

WORLD LABOUR NEWS

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Seamen fight on for rank and file control

IN JUNE, 1961 British seamen began to "enjoy the benefits" of what was widely regarded as one of the biggest steps forward in the industry, with regard to hours and wages (National Union of Seamen officials were noticeably more effusive than the seamen themselves about the agreements reached). The NUS certainly claimed it as such and regarded it as proof of the worth of the then, new General Secretary, the late James Scott.

Certainly a big advance was made with regard to hours. The basic working week was reduced to 44 hours from 56 (incredible as it may seem, there were men in a British industry working a 56 hour week up to a year ago). Union officials ignored, or were unaware of how severe an indictment of the Union was the fact that its members were previously working such a week.

When the agreements were published, union men came round to those ships in port to explain the new hours and wages to crews, all of them full of what a militant fellow was Bro. Scott and that now we had a really militant union. Unfortunately for these union men, seamen could remember when, during the seamen's unofficial strike in the summer of 1960, these self same officials fulfilling their role as strike-breakers and yes-men to Sir Tom Yates, told seamen that they already had a 44 hour week.

It is quite nauseating to see these union officials who, when Tom Yates was Gen. Sec., leapt to his defence at the drop of a hat and then, as soon as he retired, refer to the Yates regime as "the years of misrule."

The advances in wages were meagre, as usual, and scarcely worth calling a cost-of-living rise, for a top-rate able seaman (i.e. an AB who has had his ticket of efficiency for four years), the wage rocketed from £40.10s. to £43 per month—an increase of 1s. 8d. a day—while the overtime rate (and overtime must be worked where and when the Master requires) was fixed at 4s. 4d. an hour, which I believe is the average basic hourly rate for an unskilled labourer ashore (and this is not a plea for differential pay rates). The fact that seamen lost the "Saturday afternoon at sea" (an agreement that had been in existence only 12 months, whereby a seaman got half a day's leave and pay if at sea for more than four hours on a Saturday afternoon) was glossed over by the Union.

So British seamen came out of the '61 agreement with a 44-hour week and a wage, with four years' "Seniority" pay, of 28s. 8d. per day.

Bad as hours and pay are in industry ashore, they are a long way ahead of those at sea. There conditions remained virtually the same. There are ships being built today, and have been for several years, with reasonable accommodation for seamen—single-berth cabins, pleasant messrooms and even air-conditioned recreation spaces (of course the owners make sure that whatever the sailors have, the officers have better). However, there is a colossal amount of tonnage, a lot of it of post-war construction, where the conditions are appalling. Ships with dirty, cramped accommodation, inadequate

toilet and heating facilities, on some lack of fresh air—in fact, floating slums.

Again, the food on ships varies from good to inedible, depending on the tightness of the owner, the ability of the cook and the extent to which the Chief Steward is fiddling. Seamen are still rationed and in any case the working theory is that officers' bellies are different from sailors' bellies, in that they need more and better nourishment.

Seamen are subject to a number of indignities, many of which would scarcely occur ashore. Not least is the fact that, whereas there can be and often is instant dismissal of the seamen, he must give notice which varies anywhere between 48 hours and seven days. Ships officers are often abusive in their mode of address to seamen and, should the seaman reply in kind, he would find himself fined, at least. The general run of deck and engineer officers are not a very engaging bunch and the further up the ladder towards Masters and Chief Engineers they get, the less engaging they become. The Master of a ship, as direct representative of the owner, the law and God aboard, understandably often has a tendency towards megalomania, which is hardly conducive to a pleasant working or living atmosphere.

Why should conditions for British seamen be so bad and industrial progress so slow? The causes aren't difficult to find. First and obviously, the shipowners, who are a mean and grasping tribe, even when compared with the rest of the British capitalist boss class. I am sure it is no coincidence that the richest man in the UK (£180-million) is Sir John Ellerman, shipowner.

These shipowners have always been able to rely on their good friend the State for the necessary repressive legislation to ensure that seamen are denied even the most elementary rights, which have long since been taken for granted by shore workers. The two main instruments provided by the State for the owners are the Merchant Shipping Acts of 1894 (and subsequent amendments) and the articles that a seaman is forced to sign on joining a ship.

The statutes and the articles make sure that any industrial action is virtually impossible without a seaman risking imprisonment and/or loss of livelihood. Strike action can be classed as desertion, disobeying the lawful command of the Master, or impeding the lawful navigation of a vessel, all of which carry a three-month jail sentence.

If a seaman is unwise enough to strike at sea, then that is mutiny and God help him. Minor actions, such as complaints about food or conditions can, if the Master is bloody-minded enough, easily be dealt with. It is ridiculously easy to victimise a militant seaman during the course of a voyage by means of fines for all manner of

continued on page 2

Peruvian peasants seize land

LIMA, Peru, March 5—Indian peasants fought armed troops with slingshots and knives yesterday as they clung to four big privately owned cattle ranches high in the Andes, they claim belong to them by ancient rights.

Bitter fighting near Cerro de Pasco over the week-end left 7 men dead and 18 wounded, police said, describing the situation there still as "very bad."

Government troops tried to evict the Indian squatters after attempts to persuade them to leave peacefully had failed.

The farm workers seized the ranches several weeks ago, claiming ownership of the land was taken from their ancestors three centuries ago by Spanish conquistadors.

Cerro de Pasco, 110 miles northwest of Lima, is the capital of Pasco State and one of the world's highest cities with an altitude of 13,973 feet.

The government in the past has blamed leftists and Communists for rousing the illiterate peasants to take over estates and ranches largely held by absentee landlords—some of them North Americans. Critics of the government complain that it is moving too slow on programmes to better the lot of the peasants—particularly the 6 million Indians, about half of Peru's population.

How to celebrate May Day

JAPAN—Mass May Day demonstrations are to mark the climax of a campaign whose opening shots were fired on March 28. Some 5½ million workers in coal, metal, shipbuilding, electrical and machinery, chemical, paper and pulp, printing, the docks and transport industries (as well as Tokyo Stock Exchange) have taken part in token strikes of up to 24 hours in support of a demand for an all-round increase of 5,000 yen (about £4 18s.) a month and the introduction of standard minimum wages.

The "spring offensive" of the left-wing trade union federations, Sohyo (General Council of Japanese Trade Unions) and Churitsu Roren (the smaller Federation of Independent Trade Unions), representing between them 99 unions, has been an annual event for the past seven years, but the right-wing federation, Zenro (All-Japan Trades Union Council), with a membership of 1,200,000, is against it, and the iron and steel workers' union, which is affiliated to Sohyo, contracted out this year.

trivial offences and, at the end of a trip, by giving him a bad discharge in his Seaman's Book.

The Seaman's Discharge Book, with its reports on conduct and ability, and the Shipping Federation (a sort of seaman's labour exchange run by the shipowners) are both part of the official blacklist system. There was also a secret blacklist circulated among shipping companies after the 1960 strike that even extended to those employed in the shore gangs.

Who can the seaman go to for assistance? Certainly not the State, for it is the very laws of the State that keep him in his unfortunate place. Not content with the considerable legislation at its disposal, the Government will resort to even further strike-breaking activities (e.g. the use of the National Service call-up for seamen under 26, as they did during the 1955 unofficial strike).

Surely a seaman should be able to look to his Union to further his interests? Well, he definitely cannot. He might just as well go cap-in-hand to the boss as go to the NUS. It would be difficult to find a union in British industry quite as reactionary as the NUS. The conditions at sea prove this. Seamen have long been dissatisfied with the NUS. Indeed, the last four strikes (1947, 1955 and two in 1960), all unofficial, have been directed against the union, as well as the owners.

Between the two strikes in 1960, dissatisfied seamen organised themselves into the National Seamen's Reform Movement. In fact, the NSRM organised the second strike.

The NSRM is working within the rather grotesque structure of the NUS in an attempt to make the union more democratic and one capable of improving the seamen's lot. Whether it will achieve anything while remaining in the Union, or find it necessary to break away, remains to be seen.

At the moment elections are being held for the post of General Secretary of the Union and the NSRM is supporting one of the candidates—Jim Slater. This has had the effect of inspiring a smear campaign against Slater by the NUS. Also the NSRM allege that the Union have resorted to a variety of undemocratic actions in order to block Slater. In any event, it is quite apparent that the NSRM are a much more militant organisation than the NUS.

Seamen realise now that the only way to get anything done is—not to wait for crumbs that fall from the shipowners' table, not to wait for politicians to intervene, not to wait for the expensive, top-heavy hierarchy of the NUS to take time off from collecting dues. Not to wait for anybody, in fact, but to do it themselves.

B.L.H.

Ship's delegates

THE FIGHT for a delegate to represent the crew and union on ships with NUS crews has been on for a long while. Before the NSRM was formed, many unorganised seamen had tried—but always came up against a solid wall of officialdom. Until the famous 1960 strike and the National Seamen's Reform Movement was born, very little had been accomplished. Now, two years and two general secretaries later, the NUS is planning to be ready with their version, in case the rank and file members force the issue of Ship's Delegates.

As it is only a plan and has not been made public, a word to the wise, in case you are steamrollered into anything on it. Ship's Delegates, Shipboard Representation and Ship Committees are three very different things. The NUS view to press has been to avoid Ship's Delegates, but to play around with Shipboard Representation. Ship's Committees will never get their approval, as these could lead to union meetings on ships, out of the control of officials and their policies.

Ship's Delegate will not be the tough, unthankful job many on both sides think it will be. The men will see to that, as everything depends on their co-operation and self-discipline. Seamen, Masters and Owners can all shout with some justification about the bad discipline on some ships. Never do they blame themselves. One answer, and I am at a loss to understand how the Union has to date never brought it up, is that the Pool or, Shipping Federation supply the men, not the Union, who have no other choice but to take their money and enrol them.

Now, Shipboard Representatives. It doesn't say how, when or where you will be represented. It could mean that you may get an official to visit the ship by law, to represent you in a pow-wow with the Master, or it could actually mean, on the bigger ships anyway, that you will have an official sailing with you. Mark you this, he will be an appointed official and not an elected member of the crew—which, after all, is what a Ship's Delegate is.

Be wary of Shipboard Representation. Press for Ship's Delegates. About the election for General Secretary, it is not too late to register. Do register—and Do Vote Slater, from the Poles to the Equator. He is not an official, but an ordinary seagoing member like you, with a policy for you.

"Voice from the North".

Postbag

LIBERTARIAN YOUTH CAMP

The International Libertarian Youth Summer Camp is organised each year by the Jeunes Libertaires, Bulgarian Libertarians and Spanish Libertarian Youth during the whole month of August. The object of the Camp is to provide an opportunity for young libertarians (not-so-young ones are also welcomed) to meet, discuss and exchange opinions, and generally help towards promoting a better international and libertarian understanding.

The Camp is largely recreational and the site offers facilities for swimming, sunbathing and other holiday attractions. Day excursions to places of interest are also arranged.

There are a number of talks and discussions in French and Spanish and on most evenings spontaneous discussions or entertainment. You are encouraged, but not obliged, to take part in all these activities. In any case there is plenty of time and opportunity for activities of your own choice.

Since it is held under canvas, you are advised to bring your own camping equipment if you have any. Some tents are provided and there is an emergency big army tent which can accommodate fifty or more persons. Other equipment which you will need is a sleeping-bag or blankets, eating and cooking utensils and a rubber mattress if you like a soft bed. Cooking facilities (butane gas) will be provided and there will be a store for main provisions. On arrival you can either cook for yourself or join one of the already formed groups who normally share the work and expenses. This is entirely up to you.

This year's Camp will be held at ISTRES (Bouches du Rhône) in Provence, a few miles from the Mediterranean and on a fine beach. The return fare from London is approximately £15. The total cost of the Camp will depend on your food and personal expense and on how long you stay. In any case it does not work out too expensive since there is no other expense involved other than a nominal fee of a few shillings to cover site costs.

If you like the open air life, plenty of sunshine, lively discussion and meeting young people from other countries in a friendly atmosphere you will enjoy the Camp. It will also give you a chance to meet and find out what young libertarians think. For further details write to:

SPANISH LIBERTARIAN YOUTH
Great Britain Committee
159 Ledbury Road, London, W.11.

The address of the National Council of International Anti-Fascist Solidarity (SIA) at Toulouse will, from April 1, 1962, be:

85, Rue de la Concorde,
Toulouse (Hte-Gne),
France.

We shall be grateful if, besides noting it, you would print it in your paper, thus making it known to all our friends in England.

J. SANJUAN.

ISRAEL—A nine-day unofficial stoppage of postal workers ended on February 26 with victory for the strikers. It began on February 16, when 140 Tel Aviv postmen walked out to back their demand for an all-round rise of £6 a month, plus 3s. 9d. a day for delivery men, repudiating the agreement between the postal workers' committee and the Histadrut (General Federation of Labour) for varying rises of £3 to £6 10s. plus 2s. 6d. a day. They were soon joined by delivery men in other parts of the country, and a threat by the Ministry of Posts to use temporary workers to break the strike brought out most of the other postal workers.

In addition to the normal establishment-mindedness of trade union federations, the Histadrut suffers from direct political participation, each party being represented in proportion to its seats in the Knesset (Parliament). This means that the main government party (in other words the most establishment-minded party) is always in control, while the other parties exploit the workers' grievances for political purposes.

A 6 per cent rise in prices is expected to follow the devaluation of the Israel pound from 4s. to 2s. 6d. sterling. Wages are linked to the cost-of-living index, but allowances are normally only adjusted in January and July, if the average monthly index has risen by at least three points. However, under pressure from the rank and file, who have held a number of token strikes in factories, the Histadrut is being forced to support an earlier adjustment.

Read 'SEAMEN'S VOICE'

THE RANK AND FILE SEAMEN'S PAPER

5d postpaid from Bill Christopher, 34, Cumberland Road, London, E.17.

RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS IN TWO TOTALITARIAN STATES

BASQUE WORKERS STRIKE

WORKERS in the highly-industrial Basque Provinces are among the best paid in Spain. Whereas the official minimum wage in other parts of Spain oscillates between 35 and 50 pesetas per day, here they are nearer the 80 pesetas range. The workers also benefit from extras in the summer and Christmas. This is not to say that the Basque workers are well off (a survey by a catholic association found that a married couple with two children required at least a minimum of 130 pesetas daily income to make ends meet), it simply indicates what conditions must be like in other parts of Spain. Yet despite this, discontent on a large scale has broken out and workers are demanding a minimum of 100 pesetas per day. This has been their cry in all the protests they have staged throughout the province and it has been taken up by their wives and children (100 pesetas is about 13s.).

On December 1, 1961, some 3,000 railway workshop men staged a sit-down strike at Beasain, Guipuzcua, protesting at low wages and poor working conditions. Technicians and administrative staff came out in sympathy. The workers were expelled from the factories by the Guardia Civil. Later a protest march, made up mostly of the workers' wives, was brutally broken up by the police and in the process several persons were injured and there was one unconfirmed

Basque christian names to alleged acts of sabotage and flag burning. Last September numerous arrests were carried out among the illegal Basque nationalist youth movement, who were accused of being responsible for acts of sabotage. Towards the end of October seven of the arrested were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging up to 20 years. They had earlier been accused of "military rebellion" and the main charge included that of burning two Spanish flags in San Sebastian on July 18 (the anniversary of Franco's rising) and for alleged involvement in an unsuccessful act of sabotage on a special train returning civil-war ex-servicemen from a Franquist celebration in San Sebastian on July 18.

Gruesome details of their torture during examination have leaked out and, apart from the Gestapo techniques in which the Spanish police glorify, attempts were made to implicate the clergy and intense abusive reference was made to them.

It is reassuring to find that after 23 years of fascist dictatorship and without labour unions—the only recognised unions are the official "sindicatos verticales", which are of Falangist inspiration and directly controlled by the Franco regime—the workers are able to defend themselves by the traditional revolutionary methods of strike and direct action. It also indicates that the lessons of the classical free Syndicalist and Socialist unions (CNT and UGT, clandestine since 1939) have been understood and put to effective use by a new generation of Spanish workers. Despite his repressive regime, Franco has been unable to stamp out the spark of freedom in all these years.

What is happening in the Basque provinces is not new in the Spain of Franco. It has happened before and will continue to happen. What ought to impress us is the fact that, when we hear references made to Franco's more liberal and democratic changes in Spain, in connection with NATO or the Common Market or the International Bank, so little effort is made to remember the grim situation of the Spanish people.

S.G.

SPAIN...PORTUGAL...PRAGUE

As we go to press, 100,000 workers, including the miners of Asturias, are on strike and there have been mass arrests under a Franco-decreed State of Emergency. Madrid students have been arrested for demonstrating in support of strikers on May Day. From Portugal and Prague illegal May Day demonstrations against dictatorship are reported.

death casualty. Many other workers came out in sympathy and cinemas, theatres and bars were boycotted by the workers of Beasain.

The discontent came to a head when an increase in wages and better working conditions were negotiated by the biggest iron and steel works in the Basque Provinces, Altos Hornos de Bizcaya, for its 12,000 workers under a collective convention signed in November.

Unrest soon spread to other factories in the Provinces which had not been affected by these benefits. Altogether some 2,000 factories and 60,000 workers are involved in this dispute.

In mid-January one of the most important engineering factories of Bizcaya, La Vasconia, staged a sit-down strike and the workshops were closed by order of the authorities. At the same time it was rumoured that a collective agreement, to include all the workers not affected by the Altos Hornos convention, was being negotiated in San Sebastian. It seems that the authorities feared a chain reaction of strikes, which would involve the whole Basque Provinces. Beasain and La Vasconia were after all only the beginning.

Rumours of an impending collective agreement and the many assurances given by the employers helped quieten things a little. Nevertheless the agreement rumoured in January has not been completed. The cry for a minimum of 100 pesetas daily is once again taken up by the workers and we again see more strikes spreading to those factories not affected by the Altos Hornos convention, nor benefitting from unofficial agreements on the part of the employers. This time it was at the railway workshops of Irun and Eibar and in a number of small arms and bicycle factories. Some 500 workers of the Tarabusi motor-piston factory in Bilbao also came out in sympathy. Once again the workers staged sit-down and "go slow" strikes and the Guardia Civil had to intervene. Assurances that negotiations would be speeded up confirm that the authorities are eager to avoid further trouble in the area.

This concern of the authorities is understandable when we consider that strikes are illegal in Spain and that Franco had nothing but trouble in this area throughout last year.

Besides the latest industrial unrest, Franco's regime has had to cope with a steady rise in Basque national feelings and opposition from the more liberal Basque priests. It is probably the only region where the catholic clergy suffered persecution by Franco during and after the Civil War. Many Basque priests were shot, imprisoned or fled into exile. The more liberal Basque priests have maintained this tradition and in May, 1960, 339 Basque priests signed a document which was an open and frank condemnation of Franco's regime. It exposed police torture, lack of freedom, the bogus trade unions, press censorship, and all the totalitarian aspects of the regime. The authorities, particularly the police, have never forgiven the Basque priests for this.

Nationalist Basque, or autonomist feelings have always been strong and range from the passive protest of naming their children with

Sabotage and armed struggle in Bulgaria

IWMA Congress report—continued from last issue.

UNLIKE Rumania, Bulgaria has never previously been subjected to the widespread pillage which is now integral to the social and political system. Examples are legion. No undertaking, industrial, commercial, agricultural or transport, has been able to survive without, at some time or other being involved in theft or fiddling—at the expense of the consumers, producers, or the State, especially the consumers. In charge of undertakings involved in legal proceedings are invariably leading Communists including some with the best past records of service to their party. The more reputable leaders are worried, realising that these robberies add up to a giant flaw in the system and they sincerely want to stop them, having made several vain attempts to do so. Many trials, concerning theft of millions of levas, have been held throughout the country, involving tens of thousands of people. Long prison terms and death sentences have been imposed, all to no effect. Here are some representative cases:

1. Fiddling of railway ticket sales on the Sofia-Burgos and Sofia-Varna lines, amounting to theft of some tens of million levas and involving 300 prisoners, nearly all Communist officials. Several death sentences and prison terms of 1-20 years.
2. A series of grain thefts, implicating several farm collectives in the Vidine and Koula districts. More than 2,000 accused.
3. More than 700 sentenced for a chain of grocery thefts at Bourges.
4. Systematic theft of dairy produce at Plovdiv; 52 death sentences.
5. 70 sentences (three capital) at Stara-Zagora for swindling in sales of meat and offal.
6. 54 sentenced at Stara Zagora for organised robbery in the "Piperka" jam factory and fruit-packing plant.
7. Theft of wine and spirits (a State monopoly) at Stara Zagora; 40 sentenced.

In one of his many speeches, CP First Secretary Theodore Jivkov estimated thefts of currency during 1955 at 83-million levas and of goods at more than 400-million.

Naturally those in the best position to carry out these thefts are

continued on page 7

SUPPORTING THE LABOUR PARTY? NO THANKS!

"SOME OF THE SENTIMENTS expressed are good, but I still think your energies and talents are misdirected. Direct them where they can be effective." This was written by a Labour Party supporter, after reading World Labour News and so presumably the direction in which he thinks our energies and talents would be effective is within the Labour Party or, more generally, within any one of the Social Democratic Parties which are to be found in just about every country outside the Communist bloc.

Now the sentiments expressed in this paper are Anarcho-syndicalist sentiments. The idea that socialism must be free or not at all. That it can only be achieved by the direct action of the workers themselves. That the State is, in itself, evil and must be destroyed before we can establish a socialist society. That the workers themselves must directly control the means of production and distribution. That the wage system, which is a capitalist device to divide and weaken the working class, must be abolished and replaced by the principle of from each according to his ability to each according to his needs. It is to the spreading of these ideas that we devote what energies and talents we possess.

Our critic must know that Labour Party and Social Democratic policies are opposed to these ideas. State control not the abolition of the State, nationalisation not workers' control, parliamentary politicking not direct action, negotiating procedures and wage differentials, not the abolition of the wage system—these are social democratic policies and we want no part of them.

And as for our effectiveness. If numbers alone are to be the criteria, then we are unable to even approach the social democratic movement with its millions of followers. But we would dispute the idea that numbers alone are a measure of effectiveness. To the social democrat, the only way to be effective is through parliamentary action. Most of the energies (and monies) of the social democratic movement have been spent in building up highly centralised party machines, aiming at securing the election to parliament of enough party members to form a government.

In an endeavour to do this, social democratic policy has steadily moved to the right in an attempt to gain the votes of the "uncommitted" amongst the electorate. The leaders of the parties have encouraged this swing, because during their rise in the party hierarchy the desire for political power has become their main objective, while the establishment of a socialist society has become a secondary consideration.

These right wing leaders have made a mockery of such ideas as the brotherhood of man and working class solidarity. They have lead their followers into two world wars and appear ready to lead them into a third, rather than make any effort towards achieving a socialist society. Who, outside the Anarchist and Syndicalist movements, advocated a general strike against the 1914-18 war? The social democratic politicians were patriots first, socialists second and, except for a few honourable exceptions (Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in Germany) were opposed to this proposal.

And yet, had they used their numerical strength effectively, they could have stopped that war. Instead they preferred to form coalition governments with their erstwhile political opponents, in order more effectively to pursue the war effort. Then again, following the 1914-18 war, the German armament workers at a congress at Erfurt (1919) passed a resolution to make no more weapons of war and to compel their employers to convert their plants to other uses. This resolution was maintained for almost two years, until it was broken by the social democratic trades unions supplying scabs to replace striking Syndicalist workers. How effective was this action in causing the second world war, we wonder?

Not so long ago, auto workers at Acton struck for twelve weeks against the bosses' attempt to declare some of them redundant. At one time "the right to work" was a great social democratic rallying cry. Not so now it seems, as the TU officials (all good LP members no doubt) worked with the bosses and against their own members to break the strike.

We could fill several issues of WLN with similar cases of LP and TU officials siding with the bosses against the workers (one of the first acts of the post-war Labour Government, for example, was to send military conscripts into the docks to scab on striking port-workers.) But are these constant betrayals an effective way of achieving a socialist society? Of course not. If our ideas are good ones, why not join us in our efforts to make them a reality, instead of helping an organisation that is opposed to them.

BILL GREENWOOD

GRAVE DELAYS—Burials at ten cemeteries in the San Francisco area were delayed by a 27-day-strike of cemetery workers which ended on April 4.

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Rank and file conference

ON SUNDAY, March 11 the National Rank and File Movement held its first annual conference in London, attended by workers from many trade unions, representing various political points of view.

The Secretary's report of the year's activities showed that the NRFM had overcome the inevitable initial difficulties and was now firmly established, with strong bases in London, Glasgow and Manchester. Individual militants throughout Britain and Ireland had been enrolled and it was intended to organise groups at several industrial centres in the forthcoming year.

The movement's declared policy of Workers' Ownership and Direct Control of all industries and its activities in the course of industrial disputes had brought it under attack from the National Press, the right-wing spy-sheets of the Economic League and IRIS, the strike-breaking "New Daily" and from the trade-union bureaucracy. Members were being threatened with expulsion from their "official" trade unions for distributing the Rank and File leaflet, "Unite for Militant Industrial Action."

Several delegates at the Conference stressed the fact that the immediate aim of the movement is the establishment of a libertarian left, to represent the real aspirations of the workers, to assist them in their efforts against the boss-class and to replace trade union bureaucracy with working-class militancy.

"Strike Strategy", the first pamphlet of the NRFM, was unanimously approved by the delegates and members present. It was agreed that it should be followed by a series of pamphlets dealing with the various techniques of "on the job" action, such as "working to rule" and "go slow".

One speaker held that the outstanding success of the movement was that it had welded together within the ranks of an industrial movement a large body of individuals of differing political outlooks. More, he felt, must be done by the incoming committee to promote liaison between those political groupings which accept the stated aims and objects of the movement. Others spoke of the NRFM as being a militant, anti-capitalist force, free from the political intrigues of the Communist Party and the various Trotskyite factions.

Discussion of the NRFM administration resulted in unanimous support of a resolution calling for the election, not of a central Executive Committee, but of a Working Committee that would develop the democratic administration of the NRFM for the forthcoming year.

The Working Committee should avoid the dangers of centralising the movement in London by providing ample opportunity for delegates from all centres to meet regularly and by developing effective liaison between regional committees. All delegates elected directly by their own rank and file should be subject to recall. One speaker emphasised that we should never think in terms of a Central executive with power of discipline over individual members.

Rank and file delegates meeting at national level should co-ordinate rank and file activities throughout Britain. They would be mandated and subject to recall by their local organisations. Thus no committee could ever usurp the authority of the rank-and-file membership.

A working committee of nine members was then elected. It included members of the ETU, AEU, NATSOPA, NALGO, ASW, T&GWU, and covered such groupings as the Syndicalist Workers' Federation, Solidarity Group, Common Wealth, Independent Labour Party and London Anarchist Group. Conference ended with the reading of messages of support from abroad.

M. CALLINAN.

URUGUAY—The six-month-old strike by about 4,000 Uruguayan meat industry workers has been settled and all plants resumed normal work on March 19. The strike had virtually paralysed the Frigorifico Nacional and drastically reduced production at the Anglo plant.

PAGES OF LABOUR HISTORY

Fighting for the nine-hour day

WHEN LAST I visited my native city of Newcastle, I saw the sports shop of Stan Seymour, one-time footballer and director of a Cup-winning Newcastle United. I looked up at the heavy stone walls and recalled that the shop was a converted dwelling house, the house where my father was born, the home of my grandfather John Brown, Radical and trade unionist. Here and in a nearby dwelling he had been visited by Garibaldi. Best of all, I recalled his part in the famous Nine-Hours Strike.

Journeying along the riverside amid the clanging shipyards, I remembered the change of working hours which took place at the beginning of 1919, one stage in a long fight. Before that there had been a 9½-hour day and a 53-hour week, but unpaid meal breaks made a working day of 11 hours. Then we won the 47-hour week, after World War II the 44-hour week, then 42, but even the 53-hour, five-and-a-half day week had been a great triumph, a stage in the long climb from the depths of the Industrial Revolution. One of the best chapters of this saga is that of the "Nine Hours Strike."

During a great part of the 19th Century, the trade union movement tried to shorten the intolerably long working day by influencing politicians to introduce "Short Hour Bills" in Parliament, as well as by some strike action. There was some limited success through Parliament, for it was sometimes possible to gain the support of Conservative politicians against the Liberals. Traditionally the Tories were "land-owning aristocrats," the Liberals coal, ship and factory owners, believers in "Liberty", the liberty to work men, women and little children to death without State interference.

The limits of this method of obtaining a shorter working day were clearly seen by 1870 and even before. Philanthropists and politicians would never agree with workmen on how far the day should be shortened; many of the former, including Lord Shaftesbury, were opposed to trade unionism; the Bills, such as the 10-hours Bill, were obtained on the plea of the effects of long hours on

‘DIRECT ACTION’ AGAIN

THE SWF is now again publishing its original paper, **DIRECT ACTION**, which has incorporated "Workers' Voice." This appears fortnightly, edited by Bill Christopher in duplicated form, and gives first-hand information on all aspects of the workers' struggle against capitalism and State oppression. Specimen copy 3d. (plus 2d. postage) from SWF, 25A Amberley Road, London, W.9., or 5s. for 12 issues.

women and children—the reason why mining and textiles figure so largely in the discussions—and workers were beginning to resent gaining a shorter day for men by pleading the case for women. As a union paper declared, "Now the veil must be lifted and the agitation carried on under its true colours. Women and children must no longer be made the pretext for securing a reduction of working hours for men." *Cotton Factory Times*, May 26, 1873.

In 1874 the Tory Government introduced, against Liberal opposition, its shorter hours bill, entitled, "Factories (Health of Women, etc) Bill", relating chiefly to the cotton mills of Lancashire, the women securing a 56½-hour week. It should be remembered that there was no half-holiday on Saturday until the latter part of the 19th Century.

Increasingly, workers were losing hope in political action and turning with stronger faith to direct action, especially to reduce the working day and week. During 1859-60-61, there had been strikes to this end in the London building trade, to be followed by action in many provincial towns, gaining for many building workers a shorter working day, without, of course, any reduction of the weekly wage. The building workers continued to enjoy a working week shorter than that of factory workers until recent post-war years, 50 against 53 before 1919, then 44 against 47 until 1947.

In 1866 the engineers of Tyneside debated a district strike for the nine-hour day, but a slump ended the discussion. In 1870 the demand was again put forward, but the Central District Committee of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, now the AEU, cautiously decided against.

Then, early in 1871, the engineers and shipyard men of nearby Sunderland took up the issue, decided, prepared and acted with remarkable speed and decisiveness. All out on April 1 and no fooling. The employers, who had been very confident and had the support of the Durham County authorities, with military force to back them, soon found themselves on the losing end. After four weeks, a short strike for those days, the workers were victorious and gained the nine-hour day.

Alarmed at the emulation that must follow such inspiring action, the engineering employers of North-East England met in Newcastle on April 8 to prepare a counter-attack. Headed by Sir W. G. Armstrong, of the Armstrong Whitworth Company, they obtained the

support of engineering employers throughout the British Isles, who levied themselves a shilling a head for all men employed by them.

The engineers of Newcastle and Gateshead were for strike action, but trade union strength was low. There were many unions, craft unions, but even one craft might have several unions in one shop. And even these divided ranks did not contain all, or even a majority of the workers in the factories. The Webbs, with access to the well-documented records of the strike stated that "two out of three of the men in the engineering trade belonged to no Union whatsoever."

There was the problem . . . a strong and wealthy foe, our side poor, divided by a multitude of unions and two-thirds of the men non-unionists. A new, even if a temporary, single-purpose organisation must be created, above craft union boundaries, above the exclusiveness of trade-union brotherhood, a movement founded on a class, in class conflict.

A Rank and File Movement was formed and named the Nine Hours League. The League included all crafts and unions and all men, unionist or non-unionist. It took over, temporarily, the functions of the unions, without destroying them. Its president was John Burnett, an Alnwick man, member of the ASE District Committee.

The men of Newcastle and Gateshead struck, it was a hard strike, as my grandmother often told me, for I loved to listen to her stories over a winter's fire, with the wind howling down from the Cheviots, or across the angry North Sea when she later lived near the Scottish Border. I have since checked the details of these stories with the records and works of historians. It is remarkable that the tales of actual events experienced by such old people always seem to stand the test.

The national executives of the unions were lukewarm, but the local men were full of fight. "The five-months strike . . . was, in more than one respect, a notable event in Trade Union annals," wrote the Webbs in their dry manner. "One of the most memorable strikes on record," said G. D. H. Cole. The strikers were mostly non-unionists and unused to organisation. "Upwards of 8,000 men had struck, whereas only 500 of them belonged to our society and very few to any other," said the *ASE Abstract Report of Council Proceedings*, June 1, 1870 to December 31, 1872, page 184.

But the League organised them—meetings, processions through the city streets and to neighbouring towns, demonstrations on the Town Moor, factory pickets, organisation of relief, everyone seemed busy. Agents of the League went to distant towns and villages, sometimes walking many miles, sometimes going to Hull, Leith and London by coasters for a few shillings, for the strike funds were guarded with miserly care, "every possible penny must go for food."

Although the majority of workmen could not then read or write, the need of printed propaganda was understood. There was a minority who had received a rudimentary education at Church and at "Penny" schools, or who had taught themselves to read and write. From them came a team of writers, men who had learned to read the hard way and loved their diet of "the classic novels", Shakespeare, Tales of the Border and poetry. This reading, combined with a notorious Northumbrian love of narrative, now served them well.

John Brown was deputed to seek the aid of Radical Joseph Cowan, owner of an excellent local press, the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, to the weekly edition (the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*) of which Kropotkin was a regular contributor (Kropotkin often stayed with Dr. Spence Watson at Gateshead). Gripping John Brown's hand, promised to open the pages of his papers to the strikers.

But the *Chronicle* had little more than a local circulation. The worker's correspondents aimed further afield, too. The Webbs, usually lofty towards anything short of a university education, wrote: "The tactical skill and literary force with which the men's case was presented achieved the unprecedented result of securing for their demands the support of *The Times* and *Spectator*." *History of Trade Unionism*.

Armstrong (Lord) wrote a howling protest to the *Times*: "We were amazed . . . we really felt that, if the League themselves had possessed the power of inspiring that article, they could scarcely have used words more calculated to serve their purposes than those in which it is expressed. The concurrent appearance in the *Spectator* of an article exhibiting the same bias adds to our surprise." *Times*, 14.9.71.

The poor man could never believe that some of the articles were written by some of his fitters.

The strike lasted for five months, during the first three of which money came in slowly, afterwards in a flood. The flood of donations from so many parts of the country heartened the men and dismayed the employers. Writers then and historians since have

attributed the financial success to the skill and eloquence of the now unknown writers.

Blacklegs were brought in from the extremes of the British Isles, then hundreds were recruited from Europe. To stop the latter source of labour, the assistance of the International Working Men's Association was called, with some success. Then the IWMA's Danish secretary in London, Kohn, was sent to Europe to complete the job. European members of the IWMA came to Tyneside and persuaded many blacklegs to return to their home countries.

Five months gone, the League was growing stronger, the employers capitulated and granted the nine-hour day, 54-hour week, without reduction of the weekly wage. Afterwards, instead of six days of nine hours each, it was agreed to have five of 9½ hours and one of 6½ hours, finishing at 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

A later struggle knocked off one hour, blowing the factory whistle at 12 o'clock for the week-end.

The victory caused the Tynesiders' struggle to be emulated throughout England and in Scotland and Ireland, in other trades, especially building, too. On the Clyde, the shipbuilding workers were offered, instead of a 60-hour week, 54 hours and rise of wages. The rise they refused and forced the employers a 51-hour week at the old weekly wage, though in a later depression they were forced to accept a 53-hour week.

From then on, not political but direct action was the method used by the workers to secure a shorter working day and week—a fight that is not yet over.

The strike ended, the leaders of the struggle went back to the lathe, the bench and the shipyard—with one exception, Burnett became General Secretary of the ASE. The names of the others are unknown to history. I have the word of one old lady that that is how they wanted it to be.

TOM BROWN

DAY-TO-DAY STRUGGLE IN BRITAIN GOVERNMENT HAS THE BOSSSES PUZZLED

THE Government's "pay pause" has the employers at sixes and sevens. It's alright for the Government, sitting in the gas-sevens at Westminster advocating wage restraint, they don't have to negotiate first hand, they just intervene and gum up the works. Railway and Wages Councils are a classic example.

The Minister of Labour has asked the Chairmen of "Wages Councils" to reconsider their proposals for pay increases ranging from 3½% to 8% for some 330,000 workers.

"Wages Councils" are the medium whereby the poorly organised and the worst paid workers' hours, wages and conditions are fixed. The very nature of their set-up prevents them giving anything away, so you can guess if they recommend a 5% increase it is centuries overdue. The Government is therefore warning through the Minister of Labour that in future Wages Councils must stick to Government policy of 2½%.

To quote an example, women hair and fibre workers are protected by "Wages Councils"; their present rate of pay is £4.19.9d. for a 42-hour week and the proposed increase of 7% will take their wages to the magnificent sum of £5.7.7½d. This is the age of the "Blue Streak" and skimmed milk, but it is also the age of "Direct Action" and old new methods of struggle.

SITTING THINGS OUT

Some 3,000 workers at the Longbridge works of the British Motor Corporation staged a 5-day sit-down strike in an attempt to obtain a bonus increase of 36s. a week. Their claim went through the necessary negotiating machinery to national level—and was rejected by the management. Union officials called for a return to work, so that bigger and better "chats" could be held with the management.

The pay claim had been lodged 18 months before, in an attempt to bring day rates near piece-work earnings. The sit-downers have now returned to work, although at this stage without achieving the 36s. increase.

Several important factors emerge from this dispute. The strikers were not out on the stones, but were being paid. Could closer liaison have prevented affected workers from suffering? National level talks were held while the dispute was in progress, something which to date has been stiffly resisted by the employers. The last important point: negotiations have come back to rank-and-file shop level discussion.

CINDERELLAS OF INDUSTRY

A few weeks back, 2,000 nurses demonstrated in protest against the rejection of their wage claim. The meeting was called by the Confederation of Health Service Employees. The meeting in fact became five, due to the numbers attending. A group of nurses marched into the House of Commons to lobby their MP's. This

activity was not part of COHSE programme, but proves the fighting spirit of the nurses.

This section of the workers is the most difficult to organise, because in the main, religious denominations have them securely tied down. In other words they can work 24 hours a day for the love of God—and Christ will pay the bills. Although one must recognise that nursing is a vocation (for humanity), society must not pounce on the fact, which in point of fact we are doing by allowing nurses to be robbed of their rightful "freedom", wages and conditions.

What can be done? "We can't strike", say the nurses. London District council of the Union of Post Office Workers have the only solution. Industrial Action by organised labour. Pressure must be applied from outside, if the nurses are to win.

THE FIGHT THE DOCKERS CAN'T WIN

Liverpool dockers (T&GWU) are struggling to operate the closed shop system. The problem is that they are operating it against another union, National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers (Blue Union). In other words it is docker against docker—with no winner.

An official strike was declared by the T&GWU (White Union) recently against non-union employment in the docks. Leaflets were issued by the union to dockers, stating that tugboatmen and dock gatemmen (T&GWU) would not handle any ships, unless the closed shop policy applied. This leaflet was signed by O'Hare, district secretary of the T&GWU. Whether "Blue Union" men are classed as "noners" by the White Union is a matter for speculation.

There is one certainty: if there is real trouble in the docks, Blue and White rank-and-files stand together (unofficially of course). The top brass either side have their prestige to consider.

At one of the Blue Union meetings in Liverpool the following resolution was passed unanimously, that "T&GWU and NASDU should work together to achieve 100% trade unionism in the docks, without docker fighting docker. All should accept the principle that a man could belong to the union of his choice".

It will come to pass that one day dockers will say "plague on both your houses". We, the rank and file, will take control and run our own affairs.

ARISTOCRATS TAKE OFF THEIR GLOVES

Nearly a fortnight ago today some 200 news agency journalists by an overwhelming majority decided to give a month's notice of strike action.

Pay talks between the union and the agency managements opened last October. In February the employers offered an increase of £1.10s. on minimum and not less than £1 to all above the minimum. This was in answer to the NUJ demand for an all-round increase of £3.10s. In March the agency managements said they could make no further offer, until current negotiations between the union and the Newspaper Proprietors Association (NPA) were concluded. (Newspaper journalists have submitted the same demand). Agency managements must not cut Big Daddy's throat.

On going to Press the agency management and the NUJ have settled for an all-round £2.10s. increase. It is expected the NPA will settle for the same.

The aristocrats only took their gloves off. "Gawd knows" what would have happened if they had taken their coats off as well.

This has been a very brief "round up", touching only the fringe of industrial strife. It is evident everywhere that the rank and file is pushing for all its worth, but only for bread-and-butter gains. This is important, it's the standard of living—but, what about the right to live without the shadow of death. Industrial action against Nuclear Weapons, industrial action in support of the OAP's. This is the only weapon we the workers have; Parliament is not for us, one lot in, another lot out, what's the odds? JOE SOAP still grafts on, still taxed up to the neck. Have a think, this parliamentary democracy RACKET is played out.

BILL CHRISTOPHER

AARON FRUCHTMAN

It is with deep regret that we record the death, on April 7 at the age of 77, of our comrade Aaron Fruchtmann, for many years a member of the London 'Freie Arbeiter Stimme' Group and formerly active in the libertarian movement in Paris. The SWF expresses its sympathy to our Jewish comrades—particularly to comrade Fruchtmann's daughter, Sophie—in their sad loss, which we share.

* * *
U.S.A.—22,000 teachers in New York City striking for higher wages were forced back to work on April 12 after a one-day stoppage by a court injunction, defiance of which "would mean goal penalties and severe fines on the rank and file teachers" according to leaders of the United Federation of Teachers. On the same day West Coast seamen were ordered back to work by a federal judge under America's anti-labour laws.

Earl Russell's Super-state

PACIFISM is generally associated with the middle class. It is rare among workers, at least those readily identified as workers. Apart from the doctrine of pacifism, the social structure encourages in the petit-bourgeois a pseudo-social pacifist standard of behaviour. Managers, officials, employers and those who aspire to such positions usually abhor personal violence in the settlement of disputes or unpleasant encounters, but rarely hesitate to yell into a telephone for the police, even for trifling disputes, or rows provoked by themselves.

The men in blue they regard as **their** police in a special proprietary way and each feels hurt and betrayed when a constable objects to his jamming the traffic with his car, or driving when drunk. "You are a public servant, constable, we pay you." This social set-up, a denial of fisticuffs, with a readiness to set in motion vicarious violence, develops that repudiation of responsibility and seeming dual character which, in its morbid form, is known as schizophrenia.

This ethos of the middle class makes it easier for those of its members who feel so inclined to become avowed pacifists, but the worker finds it more difficult, for the ethos of his class, whatever the superficial ideas of some, regards the laws as "their" law, the police as "their" police.

The prevailing advice of workers to workers is: "Don't go to law, mate, unless they take you." While some workers seek never to call for the help of the police, those who do so rarely expect any luck in the matter, knowing that they lack social influence. So in social relations among the toilers the latent threat of a punch on the nose, rather than "Dial 999" becomes the greater deterrent.

There is no better example of social schizophrenia than the case of the political pacifist. Pacifists are often members of political parties, and parties support the State, the State exists by violence, it makes laws and those who do not obey are threatened with violence, even to incarceration and death, and it maintains armed forces to that end. To the single-minded person it is a mystery how a person can repudiate all violence, yet uphold the greatest violence machine known to mankind, and it must seem that a pacifist could only be an Anarchist, one opposed to the State—any State.

However, this is no difficulty to the political pacifist, who gaily hops from twig to twig and back again, but when one is an MP and one's party in power, the moment of truth is apt to pop up.

In Britain now, and in many other countries too, Bertrand Russell has become the figurehead, the ikon of current pacifist aspirations and leader of public sit-down demonstrations. A few months ago, Russell was visited at his home by two members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, who demanded that he and the Committee of 100 become reconciled to the leadership of the CND. Being dissatisfied with Russell's reply, the couple sat down in his parlour and refused to go until he promised reconciliation.

Russell then phoned the police and had them carried out. Again, the simple-hearted might think this inconsistent, but Russell did not sling them out himself—he only ordered it to be done.

Now Russell has recently published a new book, "Has Man a Future?" (Penguin Books, 5s.), a plea for World Government by a single, all-powerful State. This super-State, which appears to be responsible to no one and self-perpetuating—it will be that in any case—is no benevolent uncle, saying, "Now please obey my nice new laws." Like any other State, it is to be armed, but with a power greater than any previous State.

Speaking of the scientific horrors which are the offspring of the hydrogen bomb, Russell goes on:

"The Cobalt bomb is only one method of extermination. Present skills could construct many more, and present Governments would not be unlikely to use them. For such reasons it seems indubitable that scientific man cannot long survive, unless all the major weapons of war, and all the means of mass extermination, are in the hands of a single Authority, which, in consequence of its monopoly, would have irresistible power and, if challenged to war, could wipe out any rebellion within a few days, without much damage, except to the rebels." Page 71.

Rebels! You have been warned. Here is one Reich which is likely to last a thousand years . . . if it doesn't blow itself up. But is the world really suffering from too little government—or too much? No other body but the State could produce and use the H-Bomb. It has made possible what used to be thought the apocalyptic prophesy of the Anarchists: either Man will destroy the State, or the State will destroy man.

No doubt the Superstate, the Great Man, political arrangement, UNO will continue to appeal to middle-class pseudo-pacifism, but these are not the roads to peace. There is another force, with greater potential strength than any collection of power-mad politicians—the workers and peasants of the world.

When the workers—and this is possible if we are not beguiled by

"great leaders"—realise their identity of interest and leap the frontiers to join hands, when workers in uniform meet in friendship between the firing lines, as British and Germans did at Christmas, 1914 in France, and again on the Somme at Christmas, 1916, when French and German soldiers fraternised, then there shall be peace.

T. B.

BULGARIAN RESISTANCE

continued from page 3

in the Government apparatus, as they are protected by their superiors and "justice" is often lenient with them.

Accidents, especially at work, are another characteristic of the regime. Even more characteristically, despite their number, the Press never mentions them. Accidents are not supposed to happen in a "Socialist" country. Deaths caused by accident are not reported and anyone publishing an obituary notice may not mention the cause of death (if they did, it would not get into print). The frequency and gravity of these accidents, often of catastrophic proportions, are caused by poor quality materials and machinery and ill-health of personnel, together with "socialist emulation" and the need to overstrain oneself to make both ends meet. Two examples:

1. A major rail accident on the Trans-Balkan line between Tzereva Livada and Verbanovo in 1951; brake failure sent a 96-wagon, two-engine train over a precipice; 104 deaths, 70 injured, all rolling stock destroyed.

2. The Hydro-Electric Central Board needed 49 miles of tunnel dug. Original plan allowed for 2,734 deaths through explosion, landslides, flood or other causes. Job due for completion in February, 1957; by that date there had been 3,600 deaths—and another 800 followed before the job was over 15 months later. In Bulgaria most are resigned to it; nothing could be further from the truth. The Bulgarian people, most downtrodden of those under any Communist Party dictatorship, are also the most stubborn in their resistance. The history of their struggles has yet to be written.

This resistance has shown itself openly and often violently among the peasants, from the period of forcible collectivisation, which took several years, onwards—and especially during 1948-52. Open revolt broke out in the North and South of the country in 1950 and 1951, the best-known risings being those at Koula, Vidine and Plovdiv. Several times the CP was forced to make concessions and accept faits-accomplis when the peasants broke up collectives and distributed the cattle. Later the resistance broadened, taking on an armed character and bringing in industrial workers and youth. The most important examples of this armed resistance were at Sliven (an old industrial town in the Stara-Planina mountains) and throughout the South-eastern part of the country in 1950. More than 800 took part directly or indirectly, 83 revolutionaries were killed near Sliven, 40 more near Karlova, 28 between Kalofer and Kazenlik. Suppression of the movement brought dozens of death sentences and prison terms of 5-20 years.

The victims number thousands. One member of this delegation personally knew several dozen. During 1954, 32 young men were killed near the village of Touria (in the Mezanlik district); three others near Tarnitchen nearby; nine in the neighbourhood of Yambol . . . and so on. But the whole country has known armed resistance groups, heroically fighting Stalinism.

There have also been strikes, some successful, especially in the tobacco-curing plants at Plovdiv and Haskovo, where the decisive factor was the intervention of our own members. The most widespread and continuous resistance, however, is sabotage, causing enormous loss and greatly hindering the national economy.

The Hungarian rising of 1956 had great repercussions. Within 24 hours, thousands were prepared to go to the aid of the Hungarian workers; quite an army of volunteers was ready and willing to intervene, with secret groups swiftly forming in the army barracks and linking up on a national scale. Workers and peasants attacked police and army officers to arm themselves; several factories were forced to shut down as the workers walked out; large numbers of peasants left the collectives, and so on. The terrified Stalinists did not dare take disciplinary steps against the soldiers; faced with open threats from the less prudent, the authorities hesitated and Communists sought friendship with opponents of the regime.

Having learned from experience, however, the Bulgarian people waited watchfully until the Soviet intervention in Hungary, concealing the fact that they were mobilised, though this was by then almost total. That they neither informed on each other, nor let their organisation be disbanded after the defeat in Budapest, when the repression in Bulgaria was resumed, meant, in the circumstances, a great success for the Resistance, which still remains intact, with stocks of well-concealed arms. This experience, those arms and that organisation will be ready when a more favourable situation arises.

KENYA

Convicts used as blackleg gangs in Nairobi

WHILE Kenya's rival African politicians were jockeying for position at the constitutional conference in London, Nairobi was in the grip of a strike by its 4,000 City Council employees (including firemen, nurses and midwives, and sanitary workers) for higher wages, better housing, the reinstatement of two sacked workers, and the dismissal of three European officials and three Africans and one Asian accused of spying for the council. Volunteers from the European and Asian communities to run essential services were supplemented by convicts and recruits from the city's vast reservoir of unemployed.

Eight hundred employees of Nairobi County Council joined the strikers, and teachers in Nairobi and five other centres walked out on March 19 in the opening blow of their own campaign of two-day strikes to secure wage increases recommended by an inquiry; but a threat by 43 union officials to declare a general strike in support of the City Council workers was called off. The Kenya Federation of Labour's statement that a satisfactory settlement had been reached was disputed by James Karebe, President of the Local Government Workers' Union, who said the terms were too vague.

The Union's general secretary, Gordon Nyawade, was held in custody on a charge of calling an illegal strike of essential services, but was acquitted after the 16-day stoppage had ended on March 29. An arbitration tribunal was set up by the Kenya Government to settle the dispute.

Notable advances have been made in the wages of workers in recent months. The minimum wage for busmen, for instance, was raised from 50s. to 95s. a month, excluding housing allowances. But as food alone is reckoned to cost a family 130s. a month in the cities, they are still appallingly low. The average Mombasa docker's earnings of over 240s. a month are exceptionally high. And according to the Christian Council of Kenya one in three of the wage-earning population—a quarter of a million people—are unemployed.

This figure excludes landless Africans living on subsistence in the Reserves. Mr. P. M. Gordon, acting Minister of Agriculture, said recently that some 750,000 people were living at or below subsistence level for lack of land. Since last August 12,000 labourers on European farms have lost their jobs. The depression in farming has forced the General Agricultural Workers' Union to accept worse conditions for some of their members and to agree to the employers' demand that tea, coffee, sugar, and sisal plantation workers should be organised in separate groups.

To describe the Kenya Government's land settlement schemes as inadequate would be an absurd understatement. It was announced on March 19 that £893,933 had been spent on buying 166,303 acres for African smallholders, and that 4,000 families could be settled immediately—a flea-bite at the problem of 100,000 land-hungry families. Moreover one of the schemes consists of loans towards the purchase of medium-sized land holdings from Europeans. The

URGENT—and it's up to you!

NOT BEING members of the Salvation Army or kindred organisations, we aren't particularly gifted in the art of rattling a collecting can. In fact, since starting publication of WLN in January, 1960, we have managed to avoid doing so. This year, however, the SWF faces greatly increased expenditure, with the imminent need to find new premises in London—and the cost of moving and re-erecting our printing press. In fact, we need money quickly.

Some comrades—particularly in the U.S.—have apparently already realised this and we thank those whose donations are acknowledged below. Others are slow, sometimes a year and more late, in even renewing their subs to WLN. We make no apologies for asking the latter to put themselves up-to-date by sending a p.o. for the appropriate amount—and for appealing for all who think WLN is doing a worthwhile job to send a contribution to our Press Fund. We shall acknowledge all donations.

PRESS FUND, January 1—April 20, 1962

Wolverhampton, J.G.L. £1; London, J.A., 14s. 6d; Toronto, P.P., £1.63d; Seattle, G.B.A., 3s. 6; Cape Town, M.L., 7s; Birmingham 21, S.A., 7s; London, N.I., M.E., 3s; Belfast, H.C., 2s; Manchester 14, R.B., 7s; London, N.17, J.A.N., 4s; Bondi Beach, N.S.W., R.T., 5s; New York, W.R., 4s; Poland, Ohio, S.M., 18s. 3d; Wallingford, Penna. R.D., 4s; Brownwood, Texas, E.S., 4s; Minneapolis 21, D.S., 18s. 3d; Knockholt, Kent, B.J.R., 2s. 9d; Miles City, Montana, T.H., 4s; Bondville, Vermont, E.L., 4s; Seattle, Wash, J.F.C., 11s. 2d; Upton, Wyoming, E.F., 4s; Monterey Park, Calif, E.L., 8s; Bronx, N.Y., J.S., 11s; Hamilton, Ohio, J.McK., 1s. Total: £9.13.8d.

Land Settlement and Development Board naively commented that progress was hampered "by the small number of applicants who have both the required financial resources and the managerial experience to farm larger units."

Almost everywhere in Africa individual land ownership is repugnant to the peasant. The land belongs to the community which works it (as it did in Russia before the Bolsheviks turned it into a barracks). It is the **common wealth**—a profound sense of true moral values which the White man, with his property mania, is doing his best to destroy (wisely from his point of view, for it has tremendous revolutionary potential) by creating a new bourgeoisie of western-educated Africans and by the specious argument that the backward state of African peasant farming is a necessary consequence of communal ownership of land.

In the land hunger and extreme poverty of its peasants, the possession of most of the best farming land in the hands of a privileged minority (the country has 3,593 White farms, including nearly 600 company plantations), and its industrial immaturity, Kenya is comparable with pre-revolutionary Russia.

In such a situation, of what use is it to create a few hundred or a few thousand African capitalist farmers alongside or in place of White capitalists? What can it mean? To the exploited—a black instead of a white master. To the land-hungry—nothing!

DOV

Wot, no samovars?

Working conditions in a large Russian automobile factory are described in a report of the visit of an Amalgamated Engineering Union delegation as reminiscent of the 19th-century British capitalists. Unguarded and poorly maintained machines, bad ventilation, overcrowding, and shocking sanitary arrangements are specifically mentioned. Wages and conditions in Russian factories generally, in which the working week is normally 41 hours spread over six days, are said to leave much to be desired. Tea breaks are almost unknown.

MORE PRODUCTION, PLEASE

"I am disturbed that in Britain productivity is levelling off and I want that process to be reversed. If it is not reversed, I cannot get high wages for my people, shareholders cannot get decent dividends, and the employers will have a much more difficult job. We may have a quarrel among ourselves afterwards as to how we share out the results of the productivity, but that has nothing to do with this council."—Harry Douglass, general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and chairman of the British Productivity Council.

Literature

"Direct Action" pamphlets:—

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE UNIONS?

NATIONALISATION AND THE NEW BOSS CLASS by Tom Brown 5d.

WORKERS' CONTROL by Tom Brown 6d.

HOW LABOUR GOVERNED, 1945-1951 6d.

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