

--- —**SOLIDARITY**

FOR WORKERS' POWER

Volume 1 Number 8

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- 1 -
FROM

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

TO

SOCIAL REVOLUTION.

I. DEADLOCK

THE RUSSIANS HAVE RESUMED NUCLEAR TESTS. THE AMERICANS WILL DO SO AT ANY MOMENT. FALL-OUT IS INCREASING AND A LOT MORE IS DUE. THE 'GREAT' POWERS HAVE USED THE BREATHING SPACE AFFORDED BY THE GENEVA 'NEGOTIATIONS' TO GOOD EFFECT !

With a cynical disregard for ordinary people, the rulers of both East and West perfect their preparations for war... while bleating their eternal love of peace. Each blames the other. The propaganda machines are working overtime, churning out denunciations, sophistries, half-truths and lies. 'My bomb is cleaner than yours', 'My tests more necessary', 'My intentions more honorable', 'My social system more worth defending'!.

Within each country: total deadlock. The people's voice cannot be heard. At first Russia's rulers suppressed the news that tests had already been resumed. They only 'warned' that a resumption was due. Awkwardly * they talked of 'a forced measure, inevitable under existing conditions'. Bombs would be detonated 'reluctantly and with regret', radiation scattered 'with a heavy heart'. The Russian people are not informed of the well-intentioned appeals from the assembled 'neutrals'

* We can understand their embarrassment. Had not Nikita himself said in January 1960 concerning the resumption of tests: 'Should any side violate these obligations... they will cover themselves with shame, and they will be condemned by the peoples of the world'.

in Belgrade, or of the demonstrations outside 'their' Embassy in London. The government machine grinds ruthlessly on. The rulers know best. Smoothly, efficiently, the job is done. Prepare the people, condition them, brainwash them. Then tie them to the war-machine of the bureaucracy that exploits them and rains radioactive dust upon them.

In the West the deadlock is no less total. The ruling classes of Britain and America are firmly committed to a nuclear strategy. Their pious appeal to Khrushchev to 'protect mankind from the hazards of atmospheric pollution' is so much cant. Did they not drop the first bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki - when the Japanese were suing for peace? Did they not build bases the world over, when they thought they had a monopoly of nuclear know-how? Did they not threaten nuclear war in North Korea in 1953 and in VietNam in 1955? Did they not continue tests long after the Russian government had decided unilaterally to suspend them? Did not one of their fold (France) continue contaminating the atmosphere in defiance of world opinion and without incurring their displeasure?

They are hypocrites and liars. But indignation is not enough. Their motives must be understood. The bomb is a deterrent to covetous neighbours - the most perfect deterrent of all times. It is the ultimate custodian of their right to exploit 'their own' workers, free from outside interference. This is what they mean when they glibly talk of the 'defence of the free world'.

We will be told that in Britain at least our voices are not stifled, that we have 'democratic' means of redress. Every few years, we have a rather limited choice as to whom we wish to be misgoverned by and by whom ultimately incinerated.

The Labour Party, we say it quite bluntly, has nothing to offer... and never can have. Its ideology and personnel are hardly distinguishable from those of the Establishment, of which it is an essential part. 'Progressive' businessmen, administrators, managers, 'responsible' trade union officials, tired or knighted radicals, and expert parliamentary shadow-boxers scarcely constitute an 'alternative'. This is a closed bureaucracy with a solid social base. Its objectives, conscious or not, are to manage the capitalist state more 'efficiently' than the capitalists themselves, to 'integrate' the working class into exploiting society, and to ensure in the process their own political and social supremacy.

With effortless ease this bureaucracy has manipulated the apparatus it controls to ensure the defeat of the 'unilateralist' resolutions passed at Scarborough last year. Anyone who still believes that the Labour Party - that built-in stabiliser of capitalist society - can be 'used' for purposes of political disruption needs his head examined! -- We are out to challenge the Establishment on the question of its own defence. What is this but political disruption of the highest order! --

(continued p. 21)

THE DEMOCRATIC STORY

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE!

'You are breaking the Law' the Establishment snarls at us. 'Our Laws are sacrosanct. They enshrine our right to rule. We will compel their observance. We know what's best for you. We made the Bomb. (We made the laws too). Yours not to question why, yours but to do or die...'

'You are wrong, we cannot support you' the 'Opposition' bleats at us, in suddenly rediscovered unity. 'Civil disobedience brings democracy into disrepute. Other methods are available. Ours is a democratic Party. Majority decisions always prevail. Vote for us... in a few years' time! Send us to Parliament... to shadow-box on your behalf. You know how slick we are at it!' We do.

'You are dividing the Peace Movement' scream the Stalinists, converts since 1960 to the cause of unilateral (very unilateral!) disarmament. 'Send a postcard to your MP'. 'Summit talks now'.

'A tactical error' learnedly lecture us the sophisticates of the 'revolutionary' left. 'Turn to the real mass movement. Build the left wing. Pass a resolution in your Labour Party. Implement the Scarborough decisions! etc... etc...'

WE SAY NO TO THEM ALL.

We have broken out of their stifling, bureaucratic straight-jacket. We reject their phoney alternatives. We refuse to be bound by the rules of their game. These rules are devised to keep the great majority muzzled and permanently impotent.

OUR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN ARE MORE IMPORTANT TO US THAN THEIR RULES.

P.T.O.

French Metalworkers' the closing down of the factory among Renault workers too.

'Ratio-discipline' are implied. Similar situations.

uggles.

London Renault factory record. In the second quarter 1958 the firm refused to employ a well-known militant worker Joe Parker, at a time when there were no jobs available in the category.

wards considered this victimization and wrong. The men decided to take strike action - a few strikes to have caused management refused to go on. The strike, which lasted two weeks. It was due to the high the management had in already assembled, via the Air Ferry. The factors in this weakness of the links in the French and

British factories. It was only in the last days of the strike that the men in dispute received support from France (a congratulatory telegram!).

The men returned to work with their organization unbroken. They immediately started a limited 'go-slow'. This had the effect of reducing the number of cars produced on the night shift from 22 to 20.

Incidentally Brother Parker got a job at British Light Steel Pressings, where the men also threatened strike action if he wasn't employed. He was! He still works there.

Tightening the screw.

Because of a slackening in sales the firm decided early in December 1960 to convert the Dauphine from a three-speed to a four-speed gear box. This would result in an increase of price of the order of £10.0.0.

At the same time the management brought in a new works manager, who started throwing his weight around, constantly pushing the men to step up production. He aimed at increasing output from 43 to 45 cars a day. The men felt 43 cars was a reasonable day's work. They had in the past resisted several attempts to increase this figure. They told the works manager that they were not going to have the supervision breatahing down their necks all the time. They also walked out for the afternoon.

The firm tightened up. They exerted stricter control of time spent in the lavatory. They put inspectors and charge hands to stand continuously over the men and show them how to do the job faster. They

also started putting charge hands on the line, whenever a man had to leave it for any reason. The use of these and other methods rapidly increased tension in the factory.

Here is a typical example of what went on. A supervisor followed a man out to the lavatory. He found him washing his hands - and this before the five minutes officially allowed prior to clocking off for dinner. The man was brought up before the manager. The steward was called in. The steward argued that the man had just been to the lavatory, which was a natural function not controllable by the management. In the interests of hygiene the man should wash his hands afterwards. Would the management like him to call in the factory inspector and see what he thought about it? The management climbed down. The man returned to work.

After the walk-out the management, while not formally changing their attitude, nevertheless thought better of it. They ceased to push the men around to anything like the same degree.

Plant to be closed.

In the second week of January 1961, the management announced that the factory was uneconomic and that they would be closing it down on July 28.

They argued that they could save £12 per car. They would have them assembled in Belgium, despite the higher cost of transport of completed cars (as compared with crated cars) and despite the reduced duty payable on unassembled cars. (This is an interesting comment on the rate of exploitation pertaining in Franco and Belgium as compared with Britain.)

We are informed that the optimistic forecast of the employers came unstuck. In the first batch of a thousand assembled cars to reach Britain, nearly fifty per cent were in need of repairs due to damage received in transit. Since all this repair work had to be sub-contracted out (because of the closure of their own facilities) the repair bills averaged £20 per car.

We understand the management not only had to pay the dockers a premium on each car (to induce them to take extra care while unloading) but that they also had to supply them with rubber boots, following damage from hob-nailed boots to the finish of the cars. The amount of damage came as no surprise to the Stewards' Committee at Renault's.

Faced with the decision to close the factory and having no real links with the workers in the French factories enabling joint action to be discussed, the Shop Stewards' Committee had to negotiate the best possible settlement in regard to compensation.

The settlement... and the 'go fast'.

The final settlement was as follows: one week's lieu payment, one third of a week's pay for every year's service over three years and four weeks pay if the men could push production up to 45 cars a day. It was also agreed that the men would be paid up to July 28 (the date on which the final batch would be completed, assuming production was stepped up from 43 to 45 cars a day). The men would be paid up to July 28, even if they increased production even more and finished earlier.

Since they had nothing to lose by increasing production and everything to gain, the men decided to get the batch finished as soon as possible. They increased production from 43 cars a day to 120 a day! The management did not take at all kindly to this phenomenal increase. They rightly felt that it reflected on their ability to manage. *

The men finished the last car on May 26. They each got a total of fourteen weeks' pay, exclusive of any seniority payments to which they were entitled.

I would like to thank Brother Murphy (NSMW&B), Brother Wright (AEU) and Brother Jacobs (NUVB) for the information given me for this article. They are all ex-stewards at Renault's. The conclusions drawn are however entirely my own.

* This illustrates in a most graphic manner a point we have repeatedly stressed. This is that the organisation of production by a 'management' situated outside of production is fundamentally irrational. Only the working class (in which we include the technicians) can really organize production because it alone understands the real problems involved. The present organization of production (both in countries dominated by the capitalist class and in those dominated by the bureaucracy) results in a constant and continuous opposition of the workers, an opposition which is as much a cause of the class struggle as is the fight for the disposal of surplus value. This opposition results in a loss of production equal in volume to the total volume of production itself. (See 'The Meaning of Socialism', p.9).

LABOUR ADVICE

These helpful suggestions were first published in
Sylvia Pankhurst's WORKERS DREADNOUGHT... in 1922!

ADVICE TO THE WORKERS

- 1) It is your duty to keep the capitalist system going. There always have been rich and poor, and there always will.
- 2) Pay your T.U. officials as much as possible; they will then feel like gentlemen. The more you pay them, the harder they will work to keep the capitalists on your backs.
- 3) Never do any thinking for yourselves. Let your T.U. officials make all the rules for you.
- 4) Never attend a branch meeting. You might get to know too much about your T.U. leaders.
- 5) If you find your brains begin to work, read a sports paper.
- 6) Never read a Socialist paper or pamphlet. Make a point of only reading the Capitalist Press. You want to hear all the lies possible about your own class.
- 7) Remember the earth is the landlord's. Always be contented with your lot.
- 8) If the wife complains that she cannot keep house on your wages, tell her that she is living in a free country and has the right to starve.
- 9) Never listen to socialist speakers. They want to make the world a better place for the workers.
- 10) Always work overtime, when possible, so as to keep the other men out of a job.
- 11) Yours is a good old-fashioned union. Keep it as it is, so that you can fight all the other unions.
- 12) Never listen to any truck about 'one big union', or 'organizing according to industry', or 'class war'.
- 13) Do blackleg labour wherever possible, either as an individual or by voting to keep your union at work to blackleg the other union which is out on strike.

BUREAU

ADVICE TO LABOUR LEADERS

- 1) Keep the present system going by every means in your power. It provides you with a good berth.
- 2) See that your Union funds are invested in the particular industry in which the men are engaged. Railwaymen must invest funds in railway shares; miners in mines. This pacifies them and makes them 'reasonable'.
- 3) Forbid any mention of class war.
- 4) Encourage every effort to bring masters and men together. Talk constantly of 'industrial peace'.
- 5) Get as many fat jobs as possible. You don't want the men to call you a 'twicer'.
- 6) Make your Union affiliate with Amsterdam Yellow International.* You may as well get some of the pickings.
- 7) Keep in with the League of Nations. It is the thing. International Capitalism for ever!
- 8) Avoid a strike unless you are quite certain that the men will lose.
- 9) Never let your union enter on a sympathetic strike. It might make the men class-conscious.
- 10) If a general strike is in the air, hang out negotiations as long as possible, and break the spirit of the men.
- 11) If a general strike seems inevitable, you may allow your Union to join in, after it has done as much harm as possible to the men on strike.
- 12) If a general strike looks like being successful, despite all you have been able to do to the contrary, you may yet save the situation and get your wage slaves back to work for the master class by talking about democracy and the ballot box.

* Today we would say 'with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions'... or even 'with the World Federation of Trade Unions' -- for all the difference it makes.

P. T. O

ADVICE TO THE LABOUR PARTY

- 1) Keep the present capitalist system going. It provides you with good jobs.
- 2) Never embarrass the Government. Remember that you are the bulwarks of Capitalist Imperialism. Talk much about 'making Germany pay'.
- 3) Remember that the capitalist system is based on the real ignorance of the workers. Therefore flatter the workers that they are educated, then you can stuff them with as many lies as you choose.
- 4) Engage in benevolent schemes for helping the poor, and get the rich to assist you with funds. This makes the workers forget that it is they themselves who have really produced the wealth.
- 5) Having got the rich to assist you with funds, placade their names in your papers. This makes the workers forget that these people - not the German workers - are their real enemies.
- 6) Affiliate with the Amsterdam Yellow International because the international capitalist League of Nations has bestowed on it its blessing
- 7) Set up as many industrial boards as possible in the country, so that masters and men can be brought together in a friendly way. This will take the fighting spirit out of the men.
- 8) Talk much about the many blessings of democracy. This makes the workers forget that they are now enjoying the one blessing that democracy has always given them - The Right to Starve.
- 9) Tell as many lies as you can about the Soviet system and the tyranny of the Communists in Russia. Remember that it is a workers' government in Russia. If we got a workers' government here, you would have to take your coats off.*

* Things sure change! Labour leaders now disregard this advice. They praise Russian managerial efficiency. They pose as international 'Lefts'... and get away with murder in their own outfits. The odd article in Labour Monthly, the occasional advocacy of Summit Talks or East-West Trade and any faker can today be sure of 'left-wing' support!

NEGRO WORKER

BOOK REVIEW

THE INDIGNANT HEART by Matthew Ward.
New Books, New York (1952).
Obtainable from 'Correspondence',

7737 Mack Avenue, Detroit 14 (Mich.); USA., or from E. Morse, 183, Booch
Lane, Lower Earley, Reading.

Matthew Ward's autobiography shows us a human being responding to the pressures of his experience by ever more effective analysis and action.

Born a Negro in 1907 on a cotton plantation in Tennessee, where economic and legal discrimination were made flesh in white owners, all-powerful, free to indulge any sexual or sadistic whim, he carried from his childhood an indignant heart. Ignorant of politics ('I didn't care who won... I couldn't vote anyway'), unimpressed by Southern legislation ('I never felt the laws in the South meant anything - there wasn't one law in the interest of Negroes'), he left the beatings, the lynchings, the "yes, sir, no, sir" for Detroit.

The young man who crossed the Mason-Dixon line, with the faith that there his ideals were realized, found Negroes in the automobile factories of the North, helpless against discrimination, hired or laid off as the management saw fit. But on the shop floor, he also found the beginnings of inter-racial solidarity.

During the depression he returned South, to avoid starvation. In the papers he followed the growth of the U.A.W. under John L. Lewis. When in 1943 he moved back to Detroit for good, he met discrimination and prejudice with surprise. He spent the next few years learning why 'The union doesn't mean everything to Negroes that some people think'.

The Negro women in Matthew's plant complained about working conditions. They wanted to work in the sewing-room occupied by white women, where there were fans and stools. He approached the steward. He was told that the women in the sewing-room were old-timers and the union went by seniority. He obtained proof that the company was hiring white women every day for the sewing-room and organized a wild-cat strike. The union leaders, who were intending to sign a no-strike pledge, offered him a better job and a union button... which gave him 'full privilege to talk to the foreman'. They sold out the strike. The sewing-room stayed lilywhite.

Any active Negro group met resistance from union officials. Reuther, then co-chairman of the U.A.W., stated that no problems should be raised in the union about Negroes as Negroes, only about workers in general. Some workers were clearly more general than others: '... The union would have only three posts open for Negroes out of a possible fifteen. These three positions were the lowest: guide, trustee, and one shop committee man. The shop committee man is a higher post than the first two. These three posts had to be filled by Negroes. The Union had to show the Negroes and everybody else that there was no discrimination. In eight years of the U.A.W. in my local, only one Negro had ever gotten to be shop committee man'.

In every struggle for the right of workers to determine their own methods of work, their rate of production, in every struggle against discrimination in hiring, in working conditions, in jim-crowed restaurants, Matthew met opposition from the union and its caucuses, Reutherite or Communist. His support came from Whites and Negroes on the shop-floor.

The significant question for him, when he attended a Communist Party meeting to hear Howard Fast, was: 'What is the relationship of the Russian workers to production?'. Fast said he would deal with the miners first. 'The miners in Russia earned one hundred and fifty dollars a week. They all had their own beautiful homes, they had automobiles, and if the 1952 plan wasn't disrupted by war, there would be socialized bread, free bread. Then he sat down'. Matthew persisted: 'How much control do Russian workers have over production?'. Fast said: 'Production in Russia was controlled by factory committees. He sat down again'. Matthew wouldn't give up: 'Who controls the factory committees? Are they like the U.A.W. today, where the national staff controls from the top down through the shop committees and the chief stewards? Does control come from the workers on the line or from the Kremlin down?'. He received no coherent answer.

In 1945 Matthew joined the Trotskyites on the basis of a fight against segregation and discrimination. He was very active selling papers and recruiting Negro workers. The Party's 1948 Convention in New York accepted a resolution on the Negro question. Matthew's group of active Negro recruits increased. At every meeting the Trotskyite leader would exhort them: 'Let's try to get the union in it before we organize to do anything'. Suddenly, without previous discussion Matthew

(continued p. 20)

NOTEBOOK OF AN ENGINEER

BY JIM PETTER, AEU

ATTACK ON POWERS OF DISTRICT COMMITTEES

A new pattern is emerging in recent 'unofficial' disputes in the Engineering industry. The President of the AEU, speaking on behalf of the Executive Council, is seeking to use the big stick before District Committees have even considered the facts relating to local disputes and before they have made their own decisions. This is a violation of the Rules of the union.

Although DC decisions are subject to EC approval, it is the prerogative of DCs to make their own decisions first in all District matters. In fact, the EC is unable to take a decision on the facts of a district dispute before they have received the District Secretary's report. EC can, of course, issue a ukase, based on a report from the Employers' Federation, but who except a trade union official would expect a report from that quarter to be in the interests of the workers?

This new departure places a heavy responsibility upon District Committees. These bodies are composed of active rank-and-file working members elected directly from Branches and Shop Stewards' Quarterly meetings. According to AEU rules, District Committees have powers 'subject to the approval of Executive Council - to deal with and regulate wages, hours of labour, terms of overtime, piecework, and general conditions affecting the interests of the trades within their

respective districts.' The initiative for the defence of wages and conditions is thus, according to the rules, squarely in the custody of DC. EC can only approve - or more usually disapprove.

Unfortunately, despite the clarity of the rule, various agreements between the Union and the Employers' Federation have robbed District Committees of much of their autonomy.

The Federation does not 'recognize' AEU District Committees. When a federated firm wants to have official discussions with the Union locally, it reports the matter to its local Federation, which then approaches the Divisional Organizer and not the District Secretary. There are sometimes 'informal' discussions between a particular firm and the district office, but these are frowned upon by the Federation. Great emphasis is always placed upon the 'informal' nature of such discussions. Whatever the Rules may say about District Committee control over district conditions, when an employer smells a breach of agreement, his local Federation reports the breach to the Organizer, who then hurries down to inform DC that they must uphold the sanctity of agreements.

PRESSED STEEL AND SMITH'S.

In the Pressed Steel strike at Swindon some months ago, the DC put the interests of its members

before the letter of agreements. They were duly suspended for their loyalty. Immediately following this, the London (North) District Committee decided that 'tactics' demanded that they accept, under protest, the instructions from EC to order the Standard-Triumph strikers back to work. * To have ignored this instruction would have undoubtedly led to London (North) being suspended. More recently we have had the AEU Executive Council peremptorily ordering the strikers at Smith's (Cricklewood) back to work without even bothering to bully DC into acquiescence. All this emphasises that DCs are practically impotent. In the eyes of the Union bureaucracy they are entirely expendable. District Committee 'tactics' in the Standard-Triumph dispute only encouraged Carron & Co. to show their utter contempt for the DC when Smith's workers walked out. EC could not have behaved more dictatorially even if London (North) had been suspended.

THE AGREEMENTS.

The two basic agreements which have successfully deprived the Districts from having any effective control over local conditions are the York Memorandum and the Procedure for Avoiding Disputes.

The York Memo was signed in 1914 and is still the tablet of stone sanctifying the inviolability of managerial functions. The Procedure Agreement was signed in 1922, after the disastrous lock out. The AEU was almost bankrupt, and the union had to accept under duress the best terms available from a victorious and vindictive Federation.

The Union rank and file have repeatedly demanded that the York Memo should be denounced. They recognize that it is the Memo which sus-

tains all other agreements. The past election addresses of present AEU full-time officers have probably all condemned the Memo. The National Committee, the supreme rank-and-file policy making body of the Union, has repeatedly instructed EC to seek supersession of the Memo.

The Federation, of course, thinks otherwise. Half hearted and insincere attempts by EC to open discussions with the Federation on the York Memorandum have either been rejected, or the Federation has replied that they can see no useful purpose in changing a procedure which 'has stood the test of time'. What else should we expect? The employers are sitting pretty; the Memo was signed nearly half a century ago; everything is almost too good to be true. The Memo establishes the employers as judges of their own case, and the Union as a mere supplicant, with no alternative but to accept what the employers see fit to offer.

The York Memorandum should be denounced unilaterally by the AEU. But this sends cold shivers down the spines of our bureaucrats. Executive Council point out that if the Union withdrew without having negotiated something to take its place 'national chaos would result'.

Instead of national agreements and the monthly junketing at the Station Hotel, York, District Committees would have powers to negotiate their own conditions. They would be deprived of the 'services' of the national officers. Why, it would even be possible for DCs to operate the Rules and look after the real interests of the members!

*See 'Solidarity' pamphlet No.5: 'The Standard-Triumph Strike - the Full Facts'. 10d. post free.

District Committees would assume a real importance. The ordinary member would be stimulated to ensure that he gave his confidence to delegates of integrity. Managerial functions would no longer be enshrined in sacrosanct agreements. The thought might even get around that those who are subjected to these sacred dictates shall have a right to determine their content. This is a heresy too horrible to contemplate! There would be no need for a national bureaucracy! If Carron & Co. dared to intervene, they would soon be told in workshop words of four letters what the rank-and-file thought of them.

DUCKING AT ALL COSTS?

District Committees have been suspended in the past. Barrow have been suspended so many times that they are surely worthy of a special award. But in the process they have gained advantages for members which would have been lost if they had meekly knuckled down under EC instructions.

When the Relaxation Agreement was signed between the AEU and the Employers' Federation in June 1939, the Enfield DC was suspended for refusing to operate it. No DC met for over six months. The agreement was not operated in the Enfield District during the whole period. This impasse was only broken when the District was enlarged following a change of Rules.

Let us face it squarely. If DCs are not prepared to face suspension, they must carry out EC instructions. When union leaders order strikers back to work after receiving direct representations from the Employers' Federation (and before DC has had a chance to consider the real grievances), the time has come to see whether our interests would not best

be served by accepting suspension.

A District Committee thus suspended would continue in permanent 'unofficial' session. It would tour the branches, call factory meetings wherever possible, place the facts before the whole district membership and call upon all members not to accept agreements reached by national officers acting without DC. This would be a direct appeal to the ordinary worker to take a hand in managing his own affairs. The suspended DC would be a rallying centre for all workers wishing to struggle against the two-headed hydra of the boss and the union bureaucrat. It would be free of all obligations to uphold the sanctity of agreements. Instead it would urge that the Union Rules be complied with in full. It would appeal to rank-and-file members to do just that. Carron & Co. would be powerless. The Rules do not provide for any alternative body to take over the functions of a suspended DC.

If the EC suspended a District Committee, each factory in the district would be faced with two alternatives. Either it accepts the EC jurisdiction, and everything goes on much as before. Or it acts on its own behalf, supporting the suspended DC, and looking to that body for help in co-ordinating its activities with those of other factories in the area. This would be a first step in assisting individual workers to take a direct part in managing their own affairs. It would be a small, but very significant, step on the road to socialism.

* * * *

ABOUT OURSELVES

We apologise for the long delay since the appearance of 'Solidarity' No.7. This was due to absences, to difficulties imposed on our work by the press witch-hunt last July and - we admit it - to financial troubles (any help in this direction is still very welcome).

Our meagre resources were devoted - at the height of the press campaign - to the production of a special pamphlet 'The Meaning of Socialism', outlining our views in forthright terms. We are pleased to report an excellent response (nearly a hundred copies sold in six weeks, at Collett's alone).

We have also produced a special pamphlet (No.5) on the Standard Triumph Strike. The introduction is by the Secretary of the Strike Committee. The deplorable sell-out of the NUVB leadership has at least been thoroughly documented and brought to the attention of a considerable number of NUVB branch secretaries and shop stewards.

In the last two weeks our comrades have been active in the sit-downs. Several have been arrested during activities outside both Russian and American embassies. Special leaflets were produced and widely distributed.

Anyone interested in our ideas will find a short summary of them in the letter opposite. The letter was issued following an International Conference held earlier in the year.

* * * *

RED WRECKER NOW IN ROME ...

'Red Wrecker Sought... Mystery doctor behind the big strikes...

'Daily Mail', July 3, 1961

'Aims of the Solidarists... to secure workers' control of industry.

'Daily Mail', July 13, 1961

'The Pope affirmed the right of workers to a just and equitable wage... He approved of socialisation... and workers' participation at all levels.'

'Manchester Guardian', July 15.



* Alleged to wear red underpants (for protection of the unemployed).

Dear Comrades,

From May 20 to 22, an International Conference was held in Paris with representatives from the following organizations and groups:

Pouvoir Ouvrier (France)

Socialism Reaffirmed (Great Britain)

Unita Proletaria (Italy)

Pouvoir Ouvrier Belge (Belgium)

In France, Pouvoir Ouvrier was established as an organization in 1958. It originated in a group of comrades who had been publishing the journal 'Socialisme ou Barbarie' since 1949. This journal (32 issues published to date) is now the theoretical organ of the organization, which also produces a monthly duplicated paper called 'Pouvoir Ouvrier'.

The group has also published pamphlets on 'The Hungarian Revolution', 'How to Struggle' and 'The Belgian Strikes'. The organization is composed of groups in Paris, Lyon, Caen, Saint Lo, Le Mans, Montpellier, Nimes and Lille.

In Great Britain, the Socialism Reaffirmed group was established in 1960. It publishes a monthly duplicated journal called 'Solidarity' (formerly 'Agitator for Workers' Power') of which 8 issues have been produced so far. Several pamphlets have also been published: 'Socialism Reaffirmed', 'The Socialist Programme', 'The Renault Strike', 'Belgium - The General Strike', 'What next for Engineers?', 'The Standard Triumph Strike - The Full Facts', 'The Meaning of Socialism'. The group consists mainly of comrades in London and Exeter, but is in contact with small groups and individual comrades in Liverpool and Dublin.

In Italy, Unita Proletaria was established in Cremona in 1957 on a basis of agitational activity and revolutionary propaganda at a local level (publication of leaflets, intervention in struggles, and in union meetings). Since 1959, 7 issues of the duplicated paper 'Unita Proletaria' have been published as well as 3 issues of 'Quaderni di Unita Proletaria'. The group is in contact with other groups and isolated comrades in Northern Italy, with the aim of forming a revolutionary organization in Italy.

Pouvoir Ouvrier Belge was formed after the recent General Strike in Belgium. It consists of a group in Bruzelles and another in Liege. It has just produced the first issue of its paper 'Alternative'.

The Conference first discussed the activities of each of the participating groups. An exchange of information, suggestions and fraternal criticisms took place, which was considered very useful by all present.

The Conference then discussed a document intended to define the common ideological and programmatic bases of the organizations present and to provide the ground work for a discussion with other organizations wishing to join in this developing international cooperation.

A final text, incorporating the results of this discussion, will be submitted to another International Conference to be held towards the end of the year.

Later the Conference discussed methods of practical cooperation between the 4 groups. It was decided:

- 1) that work should be undertaken with a view to defining basic workers' demands in modern capitalist countries. This work should try and make a synthesis of the various national experiences in the class struggle today. It should be based on the recently published pamphlet of the English group 'What Next for Engineers?', which examines the demands in the British Engineering industry; a similar text to be prepared by the French organization; a text to be prepared by the Italian comrades on the recent strikes in the electrical engineering industry in Northern Italy; finally, a text to be prepared by the British comrades on the Shop Stewards movement in Great Britain.

- 2) a common International Bulletin, giving an account of the activity of the 4 organizations, should be published quarterly, starting from August 1961.

- 3) that a short account of the Conference should be sent to the organizations, groups and isolated comrades whose positions are known to be close to those of the participating organizations. This is the aim of this letter.

- 4) that an effort be made towards the constitution of a revolutionary group in Germany.

The common ideological basis of the 4 organizations can be briefly defined as follows:

- (1) In spite of its undeniable and important transformations during the last hundred years, capitalist society remains a class society, based on the exploitation and alienation of the workers. No reform can change this reality. Only a working class revolution can abolish it.

(2) 'Nationalisation' and 'planning of the economy' do not change the real situation of the workers, nor consequently the division of society into classes. Such measures simply replace private bosses by a ruling and exploiting stratum of bureaucrats. The 'socialism' of the Eastern countries is a lie which masks the rule of the bureaucracy.

(3) Socialism means the management of production, of the economy and of society as a whole by the masses, exercising real power through the workers councils. It can only be achieved by the conscious and autonomous activity of the masses, and not through the seizure of power by a semi-military bureaucratic party establishing its own dictatorship.

(4) A new revolutionary organization is necessary, which will not aim at leading and imposing itself on the working class, but which will act as an instrument of the proletarian struggle. This organization must be based on proletarian democracy. The rank and file members must not simply be executants in the hands of a bureaucratic apparatus but must themselves determine the orientation and activity of the organization in all its aspects.

We would be glad to get in touch with you and to send you further information as well as material published by the groups mentioned. The revised document referred to above will be sent to those who ask for it, and their comments will be studied with care.

We hope that we will be able to collaborate with you in the reconstruction of an international revolutionary socialist movement.

Yours fraternally,

POUVOIR OUVRIER (France)

SOCIALISM REAFFIRMED (Great Britain)

UNITA PROLETARIA (Italy)

POUVOIR OUVRIER BELGE (Belgium)

Please write to: 'SOCIALISME OU BARBARIE', 42 rue Rene Boulanger,
Paris X - France.

or to: 'SOLIDARITY', c/o E. Morse, 183 Beech Lane,
Lower Earley, Reading - England.

Zak-cloth and hashes

MUSIC REVIEW No. 1
'THE PARTY SYMPHONY'

Composer unknown. First performed in Labour Party, where regularly replayed with only minor variations. Boringly long. Usually acted in three movements - plus at least one motion or resolution.

1st movement: OPENING AND CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS. (Andante vivace).

Opus starts with discrete shuffling of four chairs. Swells over several minutes to crescendo from all present (about a quarter of those who should be). Aim is to drown solo intonation from Chairman proclaiming 'we are already late and will take the minutes as read'.

2nd movement: SECRETARY'S REPORT. (Allegro, finale presto).

Further solo from Chairman introduces Secretary. Secretary is old hack 'with 30 years' experience in the movement'. He trips on staccato, attempting to complete report before mumblings from Women's Section Delegate can crystallise into 'point of order'.

Performs smoothly and confidently, telling us nothing in particular at remarkable length. New mutterings from assembly, punctuated by occasional discordant chords from delegates who have discovered they have come to the wrong meeting or who just hate Secretary. Secretary swells volume, overpowering din in series of immense codas. (Sometimes performs entirely in code, thus eliminating all causes of discord). Movement ends in general confusion with conflicting calls for: resignation of Secretary, fight for Clause Four, implementation of Scarborough decisions, reversal of decision on H-bomb, municipalisation of sewers and all-out effort at Party unity.

INTERMEZZO: THE MOTION. (Infernale).

After long discussion as to whether in order or not, the Motion is introduced as fumbling solo by oldest delegate. Takes ten minutes of the five allowed. Moderato confuso from Chairman who declares motion seconded. Screeching sounds from audience suggest this too may be out of order (This part of symphony sometimes played in reverse, by accident. No one usually notices).

(continued p. 20)

LETTERS

SWEATED LABOUR

July 4, 1961.

Dear Friend,

I was interested in the article 'All-Night Cafe' in the last issue of your paper. I would like to make contact with other comrades, especially any younger ones who are like myself in catering.

Some time ago I wrote to the 'Manchester Evening News', a paper which has recently exposed the appallingly low wages laid down by the Catering Wages Act in this country. I am now enclosing evidence for your paper. This is in the form of a letter I received last April from the Ministry of Labour.

You will see what a scandal this wage slavery is, as laid down by the Minister's own Councils for unorganized workers.

I am desirous that bad conditions (£6.15.6 for a 44 hrs week!) should get as much publicity as possible. You are most welcome to use my letter and reproduce the wages chart.

Yours sincerely,

V. Turner,
Southport.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR - WAGES INSPECTORATE

NORTH WESTERN REGION - ALBERT BRIDGE HOUSE

BRIDGE STREET - MANCHESTER 3.

20th April, 1961.

Dear Sir,

The Wages Regulation (Unlicensed Place of Refreshment) Order.

I refer to your enquiry concerning your employment under the above-named order.

In reply, I have to inform you that, from the information furnished, you are being adequately paid. The following calculation of hours (without any deduction for meal breaks) and remuneration due illustrates that your gross wages are being paid in conformity with the above-named Order.

	7.am to 7.pm rate	7.pm to 11.pm rate	Sunday rate
Sunday			8
Monday	7		
Wednesday	3	4	
Thursday	7		
Friday	3	4	
Saturday	4	4	
24 @ 2/10 ¹ / ₄ d.			8 @ 3/6 ³ / ₄ d.

Total gross wages due = £6. 15. 6d. per week.

Yours faithfully,

H. Harrison
(for Senior Wages Inspector (West))

MUSIC REVIEW (cont'd from p.18)

Climax to symphony now approaching. 'Motion' theme rises simultaneously and persistently from all quarters, including caretaker's cat. Deafening apotheosis of points and counterpoints. Prolonged fart from Treasurer reduces exchange to a muttered scherzo, during which Chairman surprisingly announces: 'Motion passed'. Great satisfaction felt by all.

3rd movement: FINALE. (Con viaggio al bistro).

Work dies reluctantly (like Labour Party itself) amid confusion and cat-calls suggesting resignation, integration, concentration, elucidation, elimination, expulsion and various other fates worse than death. Spontaneous mass movement develops in direction of pub. Trots desperately seek to keep symphony going long after closing time, but are soon isolated. Loud concluding wail from all winds suggests joint theme of defeat at the next General Election, further alienation of orchestra and masses, and yet another increase in the price of bitter.

E. MORSE.

THE INDIGNANT HEART (continued from p. 10)

was called in by the party and told to direct his group into the N.A.A.C.P. He protested and tried to hold the Party to the Negro resolution. Most of his group were already members of the N.A.A.C.P. and sick of its 'do-nothing' politics. The leadership replied: 'Damn the resolution. We're talking about this group going into the N.A.A.C.P. Will you obey discipline or not?'. Matthew left the organization at last, unable to see any likeness between the Trotskyites and a workers' party.

His comrades now are his workmates on the production line. Together they will fight the company and the union leaderships to gain control of their own labour power and to give human meaning to their experience. Having escaped from the procrustean bed of Trotskyism Matthew refuses to 'give a big program about the world revolution and freedom for this or that and so on'. What he is fighting for is implicit in the total pattern of his life. He will not simplify it into a slogan. For, as Yeats warned his countrymen in 1936:

'Parnell came down the road,
he said to a cheering man:
Ireland shall get her freedom
and you still break stone'.

NORMA MEACOCK

FROM CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE TO SOCIAL REVOLUTION. (cont'd from p.2)

The minor factions of the political Left are no less irrelevant. The Communist Party will support the Russians to the last bang. The Trotskyists are busily contorting on the political tight rope, defending 'workers' bombs and tests. Other groups are dissipating their energy in pointless resolution-mongering in deserted Labour Party wards. A new movement is meanwhile developing elsewhere.

2. BREAK-THROUGH?

In the last few months the Committee of 100 has grown considerably in influence. It has organized several highly successful demonstrations. Even the Establishment is showing signs of concern at its increasing influence. They have resorted to an Act of 1361 * to intimidate 49 leaders of the Committee, charging them with 'incitement to commit a breach of the peace' on September 17.

What is the significance of this new trend? What are the sources of its strength? What are its limitations? How can the movement be developed to the point where it becomes a serious challenge to the Government? What promise does it hold for the future?

Its strength stems from several sources. Firstly it proposes something more than marching every 12 months to Aldermaston or back, than sending letters to the Prime Minister or to sundry MPs, or than passing resolutions (destined for special waste-paper baskets at Transport House).

Secondly it has developed outside of - and to a considerable extent as an alternative to - the traditional organizations of the 'Left'. Thirdly the movement has developed profoundly democratic and potentially revolutionary methods of organization, which ensure a high level of participation of its members.

Four years of marching, in increasing numbers, has achieved publicity for our aims, but little else. Stalinist campaigns by post-cards, signatures and petitions for 'Summit Talks' or 'Negotiations' have proved quite futile. We are nearer to war today than at any time in the last 15 years. So much for appealing to leopards to change their spots!

* This Act was passed following the 'Statute of Labourers' (1350) and before the Wat Tyler revolt of 1380. It was a vicious piece of class legislation, directed mainly at the peasantry. Not quite the right legislation to use against Earl Russell and Lord Boyd-Orr!

Why has the new movement developed outside the established organizations? Few would deny the feeling of indifference, if not contempt, experienced today for all traditional groupings on the Left. None of these organizations seem, even remotely, to come to grips with the preoccupations of ordinary people. All mirror various facets of Established Society, either East or West (and there is little basic difference!). Many people reject this society as meaningless and irrational, if not as frankly odious. No real 'alternatives' are presented by Tory, Liberal, Labour or Communist! All are corrupt, dishonest, seeking to use people and firmly in the hands of bureaucratic, self-seeking cliques. All vaunt what they will do - if only people accord them support, votes, money or time. None of them call on people to think and act for themselves, to have confidence only in themselves and in their collective will and strength. In all of them the leaders know best. Ossified ideologies conceal firmly entrenched social interests.

The political 'Left' today is a battlefield littered with hundreds of thousands of political corpses, disillusioned Labour Party supporters, expelled Communist dissidents of various vintage, victims of recurrent Trotskyist faction fights - all of them ground into despair, apathy or ineffectiveness through an allegiance to principle in an era which only seeks conformity and 'discipline' (a blind obedience to the decisions of others).

Is it surprising that under these circumstances people (and youth especially) should be seeking a totally new banner? The Committee of 100 unambiguously proclaims an irreconcilable struggle against all nuclear weapons. People are coming to a group which does not seek to use their idealism and their desire to live in order to inveigle them into supporting actions and causes entirely alien to their way of thinking. The Committee does not boast of its strength, of its knowledge, of its organizing ability or sincerity or tactical know-how, of what it will do, of how it will solve the problems of the hour. It calls on people to take the solution of the most urgent problem confronting them into their own hands. This emphasis on militant mass-consciousness and on autonomous mass action are entirely progressive.

3. ORGANIZATION

Centralisation and bureaucratisation are today increasingly manifest features of all social and political life. But here we find something totally different. We vividly recall the first meetings of the Committee we attended. They were not dominated from above. More time was given to the floor than to the platform. No self-appointed

bureaucracy was imposing its will on those present. This was a collective movement in which real and permanent contact was maintained between 'leaders' and 'led'. The composition of the platform varied from meeting to meeting. Decisions were elaborated in common, before the event. Criticism was at times sharp but always constructive. People sensed that what they felt and wished would be more effective here than anywhere else. They were therefore prepared to rise to heights of self-sacrifice, of organizing ability and of initiative that will never be understood by the politically alienated members of most 'traditional' organizations.

This breakdown of barriers between 'leaders' and 'led' has immense implications. It ensures first of all a genuine 'tapping' of the total collective initiative and of total collective experience. No one feels that his ideas will be sneered at, denounced or paternalistically dismissed by 'comrades with more experience in the movement'. People speak up. There is an unceasing flow of new ideas, some perhaps rather esoteric but many stimulating and practical. In this atmosphere a meeting can usually discipline itself without rulings from the chair; it can cope, gently but firmly, with both cranks and show-offs.

Committee members repeatedly emphasize that no person, no group of people are indispensable. This has important results. It ensures a constant supply of volunteers ready to replace those who may be arrested or who fall by the wayside. As the movement develops the Authorities will certainly resort to further intimidation. Decentralized organization is ideally suited to cope with this. Layer upon layer of rank-and-filers will step into the breaches. Such can never be the case in organizations where power is tightly centralized, where initiative from below is frowned upon, and where the prevailing idea is that the leadership must be protected at all costs.

There are numerous examples of revolutionary organizations being decapitated, at crucial periods, by a few judicious arrests: the Blanquists at the time of the Paris Commune, the Bolsheviks after 1905, the German Communist Party after Hitler's accession to power, the Trotskyists during World War II. Arrests may embarrass a genuine mass movement, but will not break it... for the simple reason that 'the masses are everywhere' while the forces of repression are not.

Some of the organizational conceptions of the Committee have immense implications concerning the new type of social structure which will one day supersede our present class society. This social structure will be based on elected and revocable committees (the workers councils). If the present movement evolves towards this type of organization it will have solved in practice one of the most important problems of revolutionary organization. The elimination of divisions between 'leaders' and 'led', already visible to some extent in the Committee of 100, will ensure that when the masses achieve power, this power will remain theirs, not that of a bureaucracy allegedly acting 'on their behalf'.

At this stage we may anticipate certain criticisms. We will be informed that 'efficiency' demands a closely knit organization, that the forces of coercion arraigned against us are highly centralised, that this demands a similar degree of centralisation on our own part. 'Common sense', we will be told, demands both hierarchical organization and a rigid division of labour.

We would reply that to date the practical experience of the Committee suggests that decentralisation and a reliance on mass initiative are in fact efficient. People were mobilised at very short notice for the demonstrations outside the Russian and American embassies. All that 'common sense' and 'traditional' methods of organization can 'efficiently' produce is... just another organization of the 'traditional' type. And such hierarchical organizations will never introduce a genuinely democratic society.

There is moreover a profound confusion among radical thinkers between a democratically decided division of tasks - which organizations of any size will inevitably have to confront at some stage or other - and a permanent division of labour which rapidly leads to bureaucratic degeneration and to a drying up of initiative.

4. ATTITUDES TO CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

It is high time this whole subject was submitted to an 'agonising reappraisal'. Dogmatism abounds and there is too little willingness to learn from the development of the movement itself. When opponents of the Bomb discuss civil disobedience two different attitudes inevitably emerge. These appear to be polar opposites. They often combine to render the movement ineffectual.

One attitude is that of the self-styled 'Marxist' who proclaims that since class society is based on violence (which is true) any attempt to change its features by non-violent means is doomed to failure. This completely 'unmarxist' reluctance to see the stages through which a revolutionary movement must develop leads, by easy steps, to labelling any movement which advocates non-violent civil disobedience as 'pacifist', 'anarchist' or 'petty-bourgeois'. The movement may then be dismissed as politically irrelevant and 'a diversion from the class struggle'. Such armchair 'revolutionaries' abstain from the struggle in the streets on the ground that its present methods are inadequate!

The other attitude is that of the 'dyed-in-the-wool' pacifist ('passivist' could perhaps be a better designation). Under no circumstances will he envisage methods that go beyond his limited horizon. Nothing must clash with his hallowed beliefs. His 'thinking' ends with what great pacifist thinkers have said or written in the past. The dogma is immutable. As with the self-styled 'Marxist' this is again an attempt to pour the lava of a developing and living movement into a rigid and narrow mould, cast many years ago...

5. METHODS OF STRUGGLE

The controversy over the respective merits of 'violent' and 'non-violent' methods of struggle is meaningless. Violence is never to be advocated for its own sake. Throughout history it has invariably been first resorted to by privileged minorities as a means of defending their power and wealth. Immense majorities have always been forcibly dispossessed. The real problem is how disinherited and disfranchised majorities can best assert their rights.

As the movement against the Bomb develops and becomes a genuine mass movement the coercive forces of the State will increasingly be used against it. New ideas may well emerge on the basis of this new experience. For the time being non-violent civil disobedience is the only form of struggle that can seriously be envisaged.

The greatest danger confronting the movement from its 'pacifist' wing is not a reluctance to transcend non-violent methods of struggle. It is a failure to appreciate the full potentialities and implications of non-violent civil disobedience. To renounce the use of force does not mean to renounce the use of brains.

Within the accepted framework of non-violent civil disobedience some methods are more effective than others. Some are token gestures, in no way embarrassing to the authorities. Others are highly embarrassing to the government, because holding it up to ridicule or compelling it to resort to methods repugnant to millions of people. Some acts are in the nature of individual moral catharsis. Others are socially purposeful because they expose the fraudulent nature of the laws and institutions of contemporary society.

More specifically, sit-downs should not be planned or organized to make things as convenient as possible for the authorities. To be meaningful civil disobedience should be disobedience at every level.

If the Committee as a whole disregards the Commissioner's instructions (by holding a demonstration in a banned area) then individuals must be prepared to disregard the instructions of individual constables, concerning what they should do in a given street. If the democratically decided objective is to block a street, every means possible should be adopted, short of violence, to achieve this end.

The marshals at such demonstrations should see themselves as responsible for the most effective use of the forces available, not as agencies for the imposition of police decisions on the demonstrators. Too many recent demonstrations have had their potential impact blunted by a certain type of self-appointed marshal, with a 'bureaucratic-conservative' outlook, doubtless acquired in some 'traditional' organization. Marshals should never act in opposition to the wishes of those they are 'marshaling'. Their authority derives from them alone. They should constantly bear in mind that the movement is a self-disciplined one, not one to be disciplined by them. The only occasion warranting intervention is when obvious transgression has occurred to the accepted canon of non-violence.

The whole question of the extent of non-cooperation following arrest needs urgent and continuous discussion. Several problems are involved. The movement must develop as a mass movement. Determined minorities must not be too far ahead. On the other hand its development must not be retarded to the pace of the slowest. Increasingly effective civil disobedience does not simply mean increasing the numbers of people prepared to commit a particular breach of the law. In four years the Aldermaston March increased from a few hundred to a hundred thousand. This was useful, but not decisive. Every stage of the present campaign, every new demonstration should go a little further than the previous one. More people should be involved. But those involved should always be prepared to consider new methods of struggle.

Will the fundamental objectives of the movement be brought any nearer when hundreds of people sit down as a token gesture - but when arrested cooperate amiably with the authorities? Or will this only cause an epidemic of lumbago in Scotland Yard? Non-cooperation extended over several hours - with refusal to 'sort oneself out' on the seats of the Black Marias, refusal to get out of the vans at the police stations, refusal to walk to the charge room, refusal to give one's name and address, could rapidly paralyse the authorities. To be fully effective this could only be carried out on a mass scale, preferably involving thousands or tens of thousands. The idea should be popularised.

The question of pleading 'not guilty' should also be looked into. A plea of 'not guilty' requires that the prosecution present evidence. To compel the prosecution to prove guilt is a perfectly legitimate endeavour. In practice this means that the policemen res-

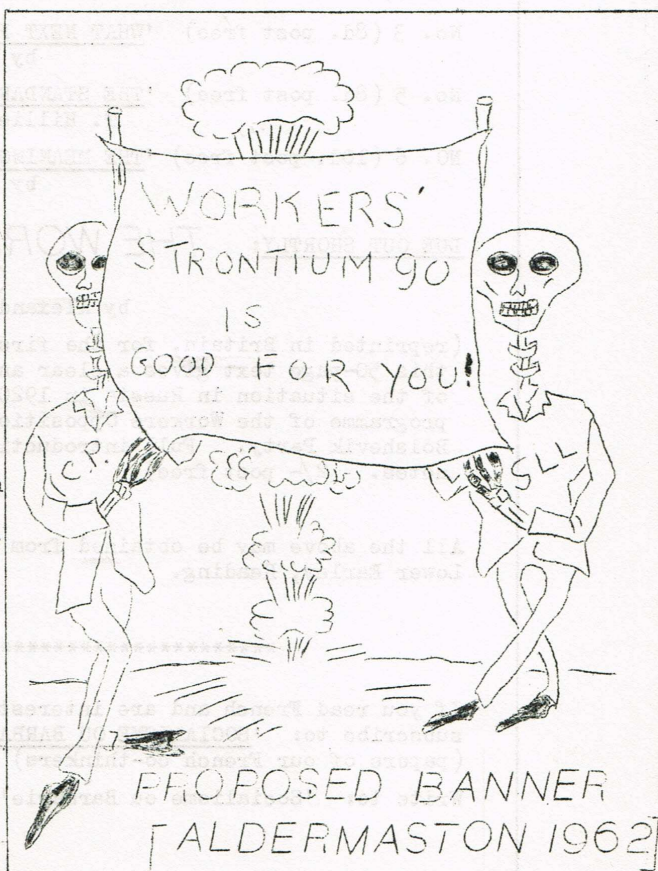
possible for carrying out particular arrests must be present in court. It cannot be another. This takes time. The court could not pass sentences like a sausage factory makes sausages, as happened following the April 29 sit-down. The arrests themselves have to be carried out far more carefully if it is known that pleas of 'not guilty' are likely to be entered. This again is easier if the demonstrators are herded together and far more difficult if they are scattered.

Many other methods will occur to people as the struggle develops. And develop it must, until the government is incapable of governing any longer, until disaffection with every aspect of its policy is rampant amongst all classes of society, until its right to rule and speak on behalf of ordinary people is revealed as a monstrous fraud. The ingenuity and resourcefulness of ordinary people, in a cause which they feel their own, knows no bounds. Provided it is not bureaucratically strangled from above it will always be one up on the authorities. The outcome of this struggle could be an autonomous mass movement, imbued with a radical consciousness and seeing the achievement of its ends in terms of its own constant mobilisation and activity. Such a movement could well bring closer the revolutionary transformation modern society is so urgently in need of, if it is to survive.

(To be concluded)

-- The second half of this article will discuss civil disobedience in relation to the working class struggle.

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