



B U S M E N

WHAT NEXT?

Solidarity Pamphlet No. 16

6d

G. Lawless
52, Elport Rd
N.5.

2/4

INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet has been written by three busmen, an ex-busman, and a member of the AEU, interested in the history of the working class. But it isn't like other pamphlets. It doesn't express the views of any particular political party, faction or sect. It tries soberly to describe things as they are in the bus industry, here and now.

The pamphlet brings facts to the general public which they wouldn't get elsewhere. What is the busman's life really like? Why the go-slows? To the busman, the pamphlet brings information about his own past, which he may not know about. It also tells him what other grades in the industry are thinking. The pamphlet tries to break down some artificial barriers. And it makes certain suggestions concerning the way forward.

We feel that this down to earth approach is more likely to help build real unity on the job than if the articles had been written from various political angles. Some of the writers are influenced by Communist Party ideas. Others by anarchist ideas. Others by the ideas of 'Solidarity'. But all are concerned about conditions of work, the right to a living wage, the struggle against speed-up, the need for unity and the need for workers to control their own organizations. These ideas should be shared by all those who have to work in the bus industry, whatever their political views may be.

The past history of transport workers is rich in lessons. Some of these are very relevant today. These lessons concern the need for unity from below. They also concern the way trade union leaderships tend to divide worker from worker and prevent effective job organization for struggle. They concern the way management constantly tries to divide us, driving wedges between London busmen and Country service, between driver and conductor, between uniformed staff and inside staff, and between craftsmen on the inside staff. These lessons are analyzed not with a view to throwing mud, but with a view to preparing for future struggles by avoiding some of the mistakes we have made in the past.

We stress the need for unity between busmen and those who work on the London Underground. Tubemen and busmen have scabbed on one another for far too long. Isolated from one another, we have been defeated again and again. It was not always like this. Together we proved too tough a nut for any management to crack. We could prove it again.

The pamphlet finally discusses certain new methods of struggle that might be used on the buses. These would involve the passenger on the side of the busmen instead of antagonising him. They would place, for all to see, the responsibility for the deteriorating service where it really belongs, squarely on the shoulders of management itself.

We would like all busmen to discuss these ideas. Pass this pamphlet on. Order further copies for your trade union branch or for your mates in your garage. Write us your criticisms and suggestions. We have some ideas. We don't pretend to have all the answers.

THE AUTHORS

BRIAN WHITBY ('This is our Life')

Merton Garage. Joined buses in July 1963. Previously only worked in 'unorganized' jobs (office work, gardener for Wimbledon Council, etc.)

FRED WHELTON ('The Inside Staff')

Hendon Garage (inside staff). Member of NUVB since 1949. Formerly shop steward at University Coach Works, Chelsea. Joined London Transport in 1953. First worked at Hammersmith Trolley bus Depot. Later at Battersea Garage (for 4 years). Chairman Watford Branch NUVB for 3 years.

KEN WELLER ('Lessons from the past')

Engineer. Formerly shop-steward. Has held every office in his AEU branch. Author of pamphlets and articles on industrial struggles. Doesn't work on the buses and after reading the other articles in this pamphlet doesn't want to.

ARTHUR MOYSE ('The End of the Road')

Riverside Garage. Joined buses in 1946. States he 'has never held or sought any union position having no desire to wield or be subservient to any form of authority and believing it is a literal possibility for men to work together in the harmony of free association'. Occasional contributor to 'Freedom', 'Correspondence', 'Press', and other libertarian publications.

BOB POTTER ('The London Bus Story')

Ex-Battersea Garage. Worked on buses for 5 years (1955-1960). Editor of a rank-and-file journal ('Battersea Garage Bulletin') for 4 years. Member of TGWU Branch Committee and of 1958 Strike Committee. Author of 'London Busmen in Battle' (1958), a pamphlet which sold 5,000 copies. For 3 years Union delegate to Battersea Trades Council and to GMC of Battersea Labour Party.

The photo on the cover is of a BESI (Bus Electronic Scanning Indicator), one of the devices recently introduced by management to tighten their control over bus crews. Details were first released to the public in a 'Daily Telegraph' article on October 15, 1962, called 'Keeping an eye on 7,000 buses'. A more accurate title would have been 'Keeping an eye on 38,000 busmen'!

The typing, duplicating and assembling of this pamphlet were all done by slave labour. Costs nevertheless come to about 7d. per copy. We're selling at 6d., so the more we'll sell the deeper in debt we'll be. We think the pamphlet worth it. If you do too, please help us. All donations will be acknowledged.

THIS IS OUR LIFE

BY

BRIAN WHITBY

TRAINING

When I decided to join London Transport I knew that there was a staff shortage and that entry wasn't difficult. All the same I was surprised at how quickly and easily I got in.

I called at the recruiting centre in Baker Street one morning intending only to find out what jobs they had. In no time I had filled in half a dozen forms, answered some test papers of infantile simplicity and been told I could start the following Monday. There was then a quick and cursory 'medical'. And that was it. I sent off the fee for my licence (the police issue these more or less automatically) and on the Monday morning reported to Chiswick depot for training as a bus conductor.

Chiswick is an interesting place. It has a great feeling of the past about it. The walls are hung with framed photographs of the various types of buses used by the General Omnibus Company during the twenties and even earlier. In the men's toilet is a full length mirror with slogans printed on it, such as one finds outside the guardroom at square bashing camps. 'Are your shoes clean?'; 'Is your tie straight?'; 'Are your trousers creased?'; 'Is your face shaved?'; and so forth...

About thirty of us reported at the Depot that morning. Most were Irish. There was one Indian and the rest were English. There were four women. We first collected our uniforms and equipment, and filled in some more forms. We then sat in a large classroom and listened to boring speeches from various officials in diminishing order of rank.

The next two days were taken up with learning the rules and regulations, practising with the Gibson ticket machine and studying waybills, time cards, fare charts and cash total sheets. We also spent a whole afternoon practising on the outmoded bell punch - which we have to know in case of 'emergency' (if the machine goes wrong you are supposed to call at the nearest garage, collect a bell punch, and carry on with that). During this period we went for a busride to Norbiton Garage. On the way we all practised issuing tickets to each other. We would stick our heads out in the rain at each stop, calling out 'Hold very tight, please' (in the approved manner) to the bewildered queues, as we rang off.

At Norbiton we were shown, amongst other things, how to put a bus out of action for several hours by lifting the bonnet and turning a knob which creates an airlock in the fuel pipe, something I shall certainly try one of these days, before I leave.

On the Thursday morning we reported to our own garages for 'on the job' training. We showed up at 9 a.m. and went straight in to see the C.D.I. (Chief Depot Inspector). We expected yet another long lecture, and were relieved when all he said was a dozen words. 'Put your actual times, and not the card times, on your timesheets'. He sounded quite serious. But I realise now that he must have been joking.

To be out on the road was quite an eye-opener after the officially sanctioned dream world of Chiswick. A few days on the 49 route (Crystal Palace to Shepherds Bush, through the busiest parts of Wandsworth, Battersea, and Kensington) soon made nonsense of everything they had taught us. 'Always ring the bus off from the platform' for instance. You could, I suppose. But you'd either get there four hours late or else collect no fares at all. Every single run on that road was a mad rush, a constant race against time.

Instructors have their own ways of introducing newcomers to the job. Some do it gradually. Others just give you the machine and tell you to get on with it. I was lucky. On my first day on a 49 I was told to stay on the platform and ring the bell. I only started selling tickets on the second day. And the following week, on the 155, I sat out the whole of the first morning on the upstairs front seat, learning the route. I have since discovered that I can learn a route more thoroughly in a morning's joyriding than in a fortnight of working on it.

After exactly one week at the garage, we reported back to Chiswick for our final two days of training, taking the reports from our instructors all signed and sealed with us. Those two days were about the most boring I have ever experienced. There were lectures on how to deal with the most unlikely situations and difficulties in the most long winded and complicated way. There were forms and documents by the hundredweight passed around the classroom. There were prepaid tickets and free passes and season tickets and scholars passes and red rovers and God knows whats. Only a few of them crop up at all regularly on the bus. We were also shown the very rare gold and silver medallions. These have the same function as our own free pass, but there are only a very limited number of them. They are only given to fat overpaid slobs who own Rolls Royces anyway. I shall be very surprised indeed if I ever see one on a bus.

On the last morning we were taken to another classroom where they keep a chassis of a new Routemaster bus. We were given a short lecture about it. We were shown how to use a jack to raise the front or back of the bus if anyone gets trapped underneath. The women were excluded from this lesson.* This is worth remembering: if ever you want to jump under a bus, don't pick one with a clippie. She won't know how to jack it up because nobody ever taught her. In any case although these jacks are supposed to be scattered by the roadside, at strategic points along the route, nobody knows exactly where they are. It would probably be quicker to call the Fire Brigade!

* We never discovered what the women were doing during this session, though there were a number of suggestions.

We then had something called the Final Test. We all had to read a fare from a fare chart and do one cash total sheet correctly without too much prompting. We were then all pronounced 'passed'. Apparently this quaint custom goes back to the far-off days of the Company, who unlike the L.T.B. could afford to turn down an occasional applicant.

In the afternoon we were treated to some more speeches by the officials, this time in rising order of rank, ending with the Principal. He spoke to us about our 'new career'. He seriously thought we were all going to serve London Transport loyally, for life. From the conversations I had with my fellow recruits I would say that six months to a year was the longest most of them intended to stay. There was only one bloke I spoke to who was actually thinking of making a career with the L.T.B. He was only nineteen and too young to know better.

Finally we were sent off to our garages again, to collect our wages and job details for the next day. I was very glad to leave Chiswick behind. The instructors there have a servile attitude to the job and to the public that I found sickening. I think most of the other recruits felt the same. According to the instructor, the way to collect fares, for instance, was like this:

'Yes, please, Sir? Where to, Sir? Nine penny, Sir. Thank you, Sir. One shilling, Sir? Threepence change, thank you, Sir.'

I have never yet heard a conductor on the job going through this 'Yes, Sir-No, Sir-Thank you, Sir, and Bollocks, Sir' nonsense. I hope I never shall.

The instructors have an irritating trick of constantly threatening you. 'If you do this, you'll be out'. 'One conductor we had did such and such. We soon got rid of him'. 'Another conductor was heard to swear at a passenger. We couldn't tolerate that, so he was sacked'. As if to get the sack from the Job That Nobody Wants was a catastrophe! In any case since the Board is only interested in profits and couldn't care less about service the only way you are likely to get the push is by running away with the cash. I honestly reckon that if a conductor ravished half the women who boarded his bus (but remembered to collect their fares first) the Board wouldn't worry overmuch.

THE JOB

Most new conductors probably start out with the idea of doing the job properly, helping people with luggage and mothers with push chairs and waiting for people when they see them running for the bus. But they soon learn. For one thing, time is so tight on most routes that you just can't afford to wait. A few moments lost at a stop can mean missing the next traffic light. That means more people waiting at the next stop. And so it builds up until you reach the other end fifteen minutes late. You then not only lose your stand time and the quick cup of tea or cigarette you were looking forward to, but you also start back late and get an extra load all the way and pay in late into the bargain. In any case when you

hold the bus up for a bloke who then pushes past you without a word of thanks, goes and sits in the front seat upstairs, and when you get to him holds out a pound note and says 'threepenny', you get a bit cheesed off. You wonder why the hell you didn't leave the bastard behind. Next time you see someone running you look the other way and ring the bell.

For any new busman the first day out on your own is a memorable occasion. Mine was a Saturday afternoon job, on a 77. By the time we got to Clapham Junction we were not only 'domino' (full up) but there were passengers standing inside the bus and on top as well. And this was out of standing hours. I had my number taken by a silly old cow because there was another busman riding on the platform and I wouldn't allow her to do the same. Incidentally they were nearly all 'bunnies' (threepenny fares) and poured off at the next stop, most of them without paying their fares. I learnt quite a lot on that first trip.

The public can be very irritating at times. When you are on a regular route and the passengers see that you know where you are, they simply ask for their threepennies, sixpennies or ninepennies. Only the long riders, who genuinely don't know the fares, ask for places. But when you are new, or 'spare', and the passengers see you consult the fare chart a couple of times, they all think they'll ride cheap. They start asking for particular places - not just well known points on the route but places that aren't on the fare chart at all. Then they sit and look blank ... while you search. The only answer to this is to state a fare which you know is well over the top. Thus if I'm not certain whether a particular fare is a sixpenny or a ninepenny I say 'one shilling, please', and the old crab immediately says 'Oh, but it can't be. I always pay ninepence'.

We don't get to know many of the passengers. The travelling public, especially when going to and from work, have remarkably regular habits. Every day they catch the same bus at the same stop and sit in the same seats. They say the same things as they pay their fares. So by the end of the week I am beginning to know them, but then I switch over to another shift. As it takes a full year to go right through the rota and back to the job you started with, you never see any of them again. I shall be interested, if I stay that long - and if the schedules are not hacked to bits again in the meantime - to see how many are still there this time next year.

Because each shift is different and the passengers are different the job doesn't get too boring. One week it's proles, most of them still half asleep in the morning. Next week it's all office workers and school-kids. The next it's shoppers and bingo crowds. Before the overtime ban I used to work a rest day nearly every week. Spending that day on an entirely different route each time made the variety even greater.

A BUSMAN'S LIFE

When a new conductor starts work he is often on the 'spare list' for several weeks. This simply means that he or she is available for any job that happens to crop up at any time through sickness or absence or holidays. During this time I found that my social life just went for a burton. I never knew for more than one day ahead what route I was on or what hours I would be working. The only thing you are supposed to be quite certain of is whether you are on early or late turns. But even that was changed for me at one day's notice. At that time it seemed to me that I was always either starting at 4 a.m. or finishing at midnight. I did nothing but work, eat and sleep. I saw nobody except the people I worked with. My mates outside the garage thought I had been put away or something. Nevertheless being 'spare' did have its compensations. It was a varied life. There was no chance to get bored. The job got easier all the time and I got quite used to the idea of conducting buses without having the vaguest idea of where they were going. There were also standby duties, when if you were very lucky you might sit out a whole shift with a book or spend it playing snooker in the canteen. You're not often that lucky. Usually a job crops up. But there was always the chance.

When I did get a regular service I was very lucky. I was given one of the best routes in the garage, with one of the best drivers, one of the dwindling number who was on the job before the war. He can start a bus so smoothly that I don't realise we are moving till I look outside. He can stop it the same way. By comparison doing a shift with some of the new blokes is like spending seven hours in an army truck, bouncing over Salisbury Plain. It's all one to the Board of course. There are no extra rewards for skill and experience on London Transport.

Once you are on a regular service you can start leading something like a normal life again. You can work out what you are doing for a few weeks ahead. Every other week usually consists of 'late turns', starting any time after midday and finishing shortly before midnight. In between you either get 'earlies' (starting before six and finishing in the early afternoon) or 'middles' (roughly eight to five). There is naturally very little you can do with your free time on a late turn week, apart from reading. I would make up for it on the earlies by going out every evening without fail. But it's a bit grim getting up before dawn on the morning after. In this job you can never have the really free social life which is taken for granted by workers in practically any other job.

I have found that since starting on service I see less of my fellow workers than in any other job I've ever had. I sign on at the garage ten minutes before we take the bus out, and it takes me about the same time to pay in at the end of the shift. That works out at a couple of hours a week. As to the people I was on the 'spare list' with, I just don't know how many are still there and how many have left. The only people you see regularly are your own driver and the blokes behind the counter.

A busman's job is without doubt one of the most unhealthy there is. When I was working a normal eight hour day (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and a five-day week I used to eat three cooked meals a day. Now I generally eat only one. I don't eat at any regular time, but when it happens to be convenient, and grab quick snacks in between. I used to get seven and a half hours sleep every night. Now I sometimes get ten hours and at other times less than four. The human body prefers regularity and this irregular way of life soon starts to have a bad effect. Whereas in an evening's drinking I used to be able to enjoy four or five pints without any ill effects, I now find that I can hardly manage two. How any busman can find the strength and energy for any sort of sex life I just can't imagine.

In the winter the conductor is liable to catch all the ills and ailments going. The passengers swarm onto the bus, close all the windows, cough, sneeze, wheeze and splutter till the germs are crawling about in hundreds, like politicians in a brothel. The only way the conductor has a chance of staying healthy is by collecting fares as best he can from the platform and never going inside. The top deck is a bit safer. The thick tobacco fag kills most of the germs. And don't forget that a conductor can be sweating on a 'domino' bus in the middle of the afternoon, and freezing on an empty one in the middle of the night, all in the same shift. He may be shivering in the second half of his shift with insufficient clothing on, or sweltering in the first half, with too much on. Yet despite all these hazards London Transport has one of the worst sick pay schemes going.

THEIR ORGANIZATION...

I have never known any industry quite so top heavy as this one. I sometimes get the impression that for every three buses on the road there is one inspector with a watch, taking notes of their times. Some of these inspectors look right nitwits, gazing hopefully up the road at places where no buses have been seen for days, while the queues milling round them contemplate murder. And as for 'jumpers', (inspectors in uniform) I have before now had three of them checking tickets on my bus one after the other, as if the poor passengers haven't got enough worries as it is. Every so often, unless you're very careful, you get 'booked' by a 'jumper' for an undercharged or uncollected fare. You then have to see the C.D.I., who tells you that you mustn't do it again.

How many 'spots' (plain clothes inspectors) I have carried I don't know, not being experienced enough to recognize them. The only time I knew for certain I had some aboard was when a retired busman told me. As he showed me his pass he murmured: 'Couple of spots. Second from the back, on the right. I hate those bastards'.

We were told at Chiswick that the 'spots' are there mainly to check that the passengers pay their correct fares. But as that is the conductor's job (and there are 'jumpers' to check that anyway), nobody believes that tale. The 'spots' are there to spy on the conductor* and for no other

* There are also the 'mechanical spots' to check up on the driver, see he gives correct hand signals, stops, starts and changes gear without jerking the vehicle.

reason. Personally I feel much happier knowing that the bosses trust me as much as I trust them. But it is interesting to ponder on just how much it costs the Board to put their spies on every bus because they fear that the pay and conditions they offer conductors are not enough to attract honest men.

The public now seems to be a little more aware of the true situation on London Transport. When they have a half hour wait in the rain because two buses are missing, they no longer blame the crew of the bus that finally turns up, the way they used to... and the way the Board would like them to. Only one person has told me that we should all be sacked and starving, a stupid bitch with a Bible tucked under her arm. But the public still don't understand enough.

... AND OURS

Conditions of work on the buses are something which no Trade Union worth the name should tolerate. But most busmen are convinced that the union will put up with anything because it was bought out by the bosses years ago. In my first week on the job I listened to a crowd of busmen in a cafe discussing the projected ban on overtime. They were nearly all convinced that it would achieve nothing beyond making extra profits for the Board, which is exactly what it has done. When someone suggested that a strike would be more effective they were almost unanimously against it. 'Look what happened last time' was the reaction. 'The Union sold us out and we went back with nothing. If we strike now they'll just sell us out again'.

One driver I worked with told me that it went back a lot further than that. 'When we were on strike in 1937' he said 'it was a hundred per cent. We were ready to go on. Then the Union told us to go back. We went back with nothing. There was never any explanation. The Union sold us then. It's been no bloody good ever since'. If it's been going on that long, it's clear to me that it's more than just a case of selling out.

Generally speaking I have found that the attitude of the older blokes to the Union is one of hatred and contempt. The younger ones, the West Indians and the clippies are indifferent to it. They pay their dues, without expecting anything in return. I haven't met anyone naive enough to believe that the Union is fighting for us.

Coupled with this is an acceptance that the job is deteriorating and that it will continue to deteriorate. Every new lot of schedules will be a bit worse than before, the good jobs will vanish, stand times and meal reliefs will get shorter, time on the bus will get longer, headways will get longer and double and treble roads more commonplace. The job has no future at all.

It is also accepted that the Union will continue to do sod all about it. Isn't it time we started organizing ourselves if the Union won't organize for us?

THE INSIDE STAFF

A large proportion of London Transport's employees don't wear uniforms and are not seen by the public. These are the 'inside staff' - the men responsible for keeping the buses in road-worthy condition. Their duties vary from regular washing of the vehicles and maintenance of the engines to repairing the damage caused by accidents and repainting the body work.

Most people who write about busmen forget the inside staffs. They do the very thing they criticize in others: they divide the sections. The industry is already divided many times over. To write on the subject by dealing with only one section can only help drive the wedge deeper.

True, the inside staffs have their own special problems. They don't discuss schedules, running times and inspectors. Often they tend to see themselves as something apart from 'the busmen', that is the drivers and conductors. But they support the busmen when there is a dispute. During the 1958 strike, the craftsmen gave generously to the strike fund. And during the recent overtime ban they again supported the action of their uniformed colleagues. Many of those I work with (at Hendon Garage) in fact felt that the ban was called off too soon.

The 'established' inside staffs fall into three main categories. There are the general hands, members of the TGWU. These men are unskilled. Then we have the unit adjusters, again TGWU, but semi-skilled men. Lastly the craftsmen (electricians, engineers

painters, coachmakers, etc.). In addition, in each garage, there is the office staff. This may be small but it is nevertheless part of the garage staff.

AN AVERAGE GARAGE.

To show the composition of an average garage, the inside staff of Hendon Garage is as follows:

Total inside staff: 58, of which 48 are general hand and unit adjusters, and 10 are craftsmen. These comprise :

4 coachmakers	NUVB
2 painters	NUVB
1 trimmer	NUVB
2 electricians	ETU
1 fitter	AEU

The same garage has 70 service buses and 8 training buses. It employs 131 drivers and 139 conductors. So, the inside staff makes up just under 20% of the total established staff.

THE ROAD SERVICE ALLIANCE.

All the craftsmen of a given fleet come together in the RSA (Road Service Alliance). This is an amalgamated body previously known as the 'Craft Alliance'. The RSA holds monthly meetings, which are well attended by craftsmen from garages all over London. Unfortunately the distances involved in getting to these meetings are too great for some of us, or they would be even better attended. TGWU members don't attend these meetings, although in most garages they constitute a majority of the inside staffs and des-

pite the fact that we have many common problems in relation to garage conditions. In this sense, belonging to a particular union tends to build artificial barriers between men working in the same garage.

Higher up the scale of delegated authority is the Joint Trades Council which does include all sections, but by now we are dealing with full time union officials rather than with rank and file members. Yet it's on the garage floor that real unity is needed.

NEED FOR GARAGE COMMITTEES.

Garage craftsmen are of course also members of their particular trade union branches, but in these there is hardly ever any discussion about the problems of the bus industry. For example my own branch of the NUVB discusses problems facing the vehicle building industry in relation to different methods of production (plastics, etc.) and their effects on organized labour within the industry. It discusses automation, unemployment and so on. These matters are undoubtedly important, but sometimes they tend to be somewhat 'academic' insofar as I, an employee of the LTB, am concerned. I can only assume that the same is felt by other members of the RSA.

The craftsmen in each garage elect a steward to represent them at garage level. He may be a member of the NUVB, the AEU, the ETU, etc. I think there should be Garage Committees incorporating all the inside staff, that is both skilled and unskilled, and both TGWU members and those of other unions. There are many things that are tolerated in garages - because we are artificially divided amongst ourselves - that would never be tolerated in a well organized factory. Garage Committees would break across these artificial craft

barriers. They would deal with problems that face all those who have to work in a given garage: oil on the floor, exhaust fumes from inadequate ventilation, disputes with the yard foreman, negotiations concerning starting times, and other local grievances.

INDUSTRIAL UNION.

I think many of our problems might be solved if we had ONE union for all busmen. Such a union would have to be controlled from below. It would then be much closer to the feelings of the rank and file.

At present the busmen are but a minute section of the TGWU. Their problems absorb only a fraction of the time of the union executive. The key as I see it is one union dealing with road transport and unity of all sections within the industry. I know 'unity' is not original. But it is needed in the bus industry if we are to make any sort of headway.

Such a union couldn't be anything but an improvement on the present set-up. It would be closer to the job. It would know the problems better. It would have a much greater support from the rank and file. We would end the absurd situation that existed in 1958, for example, where the uniformed staff were on strike, while RSA members were reporting for work as normal, saying 'good morning' to the pickets as they went in. An industrial union would ensure that any fight would be a common fight.

Obviously such a union would need to cater for various grades and crafts. It would have to advocate and work for the breaking down of the various differentials that help to create the divisions so desired by management. Perhaps these ideas are utopian? Many of my skilled colleagues would probably oppose the idea that unskilled workers

should have an equal amount, Nevertheless this is the next hurdle we must cross on the road to socialism.

Quite honestly I have no blue-prints as to how an industrial union for busmen could be brought about. It will clearly have to be done by the workers themselves. The leaders of existing unions will be opposed to any move that reduces 'their' memberships (which they consider as their private preserves). They would be frightened of losing any of the financial power that comes from a big membership. It would also be opposed by some craftsmen who would be opposed to any kind of amalgamation with semi-skilled or unskilled labour. There is a big job of propaganda to be done here.

COUNCILS OF BUSMEN.

In addition I think we should try and establish machinery for 'councils of busmen' in a given area. These could come into action as and when required to solve particular problems. For instance in the London area they might get together with 'councils of tube men', etc., to plan joint action whenever necessary.

THE LABOUR BUREAUCRACY.

Militants have every right to criticize the present set-up and the role of different tendencies in the movement. But it is important that the criticism be directed at the right targets.

There is an important link between the bureaucracy in control of the TGWU and the bureaucracy in control of the Labour Party. Both are pretty firmly entrenched. One has only to think of Bevin, Deakin and now Cousins to see the link-up. These people have all had the fate of the busmen in their hands. And all of them are part and parcel of the Labour

hierarchy. Whenever busmen have tried to struggle they have always found these people to be obstacles in their path.

But even lower down the ladder the Labour Party has failed to help us. I have had a vivid personal experience of this. During the bus strike of 1958 I was an active member of the Labour Party. I was in fact a member of the Watford Rural Parish Council, representing Eastbury Ward. My experience must have been shared by many militants everywhere. When we tried to get real public support, all we got from Labour stallwarts was: 'It's an industrial dispute', and 'It's nothing to do with us'.

Why has the Labour Party been so silent at times when busmen have been fighting not only for their own conditions, but for a better service for the public (e.g. against cuts in services, etc.)? Could it be that the Labour bureaucrats are afraid they might lose their 'respectable' image? Could it be even more basic? Could it be that the Labour Party stands for the permanent rule of bosses of some kind or other? Are they against any idea of the busmen themselves ever having a say in the running of the industry?

Some have argued that the Communist Party has been responsible for defeats. Let's keep a sense of balance. They are only a minority. To my mind the real guilty ones are the right-wing Labour bureaucrats, the Bevins and Deakins.

These men have successfully divided the transport workers, tied them hand and foot, and handed them over, almost defenceless, to be exploited by an ever more greedy management.

FRED WHELTON

Lessons from the Past

London busmen have a history of struggle second to none. This history goes back a lot further than most people realize.

The first horse omnibus ran in 1829. By 1872 there were 1,300 horse buses on the streets of London with 15,000 staff. There were also a large number of trams. Workers in the industry laboured under terrible conditions. A letter published in 1872 (Islington Gazette, January 19) described them as follows:

'The omnibus driver sits on his box 15 and in most cases 16 hours a day in all weathers. Tram drivers work 15 hours a day standing in straw with no reliefs or time for meals, or even seats provided'.

Daily wage rates varied from 3/- to 3/6.

In 1891, T. Sutherst President of the Tram and Omnibus Workers Union, gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour. He gave details of the hours worked, which might still amount to 15-16 hours a day on certain routes, for instance from 'Hornsey Wood Tavern' to London Bridge, or from the 'Prince of Wales', Hackney, to Piccadilly Circus.

In this period there was very little trade union organization. Early in 1872 a series of late night meetings had been held in North London in an attempt to found an organization for bus and tram workers. (The meetings had had to start at 11 p.m. because of the late finishing times). This effort was apparently abortive, due to the difficulties of organization under threat of instant dismissal.

In 1886 a real attempt was made to start a union. This was the Whip and Satchel Defence League, whose secretary was A.W. Spindler, a conductor employed by the North Metropolitan Tramway Company. At a meeting of the League held in Hackney on August 4, two resolutions were passed which reflect the difficulties under which the League operated:

1. 'This meeting considers the excessive hours of labour imposed on Tramway employees to be inhuman and injurious to their well-being, and a disgrace to the employers.'

2. 'Continual Sunday working was morally and religiously against the interest of the employers and called for the immediate attention of the spiritual advisers of the Crown'.

A delegation was elected to see the Home Secretary.

By 1889 the League had merged into the County of London Tramway Workers Union whose secretary was J. Hansford. The North London Branch of this organization was formed on June 7, 1889. This union had been created with a certain amount of help from other unions, notably the Amalgamated Society of Engineers which donated £25.

SOME EARLY STRUGGLES

By 1891, following a successful strike of busmen in Paris, the pent-up frustrations and anger of London busmen came to a head. The newly formed Tram and Omnibus Workers Union, with the help of the London Trades Council, organized a series of meetings in May and early June, in support of the 12-hour day. Up to that time, and by the

admission of its own President, T. Sutherst, the Union had hardly any organization in existence.* The union did however receive large scale organizational help from the socialist movement.

The strike started on June 6, 1891. It was notable for the efficiency and militancy of its organization. The pickets relieved each other with semi-military precision, about 50 men being on duty all the time at each of the major yards. At Holloway Yard, the largest in London, over a thousand horses were stabled. As the pickets changed at 6 p.m. each day, 5 keepers, 5 drivers and 5 conductors were delegated to feed and water them, leaving again immediately afterwards. Scab vehicles which managed to leave the yard were carefully followed by contingents of pickets in horse traps.

There were many fierce clashes with blacklegs and their police escorts. For example, on June 7 a bus out of Holloway Yard was stopped by a hostile crowd at Hanley Road. The windows were smashed, and the horses' traces unhitched. The bus was then driven back to the yard to the accompaniment of a crowd singing 'Rule Britannia'! There were a number of similar incidents.

On June 8, buses on the Charing Cross run were stopped at the 'Brecknock' by a crowd of strike supporters. A number of men boarded a bus and smothered the driver with over 50 packages of assorted condiments such as pepper, flour, red ochre and lamp black. They also smashed the windows and lamps. During these incidents there were a number of arrests and strikers were sentenced to up to 4 months hard labour.

The dispute lasted a week at the end of which the employers conceded the basic 12 hour day. Some men were victimized. Over £1,000 had been raised in support of the strike

* Minutes of London Trades Council meeting, June 5, 1891.

by the Trade Union movement. The dispute proved the beginning of effective trade union organization. Immediately after the strike ended the National Vehicular Traffic Workers Union was founded. Its first President, Fred Hammill, an engineer and a socialist, graphically described how this came about. In his address to the first annual conference of the union in 1892, he said:

'At the close of one of the historical strikes in the year 1891, viz. the great omnibus strike, there was a general desire among the men for a permanent organization. After many appeals to the London Trades Council for assistance, the Executive of that body decided to appoint an Organizer. The Council then generously voted a sum of £10 to pay my wages for one month. After the expiration of this period the duly elected Executive of your Union insisted on me remaining with you up to the present moment, they electing me as the Organizing President of your Union.

'The Organization which you now represent, commenced as you now perceive, under extremely trying circumstances. Six Omnibus men who had been weeks without employment, owing to the part they displayed through the "Bus Strike", were engaged as collectors. They absorbed half my months wages before we commenced operations at all. Your now General Secretary, Mr. H. Bowbrick, had to pawn his watch and guard to pay a deposit on renting your offices. Thus commenced your organization practically in the pawnshop and under the auspices of the London Trades Council.' *

In September 1898 it was the turn of the tramway workers. One hundred and fifty men at the Stamford Hill Depot struck work on September 6 over

* From text of Hammill's speech printed as a pamphlet in 1892. The text was reprinted in 'Labour's Turning Point 1880-1900', edited by Eric J. Hobsbawm, 1948, p.93.

the victimization of two men. By the 14th the strike had spread to the Highgate and Finsbury Park Depots and soon affected about 800 horse-keepers and 2,800 drivers and conductors. The strike was called by the General Tramway Workers Union whose General Secretary was H.J. Markham.

This dispute was remarkable by the large scale use by the North Metropolitan Tramways Company of blacklegs supplied by the 'Free Labour Association' of W. Collison, the 'Apostle of Free Labour', a sort of 19th century Martell. The strike lasted for 20 days until September 26, when the LCC intervened. The dispute went to arbitration, and most of the trammen's claims were conceded. This struggle did for trammen what 1891 had done for the busmen: it created a small but stable trade union.

The next big round was fought in September 1913, during the great working class upsurge which preceded World War I. This was the strike of busmen for union recognition and a revision of the draconian licensing system. The dispute started at the Holloway Depot but it rapidly spread. The men's demands were conceded by the National Steam Car Company after the men had been out for a week. The rest of the companies quickly followed suit.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Soon after the start of the first World War in 1914 the cost of living rose enormously. This led to a wave of labour unrest. But the government proclaimed 'that the rise in the cost of living is not by itself sufficient reason at the present time for increasing the wages of their employees. They regard this

rise as a burden which must be shared in common by all classes in the country.' * This attitude on the part of the government of course gave a lead to private employers.

One of the actions which helped break the government's stand was the 19-day long strike of the trammen in May 1915. Seven thousand men stopped work in support of a wage demand. The main strongholds of the strike were Highgate, New Cross and Camberwell. The dispute was very violent. For instance on one day alone (May 30) 8 trams were smashed up and a number of blacklegs assaulted. This resulted in a number of arrests and several strikers were sentenced to periods of up to 6 weeks hard labour.

The reaction of the LCC which owned a large proportion of the tramways was to sack all strikers of military age, telling them to volunteer for the armed forces. The LCC refused even to consider arbitration. It issued a statement saying:

'Notice is hereby given that since the majority of men above military age have returned to work, men who are eligible for the services will not be taken back.

a) those who enlist will receive favourable consideration for re-employment, as far as may be possible, after the war.

b) any man of military age unable to enlist may appeal to the Chief Officer and state his reasons, and he will consider whether any special circumstances allow any exception in his case.'.

These were the conditions under which the men had to return to work. The action of the LCC in forcing its employees into the meaningless mincing

* Reply to an appeal for a war bonus for Post Office Workers, quoted in Wal Hannington's 'Industrial History in Wartime' (1940) p.44.

machine of Ypres, Passchendaele and Vimy Ridge shows up the vicious hypocrisy of its multiple memorials to 'Our Glorious Dead'.

Although the strike was defeated, the men were not. Within a few months the Islington Branch of the Trammen's Union had a membership of nearly 2,000. By August the LCC had conceded a 3/- a week 'war bonus'.

Two years later, in May 1917, 10,000 men employed by the London General Omnibus Company struck work in support of the following demands:

1. Recognition of the Union and the right of representation by their trade union officials on all matters affecting their interests.
2. A war bonus of 10/- a week.
3. The reinstatement of the 10 victimized employees on the Palmers Green route.

It speaks volumes for the change of atmosphere and the militancy of the men that the Company almost immediately agreed to go to arbitration and eventually conceded most of the demands.

On August 17, 1918, two and a half months before the end of the war, an unofficial strike of bus and tram workers broke out. They were demanding a further 5/- a week war bonus for women to bring them in line with the men. At the beginning of the dispute about 18,000 workers were affected. The strike rapidly spread and by August 23 busmen in Hastings, Bath, Bristol, Brighton, Southend, South Wales, Swansea and Sussex had joined in. More significantly it had spread to women employed on the Hampstead-Charing Cross Line of the Underground (now the Northern Line). The women Underground workers were quickly joined in solidarity by more men.

The union officials belatedly followed the lead given to them. A conference called by the Transport Workers Federation demanded equal pay for women.*

The strike officially ended on August 25 but the tube workers stayed out until August 28. This was the first strike in which all sections of London's transport acted together.

1924

London bus and trammen emerged from the war a far stronger and united force than they had ever been before. As well as achieving internal unity between depot and depot, and bus and tram, they had taken the first steps towards unity in action with their co-workers on the tubes. From being one of the more downtrodden and underpaid sections of the working class they had achieved wages and conditions far above the average. All this had been achieved by their own efforts, through 'blood, toil, tears and sweat'. It is worth comparing what happened during World War I, when they were prepared to struggle, with what happened

* It demanded:

'Such a revision of the award of the Committee of Production of March 1918 as shall provide for equal payment for women, both as regards war wages and basic rates.

'This conference is further of the fixed opinion that the whole matter must now be settled on a national basis of equal pay for equal work, and will immediately take the most appropriate and firm steps to enforce the above principle and to safeguard the economic security of the men who have joined the colours, by the prevention of any sort of underpaid labour.'

during World War II, during which period they relied on the ministrations of Ernie Bevin.* There is a lesson here, somewhere!

In 1921 the Busmen's union was merged into the newly created TGWU. This was part of a vast movement of amalgamation, a movement spearheaded by those elements which had struggled during the war and had learnt the lessons of unity and solidarity. Other large scale amalgamations which took place at this time were the formation of the AEU and of the ASW. These amalgamations took place with the specific idea of more powerful joint action. There is unfortunately no evidence that the TGWU (or for that matter the AEU or ASW) have ever fulfilled the aims of the pioneers.

On March 21, 1924, there started a strike of trammens for an 8/- a week wage increase. Two days later a mass meeting of strikers at the Holloway Empire voted to call on bus and tube men for support. This was immediately forthcoming from the buses, and the tubemen issued strike notices for March 28. Thirty nine thousand men were out. The reaction of the Labour government was to declare a 'state of emergency'.

The Labour Prime Minister, J.R. Macdonald, stated: 'The major services must be maintained and the government must give protection to those engaged in legal occupations'. He then appointed Colonel Josiah Wedgwood (later Lord Wedgwood) Chief

Civil Commissioner in charge of the maintenance of transport. Wedgwood had made a name for himself earlier in the year by threatening to use troops against a docks strike.*

Before the effects of this action could be gauged a settlement was achieved which substantially met the demands of the men. They got 6/- a week increase in basic wages plus a 2/- increment tied to the cost of living. Despite the fact that the award almost completely conceded the men's demands the result of the ballot for acceptance of the offer was 9,428 for accepting and 4,377 for staying out.

An important aspect of the 1924 dispute (in view of the forthcoming General Election) is the fact that it took place under a Labour government. The reactions of that government are hardly conducive to having faith in any future Labour government solving the problems of London's transport workers.

1924 was the last year that joint action of bus and tube workers was taken in a strike of London transport workers. There was one more occasion, however, when joint action was threatened. In 1932, the London General Omnibus Company gave notice of its intention to sack 800 men, and of its intention to cut wages. These proposals were accepted by the union, but not by the men. A number of branches voted to strike. A ballot showed three to one against the Company's proposals in spite of the union's recommendation that they be accepted. The voting was 16,593 to 4,169 against the wage cut and 13,461 to 4,212 against the discharges. Anger rose even higher when it was found that a reduction had been accepted by the

* All the blame was not Ernie's. A big share must go to the Communist Party, several of whose members had achieved dominance of the Central Bus Committee before the war. Except for the period before the invasion of the USSR (September 1939 to June 1941) the Communist Party during these years was the most ardent exponent of industrial peace, and of production at all costs.

* For more information on the 'state of emergency', see 'Solidarity' pamphlet No. 15 'The RSGs 1919-1963' by Nicolas Walter. Obtainable from 'Solidarity' (10d. post free).

trammen on the understanding that a similar 'reduction in pay had been negotiated with the railway unions, the Joint Trades Committee (representing workshop staff) and the London Bus Committee'.*

Mass meetings were held in Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square. These called for joint action by Tube, Tram and Bus workers. The meetings were called by the unofficial 'Provisional Committee of Garage Delegates' which soon became the 'Rank and File Committee'. Following this the Company's proposals were withdrawn. There were no sackings and no reduction in wages.

THE NEED FOR RANK AND FILE UNITY

The bureaucracies in the TGWU and the NUR gradually grew in power. Both bus and tube men are only small minorities in their respective organizations. Therefore even with a fully democratic union structure (some hope!) they would be unable to control the industrial policy of 'their' union. This has made it impossible for workers in the two sections to synchronize their actions, by 'constitutional' means at any rate. It is very unlikely that this situation will change through the actions of the trade union leaders. What the initiative of the rank and file could bring about is quite another matter.

It should be obvious to any reasonably intelligent observer that it is the policy of the LTB to 'divide and rule', to keep the two main sections of the industry separate. This objective has been aided by the empire building and sectionalism fostered by the leaders of the NUR and of the TGWU.

On the tubes, they have been even more successful. The vast mass of tube workers are in the NUR. But most of the key motormen are in ASLEF. There is little love lost between the hierarchies of these two unions, which have frequently 'officially' scabbed on each other. There is little chance, even in this restricted field, of achieving unity in action via the official trade union machines.

In 1918 and 1924 workers on bus and tube acted together even though they worked for innumerable different employers.** The only thing that divides the two sections now is that they are members of different unions, prisoners in different cages. Differing wage structures and negotiating procedures have been either artificially created or exaggerated to divide worker from worker. Acting separately busmen and tubemen are powerless. They have consistently blacklegged on each other. Acting together, they have made the State tremble. They could do so again.

KEN WELLER.

* From a union circular dated July 30, 1932, published in the Daily Worker, on August 29, 1932.

** Before the London Passenger Transport Board took over, in 1933, there were 5 tube companies, 17 tramway undertakings, mostly municipally owned, and 61 companies operating buses.

ARTHUR MOYSE

the end of the road

'You're one of nature's gentlemen at one stop
and the biggest bastard on earth at the next'

The London public transport system never was and is not now a public service. It came into being as a cheap means of transport for the benefit of the London lower middle class. It sold them rides for a profit with the same indifference to their personal welfare that a multiple stores displays to its customers. It took their money, handed them their goods and forgot them within a matter of seconds.

The pressure of the emerging commuting working class offered a golden harvest to those who could carry them to and from work. Local councils might subsidize cheap morning fares from the local rates to aid their own underprivileged, but the private bus operators threaded their way through the streets of the mightiest capital city in the world finding fortunes in the halfpennies that poured in an unending stream into the conductor's leather bags. The busmen in their turn stood with their feet in that golden trough. They became an elite among London's unskilled labourers but in return they sold their dignity as men. Regimented, uniformed and publicly numbered they merged, for a price, into a faceless mass of favoured hirelings. They became accepted in the public mind as one with the police, the park attendant and the postmen as the creatures of the State, the public servants of the middle class, chosen by favour, by physical standardization and by family influence to form an economic cadre within their own class but always apart from it.

For their higher wages they accepted not only regimentation but a mindless and spirit-destroying discipline that had nothing to do with justice but simply meant that one had to accept the responsibility for any complaint no matter how stupid or irresponsible. The transport employers accepted a Draconian continental judicial system when dealing with their employees. The unfortunate man was held always to be guilty until he could prove his innocence of some serious or fatuous public complaint. Like our modern police societies, innocence still carried the stigma of accusation. But the reward was the guaranteed high weekly wage, the guaranteed yearly holiday, the deposit for the little semi-detached working class house and the small heap of savings to help ward off the rigours of working class poverty in their old age.

World War II swept away the conditions that made all this possible. The State has taken over the role of the private capitalist. All that we are left with is the crumbling facade of a once mighty and prosperous industry that is yearly, by accident or design, bleeding to death within the jungles of London's choking highways. The job that was once sought after as a working class sinecure has now become a casual labourer's hesitant refuge. All that is left for those who are working their time on London's transport system are the ancient stories of past militancies and the mindless and detested Victorian discipline.

Those men and women employed by the LTB who intend to soldier on have to acknowledge, without flinching, the conditions that exist at the moment. They must strive to alter them by every means at their disposal and to offer the people of London a blueprint for a transport service that will be a public service not only in name but in practice.

* * * * *

We are entitled to fight for the best living that our society can offer its children, no more and no less. And with that simple fact in mind we have a right here and now to demand and to struggle for a higher wage, for within our society we are now the underprivileged. We must reject out of hand any attempt by the employers to speed-up our working conditions until we have established that these speed-ups will help us not only financially but what is more important physically. Let them call us Luddites if they will. But let them remember that like the Luddites we live from week to week and that hunger and homelessness is still the dark spectre for London's working class. Let the Fabians join their soft white hands with those of the State to outline our future, but when it is literally you and I who will be sacrificed to build their bureaucratic dreams we must cry 'No' to shedding our blood for their future.

We must realize that the LTB is not operating its transport system as a public service. We must cease to spend our days alibi-ing and excusing their failures. The LTB is now but a huge State bureaucracy that could exist without transport. It is an organization so top heavy with clerical workers that overnight it could be transformed into any other type of government department. It is as if the huge staff of the Food Offices that were once run by the State had been told to alter their letter headings and call themselves a Transport Board.

The men and women employed in the LTB lower grades must accept the fact that fares now no longer have any relationship to the cost of London's public transport. The fare that the London bus user pays is now but an indirect form of taxation, in exactly the same fashion as his tax on bread, beer, tea or cigarettes. The busman should forget those mystical figures that have over the last ten years formed the focal point of so many of his arguments. If Marples and any other Tory or Labour minister wishes by indirect taxation to filch additional revenue for their political adventures, then that is a matter that affects us all. The busman who tries to base his wages on these dubious figures is a fool.

We are not concerned as employed labourers with how much or how little our employer makes or loses. We sell our labour in the open market. As such we must fight for a wage comparable to that enjoyed or suffered by the rest of the community. The labourer who works for the huge building contractors would not lose a night's sleep if told that his employer was going bankrupt. But he would still demand, and quite rightly, his agreed wage. Let us stop being the conscience of the LTB forever explaining to an indifferent traveller that we could have a little more because the money is there, in the LTB's till. Leave these pages of figures in the lavatories where they belong. Remember that you are but one working man or woman with a rent to pay and food to buy each and every week. Always remember that when the LTB no longer requires your services it will turn you out at a day's notice. Remember, you who have a few years' service, those like you who were sick. Who worried for them? Remember the old men still working when they should have been in decent retirement. Who worried for them? Remember the grey-haired women, many of them grandmothers, clambering up and down stairs with the sweat upon their faces in an attempt to collect each and every fare. Who worries about them? As every man and woman knows, there is a blank wall of indifference

and inhumanity to the sick, the old and the suffering. This may be but a condition of our society but why plead for mercy and understanding once every twelve months to indifferent ears?

Here is an industry cursed with a pre-war bureaucracy and attempting to cope with a deteriorating service; an industry still attempting to apply a discipline and a regimentation that were a joke in Victoria's reign to an age that seeks to land men on the moon; an industry that still hires plain-clothes agents provocateurs to spy upon its uniformed staff as they collect pennies from children while our rulers talk internationally in thousands of millions of pounds; an industry where overtime is the norm and not the exception. Between the wars the average man worked a forty eight hour week. We were promised that with the coming of automation, even those hours would, in a few years time, be halved. Thirty years have passed and now a fifty and even a sixty hour week on London's buses is considered 'normal'. The time has come not for a temporary ban on overtime, but for a permanent one. In theory we have a forty-two hour week. Let us have the courage and the intelligence to say 'not one minute longer'. How can we demand a shorter working day or week when men of their own free will are prepared to work all the hours that God sends? If, as they say, they cannot live on the forty-two hour week pay packet, then they are in the wrong job. Ten years ago a garage of 500 men would carry 30-40 spare staff, to cover sickness and leave rotas. That is now a thing of the past. It is their £400-£500 in missing wages that helps to pay your overtime, brother, for when overtime is considered as a permanency by employer and staff alike, then a staff shortage becomes a 'necessary' part of the job.

It is a commonly held fallacy that the LTB have a staff shortage. This is completely untrue for within the last ten years the LTB has hired more men than they need to cover their entire fleet of buses. The truth that no one will face up to is that they cannot keep the staff that they hire. A major reason is the stupid and irresponsible discipline. No single conductor believes for a single second that an inspector boards the bus to help the conductor. He boards that bus with the hope and the intention of finding at least one person sitting there without paying or who has over-ridden his or her paid fare. When that happens the offending passenger pays with an exchange of smiles to the official, but the conductor is reported for incompetence. There are nasty stories or rumours to the effect that the official ticket squad have a private gamble as to who can 'book' the most conductors in one turn of duty.

* * * * *

But what do we want as an immediate issue besides a social wage?

That when men and women are forced by their conditions of employment to creep out into the empty streets at four and five in the morning, then common humanity dictates that they shall not finish eight hours or so later. Ten years ago a rota job such as that would have finished five hours later, at nine or ten in the morning. It now finishes at midday. Every job that starts before seven in the morning should be a short shift and finish.

The conductor should be paid at least fifteen minutes for paying in his takings for it is practically impossible to do this within the time allowed by the LTB. Every day, all over London, some conductors are still attempting to sort out their bills and pay in their money after the official ten minutes.

Every man's pay must be available for him other than on his rest day. The LTB will give a man who has his day off on a Friday his money only late on Thursday night or Saturday morning. If that man is early turn, it is demanded of him that he attends the garage in his own time on his day off to collect his pay.

Let the LTB acknowledge the fact that we work under trying conditions and that we are not airline crews or Carlton Hotel commissionaires, but harrassed humans and that, in line with the post office worker, we should be allowed to wear open toed shoes, open neck shirts and not made to wear those stiff and heavy caps. It will be said that this is in fact the case. But it is only because of lack of staff. Let us make it our right, for it is our sweat.

Complaints, public or otherwise, should carry an automatic overtime payment of at least fifteen minutes. To the outsider this may seem an odd demand. The average conductor, in ten years, churns out over a million and a half tickets. If he is observed to have made one single mistake, he is duly reported. A week later, in his own time, he must wait like a child outside the office of the Chief Depot Inspector to be finally called in and to be asked for an explanation of his assumed fault. Any nasty child, any senile or unstable person can write in a letter of complaint to the LTB and in due course some unfortunate individual will have to spend his own time trying to explain away an incident that he has little or no knowledge of.

Let every non-skilled job within a garage be available for any man, so that if a man so wishes he can ask to spend a week sweeping out the garage or let a bus cleaner ask to go out conducting for a week or two. Let every unskilled job be interchangeable at a week's notice, without inter-office fuss.

For sick pay the answer lies in a mobile van with a competent doctor. If a man phones that he is unable to come to work through sickness, let that van visit his home in the course of the day and let the doctor check on the man's health. If he is unwell then he should draw his full daily wage. If he is held to be well, then let him call in his own N.H.S. doctor for another opinion or lose his day's pay. The case at present is that one day off, whether dead or dying, and a man automatically loses his day's pay.

* * * * *

The union has let the busmen down more than any other organization. From the employer we expect nothing. But time and time again the union leaders have thrown away chances to improve our conditions. We have nothing to show for these wasted years. It is no question of betrayal. Men only betray themselves.

If you have a union it must be a closed shop. It is only by the threat of financially fining a man who refuses to toe the majority line that you can frighten the employer and the employee into accepting the will of the union. Object to the ethics of the situation, by all means. But if you want a militant union within a capitalistic set-up then you must have a closed shop. By that same standard every man who holds a union card should have the right to stand for any office within that union.

Every election that is held must be held with each voter knowing the full background of every man who puts his name forward. At present each man is simply given a choice of two or three unknown names from a list of unknown names. At every election, let every candidate have duplicated his whole background, so that it can be posted up in all the seventy-odd garages. Let the rank and file make an attempt at an educated guess when picking their leaders.

There is a need for an alive union paper that would turn its columns over to every opinion, popular or otherwise. With a potential circulation of over thirty thousand a week this is a crying necessity. While there is this vacuum it is pointless to proscribe a minority paper such as the current 'Platform'. Such a paper exists because the busmen's union top brass cannot do their job. The busmen are sprawled all over London. It is contemptible that they should have to turn to the Tory press to find out what is happening a mile away and that the only way of discussion outside their own empty union room is that same Tory press. The blame lies four square on the shoulders of the official union.

Every agreement must be posted permanently in its entirety for every man to consult at any time. If an organization such as the LTB claims to live by the book then the whole of that agreement, local and metropolitan, must be on permanent display. What chance does a new man or an unwordly man stand when at five o'clock in the morning he is told by a cynical official that his change of job is 'in order'. In theory, if not in fact, he has a redress for like in the Army he is told to carry on and complain afterwards, but like in the Army complaints from the lower ranks are considered in bad taste.

Every garage should be built on the Scandinavian pattern with every facility for the staff for bathing, changing their clothes and idling away an hour or so.

No job within London Transport from the highest down should carry any wage that was more than double the ordinary rank and file wage. If it is argued that men with special qualifications will not work for that pay then hire them by the month for a particular job and then let them go.

There is not one single piece of administration within London Transport that could not be filled by a competent and confident clerk.

There must be a complete tie up with the Underground system with a single easily interchangeable staff. Fares on both Underground and buses could be abolished. The whole running costs should be paid for not by the local authorities but by the whole of London. The conductor should fulfill the function of a guard. Without fares huge standee buses should be the norm on all busy routes. The travelling public could board and leave each bus quickly and without hindrance. The gates of the Underground should be thrown open so that working people can pour in and out with each train. The whole set-up of cash and carry with its army of officials, inspectors and clerks would be surplus. Cleaning and maintenance should be turned over to the local council. Each London borough would have to supply and maintain its quota of buses and each bus would be clearly marked as the property of the particular borough.

There is no other answer to the problem of London's dying transport than to flood the streets with buses, to bar the motorist from the town's busy streets and to win back the Londoner's affection that it is said he once had for the shining red buses than by a system of social ownership, the abolition of the archaic fare-paying system and a worker-controlled, worker-operated transport, answerable to the people through their local council, for our welfare is their welfare.

There is an old saying among busmen that 'you're one of nature's gentlemen at one stop and the biggest bastard on earth at the next'. With a socialized bus service answerable to the people of London, we could in time all be nature's gentlemen, not for a single stop but for the entire route.

THE LONDON BUS STORY

BY BOB POTTER

No section of British workers has suffered such a deterioration of relative wage standards and, more important, of conditions of work during the past thirty years as have the transport workers: the London busmen in particular. In 1939 the London busmen stood number 2 in the index of industrial wage rates; by March 1963 he occupied the 57th position.*

Most of this deterioration took place during the war. Between October 1938 and October 1948 the price index increased by 80%.** During the same period the wages of 'all workers' increased by 120%, but the wages of Central Bus Drivers only increased by 49%.*** As far as this particular category was concerned there was therefore, during this period, not only a relative but an absolute deterioration of living standards.

It is no surprise therefore that with the possible exception of the dockers, no section of workers has created so many headaches for the bureaucrats of the TGWU as the London busmen.

The real tragedy underlying the fate of the busmen is that they have so far failed to find a method of struggle outside of the traditional trade union framework. There has been no movement akin to the shop stewards, now deeply embedded in industry nationally. Consequently the history of the busmen's struggles for better pay, against the speed-up, for shorter hours, etc, have lacked the individual participation so necessary for success. The busmen have spent the last forty years banging their heads against a brick wall.

Prior to 1920 the London busmen had their own small union. The autonomy and militancy of this organization secured for its members very favourable rates of pay and greatly envied conditions of work. To become a busman an applicant often had to wait six months or more. It was therefore understandable that dissatisfaction soon followed their union's absorption into the TGWU in 1920.

* In 1939 a London bus driver's basic wage was £4.10.0 a week; by March 1963 it was £11.16.6. In 1939 the tube-driver also got £4.10.0. In March 1963 he was getting £14.10.0. - £2.13.6 a week more than his colleague on the buses.

** 'National Income and Expenditure in the UK 1946 to 1948' - Cmd 7649 of 1949.

*** 'Labour Relations in London Transport', by H.A. Clegg, Blackwell (1950), p. 95.

London's bus transport was then carried on by a number of companies, the most important of which was the General Omnibus Company. For administrative purposes the Company was subdivided into no less than fifteen districts, and the union structure mirrored the Company organization. The members in each district elected delegates to the Central Area Bus Committee.

THE NATIONAL MINORITY MOVEMENT
AND THE RANK-AND-FILE MOVEMENT

The frustration engendered by the inability of the busmen to build a genuine shop organization, made many militants susceptible to Communist Party propaganda. This was an equivocal influence. It argued

for 'revolutionary' activity, but at the same time tied the busmen to traditional methods of struggle and to support, in practice, for the T.U. bureaucrats.

In 1924 the CP launched the National Minority Movement. Its task was 'to make the unity of the trade union movement a real one, to build up the shop and local organization which should be able to control from below...'* The London bus sections were the objective of intensive Party work, which met with considerable success. In fact, however, the Minority Movement was never more than a ginger group, seeing its function as one of 'bringing pressure' to bear on various trade union leaders.** It was a virtually defunct National Minority Movement that was eventually 'proscribed' by the TUC - defunct due to the reformism of the CP leadership, its perpetual kow-towing to the official union leaders, and the recognition of this by its members.

The year 1932 saw an upsurge of rank-and-file militancy directed against official union leaderships and in particular the inability of the unions either to improve conditions or even to protect the livelihood of their members (see p.17). These circumstances gave birth to the Rank-and-File Movement, a movement originally based on the traditions of industrial unionism and syndicalism. Unlike the Minority Movement, the Rank-and-File Movement was built on the support of trade union branches and shop stewards' organizations. It had no individual members.

One of the most influential trade union committees to affiliate to the Rank-and-File Movement was the Central London Area Bus Committee, which soon was to come under the influence of the London Busmen's Rank-and-File Movement.

* Ralph Fox: 'The Class struggle in Britain 1914-1923', p. 82.

** '...the Minority Movement must be strong enough inside the unions not only to make leaders, but also to break them, if and when they reject the policy upon which they were elected.', Wal Hannington: 'What's Wrong in the Engineering Industry?', (National Minority Movement 1927).

The journal of the Busmen's Rank-and-File Movement during this period was the extremely popular 'Busman's Punch'. Formed in 1932 by the Holloway Depot Communist Group, it was taken over by the movement itself after the seventh issue. At first a lively rank-and-file journal, which published widely divergent points of view * the paper later became more and more an overt CP journal, thus paving the way to its own extinction.

At this time there was a genuine deep-rooted feeling among busmen to form their 'own' union - a demand rejected vigorously in the initial statement of the Rank-and-File Movement, on October 5, 1932.

The Rank-and-File Movement undoubtedly obtained wide support from the busmen. By 1937, 31 of the 50 London bus branches had affiliated to it. With only one exception, all members of the Central Area Bus Committee supported it. This does not mean however that the CP had this proportion of support in the rank and file.

Such was the nominal power of the CP. Yet its role was to be the same as that of the Party in 1958: a determined policy of preventing the workers from genuinely struggling against the employer.

CORONATION STRIKE

The activities of the London Busmen's Rank and File Movement culminated in the Coronation Strike of May 1937. Officially the dispute was for shorter working hours and against the grouping of schedules. ** The coronation strike was thus essentially on conditions of work. It was summed up in the slogan 'THE RIGHT TO LIVE A LITTLE LONGER'. The Rank-and-File Movement published a pamphlet under this heading, the sales of which reached fantastic proportions.

Ernie Bevin, then secretary of the TCGWU, was opposed to strike action, and strongly advocated further negotiations with what had become the London Passenger Transport Board. But the mass feeling of the busmen, and the determination of the Central Area Bus Committee carried things out of Bevin's control.

In many respects 1937 was the forerunner of 1958. Bevin, like Cousins later, had been forced to give verbal backing. He refused to bring the trams out in support - and saw the possibility of smashing the Rank-and-File Movement by an industrial defeat. The Rank-and-File Movement made no direct appeal to the tram men or to the tube men to defy their leadership and come out in solidarity. They thereby doomed themselves. When on May 16, 1937, the TCGWU Executive called off the battle, the men returned to work

* Issue No.7 for instance (May 1933) carried an article entitled 'Against Permanent Officials' which stated: 'If you lay down these two rules - 1) limited time of office; 2) wages not to exceed those of the men they represent, then you would eliminate the parasite, place-seeking official.'

** This is still a frequent issue of dispute: by grouping schedules the employer is able to greatly intensify work.

thoroughly demoralised, while Bevin entered into negotiations with the LPTB through the Ministry of Labour.

In spite of their 'revolutionary' appeals, the Rank-and-File leaders and The Busman's Punch were now exposed as being nothing more than a safety valve. In practice they had defended the TGWU bureaucrats. But Bevin lacked gratitude. He 'deliberately allowed the Central Bus Committee to take over control of the running of the strike, gambling on his belief that the men in power in the Committee would over-reach themselves, put forward demands incapable of acceptance, and by revealing the bankruptcy of their leadership would destroy their chance to undermine union discipline in the future.' *

The bankruptcy of the Rank-and-File Committee, its failure to attempt to build a genuine revolutionary base (rather than a recruiting ground for the Party) led to the defeat of the strike. It also led to the virtual destruction of the Rank-and-File Movement.

THE END OF THE RANK-AND-FILE
MOVEMENT AND THE BREAK-AWAY UNION.

Bevin wasted no time in reaping the fruits of his 'victory'. The Biennial Conference of the Union carried a lengthy resolution, sponsored by the Executive, which declared an end to the Rank-and-File Movement within

the Union, disciplinary action against its supporters, no branch to affiliate to the Rank-and-File Movement and the banning of any unofficial journal. The machinery of the Central London Area Bus Committee was suspended. Eight strike leaders were either expelled from the union or suspended from holding office.

All this was accepted by the CP. The Busman's Punch was closed down. Two of the expelled communists, Bert Papworth and Bill Jones, re-joined the union after giving written assurances that they would abide by the new constitution. ** The three leading non-communists figures of the Rank-and-File Movement, bewildered and frustrated, joined W.J. Brown to form a break-away union. At the Communist Party Congress in May 1937, J.R. Campbell openly called for co-operation with the trade union bureaucrats: 'We insist that the trade union leaders stop fighting their own militants and start mobilising the working class to storm the Bastille of unorganized labour..... Our demand is for the calling of a conference of trade union executives. A growing number of comrades are being elected to trade union executives and to paid official positions.'

* 'Ernest Bevin', by Francis William, p. 115.

** Bill Jones is still regarded by many as the leading busman's militant. His determination to retain his popularity with the official leadership was clearly shown in 1958. I was then editing an unofficial journal, the 'Battersea Garage Bulletin'. The Bulletin had published an attack on Cousins which implied that Bill Jones perhaps held the same views. Jones hastened to send Cousins a 'personal letter', of which he sent me a copy. The letter read: 'On the contrary, without any wish for medals or approbation, I have at all times, at all levels, everywhere, expressed my general support for your policy and leadership of the union.'

A break-away union, the National Passenger Workers' Union, was launched on February 25, 1938 by a section of the Central London Area Bus Committee. W.J. Brown, general secretary of the Civil Service Clerical Association (!)* became its honorary president. Its membership never exceeded 3,000 (the union itself claimed 8,000). It carried on for eight years, but offered no solution to the busmen apart from anti-communism - hardly appropriate, since the Party's policy was by now clearly exposed to the majority of busmen.

Its main activities were litigations for 'recognition'. This was refused, following an appeal to the House of Lords by the LPTB. The TGWU of course supported the ruling of the Noble Peers. In 1946 the LPTB signed an agreement with the TGWU to the effect that as from August 31, 1946, only members of Deakin's union would be employed on the buses. 176 members of the break-away union were sacked. From that date London Transport could proudly and correctly claim 100% trade unionism.

DEAKIN AND COUSINS

Deakin had put the finishing touches to a policy which saw the union as a means of controlling the members for the employer. This he made clear when he 'justified' his suppression of the break-away union and his imposition on the busmen of compulsory membership of his own organization:

'The trade Unions are..... anxious..... to maintain the fullest personal liberty of the individual. This, however, does not mean licence to those people who for some selfish motive..... seek to destroy organizations already in existence and, above all, that joint negotiating machinery which has served this country so well during the war years.'

September 13, 1946.

For Arthur Deakin and his fellow bureaucrats the 'joint negotiating machinery' may have 'served well'. For London busmen, this was a dubious point. Between October 1938 and October 1946 the average weekly earnings of workers as a whole increased by 90%. During the same period average earnings of transport workers increased by 68%. The earnings of London busmen went up by only 35%. **

Consequently the London Transport Board was faced with an enormous staff shortage and high staff turnover. The Board's answer to its problem was (and still is) a determined speed-up and intensification of work. The union bureaucracy cooperated fully with the now (1948) nationalized London Transport Executive. It refused to endorse any actions taken by the busmen in defence of their conditions of work. ALL DISPUTES IN THE PERIOD OF THE PERIOD OF THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT WERE UNOFFICIAL. MORE THAN 80% OF THEM WERE OVER SCHEDULES AND SPEED-UP, IN SPITE OF THE LOW EARNINGS OF THE BUS WORKERS.

* Later an associate of Edward Martell and the People's League for the Defence of Freedom.

** Ministry of Labour Gazette, April 1947, p. 106.

This was the period of McCarthyism in the TGWU, culminating in the 1948 Scarborough Resolution which banned Communists from holding office.

The death of Arthur Deakin brought a sigh of relief to the membership of the TGWU. His successor, Frank Cousins, had built up a reputation of being progressive - a reputation deliberately fostered by Communist Party propaganda. The CP militants hoped (and still hope) that by 'collaborating' with Cousins they would win his support for a removal of the 'Black Circular'.

The nauseating praises of Cousins reached their climax in 1958, the year of the first official strike since 1937. During the strike, while Cousins and his fellow-bureaucrats were doing all in their power to keep the busmen isolated, Tess Gorringer (a woman conductor, member of the London District CP) addressed a meeting in Trafalgar Square. She praised Frank Cousins as 'the greatest leader our union has ever had'. For fifteen minutes she spoke on one theme: the great Cousins.

Conditions during the 1950's had gone from bad to worse. The effective working day had increased from 7 hours 20 minutes to 8 hours fifteen minutes. Short journey workings had built up the time that could be spent on the bus to a maximum. The number of passengers carried in a duty had more than doubled. Bus services had been slashed to an unbelievable extent. YET THE 1958 OFFICIAL STRIKE WAS PRIMARILY ON THE ISSUE OF A WAGE INCREASE.

THE 1958 STRIKE

From the beginning Cousins had opposed the strike, but had been over-ruled by the Central Bus Committee. His attitude was similar to that of Bevin, 21 years before. Unable to resist the pressure from below for some sort of action, he decided to 'support' the strike - while doing everything possible to see it defeated. No attempt was made to enlist the support of the tube-men. Like the tram men in 1937 they scabbed on the busmen. The London Executive of the NUR wished to pull out their members. At Cousins' request Greene instructed them to stay at work. And once again the London busmen had no rank-and-file organization that could make a direct appeal to fellow transport workers. Completely isolated the busmen suffered defeat. Again they returned to work, thoroughly demoralised.

1958 demonstrated one thing very clearly: the solidarity and determination of the busmen. The men demanded an all-round basic wage increase for the London men, Country services, garage staff, etc. The LTE offered the London men 8/6d. a week, but nothing for the Country men. Early in the negotiations Cousins asked that the 8/6d. offered be shared out, so that all workers received 6/6d. The LTE refused.

So, in effect, for seven weeks, the majority of London busmen struck, not for themselves, but on behalf of their Country brothers. Had the LTE accepted the suggestion put to them by Cousins it would not have cost them a penny more. Not only did all this demonstrate the solidarity of the workers - it demonstrated the determination of the LTE to divide one section

from the other. This policy of differentiated wage increases has since been further pushed by the LTE, with the agreement of the union - not only between London and Country men, but also between drivers and conductors.

CONDITIONS OF WORK

The conditions under which the busmen work would never be tolerated in any other industry. The bus job is one where there are as many shifts as there are buses on the road. The hours could not be more irregular - early hours of the morning one week, working until after midnight the next. And while at work, the conductor must push and shove between standing passengers, carrying a heavy ticket machine (and at the end of a duty it seems to weigh a ton!), calculating change from £1 notes, and at the same time responsible to the law for the lives of up to sixty people. The driver must weave and twist through traffic, changing traffic lanes frequently to pull into a bus stop, stopping and starting, subject to a ringing bell that turns him into a modern version of Pavlov's dog.

The average member of the travelling public has no conception of the extent of the speed-up that has been enforced on London busmen. Every year the schedules are tighter: buses must travel faster; there are less buses on the road. * To give an example of the intensity of work in Central London, take Route 31, on which I was employed as a conductor for 4 years.

The route is from Chelsea to Camden Town, a distance of 8 miles. There are 43 stops, 26 of which are compulsory. The maximum running time is 44 minutes. That is just one minute from one stop to the next, load and unload. On the same route there are exactly 20 sets of traffic lights - get caught at half of them, and 10 minutes have to be made up somehow.**

* During the past eleven years the number of drivers and conductors has declined by more than 17,000. One bus in every 4 has disappeared from the streets. Yet revenue received continues to increase. In 1961 revenue increased by £2,558,000 over 1960, and in 1962 it increased by £1,848,000 over 1961. During these two years the busmen received a 6/6d. pay increase, an annual cost of £676,000. Those who still believe that fares rise because of wage increases, please note: for every additional £1 of increased fares, the bus crews received 2/-.

** This is no exceptional route, as these figures show:

Route	No. of stops		No. of traffic lights	Running time (in minutes)
	Compulsory	Request		
49	38	30	26	71
72	36	35	18	77
77	25	29	23	58
155	20	21	20	50
157	33	36	11	69

As would be expected, this speed-up means danger on the roads. While employed at Battersea Garage I arranged for a survey to be made by colleagues on the inside staff. Out of a total of 80 buses in the garage we found that, in two months, there were no fewer than 66 accidents requiring some kind of repair to the vehicle. On average, each bus was involved in an accident once every three months. This suggests that once every eleven minutes, from 6 a.m. to midnight, day in, day out, a London bus is involved in an accident bad enough to damage it.

The extensive overtime working (1,000 of the 7,000 buses on the London streets are normally running on an overtime basis) means that drivers are often over-tired, and a danger to themselves and to the public at large.*

The past years have seen an enormous increase of plain-clothes 'spots' travelling about, spying on the conductor to see he collects all fares, doesn't steal, etc. The recent installation of BESI (Bus Electronic Scanning Indicator), the 'robot watcher', has greatly improved the LTB's ability to keep a permanent check on the buses. The theory is that with a BESI at every street corner each individual bus can be controlled from 55 Broadway.

It is against this background that 90,000 busmen have quit their jobs in the past 11 years. The average length of service of a new recruit is now 12 weeks.

PACKAGE DEAL

In spite of the low rates of pay, conditions of work are still the main problem facing the busman. That this is recognized by the busmen was shown by their rejection of the LTE's 'package deal', in

November 1962.

In return for a pay increase of 9/2d., the Transport bosses asked the union to agree to:

- the introduction of 64-seater Routemaster buses, and later a 'super' Routemaster carrying 72 passengers, in the ratio of 10 new buses to 11 old buses.
- the extension of OMO (one-man operation) buses to more central routes.
- an increase in the bus speed from 30 m.p.h. to 40 m.p.h. on suburban roads.
- the introduction of a 'standee' bus (a huge single-deck vehicle taking 35 seated passengers and 35 standing).

* For example, the recent overtime ban at Merton garage has meant that out of 307 duties (Monday to Friday), 40 have been cut, and out of 161 duties (Sundays), 19 have been cut. (one duty is on average equivalent to two complete round journeys by a bus).

As recently as February 1963, London Transport, in an effort to persuade busmen to accept a 'package deal', offered to pay bus drivers a 'scarcity bonus' of 2/- per week for the years 1963, 1964 and 1965. Far from wishing to recruit sufficient staff to operate the services, they are, in fact, budgeting for a permanent staff shortage.

The scheme would have meant at least a 5% cut in services and a much greater intensity of work. So far as the busmen were concerned the major issue wasn't cash - it was conditions. The industry has now reached the stage where overtime and rest-day working are so excessive that money alone fails to attract.

THE NEED FOR NEW METHODS
OF STRUGGLE

Such is the background to the deterioration in the working conditions of London busmen. The recent overtime ban was against the further speed-up implied in the latest revised schedules. It seems fantastic that there is no deep-rooted organized resistance to the employer as in other industries.

I think the main reason for this is the nature of the job itself. Unlike the factory worker, the busman spends most of his working time in isolation. Apart from four or five minutes at the terminus, even the driver and the conductor are working individually.

The job tends, if anything, to drive the workers away from one another rather than towards cooperation. By running ahead of time, one crew can avoid a great number of passengers - and Jack on the bus behind must carry them together with his own quota.

I am not attacking my own class. I am describing reality as it really is. The attitude of 'pass the burden onto the bloke behind' probably applies to a good 30% of busmen. By falling for this philosophy they are, of course, playing the bosses' game. They are encouraging disunity between busmen, while at the same time aggravating relations with the workers who travel on the vehicle.

Even in the 'traditional' sense there are many forms of struggle that have never been fully tried. The work-to-rule immediately springs to mind. All new employees are issued with a little blue book. As any busman will tell you, if the rules were strictly adhered to, the result would be total chaos. For example, the conductor must be on the platform at every stop. The powers that be know quite well that if this were done it would be impossible for the conductor to collect all fares without delaying the vehicle. Indeed the bosses want the rule to be broken, but it exists as a 'safeguard' for the employer. IF the conductor 'rings off' from the top deck, or from inside the lower deck, and IF there is a boarding accident, then the CONDUCTOR IS LIABLE - for ignoring the regulations.

A genuine work-to-rule would expose the complete separation of management from reality. But from a practical point of view this type of action is difficult.* The busmen would greatly increase their own volume of work. However, it must be admitted that a minority could quite effectively create havoc with the services.

* Readers will, no doubt, have noticed how during the recent overtime ban, many crews tended to speed-up, and so, in part, lessened the effect of the ban.

INVOLVING THE PASSENGER

It is important that the struggle should be clearly directed against the management and not the passenger. Successful action of this kind was taken by Paris Metro (tube) workers in May 1962, who operated services normally but refused to collect fares. After 24 hours the management capitulated.

It may be argued that such action would probably lead to a lock-out by the employers. Even if this happened the passenger could clearly see that it was the management, and not the busman, who was depriving him of his transport. A refusal to collect fares could not, however, be countered by a lock-out if it was operated suddenly, without notice, and for limited periods only. This again emphasises the need for a form of organization analogous to the shop stewards committees.

Probably no section of workers has such possibilities as the London busmen for involving large sections of the general public in their struggle. The passenger immediately suffers hardship when services are out. He can see with his own eyes the conditions of work of the busman. He may not know the details of the speed-up, rates of pay, overtime, etc., but if told these facts he can at once verify them from his own experience as a passenger. A struggle at a power station, at Dagenham, or in the pits can never be fully comprehended by outsiders. The busman's conditions of work and the reasons for his struggle could be.

The busmen have the opportunity of publicising their case to every bus passenger in London. The sight of inspectors leaping onto buses and searching passengers for subversive leaflets and posters distributed or fly-posted by conductors would not only be highly amusing: it would in itself emphasize to the passengers the political realities of the busmen's struggle.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of the London busmen is the history of struggles without direction. Thoroughly disillusioned in traditional trade unionism the London busmen have failed to create a socialist alternative: *local organizations based on the job itself, direct democracy and direct confrontation with the management.

This is a problem that busmen must solve for themselves. Only they can create an effective organization that could today assist them in their struggles and tomorrow help them to manage their own industry. Until this is done the job will continue to deteriorate, the services will get worse, workers will continue to leave in disgust, and London Transport will continue to solve its problems at the expense of both busman and passenger.

* See for example the leaflet produced early in 1963 by 41 bus branches of the TGWU. After providing the public with a mass of factual information, the writers could only suggest: 'Write a letter to the Chairman of the London Transport Board'. It is worth noting that the same 'militants' have been demanding a 'public enquiry' into the industry. We saw the results of this enquiry a few weeks ago - the busmen were offered a pay increase equivalent to that offered by the LTB as an interim settlement (what awards aren't interim?). Needless to say the 'leaders' had no alternative but to recommend acceptance of the 'findings'. You can hardly 'fight' for an enquiry and then refuse to accept its recommendations!

RULES FOR CONDUCTORS

OR

SEEN AN OCTOPUS LATELY?

'Conductors must at all times carry out their duties with due regard to their main obligations (69); notify their drivers promptly if a tyre shows signs of deflation (74 d ii) or if any unusual noise or rattle is heard (74 d i); take precautions against accepting counterfeit, foreign obsolete or mutilated coins or notes (90); wear their uniform, cap and licence badges at all times when on duty (17); endeavour with courtesy to persuade a passenger refusing to pay his fare on demand to do so, explaining the relevant provisions of the Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations (95); give hand signals in good time particularly to drivers of vehicles which may be following when the bus is about to be stopped and to overtaking cycles or box cycles on the near side when the bus is about to pull in or turn to the left (74 a); ensure the cleanliness and attend to the ventilation of their buses whilst in service (73); ensure that they are supplied with proper cash total sheets auxiliary way bills, counterfoil envelopes, bus time cards, log cards or sheets, sufficient tickets and before leaving the office that the quantity of tickets and the number of the punch or ticket-issuing machine are entered correctly (70); not take meals or refreshments when the bus is on a journey or at a terminus if their duties would thereby be interfered with or the bus delayed (19); see that no passengers others than Authorised Officials of London Transport stand on the platform (82); politely inform passengers who intend to board in excess of the number authorised that

that the bus is full (81); in the case of contact with smallpox not report for duty until disinfection of the house is completed (44); familiarise themselves generally with the principal places of interest on or near the route upon which they are working (88); not take hold of passengers as this sometimes give offence (80); in the event of a ticket being punched which is not required the conductor must withdraw the ticket issued in error, see that the passenger is provided with a correct ticket, make an appropriate cash adjustment, hand in the withdrawn ticket with the ticket box, together with a report of the mistake and the name and address of the passenger concerned (93); At the end of their day's work conductors must examine the notice boards to see whether any new notices have been posted since they started work (106 f); Etc.; Etc.; Etc.

read SOLIDARITY

The paper for the rank-and-file militant. A new angle on the industrial struggle. The anti-bomb movement - from the inside. Stories, songs, cartoons..... There's nothing quite like it (thank God!).

Don't leave it to the chance encounter. Take out a sub. now 9/- for 12 issues (post free) from: Bob Potter, 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1.

Also 'SOLIDARITY' PAMPHLETS

- No.6. The Meaning of Socialism 10d.
- No.7. The Workers' Opposition 2/5
- No.10. The 100 versus the State 8d.
- No.11. Socialism or Barbarism 10d.
- No.14. Resistance Shall Grow 8d.
- No.15. The RSGs 1919-1963 10d.

All prices include postage