

Direct Action

WORLD
LABOUR
NEWS

For Workers' Direct
Control of Industry

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION

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Fourpence

— TWO STEPS FORWARD —

THIS ISSUE of Direct Action is the second step in our drive for a monthly, printed SWP paper in 1963. Another printed issue will be published on March 1st - and the next duplicated number is to appear on April 1. We shall continue publishing alternate printed and duplicated issues until new premises are secured for our printing press in London, when a switch will be made to the printed monthly. We hope that this change will be welcomed by subscribers to World Labour News, now Direct Action, and by other readers, with whom we shall now be in contact 12 times -- instead of only six times - a year.

POWER WORKERS LOSE A BATTLE

"If working to rule causes such chaos, surely there must be something wrong with the rules", wrote a puzzled reader to the "Evening News". In the power station men's claim for an advance of 4d an hour, which was reduced to 2½d by the State employers, the only effective weapon, short of open strike action, to appear was the "work to rule" method, that is coupled as it was with a ban on overtime.

The very effective work to rule weapon is, undoubtedly Syndicalist. Originating and developed by French Syndicalist railmen more than 50 years ago, it was propagated in Britain by members of the I.W.M.A. and first practised by Syndicalist railmen in N.E. England - very successfully. It has since been consistently propagated by Syndicalists here and in recent years has begun to catch on and is often acclaimed by some who think Syndicalism is old fashioned.

However, we have to admit that all the power cuts in London and elsewhere were not caused by this tactic alone. The cold spell (which is not really bad judged by American, Canadian and European winters, or even those of 40 years ago here,) revealed an appalling breakdown of management in the industry. The management which claims all power to itself, is evidently based on perpetual fine weather.

Allowing for this, the major factor in our icy blackness, however, "work to rule" and no overtime, was having some effect. But it was operated by the men at only a few power stations. Had the majority joined in victory would have been theirs.

As it was, authority was scared and fell back on atrocity propaganda. A baby died in hospital. "It was caused by the power men - it might have been their fault if so and so had happened - and the last statement by the doctors, "The baby's death had nothing to do with the dispute."

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On the Dole in the N.E.

1962 was a bad year for workers in North-East England, particularly the part bounded by the Tyne, Wear and Tees. Unemployment rose steadily until, in December there were 60,000 registered unemployed and, according to the Ministry of Labour, this represented one person of every 20 in the population. On top of this there were another 4,317 people temporarily stopped from working. Furthermore, during the course of the year there was a steady drift of unemployed miners from the North-East down to the Midlands. They were reported to be moving at the rate of 35 every week.

THE MINES The situation in the mining industry has been very serious, with redundancy on a huge scale, both in Northumberland and Durham. In the latter, a further 12 pits are to close during 1963. While Lord Robens flies round Britain in his personal helicopter, miners from the North-East are either moving their homes to other parts of the country, or signing on the dole. Like his predecessor, Sir James Bowman, Lord Robens has done very well -- for Lord Robens.

RAILWAYS During the next three years, close on 6,000 railwaymen are likely to be redundant, adding further to the unemployed. Darlington, where the first-ever passenger railway service terminated, will be a city of the dead. Nearly 4,000 men will be redundant when the workshops close in this town and there is very little other work. At Shildon, County Durham, there is to be a gradual run-down of workers and at Walkergate, Newcastle, over 300 men are scheduled to lose their jobs. There is talk of a "reprieve" at Walkergate, but nothing is definite yet. Although Dr. Beeching has agreed to be more "generous" with compensation to redundant railwaymen, this does not solve their problem. Nor does it solve the problem of the general public, who are having their railways filched from them.

One example of this is the electric line from Newcastle to South Shields. Diesels have now replaced electric trains on this line. A workers' train that ran every morning for years has been withdrawn and on the first day of the new diesel service, workers were crowded into one train, with less carriages than usual. This has become known as the "Sardine Special". The Chief Passenger Manager for the North Eastern Region, Mr. P.B. Johnson, is reported to have stood and watched the workers crowd into the "Sardine Special" and to have been "fairly pleased with the way things had gone"!!! "We cannot afford not to have crowded trains at peak periods," he went on to say, adding that eventually some of the workers would probably find other means of transport. In other words, drive the

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people away from the railways, then close them down!

SHIPYARDS Unemployment in the North Eastern shipyards is now 3,000 and reported the highest since the second World war. There has even been a strike against redundancy. This is an entirely new development here, with men prepared to strike on behalf of fellow-workers who are being thrown on the scrap-heap. This happened at Hawthorne-Leslie's shipyard, Hepburn-on-Tyne, at the end of last year, when 300 workers struck against a decision to declare 20% redundancy in the "finishing trades".

DEMONSTRATIONS There have been demonstrations against redundancy. The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions have held protest marches in Newcastle and Jarrow. The North Eastern Federation of Trades Councils held a meeting on January 11 and decided to organise a mass lobby of MP's on March 26. Liverpool Trades Council have offered to support them. The biggest demonstration so far has been in Darlington, where, just before the end of last year, 3,000 railwaymen marched through the streets as a protest against the workshop redundancy. Traffic had to be diverted in the biggest demonstration Darlington has ever seen. In Newcastle, the one-day railway strike in November was 100%

HAILSHAM APPOINTED At time of writing, Macmillan has appointed Lord Hailsham as Minister for the North-East. Scotland has had its own Minister for Scottish Affairs for years, yet unemployment there is moving up to the 100,000 mark, so what good a Minister for the North-East will do is anybody's guess. Lord Robens, former Labour MP for Blyth and now head of the NCB, has welcomed the appointment of Lord Hailsham. So has Mr. G. Chetwynd, former Labour MP for Blyth and now head of the North East Development Council. The latter commented (Northern Echo, 10.1.63): "I think it's first-class--as good an appointment as can be made. Lord Hailsham has tremendous drive, great enthusiasm and high standing with the Government. I think his appointment will be popular among people in the North East. This is just what we wanted - a minister with full authority. We shall look forward to seeing and talking with Lord Hailsham soon."

OLD FRIENDS Lord Robens is reported (Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 11.1.63) as referring to Lord Hailsham as an "old friend." He wished Lord Hailsham well in his task of reducing unemployment in the North East "more than anyone." He put this unemployment down to "increased productivity" and stated that "there are more than 30,000 fewer jobs for miners in Northumberland and Durham than there were five years ago."

Apparently everybody is going to be unemployed except Lord Robens and his "old friend" Lord Hailsham. I wonder what the workers think about it all.

DOUGLAS KEPPEL

Building Worker's Wage Claim

Today, January 16th, negotiations started between the Building Trade Union Leaders and the Builders Employers Federation for a claim by the unions of 1/6d per hour increase.

A number of building sites stopped work today in support of this claim and men from these sites assembled at Speakers' Corner at 10 a.m. for a march to New Cavendish Street where these negotiations are being held. Sites included in the stoppage were Token's Hilton Hotel, Cubbitt's West London Air Terminal and Mowlem's Downing Street job. Also prominent were the exhibition workers and men from Merseyside and Manchester made the long journey to join us on the march.

After a short delay we formed up to start the march by which time it was snowing. We set off, cold but cheerful, with a pipe band leading and our banners held high. On the way up Oxford Street, we passed two or three sites where men were at work and there was quite a lot of booing from the marchers. This is hardly the way to get support from these workers as it can only antagonise them. Surely a small deputation to them would have had a better chance of getting these men out.

At the Employers' Federation building, shop stewards handed Mr. Harry Weaver, General Secretary of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, a statement in support of the wage claim and a pledge to action if the union leaders called for it.

After Weaver had gone into the warm, we moved off again to march to the Metal Workers' Hall at Blackfriars. It was still snowing and considering the cold, the turn out for the march was very good. The four deep column was over 100 yards long.

At the Metal Workers' hall, shop stewards of the wage campaign committee, spoke of high profits made by employers and the land racket and called for a campaign by the unions to help win our just wage claim. Union leaders should organise a national half-day stoppage to be combined with public demonstrations.

A delegate from Merseyside spoke of the high rate of unemployment in that area. He himself had been out of work for six months of last year. While working at Fords' Halewood site, he recalled how a Fords security man had boasted of 25 years service without joining a union. These security men vetted applications for work at this new factory. Fords intend to keep out any militants who might apply.

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Building Worker's Wage Claim. Continued from page 4.

Manchester delegates said that they had the support of local officials of the A.U.B.T.U. in their stewards' wage campaign. They had received good support from workers on sites in and around Manchester.

Also present at the meeting were two brothers taking part in the power workers work-to-rule. The stewards from Brimsdown told us of the long drawn out struggle for their claim. The present one of 4d. per hour was part of a claim which is still outstanding from Autumn of 1961. It was promised for January of last year, but has still not been granted.

He also spoke of the vicious attacks in the press, especially the "Daily Mirror". These were totally unjust and unfounded but one could not expect anything else from the capitalist press. He said that some men at the Fulham power station had stopped working to rule and put in extra hours without pay in order to supply hospitals during the power failure due to the flood at Brunswick power station.

After this a deputation went to call on the offices of the "Daily Mirror" in order to make a protest. The meeting was then rather hurriedly brought to a close. Some of us wished to raise points from the floor but the Chairman said that the time was short and everyone wanted some dinner. Not a very convincing excuse. Anyway things became rather noisy, but one speaker from the floor managed to make his point. He called for support for the Mass Lobby at Westminster of the unemployed in March. He urged that we should press for a ban on overtime and for the nationalisation of the Building Industry. His final point is about the last thing we want. No doubt he was some sort of "Trot", for they always call for nationalisation to remedy the injustices of capitalism. After this the meeting broke up.

I felt rather disappointed as we came out of the hall into the snow, for although the turnout for the demonstration was good, this reliance and faith in the officials of the unions voiced by the shop stewards was a disappointment.

A leaflet given out by the Manchester lads contained this passage: "We have been elected to join with building workers from other parts of the country to let the employers know we mean business and will support any action called for by our Union Leaders to win the 1/6d per hour increase".

However, the thing is, what action will the leaders take if this claim is not granted. They didn't take any action over the tea-break disputes, but left each site to carry on as best it could without any general call for action.

Isn't it about time that we in the building industry learnt from this and other failures of the leadership. We should form our own rank and file organisation, for we surely have the basis for it. After all we were not called out by union leaders today. The power workers have set us a good example along these lines. Only after we have built up our own organisation, can we hope to win our demands.

BUILDING WORKER

The Man in a Black Hat

Our readers in Britain will already have read of the death, at the age of 74, of our comrade Bonar Thompson well known for many years as the "Hyde Park Orator". The press, including the "Daily Telegraph" and the "Daily Mail", gave excellent obituaries of him, but these gave him praise, well deserved, for his ability as a lecturer on life and literature, his writing, his wit and his one man stage performances. They hardly mentioned his life as a rebel.

Bonar was born of strict Protestant stock in Antrim, Ireland and seemed to have been a rebel from his earliest recollection and remained so until his death. His life was a witness for liberty.

I first met Bonar when I was a boy and used to listen to him at the many speaking pitches in Newcastle. When the Communist Party was founded in 1920 he, as was the case with many rebels then, was swayed by the glamour of the Russian Revolution and joined its motley ranks, giving it excellent propaganda service. Offered a well paid job in the C.P. as an organiser, Bonar declined, saying that he was a poor organiser, but he offered to do 20 open air meetings a week if the C.P. would allow him to make collections and keep half of the proceeds. The local Party officials agreed to the 20 meetings but refused him any part of the collections. At that time Bonar had no job, no dole, he was destitute.

In any case he could not have endured the tyranny of the papier maché Lenins'. Bonar soon migrated to London where he resumed speaking in Hyde Park and elsewhere. A well read man (Shakespeare, Dickens, Shelley, Scott, Dryden, Shaw, Wells and Huxley were his favorites). His boast was that he had done all his reading in the public libraries (Daily Mail 7.1.63). Thompson's speeches attracted lovers of literature, but his principle subject was always the struggle of the oppressed. Perhaps because of this, the C.P. frequently ran campaigns against him.

My best memory of him was of the attacks on revolutionary and socialist meetings in Hyde Park by the strong forces of the British Fascists, in 1925. Thompson gave splendid speeches in defence of a communist platform, never before or since have I heard such oratory.

Bonar was always a friend of our movement and a regular reader of our press, always ready to lecture for us or give a recital at our socials. We have lost a good comrade. Concluded on page 10.

Peasant Revolts in Peru

Reports continue to filter through of the bitter struggles South American landless peasants are waging against the absentee landowners of that continent (see World Labour News, Vol.3 No.3).

Latest news is from Peru, where 1962 ended with pitched battles between the police and armed peasant bands in the Chaupimayo area, near Cuzco in the southern part of the country. Five men were killed in two clashes on December 26 and the ruling military junta in Lima suspended "constitutional guarantees" for 30 days in a bid to crush the revolt, which has been spreading for several months.

Farmworkers in La Convencion valley, near Cuzco, have been active in the struggle and 8,000 recently marched on the town for a demonstration, in which one of them was shot dead by police. Indian workers armed with sticks and farm implements have invaded the haciendas, claiming the land for themselves and threatening the managers.

A police report states that a small revolutionary army, several thousand strong was being trained in the wild, semi-jungle near Quillabamba, north of Cuzco. Police detachments were sent to the area, where the guerilla forces are claimed to have been broken up, with their leaders fleeing to the jungles of Paucartambo to the east.

These struggles recall the peasant armies led by the Anarchist, Emiliano Zapata, in Mexico before the first world war. The cause is the same: a feudal agricultural economy, in which the sprawling farms (haciendas) are mainly owned by absentee landlords. They are often sub-let several times, until the man who actually works the land has a cluster of parasitic middlemen on his back.

The Indian workers have the status of serfs, ill-fed and living in conditions of the utmost squalor (as shown in a recent edition of the BBC's "Tonight" programme). Farmworkers, under a system that has persisted since Spanish colonial times, are allowed a small plot of land, in return for which they must work long hours on the big estates, often without wages.

This area of Peru is potentially rich agriculturally, with a wide variety of crops. At present, however, its only outlet to the markets of the coastal cities is an antiquated narrow gauge railway -- so part of the products are left to rot and 98% of the valley's potential is untapped.

K.H.

Inside Hungary

1956-63

CONVERSATION WITH A REFUGEE HUNGARIAN
WORKER

Question: Could you tell me something about the Budapest insurrection of 1956?

Answer: It wasn't an insurrection, but a full-scale revolution, in which the people tried to overthrow the State and a regime supported by Russian tanks.

Q: What were the causes of the revolution?

A. The complete lack of freedom, Russian military occupation and general poverty. I will tell you something about the Russian occupation. I joined the Communist Party in 1918, being the seventh foundation member. During the war I was a partisan against German Fascism, not the German people. I believed in the socialist brotherhood of the Russians; after the so-called "liberation", the Russian army immediately replaced the German occupation. What they did in Hungary surpassed in cruelty and barbarism everything we know of the war carried out by the French in Indo China and Algeria. Russian soldiers, even CP members, raped women, sparing neither the elderly nor little girls of nine and collective rape was common. Six of my family, four among them CP members, were killed by the Russians in the first year after the liberation. The Russians dismantled factories, sending all machinery in working order to Russia. They utterly ransacked Hungary. The poverty was terrible. Hatred of the Russians is now in all Hungarian hearts. One of our main objectives (in 1956) was to end the occupation. We are a small country of ten-million people, plus three million around us under Czech, Yugoslav and Rumanian occupation. But we want to live free and neutral.

I was expelled from the CP in 1949 for telling a comrade that the regime was not socialism, but state capitalism. The State, represented by the new ruling class, was replacing the old bourgeoisie. The State, which decides workers' wages and fixes the prices of goods, has become the boss who controls the wage and commodity markets. There are trade unions, but their officials are nominated by the Party. Thus the State equals the Boss equals the Party equals a New Class.

Opposition cannot exist, because the new class wipes it out. That is why Rajk and other good and old comrades were exterminated with Imre Nagy. Don't forget that Kadar, head of the Government and general

Continued opposite.....

Inside Hungary 1956-63 Continued.

secretary of the Party, was freed by Imre Nagy and that this same Kadar liquidated Imre Nagy and betrayed the revolution of October, 1956. Stalinist methods...they have faithfully copied Russian methods.

The small peasants were even more opposed to the regime than the industrial workers. They do not like the collective farms, but the State put pressure on them and 93% entered the sovkhozes and kolkhozes. That is why there is continual shortage of bread, meat, even vegetables. And on the black market, goods are expensive. The leaders of the sovkhozes and kolkhozes are fairly often Jews and sometimes Gypsies; neither have any love for the Hungarian peasants. Regrettably, anti-Semitism is worse than ever. Rakosi and Gero, the two main leaders of the party, were unfortunately Jews, a fact everyone knows.

Among the Russian soldiers of the old occupation army, many fraternised with us at the start of the revolution. Then the Russians sent fresh troops from Russia, with thousands of tanks and armoured cars. The Russian leaders told the soldiers: "You must march against the Americans, not against the Hungarian Revolution." Russia is just as imperialist as any other power.

The Revolution began with a demonstration organised by the youth. Liberal intellectuals and nationalists also took part. Everyone hated the Rakosi regime, based on the secret police. That police fired on the demonstrators from the outset of the movement, which called for withdrawal of the Russian troops from Hungary and Imre Nagy to power. Workers' councils spread like a gunpowder trail in all industrial centres. They occupied the factories, calling a General Strike to support the above demands. Kadar, who had been freed by Imre Nagy in 1953, betrayed the revolution after its first week and eighteen months later had Nagy hanged, as well as many others who had taken part in the struggle against the Russians and the dictatorship. When I was expelled from the Party, my son was unable to continue his studies, although he was first in his class. He was to see how the people of Budapest toppled the colossal statue of Stalin, smashing it into tiny fragments.

I am a mechanic in general engineering work and led a district workers' education section.

Q: How does the Hungarian worker live?

A: Better, even today, than the Russian workers, but not so well as those in Western Europe. No right to strike. Working conditions and wages fixed by the State. Unions filling the role of State agents to control the workers. The same system as in Russia, under which misdemeanours at work are noted. I have a friend who was sacked. He later got work as a chauffeur, but the police soon put a stop to that by confiscating his driving licence.

Q: When did you arrive in France?

Concluded on page 11.

ESSO

ESSO stands for English Slaves of Standard Oil and according to Press and T.V. reports said slaves cannot tell Stork from butter. The ink on the old Blue Book agreement was scarcely dry when the fiddling and revision began.

The new Yellow Book (appropriate colour) is another step for domination by the Anglo American boss class. Example is Seven men now do the work formerly done by eight so one poor sod is out while those remaining share his pay between them. This is alright when the plant is behaving but "Automatics" go on strike and then the seven are running round twiddling cocks like nobodies business.

The theme song is "Where is my wandering boy tonight?" on the dole.

When sickness and leave crops up then the 12 hour shifts start - plenty of overtime. Some workers making over £1,500 a year. This is called workers solidarity though the unfortunates may think the only solids are the heads of their (former) fellow workers.

The employees car park is resplendent with nice new cars - not paid for and everything in the garden is lovely except the flowers are killed off by fallout and fumes.

"Southampton Correspondent".

The Man in the Black Hat. Continued from page 6.

Bonar led a hard life, but always saw the funny side. When a youth he was arrested for his part in a militant unemployed demonstration in Bristol. In the police station the day's offenders were catalogued, name, age, religion and possessions. The list ran so, "Patrick Murphy, Roman Catholic, 1/9d, Bonar Thompson, no religion, no money," In spite of the threat of the surroundings to a youngster, the sergeant had to ask him what he was laughing at when it was read out. Bonar kept on laughing in the appropriate places all his life.

T.B.

POTTER WORKERS LOSE A BATTLE Continued from page 1.

If any callousness was shown, it was displayed by the authorities who said they could not give preferential treatment to hospitals, although this is possible because electricity is supplied through small local areas in some of which are of course, hospitals. Indeed, before nationalisation of the industry the Marylebone (London) power station when it went over from D.C. to A.C. in its distribution, continued to supply D.C. to the Harley St., medical locality, and the medical equipment there continued to be D.C. for many years after.

The Labour Party were not very long in following the lead of the boss class and Ray Gunter M.P., Shadow Minister of Labour, made a statement on behalf of the Labour Party condemning the men.

"The Labour Party, together with the trade union movement, wholeheartedly condemn this unofficial action and urges workers in the industry not to lend themselves to a campaign that can only increase the suffering of their fellow citizens." Daily Telegraph 16.1.63.

Overtime has, however, bedevilled the issue. While the standard wage is about £12.0s.7d. for skilled men and £9.16s. for unskilled, the average wage with overtime is nearly £16. a week. The unions submit a wage claim and plead hardship based on an average wage of little over £10, the employers reply by denying this and proving that the average wage is £15.11s.7d. "and a man can live on that", the argument concludes. This is always rather telling, especially when the case goes to arbitration, when it is the decisive factor.

The power men could have a weekly wage of £16 without overtime, if they put a permanent ban on overtime.

As to the shop stewards - these struggles are triangular, the unions represent their own semi permanent bureaucracy, the employer side the capitalist class and the shop stewards try to represent the men and at the same time the unions. The shop steward movement can only be fully effective when it frees itself from this dual loyalty. They are already learning one Syndicalist lesson, this is the second lesson.

T.B.

Inside Hungary 1956 -- 63 continued from page 9.

A: 1957, a year after the Revolution. The French Embassy gave me a visa, even though I told them I was a former CP member. Former comrades, now holding office, have asked me to go back to the Party. I told them I have lumbago, which hinders my movements. I prefer to stay here and work like a beast of burden, in order to live with a little freedom.

from: Informations Correspondance Ouvrières
Paris.

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