

SOLIDARITY

FOR WORKERS' POWER

Volume 2 Number 8

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A POWER IN THE LAND

The power work-to-rule lasted from January 1 to January 20. At the onset 16 stations were affected, mainly in London. Within a few days, workers at other stations held mass meetings and decided to join. By January 4, 36 stations, generating 12,000 megawatts, were affected. By January 12, the dispute had spread to 52 stations, generating 17,000 megawatts, as well as to many distribution centres. By the end of the dispute some 70 of the largest of Britain's 233 stations were involved, with a capacity of nearly 2/3 of the country's 29,000 megawatts potential.

The key London stations showed the way in terms of methods used. Towards the end of the dispute the Electricity Council issued a list of 13 stations, mainly in the London area, that 'were acting in a disloyal manner'.

The union leaders viciously attacked the men. Even the 'militant' ETU issued a letter denouncing the 'unofficial' movement and instructing its members to dissociate themselves from it. In Portsmouth, NUGMW officials actively encouraged their members at a station not observing the work-to-rule to scab up to sixteen hours a day.

It is not the job of 'Solidarity' to carry coals to Newcastle. But we feel there are one or two important points to be made. Recent struggles in the power industry have shown beyond all doubt that workers must rely on themselves alone to solve their problems and fight their battles. The time (if it ever existed) for calling for tinkering reforms to the negotiating procedure - or for long and fruitless struggles 'to make the unions more democratic' is past. Even when the 'left' was in control of the ETU, it behaved in a fundamentally similar manner. There is no need to go through the whole experience again.

What is needed is for militants to direct their efforts into building up the organization and the ideas which, despite limitations, are most likely to be in their interests: the organization of the shop stewards' movement and the idea of independent activity. They must prepare for the next round. They must build up their strength where they already have support and campaign to extend that support to a much wider geographical area. The production of leaflets directed at the weaker brethren in the industry - and even at workers in other industries - frankly explaining the position of the power workers is essential. Information should be spread about the methods already used as well as propaganda for more developed forms of action.

The problems faced in the Electrical Supply Industry in relation to the trade union leaderships are common to ALL areas of industry. In the Supply Industry they only happen to be more acute and therefore the workers' organization has developed furthest. The solutions found and the lessons learnt can be an object lesson - for good or ill - for all other workers.

THE SHOP STEWARDS MOVEMENT IN THE POWER INDUSTRY

The recent work to rule and overtime ban by the power workers was the most effective action by an unofficial movement which has been seen in recent years.

The alarm of both employers and labour leaders was shown by the almost unprecedented witch-hunt launched by the press. Some of the Daily Mirror articles were in effect an incitement to violence against Charlie Doyle, one of the leading members of the shop stewards organization. As for the Daily Herald, the management at Battersea Power Station thought so highly of their condemnation of the work-to-rule that they had enlarged copies of the front page posted up on all notice boards. The Labour Party spokesman Ray Gunter condemned the power workers' action and appealed to them 'not to harm the public'.

The fact that a mere ban on overtime should have such an effect shows how inadequate basic wages are. Constant overtime has become the rule in the industry; the 42-hour week exists only in theory.

The failure of the unions to protect their members' interests led to the formation of the unofficial shop stewards movement. There are several reasons why the power workers have the only shop stewards organization in Britain to cover an entire industry.

As the industry is nationalised there is only one employer. Power stations are linked by a national grid: if there is a strike at a particular station, power can be supplied

from elsewhere, so the effect of purely local action is limited. There are 5 major unions catering for the industry. Even more important, the power workers are a small minority in all but one of these unions (even the Engineers & Firemen is a section of the giant TGWU). The power workers cannot hope to determine the policy of their own unions. Participation in branch activity is generally low. The need for a rank-and-file organization democratically controlled from below and uniting all the workers in the industry has become obvious to the workers themselves.

It is to the shop stewards that credit is due for whatever success the workers have had in maintaining their living standards. Whenever there is a wage claim, the shop stewards National Committee organizes lobbies and threatens strike action or work to rule. Both management and union leaders know that they must make some concessions in order to placate the shop stewards.

Naturally, the union leaders resent the existence of the unofficial movement. At the end of 1960, after pressure from the shop stewards National Committee had forced a wage increase, the AEU Executive forced George Wake to resign as secretary of the National Committee by threats of disciplinary action. On November 14, 1960, management and unions announced plans which would provide for 'workers consultation at all levels'. Frank Foulkes 'communist' President of the ETU, and Chairman of the Trade Union side of the National Joint Industrial Council, stated, referring to the

The National Committee therefore never knows if its calls to action will be supported. A real rank-and-file paper could counteract the tendency for interest to slacken once a settlement has been reached. During the recent dispute there was almost no exchange of information about their respective problems, or dissemination of news about the work-to-rule between the various stations. Because of this the work-to-rule varied from place to place from a simple overtime ban to a virtually total stoppage.

A settlement such as the one just reached could either lead to demoralisation or to demands for the establishment of an independent power workers' organization. The only way forward for the shop stewards movement is to rid itself of illusions about the impartiality of management, to understand the real nature of the union bureaucracies, and to build up its own, independent strength.

JOHN SULLIVAN

JOHN SULLIVAN, an active member of the AEU, knows the power industry well. He has worked at both Battersea and Stonebridge Park power stations.

WORKERS POWER...

A STUDY OF THE WORK TO RULE IN THE POWER INDUSTRY

The recommendations on work to rule issued by the Power Workers National Shop Stewards Committee were:

- 1) No overtime
- 2) No operation of plant in an unsafe condition
- 3) No upgrading, downgrading, transference or interchangeability
- 4) No new entrants during the period of the ban
- 5) Each employee will carry out his normal assigned duties in a careful and responsible manner during his normal 42 regular established working hours - but beyond that he will not cooperate.

National Power Workers Shop Stewards movement, that 'unofficial bodies are not in the best interests of the industry' (November 14, 1960). The shop stewards National Committee welcomed the proposed improvements in the consultation machinery and 'dissolved' themselves, much to the disgust of non-C.P. militants at Brimsdown and elsewhere.

This action was due partly to illusions about the new proposals, but mainly to the hope by C.P. members that a compromise could be reached with the right-wing in the fight then going on in the ETU. The proposed changes in the machinery did not take place (they had never been seriously intended anyway). In August 1961 when the next wage claim was pending, the National Committee resurrected itself. Its suspension of activity in the intervening period resulted in many shop stewards committees becoming disgusted, and refusing to affiliate.

There is a great contrast between the militancy of the shop stewards and the reformist tone of their paper, The Powerworker. In their programme (Powerworker No. 1, February 1961) the whole emphasis is on reform of the negotiating machinery. The shop stewards National Committee declares that its task is to make up for the inadequacies of this machinery. They stress that they 'do not wish to usurp the functions of the union' and declared that they would unite with all militant and progressive leaders to achieve their aims. Except for their call for the abolition of compulsory arbitration, most of their demands could be granted without really benefiting the workers.

While the workers have never been more militant, no basic challenge is made to the idea that it is

correct to collaborate with the management. The 'left' has contributed to this confusion in the shop stewards movement and among militant workers. The 'left' makes no basic criticism of capitalist ideas; it deplores particular facets of the system (the slowness or inadequacy of the negotiating machinery, etc.). Even if its recommendations were integrally put into effect it would not result in ordinary workers having any more control over their own lives.

What part have the unions played in the power workers' struggles? It is misleading to say that they have 'sold out' as many marxists or even some anarchists do. It is not a case of leaders 'betraying'. The unions, including those which are C.P. led, have signed agreements which commit them to collaborate with management. The whole negotiating machinery was drawn up in collaboration with the unions. It was signed by Frank Foulkes. It is this, not individual betrayals, which accounts for the impotence of the unions.

The union leaders have accepted a settlement which gives some men less than they were originally offered! The union leaders are so completely tied in with the employers that even when they were in a position to insist on the full demand they did not do so. The shop stewards demonstrated their ability to mobilise the workers, but unless they are prepared to go beyond being a mere pressure group, unless they are prepared to defy the leaders and take over certain important functions previously entrusted to the unions, they cannot be successful.

The main weakness of the shop stewards movement has been that they have no regular communications with most stations. The organization only functions when there is a wage claim

The Electricity Supply industry consists of two main sections: generating (which covers power stations and is controlled by the Central Electricity Generating Board) and distribution (which covers substations, power lines, etc., and is governed by Regional Boards such as the London Electricity Board).

The methods used in operating the recent work-to-rule in these 2 sections of the industry were very different. I will try to deal with them separately.

DISTRIBUTION (WEST END DISTRICT)

The key West End district of the London Electricity Board covers the whole of the West End, Whitehall and Buckingham Palace. It has about 600 manual workers, at least 90 % of them in the ETU. It is one of the more militant distribution centres and has consistently taken action with the power station men.

Following the call for a work to rule by the Power Workers National Shop Stewards Committee, the 7-man works committee called a mass meeting of the men at Denison House, to consider what action to be taken. This meeting decided overwhelmingly to accept the recommendations of the stewards and to operate the work-to-rule and overtime ban as from midnight on Friday, January 11. The meeting also unanimously passed a strong resolution, protesting at the role of the trade union leaders. It threatened mass withholding of union contributions if their treacherous attitude continued.

The following morning the entire popular press carried front page banner headlines 'NEW POWER GO-SLOW - THREAT TO PALACE' (Daily

Express, January 9); 'WEST END BLACKOUT THREAT TO PALACE - AND THEATRES TOO' (Daily Mirror, January 9). Newspapers also mentioned that West End theatre managers were holding a special meeting to counter the blackout threat. A 'Palace spokesman' stated that Buckingham Palace was without emergency generating equipment. The New Criterion, Piccadilly, and Wyndham Theatres installed emergency generators.

THE WORK TO RULE.

The ways in which the work to rule operated in West End District were many and varied because of the multiplicity of jobs done and because of the militancy of the men doing them. In some cases it was a simple overtime ban. In others, many subtle interpretations of working rules were discovered which led to discussions with the management reminiscent of mediaeval theological disputes.

Amongst the methods used were a refusal by drivers to move or help move any material beyond the tail-board of their vehicle. In each case they would call and wait for labourers. Electricians would refuse to touch mains fuses and would insist on waiting for an Installation Inspector to remove the fuses before the job could start. The Inspector would also have to replace the fuses when the job was done. Nor would electricians or their mates do any labourer's work. This meant that every time a cooker or other appliance was moved into a house, a van driver, a couple of labourers, an electrician and his mate, and an Installation Inspector would all be needed; 6 men at least. This applied to many other jobs too.

If a job was inaccessible, the men would patiently wait until London Electricity Board step ladders were brought from the depot. They would refuse to use the householders' ladders 'since they were only insured for L.E.B. equipment'.

Instead of going straight to the job or site to which they were allocated and then 'phoning in' to the depot to say they were there, the men insisted on going to the depot first, each morning, to clock in, and return to the depot, each evening, to clock out. This meant the loss, to the L.E.B., of the travelling time to and from the depot to the job (which on average amounts to over 1/8 of the working day).

All men on temporary transfer or upgrading to chargehand, etc., returned to their permanent job. All transfers between departments were refused.

Emergency repair men who normally drive around in vans refused to use them. They claimed that they should either be driven by a driver or that they would have to go by public transport.

The men would refuse to wait in the sub-stations longer than the 2-hour statutory waiting period, even if they hadn't been relieved by this time. This meant that sub-stations would at times be left unattended and the Staff Engineers would have to be rushed to 'man them'.

When the management claimed the 'right' to demand compulsory overtime due to the 'emergency', the men would dispute that there was an 'emergency'. They were only carrying out the rules.

These and hundreds of other pin-pricks, not least 'carrying out

of duties in a careful and responsible manner' caused chaos.

POWER GENERATING.

Power generating itself is divided into operating (which mainly involves shift workers, for example turbine drivers, coal conveyor gangs, boiler room attendants, etc. - these are the men who actually run the operating equipment), and maintenance (which involves turbine, boiler and switch fitters, boilermakers, and many other trades who maintain the equipment).

The maintenance men carried out the work to rule in the normal manner. But in their case the overtime ban was particularly effective, since a high proportion of key maintenance work must be done during non-peak hours, late at night or at week ends. The men also used a number of other methods, such as refusal to use their own 'precision measuring instruments' (such as vernier gauges, micrometers, etc.). The instruments supplied by the management weren't enough to go around. There were many other wrinkles.

The operating side is the key to the whole industry. In this section the work to rule reached its most developed and effective form. Men would leave their turbines and other equipment unattended at the end of the contractual period, even if due to sickness or other reasons they had not been relieved. And of course due to the extreme cold, to the power cuts and to other factors (there was a lot of 'flu about), the sickness rate was very high.*

* The Board also has a full-pay sickness scheme!

In some cases the engineers in charge, instead of closing a turbine down when it was left unattended would tell the turbine driver to leave it running at a set speed. This can and did have very important consequences. A turbine is usually slowed or speeded up according to the load required. If the load required exceeds, by a certain factor, the output of the turbine while it is running at a set speed, the turbine automatically cuts itself out and sheds the load onto the other turbines. In conditions of maximum output this in turn overloads the other turbines. This can have a cascade effect, closing down the whole station, as each turbine cuts itself out, as it becomes overloaded. This in fact did happen. This excellent, in-built safety mechanism makes sure that equipment is not damaged by excessive loads.

Other methods used at Battersea included the refusal of the coal conveyor gangs to work with even a single man less than the prescribed quota. They also refused to accept transfers from one gang to another to make the number up after the start of a shift. The effects of these methods, which were increased by the very high sickness rate, also prevailing in Battersea, led to conveyors being put out of action. In turn this meant that coal barges took much longer to unload. Many barges were in fact sent away half full. In fact the fuel shortage at the stations became quite crucial towards the end of the work to rule.

Another effective field was the non-emptying of the massive ash bins. This is normally done during overtime. This led to a further reduction of output. Many furnaces were working at only 30 % of capacity.

I have no figures for Battersea but at the 445,000 kw. Barking station the output was reduced at times to just over 100,000 kw. The Central Electricity Generating Board itself said that in the London area alone it lost a generating capacity of 1 million kilowatts on January 17. This increased to $1\frac{1}{4}$ million kilowatts on January 18, only 2 days before the end of the work to rule. The total capacity of England and Wales is about 29 million kilowatts.

KEN WELLER.

ERNEST SHIFTWORKER

'Ernest is now more than a match for any member of the Electricity Board. He is ready to strike and if he does, the flame of anger that he and his counterparts will let loose will be sufficient to dim all other lights.'

The moral that the Board members should learn is:

If you don't want your match to strike, don't rub it too hard.'

from 'POWERWORKER'
(November 1961)

THE SETTLEMENT

At a recent mass meeting of power workers, our district (of the London Electricity Board) decided - against the wishes of the Trade Union negotiators present - to work to rule and to ban overtime. We also decided to withhold our contributions to our Trade Unions in the event of them signing an agreement without first of all consulting the workers in the industry.

These decisions stem from and symbolise the anger of our members with both the employers and with the Trade Unions. We are angry with the employers because of their reluctance to concede a long-overdue substantial increase, commensurate with the wealth and productivity of the industry. We are also angry because of the apparent disregard of the Trade Unions of the opinions and directives of their members.

Our present wage claim is a continuation of the negotiations partially concluded late in 1961. The claim was then for a £2 per week wage increase. One of the major submissions of the Trade Unions was that our pay was lagging far behind that of associated and comparable private industries. Despite the modest increase received early in 1962 we found ourselves in precisely the same position, relative to private industry, some months later.

The Trade Unions' claim for 4d. an hour was the end product of a process of watering down. The

claim had no basis or consistency with the feelings of the workers in the industry. Even if conceded in full, this claim would not have been satisfactory. But to accept 2½d. + 4/6 productivity bonus is to say the least downright treachery whether signed under extreme duress or otherwise.

The agreement signed improved upon the Board's original offer in the case of labourers by approximately 5/10d. per week; in the case of mates by approximately 4/2 per week. In the case of skilled grades, however, the agreement is less than was originally offered by the Board. The Board had offered approximately 19/2 per week, the Unions have accepted 13/3.

The time has now come for plain and blunt talking. The Trade Union officials who have negotiated on our behalf have shown over the last few years that they are completely out of touch with our wishes. They have failed to give leadership. It seems unlikely that they will ever submit settlements to us for our approval.

When organizations supposed to represent us no longer fulfil their purpose, then we must intensify our effort to strengthen and extend our own forms of organization. When T.U.s fail to give leadership, then we must elect our own, whom we can control. This to an extent has been what's happening. The shop stewards and shop stewards committees in the Districts, on the instruction of their members, have been providing leadership. Now is perhaps

the time to read the obituary over
the corpse of official 'responsible'
Trade Union leadership. Where be-
fore we attempted to bring pressure

upon the Trade Unions, we must now
develop alternative leadership to
these dead beats.

This article was written by an ETU shop steward in the power
industry, active in the London area.

CALLING ALL STAKHANOVITES SOCIALIST COMPETITION

We are pleased to offer the next six issues of 'Solidarity' for the
best continuations to the following songs:

UNITY, COMRADES, PLEASE !

(Tune: The Lincolnshire Poacher)

When King Street's little Stalinists had gone too bloody far,
I left the International and joined the U.L.R.,
I handed in my Party card - with this you will agree -
Oh, it is my plan, in the Partisan, to frat. with the bourgeoisie...

NEHRU - MAO DISPUTE

(Tune: The man who broke the bank at
Monte Carlo)

As I marched across the border with my hundred thousand troops
You could hear the joyous whoops
Of the Trots and kindred groups
Of the S.I.L. and the R.S.L.
'Keep Left' and the A.C.P. *
I'm the man who carries on the work for Trotsky.

* Albanian Communist Party, you clot!

BREAK IT UP!

Socialists are often accused of being 'utopian' if they pause for a moment from the immediate struggle to think of the society they are seeking to achieve. Yet it is surely as much out of the dreams and aspirations of ordinary people that the future will be built as out of their opposition to the society in which they at present live.

In the following article a reader tells us how he sees the towns of the future. We hope to carry further occasional material of this kind. Why not write to us and tell other readers what you think.

QUESTION: - What do you think the towns of the new society will be like?

ANSWER: - They will not be as they are now. They will not embody millions of hideous hours a year squandered in the strap-hanging, fluorescent funnelling of human cattle to and from their treadmills. They will not be choked with endless motorcars conveying the more privileged in hardly less, if different, discomfort. A discomfort temporarily abated by multi-lane motorways which tear apart such community patterns as might otherwise have survived. For the young, town-life will offer other choices than the bromide of 'mass communication' or such self-activity as the 'ton-up' saddle or the 'hold-up' gang. The enormities of our present city life - and the fatuity of 're-planning' it have been described, with varying emphasis, by many critics. So we come to the positive alternatives...

QUESTION: - But just a minute! Surely people will still want to get about, however different their work from today's work. They will want to see friends or relatives at a distance or attend gatherings for sport and other interests and so on? We are too thick upon the ground, and people are having larger families. Helicopters, perhaps? But air-space is already a problem! Weekends on the moon, perhaps?

ANSWER: - May I quote from an article published elsewhere? *

'The possibilities of the city are exhausted. They can never be revitalised again. Everything today points to the rise of a new kind of social community - one which is neither strictly urban or rural. Modern technology has opened remarkable vistas for the decentralisation of economic life. Automation, electronic communications, new techniques for reducing iron ores and rolling steel, local sources

* 'The Limits of the City' by Lewis Herber, in Contemporary Issues, No.39 (August-Sept. 1960). Contemporary Issues may be obtained from 78 Summerlee Avenue, London N.2.

of energy and many other advances in small-scale technology, suggest that a time is at hand when mass-manufacture can be integrated with quality production on a local scale, bringing the benefits of an industrial society into balance with agriculture. It is toward this end that humanity seems to have moved over the centuries: small, highly integrated, free communities of men whose social relations are blemished neither by property nor production for exchange. By reducing the community to a human scale and guiding production entirely by human needs, rationality can become a feature of social life, not merely the feature of scattered, conscious individual men.'

It is capitalism, commodity-production which inevitably causes endless expansion, congestion, and all the morbidities of the city. The socialist alternative of 'small, highly integrated communities' needs some comment.

We want to tie nobody to a village-green. The village-green and parish-pump were all too often, in a scarcity-bound and class-ridden society, the sites of crabbed and mean-minded communities. But in essence they are, and often were indeed, the home of things far richer and more real than watching 'Panorama' or 'seeing the world' by Trans-Cosmos Airways. Civilisation - meaning culture in the sense of true creative labour, art, and human relations - must be intensive rather than extensive. As the giant cities grow, they make smaller and smaller men and women, stifled as individuals in standardised thought, speech, and aspiration. Those engaged in frequent inter-continental travel report that 'seeing the world' is fast becoming a mere seeing of one's own, trivially varied, image. Only a socialist world can preserve and create cultural variety at this stage of history. Today the proles and peasants may of course still show quaint and amusing local differences. But patience - Death is not built in a day! Capital, of either Western or Eastern pole, will make one world of antibioted ants from Skye to the barracked 'communes' of Mao-Tse-Tung.

It may be that, in a society of abundance, some will venture into space-travel. But it will not be, as now, an economic and political compulsion. It will not be an ever-outward flight from the inmost thirst of our cultural desert, where escapology is called 'progress'.

The socialist goal of 'small, highly integrated communities', for which, as Herber says, the technical means now exist, does not necessarily imply self-sufficiency if they developed in a socialist world. In some cases it might, in others not. Socialist abundance implies the absence of exchange for profit. Mutual aid between federated communities will be free and unprofitable in the capitalist sense of profit.

QUESTION: - But have you faced up to the problem of the density of our population? And what about transport?

ANSWER: - The population of Britain is more and more squeezed - by capitalist industry - into the swelling conurbations. But there

are huge rural areas wherein a redistribution would give a very different picture. The question of agricultural method and occupation cannot be set forth now.

A creative life, a healthy balance between town and country, an access to green and growing things (not just in 'beauty-spots' or sports grounds or the shrubberies on dual carriageways), a hand in the husbandry of those green things when 'the monstrous division of labour', as Marx called it, will be minimised - all this means a dispersal of population which would greatly change both need and desire for constant travel.

People with roots and creative satisfactions are not forever seeking the first opportunity to dash off somewhere else, crowding, today at least, into surroundings not essentially different from those they flee from, with fellow-travellers dazed or fevered by the same inescapable neurosis.

This is not to deny mobility. It is rather to suggest a world where the automobile and the aeroplane will be means and not ends, the servants, not the dictators, of man's desire for 'going places', a desire, moreover, whose natural force and frequency cannot be assessed by its present unnatural stimulations.

BASIL DRUITT

DEFINITIONS

COMMON MAN : Mythological figure.

Also expression used by politicians to mean 'nobody'.
Ex: 'The... shall have a fair chance'; 'a better world for the...';
Plural (Commons men): obscene term in British politics.

GOD (Almighty): substance used for the furtherance of churches.
Blesses battles.

WORLD : is free. Was freed by World War II. Had been freed by World War I as well. Shall again be free, if there is anything left of it.

NICCOLO TUCCI

ALL HANDS OFF CUBA

Many readers have asked us to drop the veil of secrecy on our attitude to Cuba.

Was Castro ever a Marxist? How far have degeneration and bureaucracy set in? How many more transitional stages are there left before either socialism or the counter-revolution can be ushered in? Above all, will 'Solidarity' defend the revolution

- a) unconditionally (like the S.L.L.)
- b) critically (like the other Trots)
- c) just verbally (like the lot of them)?

We feel our contribution to the discussion is unique. This is our line on Cuba:

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THE STORY OF THE EDWARDS HIGH VACUUM CO. STRIKE

# DIRTY WORK AT CRAWLEY

## BACKGROUND

On August 9 last year the workers of Edwards High Vacuum Co., Crawley, were faced with the redundancy of 34 of their numbers, without the opportunity of any discussion with the management. The shop stewards protested and made the following requests:

1. All reductions in the labour force to be the subject of negotiations.
2. Wherever possible reductions in the over-all working hours to avoid dismissal of any individuals.
3. Where redundancy is unavoidable, maximum notice to be given and compensation paid.

The management ignored this. On August 13, again without discussion, they increased the number to be sacked from 34 to 54. The usual developments then took place. The Shop Stewards Committee registered a 'Failure to Agree'. The company fixed the date for a Works Conference after the expiry of the dismissal notices. This took place on August 28. Despite talks which lasted all day, the company refused to discuss ways and means of overcoming the problem. When the AEU District Committee received a report on this they unanimously passed the following resolution: 'Having heard the report of the officials on the Works Conference on redundancy at Edwards, and while recognizing that there is now a shortage of work in the firm, this

District Committee are of the opinion that the situation has been deliberately engineered by the management in an attempt to break up the Union organization in the works.

'We understand that our members at Edwards are giving serious consideration to the position and would draw their attention to the policy of the Union on redundancy, as expressed in various National Committee resolutions. This is one way of combating it on every possible occasion, and of insisting on work sharing as an alternative.'

The workers subsequently withdrew their labour. The strike was official. All Edwards products were declared 'black'.

In all there were 300 strikers, most of whom were AEU members. Seven other unions were involved, including the ETU, the Sheet Metal Workers and Coppersmiths. All the shop stewards were sacked. The dismissals included five local Labour councillors, one of whom was Chairman of the Council and another the Labour Party Parliamentary Candidate in the last general election. It became obvious the employers were showing scant respect for the legally elected representatives of the people.

When Edwards first moved to Crawley they obviously needed labour and did their best to persuade workers to come. It was a serious step for wor-

kers to uproot their families and leave London for the comparative isolation of Crawley. The company reassured them on a number of points including rents, these they intimated would remain fixed. The uninitiated might think that this movement of workers would give rise to a sense of social responsibility on the part of both the firm and of the Development Corporation. As it happened rents soared and the company - after taking full advantage of all the New Town had to offer - unscrupulously planned redundancy and at a time of growing unemployment, jettisoned nearly 200 of its workers. Many of these had given long service to the firm. All the shop stewards had been employed for at least ten years. As one of them said: 'our lads have made the company; we are the geese who laid the golden eggs'.

This attack on the workers took place after Edwards had become part of an international concern. This runs true to the latest methods of attack being used by the employers - management initiates a drive to sweep away established practice and destroy factory organization, by such means as the building up of stocks and the creation of redundancy.

Edwards was certainly a thorn in the flesh of the highly organized Industrial Group of Crawley. The workers were 100 per cent organized with a militant leadership. Whenever necessary they took action to protect their conditions and living standards and to prevent any back-sliding from London rates to provincial rates (the latter no doubt being the fond hope of every New Town employer). In consequence they enjoyed the highest rates in the town.

The first reason which the company gave for redundancy was that

there were insufficient orders. The validity of this was undermined by the knowledge that stocks were being built up and that far more work than necessary was being given to sub-contractors. As the strike progressed the company attempted to finalise matters by selling the machinery from the toolroom and machine shop, thus intimating new organization and lay-out. Eventually it was openly admitted that their aim was an 'open shop', and the freedom to run their own concern without interference from the workers.

## STRIKERS AND STRIKE BREAKERS

It soon became apparent that the workers were not merely waging a struggle against an isolated company but that they were facing the full force of the Employers Federation and their professional strike-breaking tactics. A Mr. J. Leask became the Industrial Relations Officer. The usual security men were dismissed and replaced by a Securicor force, complete with dogs.

Workers throughout the country should hear about men like J. Leask. The strike committee found out quite a lot about him. He was at one time the Birmingham District Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union. He then became a propagandist for Moral Rearmament. It is known that he went to America. Perhaps it was there that he learned the latest strike-breaking methods, for instance that Securicor forces can be used against workers as well as to protect money. It is also known that Mr. Leask was behind the strike-breaking at both British Light Steel Pressings at Acton and at Plesseys. When honeyed



words are spoken about studies in management being the cure for all ills, it is as well to think of the likes of Leask, all ready behind the scenes, waiting to go into action and being able to deploy their forces, like a general with unlimited reserves. Where will Mr. Leask's next port of call be? The workers will have to learn to close their ranks against such attacks, irrespective of trade union officialdom.

In addition to the Securicor force (which at least the employers had to pay for) and to management scabs (staff lured with a minimum 10 per cent bonus for loyalty), there was also a full daily complement of Sussex Constabulary. Police intimidation, as usual, was a prominent feature of the strike. The number of pickets was limited to 11 and the strikers were refused permission to march down Manor Royal, the main road of the industrial estate in which their firm was situated. The arrest of the whole strike committee was threatened if this should happen. It is significant that the police are now advertising for a large complement of specials.

As expected, the rest of the Establishment quickly fell into line. The New Town Commission made it known that any arrears of rent would meet with serious consequences. When one of the strikers was charged in the courts he was duly fined on two accounts.

The charge arose out of an incident in which a car carrying directors was driven out of the factory with little regard to the safety of the strikers who were mobilised against the removal of machinery. One man had his clothing torn by the car and could have been killed. Expressing his anger against this, the

striker in question wrenched open the door of the car and told the directors what he thought of them. He was fined £3 for using insulting language... and another £20 for damaging the director's car. Peculiar 'criminals' we get in the courts these days - men fighting for their livelihoods and others protesting against the dangers of mass extinction.

The strike at Edwards was exceptional for its high morale. Credit must go to the leadership of the strike committee which never failed to impart strength and confidence throughout this long and bitter struggle. In an attempt to express the stature achieved, one of the workers said that they all grew ten feet tall overnight. The wives of the strikers were also solidly behind their menfolk. They held a meeting giving unanimous support. Incidentally they informed the B.B.C. of this, but apparently this medium is only interested in strike-breakers, (such as the put-up job of the Fords wives).

The strike was efficiently organized in every possible way. To help their wives and families manage on their very limited incomes, the strikers organized a shop in the AEU hut, obtaining food at wholesale prices. Every effort was made to make the full facts known to the people of Crawley and to the rest of the country. In spite of considerable coverage in the local press, they took the precaution of buying a whole page of one edition and so put all the information squarely in front of every Edwards employee. News of the strike was also given in the AEU journal. One is left wondering whether the eventual sell-out will be duly reported in this publication, or whether just one more skeleton will be quietly locked away.

It would be interesting to know what steps, if any, were taken by the National Executive of the AEU to actively organize the blacking of Edwards goods. Or was the matter left as just another pious resolution, apart from what the strikers themselves achieved. They certainly tried. Big efforts were made to follow lorries containing goods for delivery. Strikers went to cafes where the transport workers were known to go and told them of the strike. Courageous efforts were also made to prevent machinery from leaving the factory.

But the strikers were up against virtually the full force of the employers organization. They urgently needed the active support of their fellow workers. Unfortunately this was not forthcoming. Admittedly there was considerable financial support. But the strikers would have been prepared to sacrifice some of that for a token stoppage of work. This alone, they said, would have been a terrific boost to the morale of the strikers. To their credit many workers were generous. Some factories, including A.P.V. the largest factory in Crawley, donated an hour's pay each week throughout.

## THE TRADITIONAL LEFT

Workers have become accustomed to wait for a lead from their officials before giving their active support in a dispute. In Crawley this lead was not coming from any quarter, in spite of the strike being 'official'. Instead there was just a big void round the strike. The truth gradually dawned that if

anything was to be done the workers would have to do it themselves.

A public meeting was held. A number of speakers gave rousing verbal support but no real solidarity action was ever seriously discussed or planned. Yet here in Crawley were workers who had proved themselves in mass action over rents, Suez and Cuba. Among the speakers at the meeting were Dick Vines, convenor of A.P.V. and John Foster, National Organizer of the AEU. Alf Pegler put the case for the strikers.

The most support that anyone expects nowadays from the Labour Party is a resolution of support. This was duly passed by the Labour U.D.C. But workers still harbour the illusion that a fighting lead can be looked for from the Unions, the Trades Council, or at least the Communist Party.

So far as the Unions are concerned the outcome of this strike speaks for itself.

The Trades Council in Crawley has now withered away to a mere half a dozen or so delegates. This is the result of a long period of the smothering tactics in which both the Right Wing and the Communists have joined hands against those militants who were prepared to make a determined drive towards 100 per cent T.U. membership and who sought to bring about really effective shop floor organization, and most of all, inter-factory solidarity. When these militants were victimised one by one, often without a struggle (and later industrially exiled) the green light was switched on for the Employers Industrial Group. They went right ahead with an all-out attack against organized labour.

It is about time that the myth was laid concerning the Communist Party giving active industrial leadership. The persistent attacks of the mass media on the Communists has helped to keep this myth alive. Although a number of individual members may be good militants, the history of the New Town has proved that the Communist Party does not believe in militant industrial action. It is concerned with capturing positions and climbing up the ladders for bureaucratic power.

Dick Vines, President of the AEU Croydon District Committee and member of the National Committee, is also the Convenor of A.P.V., the largest factory in Crawley. For some time this factory has boasted a C.P. branch. Yet apart from verbal recognition and some financial support, A.P.V. just didn't want to know about the Edwards strike. One might also have expected some fighting lead from C.P. members like Bill Kirkup, secretary of the AEU Croydon District Committee, and Claude Berbridge, AEU Executive Committee member. But they were too busy being good committee men and doing the dirty work for Carron.

Through a meagre Christmas and the bitter cold weather the strike continued solid from September to January. By this time the number of dismissals had risen to 198. These men and their families were doing their bit to the full. The more they sacrificed, the more they could see their victory in sight. What was needed - and never took place - was for the union leaderships to take the extensive and determined action necessary to counteract the vicious and sweeping, new-type offensive of the industrialists.

## UNION LEADERS TRUE TO FORM

In the 22nd week of the strike, without warning, came the death blow - official instructions from the AEU Executive that there should be a return to work. This meant that one half of the strikers would be left out in the cold. The AEU Executive took on themselves to send out instructions to all District Secretaries to lift the 'blacking' of Edwards goods. This action was taken without the knowledge of the officials and members concerned and without any prior consultation with the strike committee and the other unions involved. Furthermore it ruled out any possibility of negotiating return to work terms with the company.

In the opinion of some workers it would have been comparatively easy to arrange a token stoppage of work in the other factories at this stage, but again no leadership of this nature was given. The strikers were bitterly concerned to see all their sacrifices cast aside so lightly. In a circular to all District Secretaries they said: 'Surely this must go down as one of the most brutal betrayals of our members ever committed by any leadership'.

In spite of official instructions to return to work, not one striker crossed the picket line until they had received the recommendations of their strike committee. After being sold out by the AEU, and there being no direct action taken by the factories around them, it was understandable that this recommendation should be given a week later. Even at that the workers did not drift back in any hang dog fashion. They marched back militantly, fully resolved to elect new stewards.

Now many workers in Crawley are asking themselves questions. Why the sell-out? Where did the pressure come from? It certainly wasn't necessary so far as the strikers were concerned. Their morale was high. After such long sacrifices they were beginning to see the end in sight. Whatever insurance the Employers Federation can give their member firms, it can't go on for ever.

You saved the employers' bacon for them Mr. Carron, you all nice and bright with your 100 % smile and knighthood. You had no mealy-mouthed excuse that this strike wasn't official. You know better than anyone that given the right kind of help, workers in a self-contained town like Crawley could take action which would cripple the offensive of the employers and their Industrial Group. You know the methods which are being used to rob the workers of the last vestige of security, to turn them from human beings into an industrial commodity called mobile labour, to be used or rejected at will like any raw material. You know all about the Leasks and the sweeping methods used to create redundancy and use it against the workers. But you're all right! You and your like just don't intend to do anything about it.

Unions were created at great sacrifice to improve the lot of the workers. All union officials are paid out of workers money. If they are unable to do an honest job of work for their members it is open to any of them to resign and join the common struggle. This particularly applies to the 'left wing' and communist committee men. Many of these do at least start off with some degree of integrity towards their fellow workers.

The workers are slowly beginning to see through the whole set-up. They are beginning to realise that they are paying an endless stream of protection money and getting nothing back for it. They are beginning to see how they are being manipulated by the union leaders. Their power is regarded merely as a deterrent and they are being used as pawns in a game which they can never win. Workers must learn to cut through the rules and regulations which are designed to prevent them from helping each other, and use their power for themselves, in brotherhood and solidarity, against the dangers which threaten them all.

GRACE JACOBS.

Grace Jacobs lived in Crawley until quite recently. She played a very active role in the local Labour movement (see article on the Crawley Rent Strike in 'Agitator' vol.I, No.5). She knows personally several of those involved in the dispute we here describe. Her husband is an active member of the AEU, an ex-convenor at Napier's and an ex-member of the North London District Committee. Two years ago he was steward of the tool room at Bourner's, Crawley, where he was victimised for attempting to organize the place. The officials of Croydon District AEU did nothing to help. The family were blacklisted and forced to return to London.

# WHITE GUARDS? OR WORKERS? - 3

We here continue our translation of Ida Mett's 'La Commune de Cronstadt' begun in 'Solidarity' vol. II, no. 6. We hope eventually to bring out the whole text in pamphlet form.

March 1921 was to prove a crucial date in working class history. The various groups claiming to 'represent' the working class showed clearly on which side of the barricades they stood. The May days of 1937 (Barcelona) and October 1956 (Budapest) were other such dates.

## MASS MEETINGS

The Kronstadt Soviet was due to be renewed on March 2.

A meeting of the First and Second Battleship Sections had been planned for March 1. The notification had been published in the official journal of the city of Kronstadt. The speakers were to include Kalinin, president of the All-Russian Executive of the Soviets, and Kouzmin, political commissar to the Baltic Fleet. When Kalinin arrived he was received with music and flags. All military honours were accorded him.

Sixteen thousand people attended the meeting. Party member Vassiliev, president of the local soviet, took the chair. The delegates who had visited Petrograd the previous day gave their reports. The resolution adopted on February 28 by the crew of the battleship 'Petropavlovsk' \* was distributed. Kalinin and Kouzmin opposed the resolution. They proclaimed that 'Kronstadt did not represent the whole of Russia'.

Nevertheless the mass assembly adopted the Petropavlovsk resolution. In fact only two people voted against it: Kalinin and Kouzmin!

The mass assembly decided to send a delegation of 30 workers to Petrograd, to study the situation on the spot. It was also decided to invite delegates from Petrograd to visit Kronstadt, so that they should get to know what the sailors were really thinking. A further mass meeting was planned for the following day, grouping delegates from ships' crews, from the Red Army groups, from State institutions, from the dockyards and factories and from the trade unions to decide on the procedure of new elections to the local soviet. At the end of the meeting, Kalinin was allowed to regain Petrograd in all safety.

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\* See 'Solidarity', vol. II, No.7, p.24. From this moment on, the Petropavlovsk resolution became the political programme of the insurrection.

The following day, March 2, the delegates meeting took place in the House of Culture. According to the official Kronstadt 'Izvestia' the appointment of delegates had taken place properly. The delegates all insisted that the elections be carried out in a loyal and correct manner. Kouzmin and Vassiliev spoke first. Kouzmin stated that the Party would not relinquish power without a fight. Their speeches were so aggressive and provocative that the assembly ordered them to leave the meeting and put them under arrest. Other Party members were however allowed to speak at length during the debate.

The meeting of delegates endorsed by an overwhelming majority the Petropavlovsk resolution. It then got down to examining in detail the question of elections to the new soviet. These elections were to 'prepare the peaceful reconstruction of the Soviet regime'. The work was constantly interrupted by rumours, spreading through the assembly, to the effect that the Party was preparing to disperse the meeting by force. The situation was extremely tense.

## THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE

Because of the threatening speeches of the representatives of the State power (Kouzmin and Vassiliev) and fearing retaliation, the assembly decided to form a Provisional Revolutionary Committee to which it entrusted the administration of the town and of the fortress. The Committee held its first session aboard the 'Petropavlovsk', the battleship on which Kouzmin and Vassiliev were being detained.

The leading body of the assembly of delegates all became members of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee. They were:

- Petritchenko, chief quartermaster of the battleship 'Petropavlovsk'.
- Yakovenko, liaison telephonist to the Kronstadt section.
- Ossossov, boilerman on the battleship 'Sebastopol'.
- Arkhipov, chief engineer.
- Perepelkin, electrician on the battleship 'Sebastopol'.
- Patrouchev, chief electrician on the 'Petropavlovsk'.
- Koupolov, head male nurse.
- Verchinin, sailor on the 'Sebastopol'.
- Toukin, worker in the 'Electrotechnical' factory.
- Romanenko, docks maintenance worker.
- Orechin, headmaster of the Third Labour School.
- Valk, saw-mill worker.
- Pavlov, worker in a marine mining shop.
- Boikov, head of the building section of the Kronstadt fortress.
- Kilgast, harbour pilot.

The majority of members of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee were sailors with a long service. This contradicts the 'official' version of the Kronstadt events which seeks to attribute the leadership of the

revolt to elements having recently joined the Navy and having nothing in common with the heroic sailors of 1917-1919.

The first proclamation of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee stated: 'We are concerned to avoid bloodshed. Our aim is to create through the joint efforts of town and fortress the proper conditions for regular and honest elections to the new soviet.'

Later that day, under the leadership of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, the inhabitants of Kronstadt occupied all strategic points in the town, taking over the State establishments, the Staff Headquarters and the telephone and wireless buildings. Committees were elected in all battleships and regiments. At about 9 pm. most of the forts and most detachments of the Red Army had rallied. Delegates coming from Oranienbaum had also declared their support for the Provisional Revolutionary Committee. That same day the Izvestia printshops were occupied.

On the morrow (March 3) the men of Kronstadt published the first issue of the 'Izvestia of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee'.\* In it one read: 'The Communist Party, master of the State, has detached itself from the masses. It has shown itself incapable of getting the country out of its mess. Countless incidents have recently occurred in Petrograd and Moscow which show clearly that the Party has lost the confidence of the working masses. The Party is ignoring working class demands because it believes that these demands are the result of counter-revolutionary activity. In this the Party is making a profound mistake'.

## BOLSHEVIK SLANDERS

Meanwhile Moscow Radio was broadcasting as follows: 'Struggle against the White Guard Plot'. 'Just like other white guard insurrections, the mutiny of ex-general Kozlovsky and of the crew of battleship 'Petro-pavlovsk' has been organized by Entente spies. This is clear from the fact that the French paper 'Le Monde' published the following message from Helsingfors two weeks before the revolt of General Kozlovsky: "We are informed from Petrograd that as the result of the recent Kronstadt revolt, the Bolshevik military authorities have taken a whole series of measures to isolate the town and to prevent the soldiers and sailors of Kronstadt from entering Petrograd".

'It is therefore clear that the Kronstadt revolt is being led from Paris. The French counter-espionage is mixed up in the whole affair.

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\* The entire file of this short lived journal was reprinted as an appendix to a book 'Pravda o Kronshtadte' (The Truth About Kronstadt) published in Prague, in 1921.

History is repeating itself. The Socialist Revolutionaries, who have their headquarters in Paris, are preparing the ground for an insurrection against the Soviet power. The ground prepared, their real master, the Tsarist general, appeared. The history of Koltchak, installing his power in the wake of that of the Socialist Revolutionaries, is being repeated'. (Radio-Stanzia Moskva and Radio-Vestnik Rosta, Moscow, March 3, 1921).

The two antagonists saw the facts quite differently. Their outlooks were poles apart.

The call issued by Moscow's Radio-Stanzia was obviously coming from the Politbureau's top leaders. It had Lenin's approval, who must have been fully aware of what was happening at Kronstadt. Even assuming that he had had to rely on Zinoviev for information, whom he knew to be cowardly and liable to panic, it is difficult to believe that Lenin misunderstood the real state of affairs. On March 2 Kronstadt had sent an official delegation to see him. It would have been enough to cross-question it in order to ascertain the true situation.

Lenin, Trotsky, and the whole Party leadership knew quite well that this was no mere 'generals' revolt'. Why then invent this legend about General Kozlovsky, leader of the mutiny? The answer lies in the bolshevik outlook, an outlook at times so blind that it could not see that lies were as likely to prove nefarious as to prove helpful. The legend of General Kozlovsky opened the path for another legend: that of the Wrangel officer allegedly conspiring with Trotsky in 1928-29. It in fact opened the path to the massive lying of the whole Stalin era.

Anyway, who was this General Kozlovsky, denounced by the official radio as the leader of the insurrection? He was an artillery general and had been one of the first to defect to the Bolsheviks. He seemed devoid of any capacity as a leader. At the time of the insurrection he happened to be in command of the artillery at Kronstadt. The communist commander of the fortress had defected. Kozlovsky, according to the rules prevailing in the fortress, had to replace him. He, in fact, refused, claiming that as the fortress was now under the jurisdiction of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, the old rules no longer applied. Kozlovsky remained, it is true, in Kronstadt, but only as an artillery specialist. Moreover, after the fall of Kronstadt, in certain interviews granted to the Finnish press, Kozlovsky accused the sailors of having wasted precious time on issues other than the defence of the fortress. He explained this in terms of their reluctance to resort to bloodshed. Later, other officers of the garrison were also to accuse the sailors of military incompetence and of complete lack of confidence in their technical advisers. Kozlovsky was the only general to have been present at Kronstadt. This was enough for the Government to make use of his name.

The men of Kronstadt did, up to a point, make use of the military know-how of certain officers in the fortress at the time. Some of these officers may have given the men advice out of sheer hostility to the Bolsheviks. But in their attack on Kronstadt the Government forces were also



making use of ex-Tsarist officers. On the one side there were Kozlovsky, Salomianov and Arkannikov; on the other, ex-Tsarist officers and specialists of the Old Regime such as Toukhatchevsky, Kamenev and Avrov. On neither side were these officers and independent force.

TO BE CONTINUED.

# ABOUT *ourselves*

Again, a much delayed issue. What's the excuse this time? Well, we've produced two new pamphlets\* 'TRUTH ABOUT VAUXHALL', by Ken Weller, a reprint from 'Solidarity' II, 6. - and 'HOMELESS', an account of conditions and a call for direct action largely written by homeless tenants themselves. Over 200 of the first were sold outside the main Vauxhall plant at Luton and Dunstable. Bulk orders were received from a number of shop stewards committees and AEU branches. Some copies are still available. Over 1,900 of the 'HOMELESS' pamphlet have already been sold. It has gone into factories, garages, power stations and trade union branches in the Battersea area, and been taken up by Committee of 100 and CND groups. It received front page publicity in several issues of the 'South Western Star', the local paper. We hope to publish some comments in our next issue.

During the recent work-to-rule in the power industry we produced a leaflet which was widely distributed and had a good reception.

One aspect of our work continues to worry us. There is not enough participation from readers. We need more articles from more people dealing with more facets of modern life. Real struggles, real experiences, real life, and no punches pulled. We need more controversy, and more correspondence, critical or otherwise.

We also need your help in extending sales. We feel a real increase should be based on a paper worth reading, and not on 'hard-sell' techniques. We don't produce 'Solidarity' for a profit. We produce it to help develop and spread our ideas. We don't think we have reached anywhere near our potential readership yet. For this we need your help (yes, YOU). How about taking a few extra copies? We will refund you for any not sold. We think our ideas are dynamite and want to plant our bombs as widely as possible. Why not help us?

One last point. We hope in the very near future to see the formation of a number of new 'Solidarity' groups: Reading, Ilford, Scotland and Merseyside, in addition to our supporters' groups in Gravesend and Exeter. We would like to hear from anyone interested.

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\* Both numbered No. 12. It's not superstition. We just can't count. The 'HOMELESS' pamphlet should be No. 13.

# BUREAUCRACY IN ACTION

We first became aware of strange goings-on in Marylebone CND last July, when we attended a public meeting, billed as a 'report back' from the Moscow Peace Congress. Police were at the door. The report was tendentious. A flustered chairman was shouting 'Shut up' at would-be questioners. Stewards were preventing the distribution of a duplicated version of the Minority Report submitted to the Congress (a document which dared query the morality of Russian tests).

We sought to discover the background to the affair and unearthed a story that could have come from Kafka or Alice in Wonderland.

Supporters of CND are regularly exhorted to do all they can to ensure that the campaign has a good public image. It is 'against the interests of the campaign' to be critical or to debate policy or organization in public. What we must all do is 'get on with banning the Bomb'. People are told that if they resort to analysis they are 'looking inwards' and not 'getting the job done'.

After eleven months of very active and rather unpleasant participation in the campaign, I have learnt, like many others, that the 'image' as issued from Carthusian Street bears no relation to what the campaign is really like. The image is manufactured much as the image of any brand of toothpaste or soap - or in much the same way as political parties use public relations techniques and platform statements to boost themselves and their key figures.

Initially CND attracted people as an alternative avenue of expression and action. It was genuinely a 'movement'. Now this is no longer true. If one inspects and analyses, it becomes depressingly clear that, at least in the London area, there is a good deal of murk and manipulation behind the now rather shop-soiled image. An especially messy spot is Marylebone.

## MARYLEBONE CND CLUB VETS A SPY

Our connection with Marylebone CND began in March 1962 when Ken and Brenda Stanway joined the group. Brenda had been secretary of an active group in Walsall which held regular, open, functional supporters meetings. She went to the fortnightly Marylebone committee meeting (the only ones held, except for a monthly film show). She told the committee that there should be regular supporters meetings, which could take decisions. The committee replied that this did not work in Marylebone but that anyone could come to committee meetings and vote.

In May, I too joined the group. I am an American libertarian, opposed to all bombs, and extremely allergic to bureaucrats, whatever their political hue. I had learnt about CND's recruitment drive, Operation Peanuts, and was interested in canvassing.

Trouble began when I phoned Mrs. Neal, a Marylebone CND committee woman, about this. She quizzed me at great length before inviting me to a committee meeting. I had no idea CND would be so particular about whom it recruited. But then Marylebone CND is a peculiar group. A few months later, when the committee 'tried' me in absentia, Mrs. Neal remarked that she had been suspicious of me from the very first.\*

About this time I phoned Hampstead CND offering to help. I was invited to take on an important job for them. Either people in Hampstead were not as 'discerning'... or they were not as suspicious as in Marylebone CND.

I was at the time unaware of the stories I later discovered were circulating about me. I ignored them for some time. As we lived in Marylebone we continued to press for supporters meetings and more activities, including contacting the 400 supporters the committee claimed it had in the area with a view to a mass canvass. We were first promised names for canvassing, then refused them.

But we did persuade the committee to call an ad hoc, functional, supporters meeting. The committee wanted to raise £65 to send a delegate to the Moscow Peace Congress, in July. We had insisted that this sort of decision could not be taken by the committee alone, without consulting supporters. The committee's nominee was Joan Hill, their own secretary. At the supporters meeting we proposed an alternative: that we associate ourselves with a number of neighbouring CND groups and trade union branches to send a joint delegate. The vote went 13 for the committee's proposal, 11 against. Most of the 13 in favour happened to be committee members, most of the 11 against rank-and-file CND supporters. This must have been a shock to them.

## SPIES AND WRECKERS: NO ADMITTANCE SUPPORTERS: OUT! OUT! OUT!

Soon after, the bannings started. I had written a long letter complaining about the way our proposals for supporters meetings and canvassing had been handled at the previous committee meeting. On July 5, I arrived at the door to attend a committee meeting, accompanied by another supporter. We were both prevented from entering. To this day the committee has not informed me of the decisions taken at that meeting. We heard about them afterwards, from Ken and Brenda Stanway.

At this first closed committee meeting, members of the committee used my letter, not for the purpose of examining my complaints and suggestions but as excuse for excluding me from all future committee meetings, the only place in Marylebone CND where a supporter had a chance to speak.

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\* Actually Mrs. Neal's 'suspicions' originated in the mind of a Mrs. Rabstein, another active committee woman, who incidentally happened to have been secretary of the local Communist Party. Part of her 'evidence' is that I had once asked to attend Communist Party meetings.

Then the situation started to get out of hand. The committee went wild. Rules were made up and changed by members of the committee as it suited them. I still tried to attend committee meetings but was always locked out. Other supporters were also locked out. When we brought along new supporters, the secretary, Mrs. Joan Hill, refused to list them, either because she considered that they did not live in Marylebone (she herself, incidentally, lives in Paddington) or because, in her words, 'I know a wrecker when I see one'.

The committee later started preparing for its Annual General Meeting. Some of the supporters were notified. We were not but we heard of their plans. At a committee meeting on August 2, Peter Merriton (Labour candidate for Orpington) proposed to restrict voting rights at the A.G.M. to 'British and Commonwealth citizens who had been living in Marylebone for at least 2 years ( a clumsy attempt to exclude me, but then, as is well known, Labour believes in Empire! )'.

Mr. Merriton also persuaded the committee that the letter written to the acting chairman by a solicitor friend of mine asking what decisions had been taken about me at the July 5 meeting was 'the opening move of a law suit for £20,000 aimed at wrecking CND' (probably instigated jointly by the Mikado and White Russian emigres!). Incidentally I had resorted to writing to them through a solicitor because neither my own letters nor those of other supporters had ever been answered. As proof for this fantastic plot, Mr. Merriton said that he, a barrister, knew full well that a solicitor's letter cost at least £25. Mr. Merriton then became leader of the group in its time of trouble. (Joan Hill was on holiday at the time. He lasted until she returned).

## I WAS A WELSH TROT FOR THE C.I.A.

Meanwhile three types of slanderous stories about me were spreading to wider and wider circles. The first, which originated from Mrs. Rabstein, via Merriton and others, was that I am a police or C.I.A. agent. Echoes must have reached the Socialist Labour League for on August 25, 1962, 'The Newsletter' claimed that 'Marylebone CND leaders are reported to have ejected a man suspected of connections with the secret service'. This story has been heard in many garbled versions in Marylebone, the CND, and elsewhere. Another story being spread by officers of CND through their national press officer is that I was expelled from a Trostkyite group in Wales. Yet another tale being circulated by Merriton, Joan Hill, Robin Gabriel and others is that I am mentally deranged, a psychopath who has been in a mental home in Italy. Perhaps the C.I.A. habitually employs mentally deranged psychopaths and sends them to Wales, to do their dirty work, disguised as Trots. We think it is time that Merriton should produce his 'proof' and that regional and national officers should back up their statements - or publicly repudiate them.

On August 5, six Marylebone supporters wrote to Mrs. Neal, asking what arrangements had been made for the A.G.M. By then the committee had

closed its doors on us. We sent a copy of our letter to London Region and also a postcard to London Region's secretary, Francis Butler, informing him that an organizational problem existed in Marylebone. Francis Butler replied that he was not interested in 'dark hints and half-expressed threats'. He made no effort to get in touch with us. However he and Alec Leaver, of National CND, arranged to meet the Marylebone committee. So a group of supporters took direct action. We entered the meeting and refused to leave until London Region officers had arranged to meet us. We only wanted London Region to ask the Marylebone committee to hold an open supporters meeting before the A.G.M., and that this open meeting be supervised, and if necessary chaired, by someone from London Region or from a neutral body, acceptable to both sides. The aim was to ensure that all supporters could participate in making arrangements for the A.G.M.

On September 2, 23 Marylebone supporters signed a letter asking London Region to do this. Another letter, signed by 17 of the 23, gave our reasons for making the request and outlined our complaints against the committee. Francis Butler did not reply to either of these letters. But he did recommend to the Marylebone committee that they hold two such meetings before the A.G.M. No further progress was made.

Ten Marylebone supporters then sent a further letter to London Region suggesting that two of us should meet with two committee members, with Francis Butler to mediate. When phoned, Mr. Butler said that Robin Gabriel, acting secretary in Marylebone, had refused. Robin Gabriel, on the other hand, told people that mediation was London Region's idea and that supporters had refused. Whether these official lies were originated by Gabriel or Butler it is impossible to say. Shortly afterwards Francis Butler wrote to me that 'other officers of the campaign' agreed that our 'interminable complaints' should be ignored. 'Letters from you or anybody representing you will be neither read nor replied to'.

At Mr. Butler's request 'Peace News' refused to print an advert we had sent calling for a supporters meeting. On September 21st it did however print a news item on Marylebone, ending: 'further discussions are continuing'. By the time that was printed however the statement was no longer true. 'Peace News' has refused to take the matter further.

## CND DEMOCRACY...BY EXECUTIVE ORDER

And so the Marylebone committee were able to proceed with their plans, without interference from their own supporters. In September, Joan Hill prepared a bulletin entitled 'Some Disagree Violently'. It described a 'gaggle of wreckers' of the campaign who were disrupting the work. It said that Regional and National CND had investigated and supported the committee. It urged supporters to come to the A.G.M. It ended, ominously, that peace movements are kept weak by witch-hunts and smears which, Mrs. Hill claimed, were being used by us against the committee.

The same bulletin described the arrangements which had been made at a closed committee meeting, on September 18, for the forthcoming A.G.M. The committee ruled that 'all, and only, listed supporters are invited. Only listed supporters are eligible for nomination and to vote. No new supporters will be listed from the committee meeting at which these measures are agreed (September 18) until after the A.G.M. (October 19)'. That is, no advance notice was given of the closing of the list.

At this committee meeting four names were removed from the supporters list. I received my file card with the inscription: 'removed from supporters list - committee decision after record of active opposition'. Since when have CND groups acquired the right to expel dissidents from within their own ranks?

Even before September 18 Joan Hill had refused to list a number of campaign supporters who had asked to be included on the list (amongst others Ken and Terry Cook, Barry and Paddy Page, Nick Howard and John Lane). No doubt members of the Marylebone committee, of Regional and National CND, and of the local Labour Party, still feel honest and confident when they declare: 'no listed supporters were kept out'.

The bulletin also promised that observers from National and Regional CND would attend the A.G.M. So they did, four of them, as active participants, including Peggy Duff. They all helped build up the facade of legitimacy.

The bulletin finally stated that the committee would reduce itself from fifteen to ten (although extra committee members were coopted by the committee almost immediately after the A.G.M.). This little manoeuvre handily eliminated several of the outgoing committee, such as Manny Blanket, who could not be relied upon to cooperate with '100 % democratic unanimous committee decisions'... taken at closed committee meetings.

The purpose of all these arrangements was clearly to ensure that 'reliable' committee members would be re-elected and could make untrue statements about themselves and about their critics without effective challenge. This was accomplished.

When we learnt of these arrangements letters were written to the Labour Party, to 'Peace News' and to various officers of the National and Regional campaign. Only 'Peace News' replied.

On October 10, London Executive met. It decided to write to the Marylebone committee not to concern itself any further about complaints from me. London Region also replied to the Electoral Reform Society, which had offered its services, that they would not be needed as Mr. Bensen's complaints were exaggerated. How can a Regional Executive take such decisions without even informing supporters?

The Marylebone committee made its final plans for the A.G.M. at a meeting on October 16. It was decided to notify the police. Alec Leaver, National CND groups organizer, and Peggy Duff's assistant, attended the meeting and agreed that this was necessary because there would be an attempt to wreck the meeting violently.

"WE HAD TO EXPEL THEM" SAID THE COMMITTEE  
 "OF COURSE" SAID PEG, "BUT WHAT A PITY!"

The A.G.M. was held in the Labour Party hall on October 18. Police were on hand. The 'Marylebone Mercury' (October 26) reported that 11 people were refused admittance. The Committee reported that 79 supporters had attended the meeting. The previous A.G.M., in June 1961, had been attended by approximately 20 people. Who were these 79? Ex-committee member Manny Blanket, who had been extremely active in the group since the A.G.M. in June 1961 wrote to the 'Marylebone Mercury' (October 26) that he did not recognize half the people in the Labour Party hall that evening. Many of the faces we did know, however, came from outside Marylebone, although non-residence in the borough had been put forward as a spurious excuse for excluding other people.

Of the committee itself, Joan Hill, Robin Gabriel and Alan Lacey do not live in Marylebone. Among others allowed in were a well-known member of the I.L.P. living in Islington, Peter Ryerson of Hampstead and Jack Taylor of St. Pancras. Peter Plouviez, Marylebone Labour candidate and also living in St. Pancras attended the A.G.M. as a supporter. This despite the fact that after the closing date (September 18) he had stressed that he was not a supporter of Marylebone CND.

People from Hackney who came as 'stewards' had been told that 'fascists' would show up. We do not know where the others came from. We would like to see lists of the 270 mailed, and of those who attended. Failing this we will presume that many of them were Communist Party friends of the committee or others primed with lies about violence, fascists, psychopaths and C.I.A. agents out to wreck CND!

It need not have been like this. Throughout we made alternative suggestions for mediation, for open supporters meeting before the A.G.M., for openness. But with the agreement and aid of Regional and National CND the Marylebone committee were able to ignore such suggestions and to proceed in the only way they knew. Peggy Duff, quoted in the 'Marylebone Mercury' (October 26) said at this A.G.M. that she, national secretary of CND, 'regretted' that it had been necessary 'to refuse to accept anyone as a supporter.' It was confirmed that the Executive could not see that the disruption over the past five or six months could be dealt with in any other way'.

## BUREAUCRATS OF ALL KINDS, UNITE!

I do not think that the difficulties in Marylebone can be solely explained by the C. P. take-over. Though the controlling clique of the committee are Communists or supporters of the British Peace Committee, the main reason for referring to them as Communists is that it is they who scream 'pathological anti-communist' at anyone who disagrees with them. It is they who find police spies all around them and they, not we, who made the issue one of Communists.

The importance of their presence is on the one hand that Communists tend to provide the clearest examples of the sorts of organizational reflexes and abuses that are becoming common in CND. On the other hand non-Communists (and ex-Communists) are quicker to notice and object to such behaviour when the perpetrators are Communists than when they are not. It would be quite wrong to conclude that the solution is to expel the Communists or to limit their positions in CND. The objectionable things they do are not specifically 'communist'. They are the universal characteristics of bureaucratic totalitarians. To expel (as they do), to infringe rights to hold office (as they do) means to apply undemocratic methods, to cripple and confuse sensible efforts to achieve genuine democracy in CND.

The Labour Party is almost as notorious as the Communist Party for its history of proscriptions. These were instituted to keep Communists out but are now mainly a way whereby a few people can control the Party at all levels (from the local Party to the National Executive). CND supporters should remember that Canon Collins and Bertrand Russell, never suspected of being Communists, were under threat of expulsion merely because they endorsed the Moscow Peace Congress last July.\*

Why should the campaign itself indulge in these 'administrative procedures', if it is a mass movement whose energy comes from the independent initiative of individuals? In Marylebone CND, when supporters tried to have a say and took the initiative into their own hands, bureaucratic methods were used. The important point is not that a Communist CND committee (ruling a non-existent group) acts like this. It is that they got active support from fellow bureaucrats on the Regional and National Executives. The facts we report are not personal attacks on individuals. They are comments on the organizational behaviour of people in certain positions. The political affiliations of these people may be different. Their thinking and methods are the same.

Perhaps Peggy Duff will let a few local Communists be the fall guys. Recently she and her brains trust of Oxbridge Upper Seconds were willing to let Canon Collins take the rap for embarrassing their plans to be directors of an international anti-nuclear organization. But the story of the Oxford Conference will have to be told another time...

Mr. Bensen is not associated with 'Solidarity'. But his story is our concern. We cannot guarantee the accuracy of all his statements. But every one we have checked - and that's quite a number - seemed incontrovertible and excellently documented.

BERT BENSEN.

\* Anyone following the 'New Statesman' items about Islington Labour Party will see the parallel with Marylebone CND.