

The Newsletter

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Behind the Port Talbot dispute — Speed-up and union-busting

PORT TALBOT, Wednesday

THE ruthlessness with which the employers of the Steel Company of Wales are meeting the demands of the craft unions takes us straight back to the dispute at Ford of Dagenham just one year ago.

The issue this year at Port Talbot is essentially the same as it was at Dagenham last year.

The management are prepared to take extreme measures, but not because they cannot afford to pay the rise demanded. They made over 18 million pounds profit last year, and any pay rise would affect only the 3,500 craftsmen out of a total labour force of around 24,000.

Break

The issue involved is the very right of the unions to call strikes to press their demands. The management are determined to break the unions' power to do this, for it stands in the way of the speed-up foreseen in these works, as in all the major plants in British industry.

Every attempt has been made to divide the workers and to get the unions fighting amongst themselves. Every attempt has been made to demoralise the men and to lay the way open for defeat.

The reply of the unions so far has been to unite and follow a policy of solidarity and no blacklegging in support of the AEU wage claim.

Lesson

'This was the lesson of the 1961 bricklayers' strike,' said a member of the AUBTW. 'The unions must stick together in this, even if they are not directly concerned in the present claim.'

This decision was made at a meeting of the officials and stewards of the seven craft unions involved (the Association of Welders, AUBTW, Boiler-makers, ETU, Painters, Plumbing, AEU) held late on Tuesday evening.

A foretaste of the management's plans for a speed-up in the works was given last October when they announced the forcible retirement of all workers over 65. The

by
Peter Arnold

workers were to be fobbed off with normal retirement pay plus a non-contributory pension of 30s. per week for 40 years in the works.

The unions declared that the management were not retiring these workers for humanitarian reasons but were making them redundant in order to get more 'efficient' use of the new automatic plant they were installing.

They demanded adequate redundancy payment, a strike was threatened and the management capitulated.

Claim

The unions then submitted their claim for a new holidays agreement. They want holidays to be increased from 18 days to three weeks, one week at Christmas and two weeks at a date not yet fixed in the summer and not staggered as at present.

They also demanded that holiday pay be an average of the year's earnings and not the rock-bottom basic now given. The present £24 for two weeks' holiday means a loss of £25 for the craftsmen.

The week's Christmas holiday began on December 23. At first the craftsmen were not prepared to leave safety men on the premises, but at last-minute negotiations, when the management recognised the week as holiday time (though they did not pay holiday money), agreement was reached to leave safety men.

The wages dispute is not a new one.

The craft unions have been demanding a rise that will bring them into line with the production workers and recognise their increased importance in the works as more and more automatic plant is installed. Strike notice on this issue has been served twice before and withdrawn.

Fouled-up

At present the craftsmen in the works get about the same as a young production worker of 18, or as a semi-skilled holiday replacement worker. They earn about £12 a week less than an adult production worker.

Negotiations were fouled up when the management decided to use the wage claim to try to divide the unions and to introduce redundancy sackings through the back door.

They stated that they would consider the claim if the unions

accepted a 'labour reorganisation'.

This would affect the craftsmen's mates. At present there is one mate for each craftsman. The management proposed that there should be a central pool of mates, from which any craftsman going out on a job would draw.

The pool of mates would be in the ratio of one for every three craftsmen. In their desire to push through the plan, the management even made an offer of a ten shillings rise when 40 per cent of the reorganisation was completed, to be followed by another ten shillings when 80 per cent was completed.

This caused a division between the ETU and the AEU. The ETU recruits its mates into the union, whereas the mates of the AEU men are members of BISAKTA.

Cancelled

When the AEU representatives said they were prepared to negotiate on the management's terms, the ETU would not go along with them. They did, however, call for a meeting with the management for December 30, to put in an independent claim. This has now been cancelled by the management.

The AUBTW have a meeting arranged to discuss a rise scheduled for January. This will probably meet the same fate.

The management assured the unions that mates made redundant by the 'reorganisation' would not be sacked, but used elsewhere in the plant on production work. This is plainly a blind.

More and more automatic plant is being installed and there is already talk of redundancy in production work. There would be few jobs, if any, for 'reorganised' mates.

They would be the first to go

● *Continued on back page*

BRITAIN CASHES IN ON CYPRUS FLARE-UP

By GEORGE DEMETRIADES

THE riots and massacres in Cyprus show that savagery and barbarism can never be stamped out until the last traces of capitalist influence are removed.

The reasons for the Greek-Turkish fighting are multiple and it is possible here to only sketch roughly the complicated factors at work in the trouble-torn island.

National rivalries in Cyprus have been greatly encouraged by the British rulers, who first appeared on the scene in the 19th century. They took great care to maintain a division between the two communities by segregating the schools and allotting positions in the Civil Service according to nationality.

MAINTAINED

They divided the Cypriot working class and maintained their rule by playing one section against another.

The local middle-class learnt fast in the hands of their British masters, who were preparing them to become the ruling class when independence could no longer be avoided. Inheriting a backward capitalist economy, they were faced with permanent contradictions and crises which they could not hope to solve.

It became imperative therefore that the working class should continue to remain divided and sidetracked in order to prevent it from becoming a serious threat to the weak new rulers.

The basis was laid with the help of Britain, Greece and Turkey, who cooked up a constitution which was used by Makarios, Kutchuk and company to further the divisions.

INVALUABLE

The concern showed by world imperialism over recent events underlines the fact that Cyprus, as a base, is still invaluable to it.

From the island, the British government, acting on behalf of monopolies like Shell-Mex, British Petroleum, etc., is able to police the rich oilfields of the Middle East and ensure their continued domination by the western powers.



Home: valuable base

As a market for industrial goods, a source of raw materials and a potential for profitable investment, Cyprus, like Greece and Turkey, attracts the attentions of Britain, France, the US and Germany.

President Johnson's 'concern' (for profits, not lives) and Home's armed intervention have the sole aim of cashing in on the crisis and consolidating their position and preventing war between Greece and Turkey, which would jeopardise the NATO positions on the doorstep of the USSR.

Large is the share of the blame for this situation that falls on the 'communist' parties of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. They have only aided the massacres by their support for their ruling classes in the last World War, by their unrivalled patriotism and nationalism and their un-Marxist approach to the 'racial' situation.

RELIABLE

By confusing and side-tracking the workers they have proved to be the most reliable allies of capitalism.

The events in Cyprus put high on the agenda the life or death necessity for the creation of new revolutionary parties in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus which will rescue the Greek and Turkish workers from the deadly web of racialism and lead them into a struggle to throw out capitalism and its hangers-on.

Workers of all countries should express their solidarity by demanding and mobilising for the immediate recall of British troops from Cyprus and complete opposition to the suggestion that the United Nations should step in—and recreate the havoc and misery of Korea and the Congo.

FEBRUARY 7 — OUR BIG DAY

A HAPPY new year to all our readers!

The Newsletter is in production once again, but one week later than we anticipated. The installation of new printing equipment by our printers proved to be a long job and we were forced to miss two issues of the paper.

However, here we are again, printed now on the very latest and most up-to-date machinery in the trade.

Our readers will realise the full potential of this improvement when, starting with the issue of February 7, the paper

will appear in two colours and twice the present size—and still only for 4d.

The enlarged, colourful paper will mark an important step forward by the British Marxist movement. The Newsletter will be able to play an even greater role in the growing struggle for socialism in this and every country.

These plans have naturally involved us in a great deal of extra finance, running into many hundreds of pounds. We want the new paper to run smoothly, appear regularly and to avoid financial pitfalls.

Here we need your help. To give the paper a sound start along the road towards a daily Marxist journal, we need cash, lots of it, urgently.

We appeal to you to help NOW by rushing donations to our office. Please organise collections in factories and offices and introduce many new readers to the paper.

The success of this great venture depends upon the response we receive from all our supporters.

All communications to: The Newsletter, 186a Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.

A 'Committee to defeat Revisionism, for Communist Unity' has been established by Michael McCreery and his colleagues who were recently expelled from the Communist Party.

The Committee have advertised themselves as believing the Labour Party to be 'an outright capitalist party', that Trotskyism has always been and always will be a harmful tendency, and that all who agree with them must honour the immortal memory of the late J. V. Stalin.

The leaders of the CPGB, they say, are opportunist, reformist and, even while Stalin was alive, only pretended to carry out his policies.

Slavish

McCreery and his friends answer the problems raised by the Sino-Soviet dispute by slavishly echoing every murmur from Peking or Tirana. There can be no greater disservice than this, not only to members of the British CP but to Chinese Marxists as well.

One aspect of Chinese theory to which he clings is particularly relevant to McCreery's sectarianism.

This is the conception that the most important blows at imperialism are being struck by the national struggles in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Dampened

This can be taken to imply that the class struggle in Britain will be dampened down by concessions at home until the nationalist movements have weakened the imperialists sufficiently.

Such ideas have nothing to do with 'defeating revisionism'. The revision of the Marxist programme is not the result of a few errors by communist leaders, but has an historical basis.

It represents the pressure of world imperialism on the working class movement, via the bureaucratic apparatus, and it has roots in sections of the working class itself.

Grasp

To really fight revisionism means to grasp the history of how it arose. This, in turn, implies a continuous effort to relate the principles of Marxism in theory and practice to the day-to-day struggles in which the working class is engaged.

Ritual repetition of quotations from Lenin and other revolutionary texts, however correct in themselves, are evasions of this task.

McCreery gives one of his pamphlets the characteristic title, 'Destroy the Old to Build the New!'. Nowhere does he discuss the history of the CP and

What the McCreery group fails to grasp

The roots of revisionism

By JOHN CRAWFORD

its leadership.

Not one word does he offer on how the fight against the revisionism of Gollan and Khrushchev is relevant to the preparation of the workers for future battles.

Even before the Communist Party was formed in 1920, Lenin insisted on the importance of a fight to bring Marxism into the development of the Labour Party. It was not enough to denounce the treachery of the Labour leaders.

Because of the connection between the Labour Party and the trade unions it was vital, and possible, to mobilize working-class support within the Labour Party for the fight against reformism.

Only in this way could a mass communist movement be constructed in this country and the experience of the Soviet Revolution put at the disposal

of the British workers.

The CP leaders made a real effort to carry through such a



Hitler: helped to power by Stalin

policy—but only for a very short time. By the time of the General Strike in 1926, Stalinism in the Communist International had already turned them in other directions, first to the right (1925-28), then to the ultra-left.

A study of the history of King Street would show a continuity of the present leadership, not just for ten or 20 years, but nearly 34. In 1929, the Inkpin - Rothstein - Campbell leadership, which had majority support, was replaced, by Comintern decree, by Dutt and Pollitt.

The latter had agreed to carry out Stalin's current line, as best they could. This held, in particular, that the Labour Party was not merely a capitalist party but that its leaders were 'social-fascists'.

This lunatic policy continued until 1934 and nearly wrecked the CP for good. The corresponding line in Germany led directly to Hitler's victory.

It was later replaced by other policies, mainly to the right, but all manufactured to suit Stalin's shifts in foreign policy. These culminated in the parliamen-



Dutt: put in power by Comintern

tarianism of 'The British Road to Socialism', reported to have been designed by Stalin himself.

It is impossible to fight the reformist policies of Gollan and company without tracing their roots in the policies of Stalin in the twenties and thirties.

Study

This involves a study of the fight against them by Trotsky and the Left Opposition. To remain a faithful Stalin worshipper in 1964 makes such an undertaking impossible.

The fight to release the British working-class movement from the grip of reformist misleadership has a long history. The present crisis in the CPGB will bring many new forces to help build the Marxist movement which will carry through that fight—but only if this history is absorbed.

Sectarian groups equipped with a few Leninist phrases and making revolutionary noises can only distract us from this task.

Wage freeze: bosses' main aim for general election year

ONE word sums up the economic prospects for 1964: uncertainty. Although in the last half of 1963 the artificial stimulants of the Maudling budget pepped up British capitalism to a faster rate of growth, even its best friends are doubtful how long the present expansion can last.

If a Labour government is elected in the course of the year it will inherit a tangled knot of problems and may soon have a recession on its hands.

The present expansion, intended by the Tory government to prepare the way for a general election which would offer them a chance of a return to power, is highly unstable. The stimulus given to consumer spending by the last budget is now running out, but not before it has pro-

duced a new threat to the government and the employers in the shape of wage demands and industrial militancy.

In the course of the next year or so higher incomes at home are likely to push up the demand for imports while raising the price of exports. This effect, perhaps preceded by a flight from the pound resulting from a Labour victory, could once again cause a balance of payments crisis.

DOUBTS

Whether or not such a crisis blows up during 1964, there are some doubts about the continued growth of the world capitalist market without which exports from Britain are unlikely to grow.

Recovery in the United States, although with 5 per cent unemployment, has now been going on for an unusually long time. A recession could develop by the autumn.

In Europe the confidence of the hey-day of the boom has given way to apprehension.

RESTRAIN

In Germany some financial weaknesses in the business structure have been revealed. In France measures have been taken to restrain inflation.

Europe was scarcely touched by the last big recession of 1957, but there is a growing opinion that such immunity cannot be counted upon in the future.

ACUTE

As markets expand less rapidly and competition becomes more acute so the pressure on profits grows. Profitability, the driving force of capitalism, feels the squeeze and employers look around for the most immediate way of holding back or cutting costs.

The dilemma of British capitalism is, in this respect, most acute. The wages issue brings into sharp focus the international vulnerability of British capitalism and the nature of the class struggle in Britain.

SHARPLY

It demonstrates that capitalism has not changed and that the interests of employers and workers are as sharply opposed as ever. It raises, ultimately, the question of who should control the economy and whether it should be run to make profits for the few or to serve the many.

It underlines the dependence of Britain on the world market and the real nature of that

dependence. Britain's position in the export markets is barely being maintained despite considerable growth in world trade.

While rivals have improved their position by superior technique and organisation, British manufacturers have shown signs of falling behind. Thus they must resist increases in wages, at any rate when this is likely to put them at a disadvantage on overseas markets.

STRUGGLES

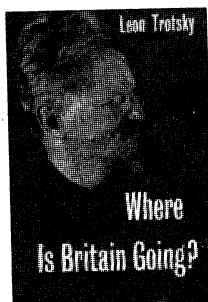
In the coming year of uncertainty two things seem certain.

Firstly, this will be a year of wages struggles in which the aim of the employers will be to obtain measures of wage control in agreement with the state and the trade unions.

Secondly, the next budget cannot make the kind of concessions to tax payers and consumers which were made last year.

Both these factors increase the possibility of a Labour victory at the general election. But unless such a government pushes on with socialist measures it will find itself quite unable to realise the hopes of those millions of workers who will have voted for it.

Tom Kemp



A brilliant survey of British politics just before the General Strike of 1926

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Big rents battle flares in Harlem

**Others
have died,
says
Baldwin**

AMERICAN Negro author James Baldwin made some pointed remarks about the Kennedy assassination and the fight of the Negroes for emancipation at the recent conference of the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee in Washington.

'This happened,' he said, 'in a civilized nation. A lunatic blew the President's head off.'

'I don't want to sound rude. . . . We all know that for many generations black men's heads have been blown off and nobody cared.'

Aroused

'We need a clear understanding of reality in this country—by reality I mean that another human being is another human being. With this kind of understood reality, then the assassination of Medgar Evers would have aroused the country. He was a man, he had a wife, he had children.'

'Six kids murdered in Birmingham, in a Christian country, in a Christian church, in Sunday school, and nobody cared!'

He went on: 'To free the country you must change it. This notion of change is the issue.'

'Presently they try to label dissenters and to continue labelling and getting rid of dissenters. This country was built on dissent and real change . . . America now distrusts dissension as much as any totalitarian government can.'

'Take it'

There was loud applause when he declared: 'It is not a matter of giving me this or that, or of giving or not giving me my freedom. I will take it!'

'This country does not produce to satisfy the needs of the majority of the people. The huge expenditures for war armaments and the vast industries producing war weapons do not satisfy the needs of the people in this country.'

Referring once again to the assassination he said: 'We must make it known that the terrible events of the last week have done nothing to alter the struggle and, if anything, have made it more important to proceed. The hesitation that existed before—the hesitation to liberate oneself—this hesitation has vanished.'

A TOUGH rent strike is developing in the Negro area of Harlem, New York.

The strikers are demanding repairs to buildings and the installation of proper heating and washing amenities.

To enforce their demands, which have all been turned down, the tenants are refusing to pay any rent until the repairs are carried out.

The tenants' organisation, the Community Council on Housing, has organised about 60 buildings and as an immediate step it has committed itself to raising this figure to 1,000.

'NOT GOING TO PAY'

The Council's attitude was expressed in a leaflet advertising a recent rally:

'Let the landlords know, we are not going to pay rents for rats to eat our children, no heat and no hot water, stoppied-up toilets, leaking ceilings, or any other violation'

Slum landlords have been accused of giving a free hand to drug racketeers to ply their wares on their property. Under these squalid conditions business is naturally booming.

About 200 people attended a strike meeting on December 15, where speakers outlined some of the difficulties and aims of the strike.

'HOLD OUR RENT'

A strike co-ordinator of the Community Council on Housing, Major Williams, told how: 'We are finding that every time a landlord gets hit by a notice for violations' (of health or safety requirements) 'a different agent appears that we have to deal with.'

'Well, we're through dealing with agents of the landlords. We're going to hold our rent money until we get "the man".'

It was pointed out that where there were violations against the regulations, state law empowered city officials to step in and collect the rents instead of the landlords and carry out the necessary repairs with the money.

TOSS OUT TENANTS

Jessie Gray, chairman of the Council, told how landlords were retaliating by using a section of the Rent and Rehabilitation Act which, he said, 'allows landlords to toss out tenants they regard as "nuisances". And who is a "nuisance tenant"? Why, it's anyone who demands proper service . . .'

Gray went on to give expression to the widespread dissatisfaction with the Democratic Party, which has up to now enjoyed some measure of support from the Negro population.

He said: 'We will tell Mayor Wagner we will boycott the Democratic Party until they decide to help us. We have to

let the Democratic administration know we will not continuously vote Democrat while rats are in our buildings.

'That doesn't mean we are in love with the Republican Party either. Even if we have to elect one of the rats who will run against Mayor Wagner for vice-President, we don't have to sit it out.'

Negro sources are confident that the strike can be quickly spread. It has already reached out beyond the confines of New York City with a rent strike in a slum area of Cleveland, Ohio, started by the Congress of Racial Equality.

The rent strike movement is indicative of the growing realisation that begging the administration for help achieves precious little and that if there is to be any satisfaction, action must be taken to enforce rightful demands.

(Based on a report in the American Socialist weekly 'The Militant')

Big US pay demands

Millions of United States workers are starting the new year with substantial wage claims.

Jimmy Hoffa, long a thorn in the side of American bosses, is pressing a claim for 400,000 members of his Teamsters Union for a new three-year contract in the road haulage industry.

The demands would cost about £250 million over that period.

Miners, dockers and car workers are also demanding more money.

And 85,000 members of the International Ladies Garment Workers on the East Coast are asking for a 2s. in the £ rise.

In New York a strike was threatened by underground and bus workers unless their demands for better hours and money were met.

At present they work a 40-hour week, at a £1 an hour.

They are pressing for a 32-hour week and a 3s. in the £ increase.

S.A. SHOW BAN

The showing of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical 'South Pacific' has been banned in South Africa on the grounds that it is a 'plea for the mixing of the races'.

When the film version was shown there recently it was heavily censored.

THE MISSING HAIR

Surrounded by police some 10,000 people demonstrated in Karachi on New Year's Eve to mourn the theft of a strand of the Prophet's hair from the Hazrathal Shrine at Srinagar.

For days now the theft has provoked demonstrations and riots. Many Kashmiris believe that this is part of a plan to integrate Kashmir into the Indian Union.

WORLD +

+ NEWS +

+ ROUND-UP

Nkrumah makes it official

DR. NKRUMAH, President of Ghana, has announced plans which would quash all opposition in the country and give him supreme control of the legal system.

The plans are contained in a series of amendments to the two and a half-years-old constitution which Nkrumah proposes to put to the country in the form of a referendum at the end of January.

If Nkrumah gets his way Ghana will officially become a one-party state. The party is to be the President's own, the Convention People's Party, which is to serve as 'the vanguard of our people in their struggle to build a socialist society'.

'Develop'

The one-party system would be introduced in order to 'develop the organisational initiative and political activity of the people'.

The amendments would also give the President 'power in his discretion to remove a Judge of the Supreme Court or a Judge of the High Court at any time for reasons which appear to him sufficient.'

Without awaiting the results of the referendum Nkrumah has already asserted his dictatorial 'rights' in this field when he dismissed the Chief Justice who had been unwise enough to actually acquit three of the accused in the recent Ghana treason trial.

New Arab-Israel clash

A SUMMIT meeting of the Middle-eastern Arab states, proposed by President Nasser, has been called for January 13.

Nominally at stake is the fate of the River Jordan, but Nasser's hostility to Israel's very existence has been the dominant factor leading up to this meeting.

The River Jordan has its main sources in Arab territory, Syria and the Lebanon, passes through Israel, and then re-enters the Arab world in the state of Jordan.

The Israeli government has announced its intention of diverting much of the Jordan's water southwards into Israel in order to supply its coastal plain irrigation scheme.

LIMIT

This plan would limit valuable water supplies to Jordan.

President Nasser has called on Arab leaders to sink their differences in order to take effective action on this question. According to the 'Times' he was quoted as saying: 'We have already decided that the Arab rivers should be cut off from Israel. . . . Afterwards we should discuss the military aspects of the matter.'

The Cairo paper 'Al Ahram' anticipated that if the River Jordan were cut off from Israel in Syria and the Lebanon the prospect of British or American intervention could not be ruled out.

DISSENT

The diversion of the river would also hit Jordan; the fact that the diversion had taken place on Arab territory would be scant consolation.

With Nasser's 'Arab unity' in its present state of disarray, the summit meeting will probably be unable to take a firm stand in the face of either of these prospects. Signs of dissent are already showing with Saudi Arabia not bothering even to answer the invitation to the meeting.

Revolution and Counter-revolution in Spain

by Felix Morrow

220 pps, maps

A brilliant analysis of the politics of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War which has long been a rarity in Britain, Morrow's book is one of the few serious Marxist works of our time. Hammered out in time with the dramatic events it describes, it penetrates the conflicts within the Republican camp, from the Liberals and Stalinists to the Anarchists and the POUM.

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'Happy Halewood'

Pay trouble at BMC

From M. SHAW

THE walk-out of 130 transport workers at the British Motor Corporation's Bathgate factory on December 14 brought the number of stoppages to six during a seven-week period and was the 59th strike since the factory opened in August 1961.

This is the measure of discontent and dissatisfaction of workers employed by BMC.

The transport men were in dispute with the management over the method of paying out wages. When they struck work 500 other workers were sent home.

Frequent

Two days previously a similar number of storemen came out on strike after the management had sent home 150 tractor assembly line workers, including some storekeepers, because of shortage of materials. All the strikers were back at work within two days.

It is a frequent practice at BMC to send sections of workers home, or advise them not to report for work due to lack of materials in a particular department. Every time this happens the workers take home a considerably depleted wage packet.

When their frustration and anger at this treatment causes them to organise in protest they are accused of 'industrial anarchy' by Mr. K. Sinnott, BMC's Managing Director.

Official

The solution presented by the Tory 'Glasgow Herald' was that Scottish trade unions should learn from Dagenham: 'They should appoint an official to represent all their interests at Bathgate and always be on the spot until a degree of industrial stability has been achieved.'

Officials of the Transport and General Workers' Union are attempting to reduce the number of 'unofficial' stoppages. To this end they have obtained a decision that no strike action is to be taken by any member of the union until a full meeting of the branch has been convened and a full-time officer of the union is present.

The chairman of BMC, Mr. George Harriman, is to be informed by the national secretary of the TGWU of the unsatisfactory relations between management and workers and asked to visit the factory at Bathgate to try to improve relations.

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Ford boast

Militants are weeded out

TUCKED away in 'The Times' on December 23 was a report from the Northern Correspondent of the paper entitled 'Ford find key to good labour relations at Halewood: Selecting men on basis of character'.

Ford are the pace-setters for big business in this country. They are able to move with the times and adapt themselves to changing situations.

As the article shows, the management are now using far more subtle methods against the workers than the brutal strong-arm tactics of the thirties.

No comment is needed. The article speaks for itself.

PUNDITS

'When Ford first announced they were coming to Merseyside the 'image' of the area was still one of labour strife, and the company was having plenty of trouble at Dagenham. Heads wagged and pundits forecast "they are in for a packet of trouble there".'

In fact, the pessimists have been proved wrong. In the first year of production not one hour of normal work was lost and only one Saturday afternoon's overtime was upset (and that was on a day when Liverpool and Everton were playing locally).

Turnover has never gone beyond 13 per cent and a survey is expected to prove that the factory has a contented labour force. Production, now at 700 cars a day, has outstripped the best hopes of Mr. John Kuipers, the general manager, and the company is receiving favourable reports on the workmanship standards of its own special product, the Corsair.

UNFAIR

Comparisons with Dagenham would be not only odious but unfair. At Dagenham 40,000 people work on a floor space of 7,700,000 sq. ft.: at Halewood there will never be more than 11,500 on a floor area of 3,628,000 sq. ft.

This means that life and work at Halewood is pleasanter, airier, and more hygienic than it could ever be at Dagenham.

While the executive here admit that lessons painfully learnt at Dagenham are being painlessly

applied at Halewood, they believe that the real key to their success has been their ability to select their men on a basis of character rather than previous experience.

Men are given jobs at Halewood because they are fit and have good working records rather than for any previous experience in the motor industry.

SYSTEM

The Ford training and production system (once unkindly described as devised by geniuses to enable morons to make motor cars) takes care of the rest. The present labour force includes bus conductors, dockers, merchant seamen, and shop assistants who had never seen a car made until a few months ago.

The company has fairly extensive knowledge of the local trouble-makers. This has been largely acquired by exchanges of information with other employers, and while there is no political discrimination the chances of an agitator getting an undercover job are slight.

A few doubtful cases have slipped through the net, but they are known. They will be allowed to go their ways in peace, unless they try to start anything.

The most important characteristic the selectors look for in a recruit is his ability to work hard and fast under a shift system and to accept a fairly tight discipline. Inability to measure up to this requirement is the biggest cause of the present 5 per cent rejection rate.

MILITANCY

The recruit training system at Halewood has now been extended to turn out 'non-commissioned officers' as well (military metaphors are almost unavoidable in a factory where the best Service principles have obviously been borrowed).

The first 100 foremen trained in six-month courses are now at work on the production lines, and another 90 will be passing out soon. The process of training foremen obviously owes a lot to Sandhurst, Dartmouth, and Cranwell.

Nothing quite as big as Halewood has been created as quickly in British industry before. The men running it believe they have learnt and applied the lessons of the past and are full of hope for the future.'

Speed-up and union-busting at Port Talbot

From page one

in any redundancy as they would be the 'last in' on production work.

The management were obviously hoping that the craft unions who recruit mates would not worry too much about their fate, for once the mates were transferred to production they would join BISAFTA, and hence 'would no longer be the concern of the craft unions.'

The management set the pattern for this sort of reorganisation when it shut down the Margam Melting Shop last year. The men made redundant were absorbed in

other parts of the works, but for some this was only temporary.

On December 28, over 100 of them received their cards. This sacking in two stages should be noted by all the workers in Port Talbot.

To these tactics, designed to divide the craftsmen among themselves, the management have added further measures to divide the craftsmen from the production workers. This is what the shutdown amounts to.

With its dramatic letter to every worker in the works, warning that 'a stoppage would have a very serious effect on all our employees' and that 'Business lost in this way



Midlands busmen fight Martell and right-wing

WEST BROMWICH busmen have not ended their dispute with the Labour-controlled town council, though there have been no unofficial one-day strikes since before Christmas.

On Monday in Christmas week they banned overtime until further notice.

Doug Watts, secretary of the local busmen's branch of the TGWU, said the men were still solid in support of their incentive bonus and spread-over duty claims. They had not been frightened off from staging further unofficial strikes by the Transport Committee's threat of the sack.

Of the threatening letters sent round to each individual bus worker, Doug Watts said: 'If they are prepared to sack everyone, we would be prepared to accept these notices. Then we will see how the public like being without any buses at all. It will take months, even years, to get a full traffic staff again.'

Sitting

He said the National Joint Industrial Council sitting in London had been discussing the West Bromwich dispute instead of the application for a national pay increase for bus workers. For the sake of their colleagues in all parts of the country, therefore, they had decided to defer the question of further strike action pending the outcome of negotiations for the national pay increase.

Immediately before Christmas the West Bromwich Transport Committee called for an assurance from the busmen that they would take no further unofficial strike action. The men were not prepared to give such an assurance.

From a recent TGWU branch meeting, a letter was sent to the union's headquarters making it quite plain that the branch thought it high time national officials took a part in their

dispute. If necessary they would urge that Frank Cousins, the general secretary, should attend a branch meeting.

(That would have been impossible. Cousins is holidaying, at union expense, in the West Indies!)

The 'big stick' tactics of local Labour councillors, culminating in the threat of the sack, so angered the bus workers that 150 of them have filled in forms contracting out of the political levy paid by their union to the Labour Party.

There is profound disgust that the claims of workers to decent conditions should receive such unsympathetic treatment at the hands of a Labour-controlled council.

Forces

The fact is not lost upon busmen that the forces ranged against them include the right-wing Labour Group, supported by the Tory Group and given unsolicited assistance by Martell's ultra-right 'Freedom Group', which intervened in their fourth one-day strike by putting a fleet of scab 'Freedom Buses' on the roads.

The only voice raised in defence of the bus workers was that of Labour Councillor Mrs. Laura Brettell, who opposed the recommendation to send out notices threatening the sack. She was greeted by loud and prolonged applause from busmen who packed the public gallery.

At the close of the meeting there were calls from the gallery of 'Heil Hitler' and 'Fascists'. After the decision was taken to send out the threatening notices, it is understood that angry bus workers demanded a walk-out and that union officials were 'at full stretch' to prevent it.

Martell applied for a licence to run up to 50 buses in the event of a strike on any day before and over the Christmas holiday.

would not easily be regained', followed by the announcements by BMC, Vauxhall and the Metal Box Company that they would look elsewhere for their supplies, the management are trying to get the workers to feel that the craftsmen will be responsible for any suffering that may result from the strike.

BISAFTA men and Transport and General men at Port Talbot should understand that the strike concerns them as much as it does the members of the AEU and of the other craft unions.

The shutdown is not really over wages but over the management's need to break the unions before

introducing more 'reorganisation of labour' and speed-up with the automation. In further struggles, of which this is merely the forerunner, members of all the unions in the works will be involved.

Nor does this issue concern workers in Port Talbot alone.

The management hope that their 'off with the velvet glove and on with the knuckleduster' attitude will break the union strength in the works and serve as a national example of what happens when workers strike.

They anticipate that a defeat here will spread demoralisation throughout the whole of the labour movement.