Wind of change threatens Iberian dictators

The strikes

The strike movement spread rapidly to other regions of Spain and has lasted nearly two months. Before it finally quietened down, Franco had to call a State of Emergency in the three provinces more directly affected by the strikes: Asturias, Vizcaya and Guipuzcoa. This is the first time since the Civil War that a State of Emergency has been declared in Spain, and although in theory this restricted civil liberties, in fact it made little difference in a country where the limitations are so drastic anyway. Under Franco, there is a permanent ban on freedom of movement, speech and association, proclamation of the State of Emergency simply empowered Franco to use force to crush the strike movement if threats and negotiations failed. It is also the first time that a strike movement of this magnitude has taken place in a totalitarian state where such strikes are illegal.

The conflict started over Easter in a number of coal pits in the areas of La Rioja and Mieres in the province of Asturias. miners refused to come up from the pits and others failed to clock in. Soon, the most important coal-producing area of Spain was completely paralysed.

In spite of the fact that the Spanish Press carried no mention of the strikes at this stage, they quickly spread to the industrial Basque provinces with over 20,000 iron and steel and naval workers joining in sympathy. In Bilbao, San Sebastian and Mondragon, important enterprises such as the Constructora Naval, Bebeock and Wilcox and Uzquiza in Bilbao, and the Union Sarragea and Roca in Mondragon, as well as hundreds of small firms joined in solidarity.

This movement, that has aptly been described as a great upsurge of solidarity, soon spread to other areas of Spain. To the mines of Villaviciosa del Bierzo in the province of Leon; the mines of Peñarroya in Cordoba; those of Liébana in Cantabria; Rio Tinto in Huelva; the industrial and mining zone of Ebro in the province of Ciudad Real; the textile workers of Cervera, Salamanca; the shipyards of Rivas, Cartagena; the Sagunto steel works near Valencia; the railway workshops in Madrid. In Barcelona, such factories as the Pirelli, Ensa, Mada, and Siemens y Corno had to close. The miners of Colque in Guadalajara, to the north of Barcelona province, won down strike in the pits, stating that they would remain there until the pastime they had asked for was granted. They had food supplies for several days and two supervisors as hostages against police threats. The police intimidated many other workers from doing the same in several other places and in many cases arrested the ringleaders. In the vicinity of Barcelona, Sabadell, Valls, Reus, Figueres, Pobla de Lillet, were affected by strikes and sporadic stoppages.

Throughout this time, hundreds of leaflets and handouts were being distributed all over the affected areas, urging workers to support the strike. The CNT had started with a May Day message which circulated all over Spain, calling on the workers to take direct action and for a General Strike. It condemned the various solutions which had been put forward to resolve this, and suggested that the most constructive solution was an experiment like the strikes as thorn, propelled by the people themselves and avoiding both monarchical and parliamentary solutions, which would not change anything fundamentally. It gave the country the new life and inspiration it needs. It ended by listing a number of immediate objectives which included workers' control of industry; agrarian reform; the abolition of military service; free primary, secondary and higher education; the abolition of forces; provision for infants and the aged; and consumers and producers municipal and district planning councils.

During the strikes many other leaflets were distributed by the CNT in Barcelona (some in Catalan), Madrid, Asturias, Andalucia and the other affected areas. As a result of these and other actions, many of its members were arrested. In Barcelona alone there were over sixty who had been charged with anti-economic activities, that is to say supporting the strikes. In Asturias, there were also several CNT members arrested for taking part in strike committees.

As well as CNT leaflets, there were many Catholic (HOAC Hermanias, Obreras de Accion Catolica and JOC Juventudes Obreras Catolicas), Communist, Anarchist (FAI, Socialist, Basque Nationalist, and Catalan Regionalist).

NOT JUST ECONOMIC

Many commentators have interpreted the strikes as being a simple economic conflict. To do this is to underestimate the aims of the workers. One early indication that it was not merely a struggle for higher wages was the fact that the Asturian miners refused to return to work even when their claims had been accepted. They insisted on official recognition of the strikes and in many cases refused to negotiate through the official Falangist 'vertical syndicates'. Further, they were opposed to the release of these workers who had been arrested, before returning to work.

In a country where strikes are illegal and under a totalitarian dictatorship, any one of these things, the strikes in themselves, becomes much more significant and attains a depth of meaning much more difficult to interpret by someone who has not lived and worked in a totalitarian regime. It cannot be viewed by Western standards.

Once the action is taken, it projects itself much further and becomes a challenge and a defiance to the regime in power. It is also the only time that these people have had a chance to be heard. In a country that is as unorganized as Spain, this is a great opportunity for the workers to make themselves heard. In this way, the strikes are not just an economic conflict, but a political one as well.

French Anarchist's hunger-strike wins reform of CO law

LOUIS LECOIN, 74-year-old Anarchist veteran whose book 'De Prison en Prison' (From Prison to Prison) tells the story of a life spent fighting for freedom and social justice, ended a successful hunger-strike to force reform in the laws governing conscientious objectors in France on June 23. His hunger-strike, which lasted 24 days, attracted widespread interest in the French Press and the De Gaulle Government finally capitulated by promising that a radical reform in the CO law would be passed before Parliament rose on July 25. Under this, French COs will get similar treatment to those in Britain, instead of being condemned to long years of prison, without hope of release. Reporting this on June 24, the London Sunday Times hedged its Paris dispatch 'Lecoion wins Objector Law Reform' — and commented: 'It was manifestly one of the finest triumphs for M. Lecoion, who has been campaigning for this and other humanitarian causes for more than 50 years.'
THE CHURCH

While the students in Madrid were demonstrating in solidarity with the Asturian miners and against the Opus Dei, which had recently been accused of being undemocratic, and the people of Pamplona, and have slowly gained strong ‘behind the scene’ influence in many aspects of university life (as well as in all walks of Spanish life), to which all the students objected, many elements of the Catholic Church had come out defending the strikers.

In the affected areas, particularly Asturias and the Basque provinces, priests were openly backing the strike. In many cases from the very pulpits which once had been used to bolster support for Franco’s regime, priests were now expressing their opposition, and from the Pope’s encyclical Mater et Magistra, were making clear their desire to continue the strike and in several cases making collections for the strikers and their families.

The Catholic Brotherhoods (HOAC) and the Young Catholic workers of the diocesan pamphlets calling on workmen to join in with the strike and asking for official recognition of workers’ rights. The presidents of both groups were fined 20,000 pesetas for permitting the publication of the pamphlets. Even the official Catholic weekly, El Pueblo, declared that “the right to strike is a natural Christian right”, even if it was illegal in Spain.

The strikes have, in fact, laid bare the rift that exists between the Church, one of the strong pillars which has supported Franco until now, and the Falangist regime. This creates an altogether new situation for the Church, for the first time in its history, it is in a position to know which the way the wind is blowing and, if necessary, to help direct it. So, has the Church been acting on information and is quickly entering a rehabilitation campaign to get back into the eyes of the Spanish workers? Whatever the answer may be, she certainly needs it—and it comes rather late in the day.

Dishar Falangists who are still suckling the golden teat have reacted strongly against the action of the Church. After having quickly read their bibles, they found the right fit for the daily ‘Arriba’. In an editorial under the title of ‘Renderer to Caesar what is Caesar’s they lament the fact that after receiving all the material and spiritual aid from the (Falangist) State, is it safe to see the Church interfering in purely political affairs, which the State alone is competent to do. It is the first time the Church has been openly criticised in such strong terms by Franco’s regime.

Subsequently, a number of priests have been accused of being Communist agents and an army chaplain has in fact been shot on that charge.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The strikes are over, but neither the conditions which forced them, nor the outcome which continues against the regime, have been changed. Soon after the strike was called, the people shook Madrid. One at the Opus Dei centre, another at one of the Opus Dei controlled banks and a third at the old residence of the Papal Nuncio, were killed. This is a testament to the fact that the FLP (Frente de Liberacion Popular, Popular Liberation Front) is responsible for these acts and quickly effected a purge of its members.

Later a man was killed when a time bomb which he carried in a suitcase exploded. He was apparently identified and, after conflicting reports, declared a veteran of the Blue Division that Francisco used to help Hitler on the Russian front. Knowing the dubious tactics of the Spanish secret police, he could have been anybody, even a stooge of some elaborate plan to discredit the Brotherhoods or the perpetrators of the acts of sabotage.

Apparently as a result of these explosions, all air passengers were being searched methodically at airports, and frontier controls became more strict. At the same time, Spanish police are the order that they are in an advanced state of training in matters of aggression and official arrest. This was ostensibly aimed at the prominent leaders of the Republican Democrats, who had met at Munich with Republican and socialist exiles to discuss actions for the removal of Franco and his succession. But since, the whole story was clearly informed by Gil Robles of the meeting, it is odd that Gil Robles, Ridujeo and several others were allowed to leave Spain, only to be given the choice of exile or banishment to the Canary Islands on their return.

It seems more likely that Franco fears renewed activity within Spain and is seeking powers to counteract it. Seen in this background, the declaration of Franco on ‘Victory Day’ that he had never felt the situation was rather hollow. Everything indicates that the rift between the Church and the workers will not disappear, that the discontent of the workers, which has lasted 25 years, will increase and that Franco will be faced with further crisis, unless the situation changes quickly and radically with the setting up of the monarchy.

The Church will certainly back the latter, rather than have an open revolt of the workers, which she would inevitably be unable to control.

IN PORTUGAL, TOO

While Franco’s dictatorship is effectively being undermined, his bosom friend Salazar faces similar difficulties. His disastrous colonial affairs have been followed at home by growing opposition to his dictatorial regime.

Chelm lawmakers that the strike movement in Spain was giving Franco a painful headache, the Salazar dictatorship was faced with May Day demonstrations in Lisbon, Oporto and many other parts of Portugal, with the police opening fire on workers and students. In Lisbon riots broke out in several places and demonstrators signed the pledge, who had opened machine-gun fire on civilians. Several civilians were killed as a result and hundreds wounded. The police arrested over a hundred demonstrators and more arrests have followed. This was the culmination of widespread discontent among students and workers. The mounting opposition to them, stands a very fair chance of overthrowing both in the near future.

S.G.

SITDOWN AT SPANISH EMBASSY

A DEMONSTRATION of solidarity with the Spanish strikers and of opposition to Franco was held at the Spanish Embassy, Belgrave Square, London on Saturday May 26. Sixty six comrades responded to a joint call from the CNT, CNT, SWF and IAG and a thousand people turned out for the demonstration. Five English comrades entered the Embassy, demanding to see the Ambassador. In his absence they were seen by the Councillor and told him they would not leave until a public declaration of support from the Soviet government was issued. Soviet diplomats, until they were called to eject them—and a two-column picture of SWF member Margaret Haines being dumped on the pavement outside graced the ‘Sunday Telegraph’ on the following day.

Postbag

Dear Comrades,

May I raise tentative protest against some of the ideas expressed in ‘Earl Russell’s Super State’ in your last issue? I have no great desire to leap to the defence of some of Russell’s more idiotic pronouncements, but I would like to voice a word of caution. His detractors (for and against the Bomb) tend to select what is convenient to themselves out of his writings for criticism, while ignoring the extraordinary volume of common sense he has used over the years to deride and discredit the superstitious and the reactionary. Surely Syndicalist can appreciate his support for workers’ control in his own country, and his open criticism of the Soviet government, his thought processes rather than irrational faith, etc. Those aspects of his outlook we don’t like we can and should reject, while thanking our lucky stars we are onside with the war-lords. The same goes for people who are elected to by others. The leadership crisis is a pernicious disease.

My main quarrel with T.B’s article was the misuse of the term pacifism, which was written off as a sort of middle-class luxury. Without wanting to be sectarian, I think it is important to point out that pacifism cannot yet be called mass in the most commonly accepted meaning of the word. The limited objective of banning nuclear weapons has never been accepted by pacifists as anything more than a move in the right direction. Even so, pacifism is desirable, even necessary, and is rooted in the ideas of the Christian Democrat, who is not a pacifist, but who can be a very different emphasis. As I am a pacifist, let me make a plea for mutual tolerance and understanding which, with good will and a flexible approach, will lead to the establishment of (for a change) an effective revolutionary force which can beat the State and avoid nuclear destruction.

Your fraternally,

TONY SMYTHE

KENYA—Surest way to silence a rebel—give him a Government job. One-time firebrand Jomo Kenyatta, now Minister of State for Constitutional Affairs in Kenya, on June 8 condemned widespread strikes in that country, saying the workers might have legitimate grievances but the Government was ready to hear their complaints. On the same day, printing employers capitulated to striking workers, conceding recognition of their union and extension of a recent pay award to grades represented by the union... an effective answer to Kenyatta.
BONUS SYSTEM IS A THREE-CARD TRICK

Bonus Systems are a refinement of the wage system, with which most workers in industry today are familiar. Many firms have some sort of bonus system, while many more are attempting, or trying to introduce, the same or a similar system. The explanation generally given by the management is that they would like to see a system introduced whereby both they and the workers can benefit. The firm's output—which the theory goes—will increase (and if the workers will get higher wages. And everybody lives happily ever after.

All this despite the fact that the working class and the employing class have nothing in common, least of all a common interest in production—a fact that both managements and workers know. It is the workers who are responsible for introducing these schemes and the bonus rates that they initially offer. In the last, far from being interested in a scheme that benefits the workers, as well as the management, they aim only at raising profits and lowering costs.

However, these schemes are dressed up, one fact emerges: the management either wants more work for the same pay, or more work for less pay—and they intend to get this extra work not by more man-hours (which would mean paying overtime or employing more men), but by increasing the standard working time above their basic week. The management would obviously not even bother to try and introduce a scheme which did not increase their profits; there would be no point—besides, these schemes are expensive to introduce and even after a short period of time, the very intensive application of these schemes causes serious harm, not only for the工人, but also for the factory, particularly in his family, as the time is where he spends most of his leisure time. From the purely physical point of view, these schemes are an open invitation to take a chance and try to cheat the worker. The worker is not even given the chance to retire. The knowledge that he must work harder and faster, harder and faster, because if he doesn't, his family will suffer at the end of the week, is hardly conducive to good mental health.

Also these schemes have numerous repercussions in the life of the family. The factory, in its own respect, is of his life in the factory—particularly in his family, as this is where he spends most of his leisure time. The purely physical point of view, these schemes are an open invitation to take a chance and try to cheat the worker. The worker is not even given the chance to retire. The knowledge that he must work harder and faster, harder and faster, because if he doesn't, his family will suffer at the end of the week, is hardly conducive to good mental health.

The introduction of these schemes is usually resisted by the workers, though the vigour and success of their resistance depends, of course, on the militancy of those workers involved. Some managements find it relatively easy to introduce their schemes, while others have found that to increase their rates and the worker will find that, if his weekly pay-packet has increased at all, it has not been done by a percentage that is in any way comparable with his output. Also, it might appear at first, to some workers that the workers' interest is not apparent, but, in practice, if the rates are fair, every time a bonus scheme is successfully introduced, it can be chalked up as a victory for the bosses.

The ways in which the management try to build up the workers into accepting their latest racket are varied and at T. C. Jones & Co. Ltd., a firm of construction engineers in Shepherd's Bush, West London, these methods are fairly well illustrated. Here the managements' approach is basically that of an attack on the men's solidarity and the workers, on the other hand, have attempted to build up the workers into accepting their latest racket in a form of direct action.

They have not been approached as a whole, but piecemeal. The different sections—millers, cutters, the men on the saws, the men in one of the 'Boilermakers', the CEU or the AU. The trade unions at this point seem to be willing to back any decision that their members care to take (the CEU would not accept the management's proposal of the board reorganisation without the workers' agreement, an agreement to which the firm have all the full details of the scheme and have discussed it).

The initial rates offered have been rejected by all sections that have been approached. The management has already expressed their intention of forcing the scheme through (obviously only in a form beneficial to them) and have used veiled threats about having to close the shop down if the scheme is not introduced.

Can workers in industry resist the continual threats to their already low standard of living? It is probable that the threat of reduced real wages, whether by means of phoney bonus schemes, reductions in the number of hours worked (or the hourly rate), the ever-increasing cost of living, or the chaotic state of the country, will continue to act as a powerful defensive measure and gains for the worker only a temporary reprieve. If one bonus scheme is thrown out by the workers, the bosses will seek other ways of increasing their take-back from the wealth produced by labour. If one cost-of-living rise is won, the inflationary spiral will continue to climb steadily, necessitating more and more cost-of-living claims, not all of them successful.

The day-to-day struggle for improved conditions and pay goes on. The worker cannot afford to relax in this struggle, for if he does, he may lose it all, for the struggle cannot be produced which finds its way into his pocket will get even smaller.

This is what the wage system means. This state of affairs will continue for as long as there is an employing class (private or State). The employering class is a disease of society and the energy and suffering that workers put into the day-to-day struggle to improve their conditions and pay unfortunately do not even provide a cure, merely a very temporary relief. Prevention is the only sure way of dealing with this disease. The wage system must be abolished and with it must go the bosses (private or State) and all its trappings. All idea of the domination of one man by another must finish.

If one accepts this idea, that the domination and exploitation of one man by another is wrong, then the only industrial allegiance to our present industry (of some-called socialist and communist countries) than one can accept is that of workers' control of industry. Only then will the man be able to enjoy in full the wealth that they produce.

B. L. H.

An unhealthy service

Most people agree that nurses are underpaid, overworked and subject to severe restrictions on their personal freedoms. The public health service suffers as a result of this and the inadequate hospital building programme.

Because of the conditions, many nurses quit during or after training—a waste of money and training facilities, a disruption of careers and a loss from the health service of some of the more able and enlightened workers.

Those who remain have often accepted hospital conditions in the hope of eventually being able to help the sick and tired, in the rush of work, standards which are grossly inadequate. Even to reveal these conditions often seems to the nurses to be whining in self-pity and condemning the sincere efforts of their fellow workers. Yet the health service is regarded as an essential service, and a working is a fraction of the resources used in war preparations. The numbers and quality of nurses could be increased without limits by offering conditions comparable to those in industries devoted to the destruction of life.

What can we do to cause these changes in the health service? Nurses and others can stimulate public opinion by revealing the facts. Self interest should make us all concerned about a public
service we will probably urgently need at some time in our lives.

The nurses could theoretically strike, but since they have already imposed poor conditions for so long in the interests of their patients, they are unlikely to withdraw their services, or even ‘go slow’ when the immediate result might be tragic.

Mass protests by nurses have drawn sympathy, money and token strikes, but the demand is for wages rather than for an improvement in the health service which, as the Medical Journal and Gazette observes, ‘is in a state of utter neglect and conditions are so bad that mass strikes to force a radical change seems remote, since the understanding of radical needs and possibilities is inadequate at present. The nurses may hope for a small increase in money, but this will bring power with it a decline in sympathy and action and in the long run changes little.

What effect could a highly-organised nurses’ union have? It could spread propaganda; but could it increase radical understanding among nurses? We must consider the possibility that, if the Ministry of Health, who control the nurses’ conditions, were to tighten their grip, a strike could bring difficulties in the future. Nurses might consider withdrawing their services to their patients.

Every nurse has ample opportunity for spreading her ideas by personal contacts inside and outside the profession. They also have ample opportunities for direct action against the unsatisfactory factory conditions in their everyday work.

Freed from the illusion that changes are brought about by other people, as a result of our gift of money, advice and appeals, every one of us carries the responsibility of change in our own lives.

We continuously find ourselves in situations where we can accept or refuse unsatisfactory conditions. If we refuse at every point, we gravitate to prison where, by and by, we shall get used to it and gradually begin to like it. When we have got things so far as we can, we can set limits to our acceptance.

Nurses could refuse to accept work outside their normal duties, insist on adequate time and facilities for leisure, resist injustices and the abuses of authority in the hospital and in their private work. The important thing is to try to build up co-operative and non-authoritarian relationships with higher standards.

M.B.

The gentle saboteur

SABOTAGE often evokes images of train wrecks, fires and nocturnal explosions. Perhaps this is largely due to the calls made by governments in wartime—calls to carry out sabotage against the enemy with expert help and even liberal supplies of saboteur’s kits.

But here we are concerned with the sort of sabotage in which no one is injured and no property is destroyed. Certain groups of workers have wanted to strike but, hesitating to do so because of blacklegs or lack of strike pay, they have tried strike methods which have hurt neither them nor the public.

One such method, usually attributed to Syndicalists, is the ‘big mouth strike’, when workers who don’t feel it is all well with their firm in one of the more expensive streets of London’s Oxford Street. A customer was about to buy a dress from an assistant who had assured her it suited her well; when she turned to the Scots girl and asked for a second opinion. That hostie told the customer the size didn’t suit, she looked awful in it and why. The woman agreed—cancelled the purchase and gave the girl a pound for the money she had saved.

This was not done as an act of striking, but it gave the girls something to think about. M.R., however, any reader thinks that all this has nothing to do with the art of the wooden shoe (French sabot, wooden shoe), let him listen to the heart-rending cry from the boss, ‘It’s Sabotage!’

Another form of strike action likely to please the customer is the ‘defective product strike’. This was successfully used in a few cases in the building trade, notably in France about 50 years ago. The work is carried out, not as the contractor instructs, but as he contracted to have it done. Concrete is left unhardened, or one in ten of the nails or bolts is missing or of the wrong size. The workman will then go off the job and the customer gets what he paid for, a house that will stand for a few years but not one that will stand for a lifetime.

Such workmanship also raises the self-respect of the woman.

This was expressed in a Syndicalist building trade journal in France quoted in ‘The World’ by Professor G. D. H. Cole, 1928. But ‘The World’ was a friend which urged that form of ‘sabotage’ which turns out art in our respective trades and raises the standard of workmanship.

Engineering factories, too, offer good ground for such tactics, for there is a constant lowering of standards which has forced on workmen during at least three generations, but I know of only very small-scale use of this weapon.

Best of all, this method could be applied to the deliberately ignored safety regulations which the State prescribes and experience approves, but which management insists shall be broken in the name of production. If a worker breaks the rules and gets away with it, he may be a good man in his boss’s eyes, but if his lot is injury or death, then he is to blame, his boss repudiates him. Let the worker always remember that, especially when the cry of ‘Sabotage!’ is heard.

Rather different is the ‘string of pearls strike’, again attributed to Syndicalism. The workers, without strike pay, anxious about blacklegs, oppressed by the forces of the State, remain at work, but do everything wrong. One small mistake—a notice written in another, more graceful, more elegant language, a mighty fine necklace.

In the case of trainmen taking the trains and refusing to take fares, one have read of three such cases, but so remote in time and place and so briefly reported that, I regret, I can give no detailed report. None of the cases was in Britain. It seems the passenger were, for the most part, happy, though in one case the trainmen were continually jibing with joyriding children. Of course, the transport owners soon stopped the train running, declaring a lock-out. At least they got the public’s anger, not the workers.

Another method for transport workers, particularly busmen in a traffic-choked city like London, would be to abandon their buses in the streets at an agreed time, thus providing an effective dam to the torrent of strike-breaking private cars. There is an old saying ‘It’s been a long day—he’s going home’ as he walked off into the night, may have had the embryo of this idea in mind.

Best of all I like the case, attributed to the IW, of workers in a famous tailors’ country, who switched boxes of labels, so that the poor end of pink cuts got high-priced tags and the middle cuts of red salmon got cheap labels. Some customers must have been annoyed and some delighted. It could be a nice change for both parties.

T.B.

Thank you, but...

OUR THANKS to the few comrades listed below, who replied to our appeal in the last issue of WALN. It is still open—and we hope to publish a much longer list in our next issue.

PRESS FUND: April 29—June 1, 1962.


Total: £4 19. 16d. 1962 totally carried forward, £14 11. 9.

STRIKE WINS RECOGNITION

Labour history was made recently when one of Canada’s most virulent anti-labour firms, the Hudson’s Bay Company, finally signed a agreement with the Retail Food and Drug Clerks Union.

The agreement, which followed a seven-week strike at the company’s store at Powell River, B.C., was the first union contract ever signed by Hudson’s Bay, since the company of gentlemen adventurers first received their charter, nearly 300 years ago. Industrial Worker, 28.5.62.

GLASGOW: Readers in the Clydeide area interested in SWW activity are asked to contact R. Lynn, 22, Ross Street, Glasgow, S.E.
INDEC takes sting out of CND

INDEC (the new CND independent Parliamentary group) published its statement of order on the CND at about the time that the LWN went to press. It starts with a reasonably factual review of CND and of the C. of 100's progress up to the present; then postulates the view that CND has always had five choices: 'an alliance with the traditional Left' (in the form of the 'Voters' Veto' refusal to vote for Multilateralist candidates); 'putting up candidates at general elections' and at 'by-elections'.

It is notable that, whereas the 'Voters' Veto' was, as far as it went, a policy Anarchist and Communist parties could adopt, the writers have not even bothered to consider the possibility of a parliamentary case and appear to have thrown in the absolute impossibility of Parliamentary change permanently eliminating the Bomb. They have naturally little difficulty in demolishing the C. of 100, which is not substantially the same as Unilateralists or as the Unilateralists' case for the Bomb. It is not—in the opinion of this writer—necessary and it is one of the reasons why some who support the LP or the CP, both of which are essentially opposed to Unilateralism.

Laurens Otter

With Algeria's refugees on eve of independence

This first-hand account of the life and aspirations of Algerian refugees in Morocco is compiled from the experiences of two contemporaries who have both spent some time travelling and living among these unfortunate victims of French imperialism.

The war in Algeria was still going on when we were in Morocco. Although we naturally heard much about the war, we saw little. Our one attempt to visit the theatre resulted in it being closed under the non-payment of a heavy tax by the Algerian government. The Algerian war was so tragic that it is better not to dwell on it. The Algerian war was unsuccessful and the Algerians finally decided to take the film themselves, while we sadly but non-violently sat by and watched the ruin of two dozen precious pictures of our journey round Morocco.

After thoroughly searching our van for signs of espionage, they allowed us to load the courtesily enough, and we drove back along the shell-scared road, crossing the border and the steamer's land which lay between the battles and the Moroccan eastern border point. The friendly pressure of the Algerians was overcome, as it was the pressure of our moribund nation. The Algerian traffic had passed that way for months, though we knew well that the ominous silence hanging over this dusty desert landscape, the distant mountains and the few deserted and half-roofless homesteads, must cover a continuous movement over the border by night.

At Oujda we met two of the Algerian tax-gatherers whose task it was to go from village to village, collecting the 10 per cent levy on their income from all Algerian workers in Morocco, and France, which was used to finance the Algerian war. We understood that most paid unpaid, the Algerian population in the Oujda region had been doubled by the influx of refugees. Many families carried on their customary nomadic existence, but had fled over the border to safety. This meant an extra burden on the already sparsely populated land, and these people at least had some occupation, as they could carry on their usual way of life. Less fortunate were the hundreds in the villages and towns who had no work. The Algerian refugees in Morocco at this time numbered about 100,000 of which about 50,000 were in this region.

But most of the Algerians over the towns and villages and cannot be easily numbered. Considering that the Algerian war has its own unemployment problems, and that the state of the Moroccans was often no better than the Algerians, it was everywhere a remarkable degree of friendship and hospitality to the Algerians.

Later we came through the broad valley leading to Saidia on the coast. The mountains rise steeply on the Algerian side and the rugged coasts, lined here with palm trees, towards the border, which we could see distinctly marked by lookout posts and barbed wire. A shot called us back, and a shadowy and pleasant Algerian boy, who had obviously been sent to follow us, stood there waving a white flag—warning him not to go on as he was shot at. Certainly if we went on we should be shot by the French. Four or five had died this way recently, and several families were bombed in their homesteads just on the other side of the border.

Here in Saidia live many hundreds of refugees, many in make-shift houses built up inside the walls of the ancient and disused Kasbah. There had been no work for years, and the children had little or no education. A minimum standard of living was apparently
maintained with aid from the UN and numerous voluntary organisations, and we met the team from Raissa Barren (the Swedish Save the Children organisation) who had come over an amazingly large area. Often the Moroccans are included in this aid, as their need is as great as that of the refugees. We also met the American Friends Service Committee team, who concentrate on giving some basic training in street work, and have encouraged the initiative of the young people and give them some skills which can be of use in the future. One young teacher said that with his class, who were learning simple carpentry, his chief difficulty was to get them to stop working. Each boy when he leaves is given a set of tools of his own to use how he likes in the future.

Similar work, but in more established surroundings, has been going on for some years in the Rabat area, where a number of schools have been started by the Moroccan section of IGTA (Union Générale de Travailleurs Algériens) and largely supported from voluntary sources. We saw small groups of boys working with deep concentration on electrical fittings, metalwork and carpentry, and, at the school gates, a group of 400 high school compositions and chanting fluent Arabic from their readers. Arabic was outlawed as a foreign language in Algeria, and only a small number in religious schools there learn their own tongue from their teachers.

The enthusiasm of their pupils and their hope for the future is certainly the only reward of their teachers, all refugees themselves, who live in the same Spartan surroundings as the children and work voluntarily on the project. The work in the schools is carried on in a beautiful wooded area of coastland and run by a devoted young headmistress. These children, fortunate in their opportunities, are actually the unlucky ones, orphans and those who have lost touch with their parents, and who are selected from the border areas and sent here.

In Morocco there is enough evidence that the imperialist system has to a large extent been replaced by a bureaucratic and capitalist national type of administration, and education is developing slowly. The younger generation are taking advantage of their new emancipation, but against a background of widespread illiteracy and poverty, and there are huge differences between the pay of educated professionals, craft workers and the unskilled workers and peasants.

Determined plans that the same situation shall not arise in Algeria are being made by the more radical organisations for the new regime, and from time to time attacks are made on those outside the organisation, we learnt something of their hopes.

Plans include the three countries, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, Algeria is at the moment, as a result of French policy, the more highly developed, while Morocco appears to some extent as a medieval world of craftsmen and peasants using methods that date back to Bible times.

The opinion seems to be unanimous among those that we met that all is not well for the war will only if there is not a social and economic revolution, although it is not necessary whether this should follow Syndicalist lines, or consist of nationalisation of heavy industries, leaving light industry to private enterprise.

The balance of trade has determined the present state of agriculture and industry in Algeria. In 1940 the land was taken over from the Algerian peasant farmers, and re-divided among the French and other European settlers. For some time they retained control but gradually the Algerians were allowed to buy up some farm implements and to move on their own farmland. The industries have, of course, been entirely under the control of French and other interests. The large foreign population of Algeria at the moment is accounted for by deliberate government policy during the colonial period, when the French, Spanish, Italian, Jewish and other settlers were encouraged to have large families and increase in number by a system of bonuses or rewards per child born to them, graded upwards as the family increased in size. The result of the population something like 900,000, largely in the bigger towns. It is felt very important that the natural resources of the Sahara should be made available to the three countries, and the borders, which are not harmonious.

This is just a little impression we gained of what to hope for in Algeria, not through reading, but through talking to the people themselves in Morocco. For the rest of our journey we saw as much of Morocco as possible. Each day was a wonderful experience and we were welcome in every place we visited. The people of the northern cities assured us that their hospitality and the quality of their roush-kush was unequalled, which we well believed. We wandered through the souks, saw the tough of the market boys, and sat drinking tea in a tin teahouse and watching a letter writer with an ancient typewriter plying his trade opposite.

An elderly blind man of exceptional dignity was given a bowl of soup by a child who had made him independently. This gentleman was apparently more philosophical than commercial, for we saw him make no profit that day, only watching and watching with the passers-by.

But the hospitality of the south was overwhelming. We were offered numerous glasses of tea and bowls of dates in fortified Arabian Nights' townships, oasis towns and Bedouin encampments. Perhaps the most welcome help we were given was by the group of Bedouin who appeared apparently from nowhere with their van, had firmly dug their four wheels into the sand on a lonely desert track and refused to move. Big bunches of scrubby desert grasses were scavenged from the surrounding country, and a few minutes later the dried and sliced greens were in the van, and the load was removed and learned their technique. After a few attempts we started successfully and proceeded to the next town with their leader as passenger. We had a supply of firewood on board, and after some difficulty we got this into the trap, which makes a most dependable desert bus-stop. We spent much of the time accompanied by anything up to ten or twelve hitch-hikers, which on one occasion included two sheep, one alive and one dead, on their way to market.

AVERIL OSKARSSON

Solving bosses' problems

WHAT does the Canadian Labour Congress do to justify its existence? Here we have an organisation of over 1,000,000 members, potentially capable of completely paralysing the economy of the country, yet its president, Claude Jodoon, spent a large part of his time at a conference held recently in Vancouver pleading with the Government and bosses to consult with Labour to find a way of solving the economic problems facing the country.

What interest have the working class in solving the economic problems of capitalism? To the extent that the workers can solve these problems the bosses would be to the detriment of the workers anyway.

Of course he admits that the system is far from perfect. Little things like over 500,000 people being more or less permanently unemployed has nothing to do with the fact that the workers have jobs. If the workers were a really large slice of the wealth they produce but he is confident that, soon as we use the system of ‘free collective bargaining’ in the future, all these little problems will be straightened out.

In fact he waxed eloquent on the wonders of ‘free collective bargaining’, so perhaps we should go a little deeper into the workings of this system. What happens is this. A union is negotiating a contract with a company on behalf of its members to have workers paid a wage which we have a right to. The union has an economic expert on its payroll, who figures that the company, having had a profitable year’s operations, can afford to give its workers a, say, 5 per cent increase and still pay big enough dividends to keep its shareholders happy. The company has an economic expert who arrives at the same conclusions.

The union and company representatives then sit down together and the union man asks for a 10 per cent wage increase and the company man says the company cannot possibly afford an increase higher than 5 per cent. The two groups are thus caught in a stalemate. The union can only call a strike vote to appeal its members of its concern for their welfare. But before any strike action is taken an agreement is reached, giving the employees a 5 per cent wage increase and 10 per cent increase on top of that.

Of course, occasionally one side or the other makes a mistake in its calculations and a strike actually occurs, but generally speaking the system works well— for the bosses. This then, is the system in which those who control the CLC place their faith.

Having heard Monsieur Jodoon’s collaborationist address, the congress proceeded to endorse plans: 1. provide support for the New Democratic Party; 2. continue an open door policy towards workers who wish to return to the mainstream of organized labour (this being an anthropism for continuing a policy of raiding the membership of unions not affiliated to the CLC); 3. launch a new, coordinated campaign on a long-term basis to enlist more than 500,000 members; 4. launch a national campaign to win support for shorter working weeks with the same or higher take home pay and more holidays in coming agreements with employers; 5. initiate a special study on the problem of jurisdiction disputes and their solution by arbitration and other methods.

The need for this study was highlighted by the breakthrough from the congress staged by the 65,000 member Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. This was in protest at the hearing of a report on its jurisdiction over logging work in the province of Quebec. The union over the right to organise the Newfoundland loggers. This dispute arose out of the loggers strike in 1959, which was organised by the IWA to which the loggers then belonged. The prime minister of Newfoundland, Mr. C. H. Snow, asked at the last provincial conference that paper firms Bowaters and Anglo-Newfoundland Development, passed special laws banning the IWA from the province and so doing succeeded in breaking the strike.

He then launched a company union, which proceeded to sign a ‘sweetheart’ pact with the pulp and paper companies. This action

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London's match girls strike a light

More money came in, not a lot when divided among 1,400, but it paid expenses and left something over for plain food. They had no money to buy the dress or the new shoes the girls were promised. 100 per cent packet, other East End workers offered to join them.

Bryant and May said they would have to make the workers in Denmark, Norway and Sweden and the factory then, as they always urged the public to buy British matches, this threat increased the strikers' propaganda campaign. Telling, too, was the revelation that several 'progressive' Liberal politicians were shareholders. The threat to remove the factory was answered by the East End.

After two weeks the firm, which had refused to negotiate or even to offer wages, abolition of fines, the reinstatement of the dismissed worker and recognition of the girls' claims, last 1907. Singing, return triumphant to work.

While giving full control to those who helped them, the girls must not be forgotten that they themselves did most of the work and it was their spirit that gave the day the value it received. The women's trade union was due to the discipline, unity and steadfastness of the girls.

The East End was thrilled and aroused by this gallant stand. The gas workers followed their example, and the small girls were turned to. In small townships where the girls had been, employers and their employers alike, who were acquainted with the story of the girls' strike, they were treated with respect and sympathy.

There was a lot of talk about the girls in the East End, and this was at a time when the strike was at its height. The girls had been on strike for eight weeks, and their courage and determination were inspiring. They were fighting for their rights, and they were not going to give up without a fight.

The strike continued for several weeks, and the girls were supported by the people of the East End. The employers were forced to give in, and the girls were eventually able to achieve their aims. The strike was a great victory for the workers, and it showed that they were not afraid to stand up for their rights.

TOM BROWN

CANADIAN NEWS (continued)

was loudly condemned by the CLC and its members and a campaign was launched to have the discriminating laws repealed. While this campaign was in progress, secret negotiations were being held between the company union and the Carpenters, aimed at having the Carpenters take over the company union (hence making it respectable).

The IWA was finally allowed back into Newfoundland, but it was rebuilding its organization, the companies and the Carpenters union announced the signing of a two-year contract, while in Newfoundland, the Carpenters union, which had always been regarded as a minor party, was never even consulted as whether or not they wished to be represented by the Carpenters, or whether they approved of the terms of the contract.

The IWA protested to the CLC and accused the Carpenters of raising its jurisdiction. This led to the IWA appointing a committee to investigate the affair. The committee recommended that both unions withdraw from Newfoundland for a one-year period and a CLC Charter local organise the loggers. After a year a secret vote would be held to decide which union the loggers wanted to represent them. The Carpenters refused to accept this and declared their determination to hold on to their Newfoundland loggers. Should they persist in their attitude, they face expulsion from the CLC.

The IWA was 16,000 strong and the Newfoundland and the 40,000 strong International Brotherhood of Teamsters, both recently expelled for raiding.

Raiding may be expected to increase in the future, as the ravages of the strike have become more widespread, reducing employment opportunities and leaving the unions fighting each other for control of decreasing numbers of workers. Union bosses can be expected to do little more than to bribe workers with shorter hours and a loss of pay. It is therefore up to the workers themselves to refuse to fight each other for those jobs that are available in our automated future and stop fighting the bosses for a shorter workweek and jobs for their fellow workers. The Carpenters show no concern for their fellow workers unable to obtain work, indeed he is never happier than when allowed to work unlimited overtime.

The idea that it is wrong for some workers to be on overtime whilst others are on the dole does not even occur to him. It is time it started occurring.

BILL GREENWOOD
DAILY STRUGGLE IN BRITAIN

Railmen come back for that second helping

THE railway unions are reporting back to collect the rest of the debt owing to them. Remember Mac's words? 'Come back later'. Dr. Beeching is in trouble. If he accepts the Guillelme principle, then the award that should be made will blow the 'wage pause' higher than it is now. It is quite the cards that the Government will take the railway workers 'on' this time, and the union leadership will be forced by their rank and file to call a stoppage.

A very interesting article in 'Railway Review' referred to the girls who work in railway refreshment rooms. Their wages are fabulous, seven whole pounds a week and they only have to work a 48-hour week for that. Women's wages follow Wages Council rates, they haven't yet received the 5 per cent increase award to railwaymen on April 1. If I remember rightly, the only time the Spanish railways ran efficiently was when the workers ran them themselves. That statement was made by an American newspaper man who had experienced both, before and after so to speak.

In the last issue of 'Direct Action' (Industrial News) it was reported that British employers viewed the Cost of Living Bonus as 'inflationary' and therefore wanted these agreements terminated. The printing employers as members of the Employers Confederation are asking for a discontinuation of the Cost of Living Bonus, they claim it is an unsatisfactory means of adjusting wages. The building trade employers have exactly the same idea in mind. As far as the printing unions are concerned, I will stick my neck out and say that they will throw the employers' proposals straight out of the window. Wages tied to the Cost of Living Index, one has a slight chance of keeping rising costs within sight.

CRIME DOES PAY

One of the most vicious crimes ever committed has again been drawn to the public's attention. The murder referred to is the closure of the 'News Chronicle' and the 'Star'.

When the closure took place it was announced that former employees were to receive compensation in the order of one week's pay for every year of service. A certain shareholder objected to this and managed to secure an injunction restraining the Daily News Ltd., (Chronicle and Star) from paying up. The case was taken to court and judgment given in favour of the shareholder, so that the victims of the murder receive nothing.

In an article in the 'Financial Times' 7.6.62, the point is made, that English Law has remained wedded to the principle that a company's sole purpose is to make profits for its shareholders. One might term that statement as a 'classic truth', capitalist economics in its stark nakedness. Referring to the case of the Daily News Ltd., in particular, the article states 'If the undertaking to pay compensation to the former employees of the 'News Chronicle' and 'Star' had been part and parcel of the contract of sale between Daily News Ltd. and Associated Newspapers Ltd., fresh legal considerations would have arisen.'

When the merger took place, former employees of the Daily News Ltd. believed that the payment of the compensation would be purely a matter of time, allowing for legal rigmarole, organisation etc. Even when the injunction was granted, it was thought that the shareholder hadn't a snowball's chance in hell of preventing the compensation being paid.

In other words every one thought that the 'compensation'

was covered in the 'sale agreements'. How wrong can you be? The whole set up smelted of stinking fish, this affair must surely go down as the 'bloodiest murder in Fleet Street'.

AGAINST COLOUR BAR

Municipal workers at Alcan works, Banbury voted in favour of excluding coloured workers. 205 members in favour of coloured workers being employed, 591 against. There were 128 spoiled papers and more than 600 members abstained.

The policy of the National Union of General & Municipal Workers is opposed to any kind of colour bar.

What are the reasons for the decision at Alcan? One reason is economic, fear of future unemployment, another I believe is sexual. It should be noted that in parts of Africa where the colour bar is viciously employed, it is a criminal offence for a black man to go with a white girl, but for a black girl to go with a white man is classed as just 'not cricket' but nice.

A third reason is 'living habits and customs' which are totally different, community living is not understood or appreciated in this country. These are genuine difficulties and fears which must be overcome. No one asks to be born, or determines where he should be born and that must be the whole basis of understanding.

THEY WANT A LEVY

According to the June issue of the National Association of British Manufacturers journal, the test of the National Economic Development Council will be whether all its members recommend a limitation of under 3¼ per cent for the average annual increase in wage rates. The Government's 2½ per cent is not regarded as a practical limit to wage increases in many sections of industry.

3¼ per cent then, is the membership fee for the trade union reps. on 'Neddy'. May I suggest that the fee is prohibitive enough to force withdrawal of trade union reps. I wonder?

Bill Christopher

Literature

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