

# THE NEWSLETTER

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## LANCS MINERS GAGGED BY UNION BOSSES

By WILLIAM HUNTER

**L**ANCASHIRE miners who took part in the rank-and-file miners' demonstration against pit closures in London on January 8 were under attack at last Saturday's area conference of the National Union of Mineworkers.

At the request of the Welsh miners one Lancashire branch of the NUM—Sandhole—sent delegates to this demonstration, and other miners from the area went as individuals to demand a fighting policy from their leaders.

The Lancashire conference last week-end discussed a resolution from the area executive which 'dissociated' the area completely from 'this unofficial demonstration'.

The resolution declared that in future no delegates from branches, or officials, can attend 'any unofficial conference or demonstration' without receiving permission from the executive committee and the delegate conference.

The resolution was carried by the area conference with quite a number of delegates abstaining.

That miners' leaders put forward this resolution to strengthen the witch-hunt was shown by the statement to the Press

### WE HAVE THE BUILDERS IN . . .

Your copy of The Newsletter next week will be smaller than usual.

This is because building work is in progress at the printshop where our paper is produced, and it will not be possible to turn out the usual eight pages.

This building work is part of the necessary preparation for the expansion we are planning in the size of The Newsletter.

which Edwin Hall, area secretary, made immediately after the meeting:

'This is an answer to the Trotsky movement's call for a rank-and-file conference of miners to be held in March. The delegates made it clear that they didn't want any connexion with such a movement.'

In fact it was the rank-and-file paper the Miner which had stated its intention of calling a rank-and-file conference in March.

Right-wing leaders attacked the Miner and all forms of rank-and-file demonstration.

Mick Weaver, well-known member of the Communist Party, voted for the resolution at the EC meeting before the conference, thus helping Hall in his attack. Yet a few months ago Weaver was being threatened by the same Edwin Hall with expulsion from the union for standing as a Communist Party parliamentary candidate at Wigan. There was no hesitation on the part of supporters of The Newsletter in Lancashire pits in defending Weaver against Hall's bureaucratic threats.

At the area conference the pay-off for Weaver's action on the EC came when he tried to support a resolution calling for the area to send delegates to London to take part in this Thursday's mass lobby.

(Continued overleaf)

### 'REINSTATE OUR STEWARD OR ELSE!' SAY MEN ON DAILY MIRROR SITE

From Our Industrial Correspondent

BUILDING workers on the Daily Mirror site at Holborn Circus, London, have given W. C. French two days to reinstate their Federation steward, Brother Joe Saunders.

If he is not back on that site by Friday, January 30, the 130 men on the job will down tools again. This was the decision of a mass meeting on Wednesday.

Bro. Saunders was one of six men sacked at the end of last week for alleged bad timekeeping. The workers felt that this was an excuse to get rid of their steward, and took strike action.

They went back on Wednesday after a disputes commission had asked the union and French's to get together in order to reinstate the Federation steward.

The men are insisting that Bro. Saunders be reinstated on the Daily Mirror site, and not on some small, out-of-the-way job—a device sometimes used in the past to isolate militants.

### CONVENER BLASTS UNION LEADERSHIP: OFFICIAL FINDS THINGS 'STICKY'

TRENCHANT criticism of the attitude of the Amalgamated Engineering Union executive to the Harland and Wolff strike is expressed in a statement to The Newsletter by convener David Forfar.

'The employers hope that we will be defeated by a lack of finance—and we must also conclude that our own executive shares this viewpoint,' he declared.

'This can be the only reason for their failure to grant recognition to our strike, and so give our members dispute benefit.'

The eighty-three fitters are now in the eighth week of their strike against sackings and victimization. Glasgow district committee of the AEU has endorsed the strike three times, but the executive has twice refused recognition on the ground of 'lack of information'.

The executive's attitude is perhaps revealed by what Mr Alex Hinton, Glasgow district organizer, said in an interview with the Scotsman:

'While the executive council may have one hundred per cent. sympathy with the people in the dispute, if they recognize this dispute the employers will be down on them like a ton of bricks. It is a tremendously sticky position.'

In an effort to break the bottle-neck inside the factory the management tried to get apprentices to do the strikers' work. The lads met, decided not to touch 'black' work—and all applied to join the union.

The strike committee, which has the unanimous backing of the fitters, is mobilizing maximum support throughout Clyde-side. There is urgent need for financial help.

## COMMENTARY

### THE POISON AND THE CAGE

**T**HERE are times when socialists need to pause from their day-by-day tasks and take a long, hard look at capitalist society. We need to remind ourselves just what it is we are fighting to overthrow. This is all the more important since there are a good many 'new thinkers' about who are doing their best to convince themselves and anybody who will listen to them that capitalism is not so black as Marx painted it; that the class struggle is merely a Trotskyist dogma; that the working class is incapable of bringing a new society into being.

Two news items this past week show the rottenness if the society we live in.

British scientists working in government establishments are producing a poison called botulinus. This substance is so deadly that 8½oz of it, properly distributed, could kill everyone in the world. It will kill within six hours anyone who breathes it or touches it. British scientists are also experimenting with forty other deadly germs. Dr Brock Chisholm, former director-general of the World Health Organization, says: 'If anyone is still not convinced that war and suicide are synonymous, this should convince them.'

Whoever retains any illusions in 'western values', or fancies that there is respect for human dignity in our 'free society', let him read how at Eastleigh (Hants) the local carnival committee have a plan to put a man in a cage on show in a public park. He would stay in the 12ft by 12ft cage for eight days and nights. 'We are looking for a volunteer ready to play the part of a human ape,' said the committee secretary. 'We will offer him a gratuity of £25 plus food. Feeding times will be posted up outside the cage as in a zoo.'

Science fiction writers have sometimes used the theme of our species being nearly exterminated in a nuclear holocaust, one or two specimens of *Homo sapiens* remaining as exhibits in the zoo of some succeeding species. The British government evidently has something much more efficient than H-bombs, and no doubt much cheaper. The logical outcome of its experiments is that no one would be left to enact in reality the macabre fantasy that is to regale the good citizens of Eastleigh.

Is botulinus an impossible nightmare? Is the 'human ape' idea a triviality? If we dismiss them thus, we are blinding ourselves to the real nature of capitalism. The inner connexion between these two things is the inability of capitalism to ensure a human existence for those it exploits. Unless we destroy capitalism, it will destroy us. Unless we overthrow the system that degrades people, sucks profit out of their labour, uses them as cannon-fodder and conducts hideous experiments without consulting them, we run the risk of being poisoned or blown to pieces. Petitions, deputations, hunger strikes and heroic gestures are not enough. Working-class action aimed at working-class power alone will show the capitalist class that the workers are not 'human apes' to be exploited, poisoned or massacred—but human beings resolved to assert their humanity by wiping out an inhuman system.

### MINERS (Continued from front page)

The platform ruled that this resolution was negated as a result of the EC resolution. Thus by helping Hall shake his fist at rank-and-file militants, Weaver undermined the campaign of his own party comrades for a mass protest.

According to militant miners in Lancashire, the statements of Edwin Hall at the area conference made it quite clear that the national executive of the NUM really oppose any type of demonstration.

Having accepted pit closures, they view even the lobbying of Parliament as an embarrassment.

To accusations that unofficial activities 'disintegrate' the union—an accusation made by the NEC member for Lancashire—militant miners reply that it is the policy of the leaders which can lead to 'disintegration' of the union.

The leaders try to create illusions that miners in areas such as Lancashire can escape unemployment. They try to put barriers in the way of developing united action against National Coal Board policies.

### FISHER AND LUDLOW MEN CUT THROUGH PROCEDURE TANGLE

By Harry Finch

**O**VER a hundred crane drivers and slingers employed at Fisher and Ludlows, Birmingham, the British Motor Corporation car body factory, returned to work on Monday. By strike action they had forced a breach in the negotiating procedure.

The management has agreed to have discussion at factory level again, instead of the dispute having to go to the York central conference in three weeks' time.

The strikers had given an excellent display of solidarity in the face of vicious Press attacks. They were accused of being responsible for thousands of BMC workers' being sent home by the management.

As usual, the strikers also had to face the pressure of their own union officials, who urged them to return to work as soon as the strike began.

#### Thanks to direct action

The men had submitted a claim for a 45s. a month 'accident-free' bonus, after all other transport drivers at Fisher's had received a rise (thanks to direct action on their part).

The claim was put into the 'procedure' machine, which promptly rejected it at factory and local conference levels.

The men decided that it was no use waiting another three weeks for the York central conference, only to be told 'No' again. They decided on direct action to expedite progress.

In the view of Harold Hutchinson, of the Daily Herald, 'the men were wrong in taking direct action'. But this Fleet Street pundit does not tell them what they should have done to win their claim.

After all, these slingers and crane drivers get only £12 a week for a job requiring great skill in handling heavy car parts.

#### He condemned official stoppage

Hutchinson no doubt gets rather more than £12 a week for laying down the law to factory workers. (It was he, by the way, who in December 1953 condemned in the Daily Herald the official one-day national engineers' stoppage.)

Brother E. Jones, secretary of the local branch of the Transport and General Workers' Union and member of the TGWU executive, put the other side when he said:

'The action may be unconstitutional, but the men have got fed up with long-winded procedure that seems always to lead to "failure to agree".'

The Birmingham Mail tried to make its readers' flesh crawl when it wrote that the loss of production would mean the loss of thousands of vehicles, adding: 'The value of the lost pro-

duction is computed at between £250,000 and £500,000.'

But workers at Fisher and Ludlows told me:

**'If "they" had paid the slingers and crane drivers the 45s. a month there would not have been a strike. It would have cost the BMC only £100-odd a week—£5,400 a year. Yet they are ready to lose over £250,000 in one week rather than pay these men their just claim.'**

I asked these workers, all members of Pype Hayes branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, if there had been any hostility between the thousands who were sent home by the management and the hundred strikers.

### **'Show-down coming soon'**

They replied that in general no blame was attached to the strikers at all.

Bro. E. Bird, chief shop steward for all Fisher and Ludlow maintenance men, told me his own men had just lifted an eight-week overtime ban for the purpose of the management's renewing discussion with them on a previously rejected wage application.

He went on:

**'My men told the supervisor that if any foreman dared to try to use any of the cranes or hydraulic lifting trucks, they would all refuse to work.'**

The workers I spoke to told me that since the BMC amalgamation, they feel that Austin tactics are being introduced at Fisher's, and that a show-down is coming soon.

### **FORDS ELECTRICIANS GIVE STRIKE NOTICE**

Electrical Trades Union shop stewards at Fords, Dagenham, have given notice of strike action, expiring on Tuesday week. Four men employed on electrical work are not members of the ETU.

According to a company spokesman, a strike by electricians could bring the factory to a standstill in 'a very short time'.

### **BUILDING WORKERS' 'NO CONFIDENCE' VOTE IN WITCH-HUNTING EXECUTIVE**

**From Our Industrial Correspondent**

OVER seventy building workers, at a conference of London branches of their union, carried unanimously a resolution condemning the action of their executive in expelling and suspending members.

An addendum declaring no confidence in the executive was also carried, with four votes against.

One delegate who opposed this said some members of the executive had fought against the expulsions. Another pointed out that opposition confined to EC meetings is not real opposition.

And a veteran building worker, who said he had been a steward on fire work for years, declared:

**'In all my experience we have never won anything as a result of what they do at the top. Only when we ourselves struggle at the bottom do we gain anything.'**

The conference was opened by Mick Gammon, a suspended member of the no. 1 divisional council, who said the witch-hunted members had all been demanding a campaign to strengthen the union, and to protect victimized shop stewards.

### **Will they follow suit?**

Brian Behan asked what guarantee there was that the present leaders of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers would not follow the example set by the leaders of the National Union of Hosiery Workers, and accept a pay cut when the time came.

Winding up an excellent discussion, Bro. Gammon appealed to delegates not to regard the matter as a conflict of personalities or groups.

Unless a determined fight was waged, not only for reinstatement, but also to change the policy of the AUBTW, then

building workers could have reimposed on them the wage cuts and filthy conditions of before the war.

The conference agreed to the setting up of a campaign committee to carry on the struggle for full reinstatement.

The conference was called by the AUBTW's oldest branch, Lambeth and Borough.

### **RALEIGH WORKERS FORCE PARTIAL CLIMB-DOWN ON SACKINGS**

**From Our Industrial Correspondent**

PRESSURE from the rank and file at the Raleigh cycle factory in Nottingham has forced the management to climb down on some of its redundancy proposals, but the workers are continuing to press for the withdrawal of all notices.

The original plan to sack nearly 500 workers—including 100 staff members and 130 old age pensioners—was part of an 'economy' drive demanded by Raleigh shareholders.

On the production side a four-day week has already been in operation for almost a year. The new economy measures affect other departments.

When the sackings were announced the unions failed to agree on policy. The Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers and the Electrical Trades Union all decided to accept the management's proposals.

But most of the sackings affected members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. At a hastily convened meeting workers belonging to this union mandated their stewards, by a vast majority, to press the management for a reduced working week and no sackings.

A 40-hour week was proposed for a trial period of three months, and the workers demanded a meeting between union officials and the Raleigh directors at which the latter should be required to provide proof of the firm's financial position.

### **Surrender of bonus agreement**

These two demands were ignored by the management, but a shorter working week was accepted, 39½ hours being suggested.

The management proposed to reduce the sackings to sixty workers but to proceed with the 'retirement' of the old age pensioners, though with a longer period of notice depending upon length of service.

However, as the workers' representatives were about to leave the meeting the management added that the workers must also lose 4½ hours' pay and 4½ hours' piece-work earnings as well as a loss of one-fifth of their production bonus, or 12s. 4d.

This meant the surrender of a bonus agreement won only a year ago after a four-day unofficial strike.

At a second mass meeting the rank and file rejected the management's new proposals and instructed the AEU stewards to maintain the original claim.

The union is not, however, willing to defend the pensioners, some of whom have already received notices. They will not find it easy to get new jobs in Nottingham, where there are already 4,000 unemployed.

### **BERRIDGE TOLD THEM: 'PACK IT IN', BUT STRIKERS REPLIED: 'NO CONFIDENCE'**

Claud Berridge, Amalgamated Engineering Union official and member of the Communist Party, spent 3½ hours trying to persuade the Universal Pattern strikers at Crawley to end their five-week dispute and seek other jobs.

Strikers' reply to this call from the AEU executive was a unanimous vote of 'no confidence' in the executive.

'The solidarity of the members affected remains unaltered,' declared a statement issued by the strike committee. The employers have taken out writs against two shop stewards, alleging 'conspiracy to injure the plaintiffs in their trade'.

**STOP PRESS.** The Crawley men later decided to accept union advice and seek other work—'under the strongest protest'.

### 'RELEASE YOUR COMMUNIST PRISONERS', NASSER TOLD

A RESOLUTION protesting to Nasser against the arbitrary arrest of communists in Egypt and Syria was passed last Saturday at a meeting in central London addressed by Michael Banda, a member of The Newsletter's Editorial Board.

'We consider that such arrests help foreign imperialism, the real enemy of the Arab people,' the resolution declared.

'We therefore demand the immediate release of these prisoners and insist that they be allowed to participate in the life of the trade union and political movements with their full democratic rights restored.'

A similar resolution was carried protesting at the arrest of members of the Baath Socialist Party by the government of Iraq.

It was agreed to hold a protest march (on a date to be arranged) to the embassies of the countries concerned, and to invite the Daily Worker, Tribune and other working-class newspapers to participate.

## Now's the Time to Prevent Sackings on the Railway

By BRIAN ARUNDEL (Manchester railwayman)

**IN 1959 the British working class is faced with these alternatives: either a return to the bitter pre-war years of mass unemployment and all its attendant miseries; or united resistance to the Tory onslaught.**

Only a united and militant Labour movement can prevent a return to the hungry thirties and end once and for all the system which causes unemployment, misery and war.

In the coming struggles railwaymen will have an important part to play. Along with the miners and workers in other nationalized industries, they will bear the brunt of the Tory offensive.

The Tories have already succeeded in getting rid of 20,000 railwaymen in 1958. This pattern is being repeated throughout industry.

All workers face this problem and in finding the solution militants in every section must grapple with colossal tasks.

### Help them to prepare

On the railways we have many problems such as redundancy and excessive overtime to make up for a low basic wage. We have imposed upon us a huge bureaucracy of overpaid officials, compensation idlers and, last but not least, a Tory Government with policies aimed at discrediting nationalized industries and the workers in them.

This article, written by a rank-and-file railwayman, puts forward policies for discussion. I hope it will help my fellow-workers to prepare for the coming struggles.

## Railwaymen and Miners

In the pits 13,000 miners are facing the sack, thirty-six pits are to be closed and many more will follow. This is Tory policy for nationalized industries out in the open.

Gone is the talk of 'normal wastage' and 'gradual' running down of labour forces. With one bold stroke the Tories want to chop down 13,000 miners. Behind the talk of 'economy' all sorts of threats emerge.

With 13,000 miners out of work, hard-won conditions and privileges will be next in line for attack in the pits. The threat of the sack, for all who do not accept further cuts, will return. Speed-ups will take place.

Favouritism and privileges for lickspittles will come back with a vengeance. Miners' blood will again saturate the coal we burn in our grates.

### Stake in their future

The campaign of hate conducted against the miners in their fight for improved conditions has affected the reasoning of many working men and women, including railwaymen.

The Tory Press has blamed the miners for every manner of economic ill caused by capitalism. Now they hope to get public support for their measures against them.

We railwaymen cannot afford to fall for these splitting tactics. As workers in nationalized industries we have a stake in the future of the miners.

If we allow our leaders to repeat the London bus sell-out and leave the miners to struggle in isolation, we shall find when confronted by the British Transport Commission and the Tories that we too are in isolation, with the result that we will be subjected to the same harsh measures as the Tories now hope to force upon the miners.

The public mind is being carefully conditioned so that it will be ready to join in the vilification and slander against railwaymen, miners, dockers and transport workers when they are forced to defend their conditions.

These are the Tory tactics. For us they are poison.

**The thing the Tories fear most of all is solidarity. Our futures depend on it.**

Only the united action of miners, railwaymen, dockers and transport workers can dash Tory hopes of a repeat performance of 1926. A united fight against sackings in the pits today will mean a united fight against all sackings tomorrow.

## Leadership

Twenty thousand railwaymen sacked in 1958. This is the price paid for the acceptance by our leaders of the strings attached to the 3 per cent. pay rise.

When our leaders ran out on the London busmen and accepted these strings they did not receive the backing of rank-and-file railwaymen.

The rank-and-file attitude was expressed in repeated resolutions from some of the largest district councils of the National Union of Railwaymen, such as Manchester and London, calling for the rejection of the 3 per cent. and its strings.

Today the Tory Transport Minister, Harold Watkinson, talks of further sackings and these same leaders, with the help of the BTC, haggle over a six-months-old pay claim.

We are told now that they have got down to cases, that joint investigating committees are looking into our wages and conditions. But what are the odds that any improvement to wages and conditions will involve sackings?

**The big question facing railwaymen now is: Are we going to stand by this time and let our leaders open the door for a further 20,000 to be kicked out? Or do we put up a fight?**

First of all this cowardly retreat by the leaders must be stopped. It is weakening our fight and helping the Tories in theirs.

### Concessions, compromises, sell-outs

Of all the problems we have in common with other workers, this crisis of leadership is the most fundamental. We hear of concessions, compromises and sell-outs by various union leaders. Their whole outlook and attitude in this period is one of weakness and treachery.

It is they who have created the conditions that now make it necessary for rank-and-file trade unionists to call for a fight.

Since the end of the war full employment and our strength have put our leaders in a position to make big demands on the employers.

Needless to say, they have not taken advantage of this. Instead they have used it to feather their own nests.

Their salaries have risen to heights which make it impossible for them to stay close to working-class interests. They have moved into middle-class surroundings, live in smart houses in middle-class areas and drive expensive motor cars.

Their whole mode of thinking and operating has become middle-class. The lure of knighthoods and seats on the boards of nationalized industries replaces the drive for improved conditions of members.

### Co-operate with the Tories

In short, they have become divorced from the rank and file. They have taken root instead in the various organs of State. Their militancy is governed by the employers' willingness to listen to their suggestions.

We see recently examples of how they co-operate with the Tories and with big business: in the London bus strike; in the courts of inquiry set up to smash shop stewards' organizations such as that at BOAC; in the South Bank sell-out when Lowthian and Weaver of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers expelled militants and held the threat of expulsion over the heads of others.

Some say the answer to this is to change our leaders and elect better ones. But is that enough by itself? We can never guarantee that the new 'militant leaders' will not eventually give way to the same pressure and go the way of the others.

Let us kick out the old leaders by all means. But, more important, let us see to it that they are put under full control of the rank-and-file union members by a system of election and right of immediate recall.

Their salaries must be in line with the job average, and all expenses must be cut to the minimum.

We are not saying that union officials must be worse off than the members or go about in rags. Neither should they be paid inflated salaries and expenses which put them far above the members they are supposed to serve and who pay their salaries.

### Fight for full consultation

How can a man who has a four-figure salary, and who moreover lives and moves about in upper and middle-class circles, really feel the necessity to wage a struggle on behalf of the workers on £8-£9 a week basic wage?

We must fight for democracy within the unions and for full consultation with the members.

Resolutions such as those sent by various district councils of the NUR, calling for a rejection of the 3 per cent. and its strings, must be backed by action.

No railwayman wants to repeat the sell-out of 1926. And so we must fight to prevent it. Leaving it to men who are no different from Cramp and J. H. Thomas to decide whether we fight or not would be fatal.

Let every serious railway militant get among his mates on the job and discuss these proposals for bringing the unions back to their original purpose: the defence of their members' interests and living standards.

## A Policy for the Railways

In the forefront of coming struggles against the Tories will be the nationalized industries. The problems, therefore, will be political as well as industrial problems. The present leaders' method of separating political and industrial action is a backward step.

In the main it is political decisions that determine the future of the nationalized industries. Therefore the workers in these industries must play a decisive part in the taking of such decisions.

On the railways we see Tory political policy deliberately forcing down wages and standards of living.

Nearly every railwayman has to work overtime of one kind or another to supplement a ridiculously low basic wage. Cuts in overtime are the cause of many disputes.

The final answer will only be found by giving every worker on the railways a decent basic wage.

With correct policies and leadership the determination to resist overtime cuts could be used to win a better wage without overtime.

### Packet worth taking home

But until we win our fight with the leadership for policies which will bring us a pay packet worth taking home we must preserve the right to earn a decent wage.

'There will be no difficulty in establishing the fact that railwaymen are grossly underpaid in comparison to other industries and private concerns.'

So said Brother Greene, general secretary of NUR, in a speech at the Labour Party conference last year.

'But,' he asked, 'where is the money to come from?' That one can be easily answered:

**(1) Stop paying compensation amounting to millions of pounds a year to parasites who do not lift a finger to earn it.**

Nearly £60 million was paid in 1957-58 in compensation and interest. The cost of keeping on the 20,000 sacked railwaymen at an average wage of £10 per week would come to under £1,500,000, i.e., one-fortieth of the amount paid to ex-owners and bankers.

**(2) Get rid of bureaucrats who know nothing at all about the railways but expect, and are paid, fantastic salaries.**

These men kill incentive and damp the initiative and willingness of workers who do know the railways and could use this knowledge and experience to plan the future running of them.

**(3) Stop using nationalized industries to subsidize private capitalism at the expense of the public and of the workers in these industries.**

We should soon find that money to provide a good weekly wage packet can be found.

Bro. Greene ended his speech by saying: 'It may be that we will find ourselves in trouble.'

### Sacrifice of another 20,000?

Whom does he mean? The leaders or the members of the NUR?

If the acceptance of a further pay rise means the sacrifice of another 20,000 railwaymen there will be no doubt who will find themselves in trouble.

Our union leaders have no mandate to accept sackings. They know where the money is to be found. It is up to us to make sure that it is not found by depriving men of their livelihood.

Tory arguments that modernization must involve redundancy if it is to succeed are swallowed by our leaders.

This bare-faced lie, if taken at face value, will mean extensive sackings on the railways.

It is in the logic of the Tories' own argument that we find our answer: if the railways are to be run more efficiently and more cheaply with a smaller labour force after modernization, then why cannot the present labour force do the job but work shorter hours?

### Contributed to its downfall

The 40-hour week without loss of pay can be introduced. Longer holidays can be given.

And if that does not absorb all the surplus labour after modernization, the retirement age can be lowered.

Many problems on the railways are due to Tory policy. Will they be solved by a Labour government? Not with Labour's present policies.

The rejection of broader nationalization with real workers' control contributed to the downfall of the last Labour government.

The Labour government's policy of placing ex-employers, brigadiers, generals and high Civil Servants—all of them Tories and full of hatred and contempt for the working class—in charge of the nationalized railways and pits has made it impossible for them to be run in the interest of the working class.

We see from the present crisis how forces outside the nationalized industries can affect their working. Just taking the control out of the hands of private capital has not solved the basic question of unemployment in these industries.

On the railways redundancy threatens through loss of traffic. This is due to decreased demand outside. Sir Brian Robertson, in a letter to Harold Watkinson, the Tory Minister of Transport, tells of 'a violent unexpected blow by the sharp setback in the output of steel, coal and other basic industries'.

This is the price Labour has paid for leaving the majority of our economy in the hands of private capital and therefore subjecting it to the capitalist crisis.

### Kick out ex-owners

It is impossible to build a defensive shield around nationalized industries unless the economy is planned and controlled in a socialist manner.

Therefore the first task of the next Labour government must be to nationalize the rest of the basic industries.

Kick out the ex-owners of these industries and allow the workers in them to elect committees and councils to run them. Only then will real socialist planning be possible.

We have been put off for long enough with compromise talk and the Right-wing 'sacred cow' of joint consultation. Many trade unionists have given up this one-sided farce long ago.

It is high time that the workers took a hand in the running of their own industries, so that the fruits of their labours are shared justly and the workers at large receive the full benefit of public ownership.

## Into the Struggle!

In the coming struggles the Right wing will use all kinds of argument to distract us from the real issues involved. We must not be deceived.

There is no place in a socialist society for them. They will prevent its achievement as long as they can.

We must campaign within the unions for militant policies. We must bring the unions themselves under the control of the rank and file.

We must fight for our policies in the local Labour Parties and be prepared to back up suggestions with industrial action if necessary.

Bitter lessons have taught us that we cannot win our fights alone. We must strive for unity with miners, dockers, transport workers and others. But first we must achieve unity on the railways.

The division into three unions weakens us in face of the Tories. These artificial barriers between workers in the same job must be broken down.

**If our leaders will not get together and thrash out a common policy for us, then rank-and-file railwaymen must do the job themselves.**

Every militant railwayman must get among his mates and show them the need for solidarity by urging support for workers who are fighting for their conditions and against sackings—irrespective of whether strikes are labelled 'official' or 'unofficial' and irrespective of which grade or depot they might involve.

The Tories and big business men are afraid of our using our strength. So are our leaders.

But when railwaymen do swing into action, they will be able to play a powerful part in defending working-class standards and preventing a return to the 1930s.

## COLONIAL PEOPLES NEED NEW, SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP

By Tom Kemp

A CRUCIAL factor in the colonial and semi-colonial countries is the absence of a real, independent working-class political leadership able to present an alternative policy to command the support of the peasants and the middle classes of the towns.

Economic backwardness is decisive: it means that the working class is small, still raw, emerging from its peasant or tribal shell.

Its 'natural' leaders tend to gravitate into the national movement and lose their class identity. But the correct policy is also lacking, and that is no less important.

It is in this light that the part played by the Communist Parties must be assessed. There is no doubt that these parties constitute a powerful pole of attraction, especially in Asia and to some extent in the Middle East.

### Prestige of USSR and China

Social-democratic and 'liberal' solutions have no real relevance in backward countries. Moreover the prestige of the USSR and China—backward countries which developed industrially—constitutes a tremendous capital for the Communist Parties.

But the fact is that these parties are largely middle class in leadership, composition and ideology.

And their policies have to be tailored to suit Moscow's political needs, which do not necessarily coincide with those

This is the second of two articles about the class struggle in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The first article appeared last week.

of the country concerned, to say the least. The capital may easily be squandered.

At present, though not necessarily invariably (e.g. India, 1942-44 and 1947-49), Moscow's interests determine support for the national bourgeoisie in a national front 'against imperialism', and in an international line-up under the leadership of the USSR.

Ideology is tuned to this: Ghandi, once an imperialist lackey, is accepted into the pantheon of heroes of the struggle.

The political line of the national Communist Parties is geared to this objective, while leaving more or less initiative to the local leadership in the exact formulation and application of the line to suit each country.

### Several strings of policy

Each party usually has, as it were, several strings of policy, each identified with one or more leading figures.

Thus there there will be a tough line, a very moderate one and a Centrist, opportunist one: it is the latter which is now current, but with traces of the second.

An extreme example is offered by Egypt, where there are, or were, several separate Communist Parties, representing different lines.

According to the Cairo correspondent of the French Left-wing paper France-Observateur, the two main trends were the 'Palme Dutt' line and the 'French' or 'Syrian' line.

The editor of the Labour Monthly, whose special role it is to canalize the immense energies of the colonial movement into lines favoured by the Kremlin bureaucracy, was the advocate of maximum support for the national bourgeoisie in general and Nasser in particular.

Thus his Egyptian disciples put themselves in Nasser's service and duly turned out much 'anti-imperialist' and pro-Nasser, pro-Khrushchev propaganda, while giving no effective leadership to the fellah and the urban worker, since that might bring them into collision with the national bourgeoisie.

On the eve of Nasser's wave of arrests of communists of all trends, a leader of this group explained the Dutt line to the French journalist in terms which made this perfectly clear.

It was of paramount importance to work with, and for, the régime. To this end, for example, all Jews were excluded from the central committee!

The 'Syrian' line did not differ fundamentally, but opposed centralization of the United Arab Republic and sought a federal arrangement. Interest will now probably shift to developments in Syria, where the Communist Party has considerable following and a clear break with Nasser is possible.

As for the unhappy Egyptian communists, they can continue the discussion in prison, if they are allowed to do so. It is possible that Nasser will bring them out again when the current business of sorting out his financial relations with the west is concluded.

The nature of this policy, as advocated by Dutt, among others, has a precise name in international socialist history: it is 'Menshevism'.

It assumes that a backward country must pass through a considerable period under bourgeois rule. Hence, logically, an alliance with the bourgeoisie, the instrument of this process.

### Led to bloody defeats

This policy was resuscitated by Stalin in the 1920s, notably in China, where it led to bloody defeats after a period of support for Chiang Kai-shek and the idea of a 'two-class party'.

While the national bourgeoisie should be supported in so far as it leads the struggle for national independence, the policy adopted by the Communist Parties makes its militants mere handmaidens of the ruling group.

The task of building a real socialist movement with roots among the people is not merely passed by, it is impeded in the name of a specious appeal to immediate results.

Its basic theoretical error today is to assume that the

national bourgeoisie is at all capable of fulfilling the historical tasks which its counterparts in the advanced countries did.

This error mechanically transposes the experience of one set of conditions, of one epoch—when the bourgeoisie was an ascending class on a world scale—to wholly different conditions and a wholly different epoch.

In fact the position which the national bourgeoisies hold today in the 'under-developed' countries is very fragile, indeed transitional.

Their far-sighted leaders look anxiously over their shoulders at the growth in the working class, and listen to the rumble of discontent which the failure to achieve earlier promises is beginning to evoke.

### Appeal to western countries

They appeal to the western countries, especially the USA, to help them with economic aid, urgently, before a new, more radical leadership sweeps them aside.

The point was made by Nkrumah in an article in the American journal Foreign Affairs and by Mboya in the Observer.

The working out of a policy, and aid for the nascent socialist movement in these countries, must pay great attention to the position and prospects of the national bourgeoisie.

It must take account of the fact that in the present epoch the stabilization of régimes which are in fact new capitalist States is unlikely.

To give the national bourgeoisie unconditional support would therefore be highly dangerous and compromising; on the other hand there are important segments which, because of their social situation and their understanding of imperialism, can be temporary allies, or may even be brought over to the cause of socialism and the working-class movement once they see such a movement in formation.

Consequently the building of such a movement remains the fundamental task.

## Constant Reader | Socialism and the Struggle against War

WITH much in Peter Cadogan's letter (January 17, p. 24) about the lessons to be drawn from the suffragette experience for the anti-rocket-base campaign today, I am in agreement.

But it should be pointed out that the Marxists of 1910-14, though they waged special anti-war campaigns, never separated the struggle against war from the struggle for socialism, but always brought to the fore the real causes of war and real road to its abolition.

And why does Cadogan say that the struggle for socialism was not 'on the agenda in 1910-14'? Was it 'on the agenda' in 1917? And if in Russia, why not here?

Further, why the identification of socialism with the Independent Labour Party?

Lenin, in 1912, wrote of this party as being "independent" only of socialism, and very dependent indeed upon liberalism—though, he noted, 'even in the ILP the protest against Liberal-Labour politics is growing'.

### In the Stalin manner

Anybody who hopes that the new 'History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union' will be substantially more objective than the notorious 'Short Course' of 1938 had better stop hoping, if the chapters on 1917-20, recently published in the Moscow journal *Kommunist*, are typical of the whole.

As in the old days, the authors contrive to tell us in some detail the story of the revolution and the civil war without recognizing the part played by the leader of the October insurrection and organizer of the Red Army.

The only mention accorded to Trotsky is in connexion with his dispute with Lenin over tactics at the Brest-Litovsk peace

conference—of which a much over-simplified account is given.

(As usual, the list of members of the 'war faction' omits Dzerzhinsky, he having become one of the saints of Stalinist mythology; a statue to him was recently unveiled in Moscow.)

Oh yes; we do also learn that Trotsky was too fond of tsarist officers and had the wrong idea about the comparative importance of the eastern and southern fronts.

### Omission—and admission

Nevertheless, it should not go unremarked that these chapters omit any mention of the alleged conspiracy by Trotsky and Bukharin in 1918 to murder Lenin, which bulked big in the 'evidence' at Bukharin's trial in 1938.

This amounts to an admission that the charge was false.

When are British Communist Party members going to demand a plain, explicit statement from their leaders about the Moscow trials which perverted the thinking of a generation of communists? Perhaps at this year's congress?

### Precedent

'We should declare our support for men who come out on strike even against the instructions of the unions—especially where it can be seen that by following the usual negotiating machinery the job in dispute would be finished before the case could be settled.

'We should support the formation of inter-branch link-ups and organize rank-and-file movements where they do not already exist.'

No, that is not a quotation from the report of the rank-and-file Conference called by those terrible Newsletter people, nor from any of the numerous follow-up meetings held since.

It comes from the report of a rank-and-file conference held in September 1933, on the initiative of a paper called the

Militant Trade Unionist.

Signatories to the call for the conference were Tom Mann, Alex Gossip, Percy Collick, Bert Carter and (of course) Jack Tanner.

### **Auld acquaintance**

While selling The Newsletter outside the Communist Party's 'Burns Night' meeting in St Pancras Town Hall, I noticed, among the party dignitaries who passed me on their way in, Bob Stewart, a veteran leader of British communism, now head of the department which expels members from the party.

He it was who, at the Fifth World Congress of the Com-

munist International, on July 8, 1924, called for demonstrations everywhere to Egyptian consulates to demand the release of eleven Egyptian communists who had been arrested by the country's de facto ruler, Zaghlul Pasha—this although Zaghlul was at least as much of an anti-imperialist 'progressive' as Nasser is.

Nowadays, of course, such matters are left to what another of the Burns fans called, as she passed us, 'those horrible Newsletter people'. Burns would have had an unforgettable phrase for these renegades from their own best traditions.

**BRIAN PEARCE**

## **FOR MASS ACTION AGAINST SACKINGS**

### **Liverpool**

Stork Hotel, Queen Square,  
Sunday, February 1 at 7 p.m.

Hear **HARRY CONSTABLE, PETER FRYER and GERRY HEALY**

### **Wigan**

The Baths Lounge, Millgate  
Monday, February 2, at 7.30 p.m.

Hear **GERRY HEALY**

Chairman, **JACK SMITH** (member of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives)

### **Sheffield**

West Street Hotel, West Street  
Friday, February 6, at 7.30 p.m.

Hear **GERRY HEALY**

### **Leeds**

Friends' Meeting House, Woodhouse Lane  
Sunday, February 8, at 7.30 p.m.

Hear **PETER FRYER and GERRY HEALY**

### **Castleford**

Roundhill Working Men's Club  
Monday, February 9, at 7.30 p.m.

Hear **GERRY HEALY**

### **South London**

Lambeth Town Hall  
Monday, February 9, at 7.30 p.m.

Hear **PETER FRYER**

## **LETTER**

### **READER COONEY LAYS INTO THOSE LAZY INTELLECTUALS**

I TRUST The Newsletter will side with Dr Alexander, of the education authorities, in rejecting with ridicule the teachers' demand for more pay than they were offered.

In what sense can teachers be said to produce anything?

A speaker at the Newsletter Industrial Conference had the right idea when he said that only those who work out of doors can be said to work in the true sense—though this showed, perhaps, a slightly narrow 'building-worker' approach, forgetting the miners.

Machajski long ago pointed out the parasitic role of so-called brain-workers—and how Marx concealed the exploitation of manual workers by these people in his calculations and tables in 'Capital'.

(Trotsky knew Machajski, but, of course, disagreed with him. There is something about their encounter in Max Nomad's

book 'Rebels and Renegades'.)

The Chinese have the right idea in setting their 'intellectuals' to jobs like street-sweeping. This is not just the same as the voluntary week-end work that went on in Russia under Lenin ('Subbotniks').

That was only to help out in emergencies, when it was a question of all hands to the pump.

The Chinese seem to understand that what these people normally do is not work at all, and they need to have their noses rubbed in the real thing.

**F. Cooney**

### **JOBS BATTLE GOES ON AT STEVENAGE**

Building workers on Neal's contract, Stevenage, are angry about the failure of union officials to put up a fight for the reinstatement of Bill Sullivan, chief labourers' steward. The officials asked the firm to keep on three stewards left but the firm refused. The officials have left it at that.

The solidarity of the workers on Marriot's contract has led to the reinstatement of the deputy Federation steward.

The dispute on Carlton's contract over a bonus issue and the non-reinstatement of a number of men comes before a disputes panel next week.