday overtime.

They have appealed against the suspension which amounts to a fine of over £20 or more.

A resolution was passed by 3,000 dockers calling for a demonstration to be held on the day of the appeal and calling for a campaign to get the support of every docker on the Merseyside.

The resolution warned the employers that if the suspension continued, a call would be made for a complete ban on week-end working.

This fight against compulsory overtime is not a new one for the dockers. Over ten years ago they fought a national strike for one month over the question.

Part of the recommendation then agreed upon before the men resumed work was: 'that should any docker be penalised for refusing to work overtime, then further national action would be taken...'

Since 1954 no London dockers have been suspended but in Liverpool dockers are still fighting over this issue.

### Agreement

On Merseyside there is an agreement that dockers under the threat of suspension should work two hours' overtime from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Monday to Thursday inclusive.

They are allowed to knock off at 5 p.m. on Friday. If the ship on which the dockers are working is due to sail, then they are forced to work on after the 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. period—if necessary until 11 p.m. not only Monday to Thursday but Friday as well.

Under this agreement dockers can work as many as 40 hours a week—there is no 40-hour week for them.

Last August at the national ports liaison committee held in Hull, London dockers are reported to have expressed surprise at the fact that northern dockers are still suspended for refusing overtime.

At that time it is claimed that they declared that the whole of London would take action if any docker was suspended for such a reason.

In such struggles the northern dockers are well aware that they will not be left on their own to fight on this issue.

It could well be that if the present attack by the employers on the northern dockers continues, what has already been fought for and established in London might have to be fought for again

bosses like the foreign girls because they work so much harder'. In times of contraction, they can simply be sent home. Once again the unemployment statistics are preserved.

Whilst they remain, they are subjected to the harshest conditions. In the mines many of these workers are forced to live in huts on the mine premises themselves.

Their lack of political rights, the language barrier, and the inactivity of the bureaucracies regarding the problems of these workers, and the constant threat of deportation make these workers 'easy meat' for the employers.

It is the conditions of the young workers and the foreign workers that are setting the pattern for modern Belgian industry. These are the norms that the employers will attempt to spread to the rest of industry when they can.

In the case of public transport, they have already gained some successes.

Belgium in 1965 is very different from what it was even as little as five years ago.

The division of the country into an industrial and a primarily rural area no longer holds.

The rapid development of Flanders and Brussels and the creation of enormous potential unemployment and super-exploitation in Wallonia has given rise to an entirely new political situation exemplified on the one hand by the creation of the Mouvement Populaire Wallon in Wallonia and on the other, by the strikes in the Ford factory in Genk and in the Antwerp shipyards.

To understand these new developments in the light of the new industrial pattern, it is necessary to examine the working class movement in the different regions of the country.



## Loscoe housing destroying health

**S**INCE Mrs. Jackson of Loscoe (see picture of village above) refused to pay rent until repairs were done to her home, a man has come and put a couple of slates on a few roofs.

The family told The Newsletter that he was not on any roof for more than ten minutes.

The pavements are now littered with slates again after last week-end's wind.

Another youngster, the 4-year-old son of Marie Smith in Albion Street, is in hospital with pneumonia.

In the back bedroom, half the ceiling is down.

Marie Smith and her three children sleep in the front bedroom. Her son had always been the healthiest one of the family, but his bed always got wet when it rained.

Marie, 6-year-old Bernadette and the baby share a little bed under the window, which has been broken for weeks.

They are unable to repair it themselves because, after paying for coal, rent and diet, they have £4 7s. to live on. The landlord has done nothing.

The council have promised them a re-let house. Four have recently been handed out, but not to them.

The ceiling below their bedroom is coming down from the damp in two places. Bernadette is in and out of hospital, and Marie has chronic bronchitis and chronic asthma.

Loscoe housing is destroying the health of its people. But the landlord does token repairs and re-lets the houses as fast as they become vacant. Featherstone housing committee promised to stop this. So far they have done nothing.

## Saturday stoppages hit Yorks towns

**W**ORKERS employed by private bus companies last Saturday launched the biggest one-day stoppage so far in the present struggle in Yorkshire.

Big towns that were hit included Leeds, Halifax, Dewsbury, Castleford, Wakefield, Hull, Bradford and Goole.

The bus companies concerned were The West Riding Automobile Company (Wakefield), The Yorkshire Woollen District Transport Company (Dewsbury), the Yorkshire Traction Company (Barnsley), Hebble Motor Services, Halifax County Motors, Burrows & Sons, Wombwell; South Yorkshire Motors, Pontefract, and East Yorkshire Motor Services Ltd.

### COMPLETE

In Halifax there was a complete stoppage of the Hebble Services to Bradford, Leeds, Rochdale and Burnley and at Bradford only half the Hebble morning shift turned up for work.

For the second week running 1,000 workers employed by the Yorkshire Woollen District Transport Company struck in Dewsbury. None of the company's 276 buses and coaches left the depots at Heckmondwike, Liversedge or Savile Town.

Osset and Horbury were cut off by the strike of workers employed by the Yorkshire Woollen Company and the West Riding Automobile Company. Bradford Corporation busmen

refused to travel into Barnsley, on routes affected by striking busmen.

1,500 drivers and conductors of the West Riding Automobile Company stopped work and affected Wakefield, Castleford, Featherstone, Selby, Pontefract, Goole, Barnsley, Sheffield, Doncaster and Bradford, plus many small villages.

One small private company, Larratt Pepper and Sons Ltd, attempted to run services into Barnsley from Thurnscoe but the first bus to call at Barnsley bus station had to be given police protection, and the company withdrew the service.

A few days before, a meeting of the Joint Depots Committee had decided by a small majority against taking action.

Discontent at wages and conditions, however, burst through the barriers put up by what one busman called the 'pacifists' on the committee.

A meeting of busmen at the South Shields depot of the 'Northern Company' decided on a one-day stoppage.

The following day, busmen at the North Shields depot of the Tynemouth Company agreed to join the strike. Six busmen voted against the one-day strike but this was because some of them wanted to go further.

At Wallsend, 70 busmen employed by the Tyneside Company agreed unanimously to join and later in the day busmen at the Northern Company depot in Gateshead supported the strike.

So far, the employers have refused to increase their offer of 8s. 6d. increase.

Rank and file busmen are thoroughly fed up with the delaying tactics of their employers and union leaders.

There is a meeting of the National Council of the industry on Wednesday.

There will be depot meetings in the following days and only a substantial increase by the employers will stop further action.

# Nottingham—four bus companies brought to a halt

By a Newsletter Correspondent

**A** strike on Saturday, February 13, brought all routes operated by the four major companies in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire to a halt.

The busmen were demanding a speed-up in their pay claim negotiations which have taken an interminable time.

● **Trent Motor Traction Co. Ltd.** No services were operated by any of the depots at Ashbourne, Alfreton, Belper, Derby, Hucknall, Loughborough, Mansfield and Shipley and Nottingham. 340 buses were idle.

● **Mansfield & District Traction Co. Ltd.** All 120 buses were in the garage. The previous evening four drivers were in the garage to take out, on overtime, dance specials. They could not get through the picket line and the management called in the police. The pickets were told to be peaceful, but by the time they had finished arguing it was too late for the specials to go out.

● **East Midland Motor Services Ltd.** Depots at Mansfield, Shirebrooke, Worksop, Clowne, Retford and Chesterfield were out leaving 200 buses idle.

● **Midland General Omnibus Co. Ltd.** All doors were shut. 240 buses affected.

### NOT ASKED

Nearly 2,500 busmen took part in the stoppage. The only major company operating was Barton Transport, which has only 25 per cent trade union organisation.

A Barton driver at Mansfield claimed that they had not been asked to support the strike.

In the future, attempts must be made to organise and get the support of these busmen.

Crews of the East Midlands and Mansfield Traction are in the National Union of Railwaymen whilst others are in the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Many busmen insist that all crews should be in one union otherwise garages are split.

At Nottingham a Trent conductor said: 'It is a success as

## Tyneside busmen express discontent

**T**YNESIDE busmen employed by private companies stopped work for 24 hours last Saturday in support of their demand for more pay.

A few days before, a meeting of the Joint Depots Committee had decided by a small majority against taking action.

Discontent at wages and conditions, however, burst through the barriers put up by what one busman called the 'pacifists' on the committee.

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Another conductor stated: 'This is not the end of it, if we get no satisfaction at the Wednesday meeting of the Joint Industrial Council, there's no telling what we will do.'

'We get up at 4 in the morning when we are on early and when we are on later we don't get home till one o'clock in the morning. We work Saturdays and Sundays.'

'All we get is £11 4s. per week.'

He said that many passengers were sympathetic but a lot of them did not realise just what awkward hours busmen worked for such a small wage. 'We don't want them to think we are only to upset them but it is the only way we can fight the employers and show our solidarity.'

A driver of the Nottingham City Transport gave a letter of support to Trent pickets at the Nottingham depot.

It said: 'We fully support the Trent men and consider that it is necessary for all provincial and municipal busmen to prepare and fight struggles together... that £15. offered to municipal busmen was worth nothing since the Arbitration Tribunal had only granted it because the cost of living had gone up 10/6 a week.'

### BACKDATED

It is now clear that all busmen must demand an increase of no less than £2 per week backdated to when negotiations first began.

Only with the unity of provincial and municipal busmen can they hope to win.

Throughout the country busmen have shown that they can and will fight. But in isolation they can only get demoralised.

Course, fuster the isolation by stating, for example, that branches can only send correspondence to other branches demanding inter-depot committees through the Regional Trade Groups.

All rank and file busmen must demand in their union branches that co-ordinating committees with delegates from all garages and all companies and municipalities in the Midlands be set up.

## Sterling

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prevent a general depression on the scale of the 1930s.

He therefore advocates the return to a full gold standard, which will impose on the participating countries the observance of rigid rules, especially the need to deflate internal prices and incomes to correct a balance of payments deficit.

Such an argument appeals only to the financially strong countries like France or Germany which have ample reserves of foreign exchange.

Britain and the U.S. can be expected to fight tooth-and-nail against the Ruff scheme, since they have much to gain from the present international monetary system.

To restore the full gold standard would render difficult, if not impossible, the continued take-over of European business by U.S. capital. It would make the pound a second-rate currency and, if grass would not actually grow in the streets of the City of London, the bottom would fall out of some very

lucrative businesses, precipitating a crisis here which would leave 1931 far behind.

U.S. capitalism is now in the fifth year of a boom which, for all the existence of some five million unemployed in the U.S. has meant a rare harvest for business.

Yet this expansion takes place against a general backcloth of great uncertainty.

The French offensive is certainly most unwelcome at this time, as unwelcome as the sterling crisis.

What it seems likely to lead to, in the immediate period, is a closer monetary arrangement between the members of the European Common Market which will hit both the USA and Britain and make the economic future for both more uncertain than it already is.

But time is creeping up on the European economies too.

The forces of expansion which produced the economic 'miracles' are on the wane. The bitter quarrels over monetary policy are symptoms of a deep-going instability in world capitalism.