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BIG FLAME  
REPRINT.

WHAT NEXT

FOR

ENGINEERS?

KEN WELLER.



We're reprinting Ken Weller's What Next for Engineers because it's even more relevant now than when it was written, nearly 10 years' ago.

Weller spells out what Ford workers have discovered in the 10 week strike - that union officials don't have the same interests as their shop floor members.

And he points the way to a new approach to the present get tough line of Halewood management. That is vital now since it looks as if Fords are out to repeat what happened in Dagenham in 1962.

There they suspended a steward for holding a meeting in the factory which provoked an all-out strike in the PTA. Fords then declared 600 redundancies. Finally, all but 17 stewards were taken back - no thanks to the officials who consistently called on the men to go back to work so 'they could get negotiations going'. Job organisation at Dagenham was broken and management set about depressing wages and conditions. It was six years before there was a big revolt - the seamstresses' strike - but by then Ford workers were making the cheapest cars in the country for the lowest wages.

Why do we expect them to try it on again?

First, Halewood stands out as the most militant of all Fords British Empire, and it produces fewer cars with a higher rate of absenteeism. Halewood stewards and militant rank and filers are the biggest obstacle to Fords making more cars with fewer men. Because that's what they must do to overtake the other three firms' sales.

Second, Fords have done their best to provoke an all-out strike at Halewood, but on their terms: a work force scared by redundancy threats and divided by stick and carrot discipline (stick in one section, carrot in another). At present, the militants are divided. Nearly all realise the danger of an all-out strike, especially so soon after a 10 week effort. Some are ready to take the chance while others would rather ride it out in the hope of coming back on top later. We are not so sure that there will be a later. What's happening at Halewood is the softening up before the Industrial Relations Bill becomes law.

This pamphlet gives us some clues for avoiding that dilemma altogether. The first is, beware of the officials. When management get away with murder - Dagenham 62 or Pilkingtons 70 - union officials are the accessory after the fact. The safest way to deal with them is RELY ON YOUR OWN STRENGTH.

The second clue is about tactics. The go home strike weapon has just about been flogged to death. Bosses much prefer a strike - especially if they have time to stockpile - to a struggle inside the factory.

The factory is their most valuable possession and a struggle inside directly threatens it.

They know that they have a better chance of breaking a strike by threats and propaganda when workers sit at home isolated from each other. Inside the factory, you stick together and are the stronger for it. Finally, while Fords can afford a strike they can't afford organised, unexpected disruption which plays havoc with production schedules.

Some Halewood workers have begun to think about what would happen if they stayed inside to fight and if they stayed inside when suspended or laid-off. In other words, there's a completely new situation at Halewood which needs thinking about new ways to deal with it.

Go slows, work to rule, non-cooperation, short lightning strikes and sit-ins - these are just some of the tactics that can be used inside. We're not putting forward a blueprint, because different situations need different tactics.

Here are some examples of what has been done on these lines.

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF MAY, PTA NIGHT SHIFT WORKERS LAID SIEGE to the administration block. They piled off their section, ran up the stairs and bundled into the lifts, got into some offices, besieged a manager and created havoc. The security men were shit scared.

DOING THE SNAKE AT FIATS, TURIN, ITALY: IF THERE'S TROUBLE IN A SECTION, EVERYBODY DOWN TOOLS, WALKS OFF TO THE NEXT SECTION - MAKING AS MUCH NOISE AS THEY CAN - AND CALLS IT out. Then together, they march through the plant collecting more and more workers on the way. Finally, there's a mass meeting to decide what to do about management (and the scabs). In this way, it is impossible for management to isolate one section from the others, since trouble in one section is immediately spread to others.

WORKERS HAVE BEEN OCCUPYING THE HUGE RENAULT FACTORY IN PARIS SINCE MAY 7. MANAGEMENT HAD TRIED TO LAY OFF THE 20,000 WORKERS DUE TO A SHORTAGE OF PARTS, BUT THEY REFUSED AND OCCUPIED THE FACTORY. LATER THEY PUT IN DEMANDS FOR MORE pay and for changes in the grading system. They have recieved mass support from many other French workers.

AT VAUXHALLS OF LUTON, IN ANSWER TO A SPEED-UP OF THE TRACK THE MEN CONTINUED TO PERFORM THE SAME NUMBER OF OPERATIONS PER HOUR. THIS MEANT THAT ALTHOUGH MORE CARS PASSED, SAY 105 instead of 100, only 100 operations would be completed. But since each man might choose a different five cars to ignore, the end product was 105 potentially defective vehicles, all of which had to be elaborately checked by inspectors.

Variations on all these examples have probably been used in Halewood before now. But now it's necessary to extend them and organise them.

Finally, communication. One thing that stands out at Halewood is the lack of information and links between sections and plants. Many workers get their account of a dispute from a foreman or a supervisors bulletin. But if sections are not going to be isolated and forced to fight alone, regular, reliable communication is vital.

We've discussed producing a regular weekly bulletin with stewards and rank and file workers. So far, everyone is in favour of it. Some people have said they will contribute to it or distribute it. If you are interested in this or would like to talk over this pamphlet contact

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# WHAT NEXT

# FOR ENGINEERS ?

## 1. THE KEY ISSUES

Most of the political parties and groups have their own cure-all programmes for the various industries, including engineering. This draft is not just another attempt to prescribe one more. The only solution to immediate industrial problems, and for that matter to the actual achievement of a socialist society, is the emergence of a strong, self-confident, politically conscious, national rank-and-file movement. Such a movement must be based on shop and factory organizations. In our opinion, revolutionary socialists must therefore encourage the building of powerful shop organizations, fully controlled by the workers themselves.

We consider that those demands which lead to an actual increase of working class power in the workshop by extending their control over working conditions, the taking over of what the boss calls 'managerial functions' are of basic importance.

In many cases long struggles are waged, the control of which is in the hands of bureaucrats who make no sacrifice themselves. At the end of such struggles the relations between worker and boss (and worker and trade union mogul) remain unchanged. The great London bus strike of 1958 was an example of this. The history of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers is an illustration of the attitude of trade union leaders to strikes which threaten the boss' 'right' to control. The only major

strike which this union has recognized for many years was a strike against another union!

Demands which challenge the employers' control of the workshop are of primary importance. Those which do not (such as purely economic demands) whilst very necessary and inevitable, are of secondary importance.

Because of the differences between various factories it is foolish to attempt to lay down a programme which can serve as a single industrial blueprint. Demands which might be progressive and useful in one factory or even one shop can be reactionary and useless in other factories or shops. Conditions and the consciousness of the workers differ quite radically from place to place.

## 2. THE TRADE UNIONS

The present-day trade unions are, by their very nature, absolutely opposed to real job organization. Fundamentally sectional in character, whether they be craft unions or industrial unions, they bring one group of workers against another.

For example the trade union bureaucrat tries to solve redundancy by advocating the sacking of non-unionists or even of members of other unions.

Controlled by full-time well-heeled

bureaucrats, whose conditions of life are far nearer to those of the boss than to those of the workers they are supposed to represent, the ordinary worker is excluded from any say or control of the union's activity. Within the unions, the capitalist method of conducting business predominates, with the big boss instructing the 'ignorant' workers of what is best for them.

All this does not mean that we are against union work: far from it. We understand the importance of the struggle within the unions to win many workers from their narrow craft outlook to a wider understanding of the real struggle.

About nine million workers are organized in trade unions. Only a relatively small proportion of this number are properly organized at job level. The union leaders are perfectly happy for this to continue. The history of the Shop Stewards Movement shows that the officials have always opposed it, considering the stewards movement as an usurpation of and a challenge to their authority. Many unions do not even recognize shop stewards. The Metal Mechanics for instance attempt to have their shop stewards appointed by the full-time officials. Officials often play the employers' game, using one section of workers against another and appealing to craft interests or to 'the interests of the union', as opposed to the interests of the workers as a whole.

Between the factory committees and the full-time union officials there is a constant conflict which arises because of their differing interests.

Militants must struggle to make factory and shop organization independent of the control of trade

union bureaucrats. The union officials must be kept out of the factories. There have been many cases where officials have set members of one union against another and thereby smashed strong factory committees, reducing them to impotent and demoralised bodies.

The union officials practice between themselves a firm solidarity. Their private meetings often decide where to sell out. They work in absolute unison, without the workers they claim to represent having any say or even knowledge of what they are doing.

In most cases the full-time officials regard their job as that of arbitrators between workers and management. This is of course acting as personnel managers, but paid by the workers!

Worthy of close attention is the cooperation between the union bosses and the employers: cooperation often aimed at weakening shop organization. The T.U.C.'s suggestion to compile black lists of 'trouble makers' and to keep them out of key factories is a most disgraceful illustration. At Ford's new factory in Liverpool, the A.E.U. and N.U.G.M.W. agreed that the workers should be employed at District rates, far below those paid at Dagenham. In return these unions were to be given priority in 'organizing' the workers. Some officials gave the employer full cooperation in keeping the works 'nice and peaceful' (Vauxhall's is a notorious example of this). In return the unions get special facilities in collecting union dues. Recently the campaign against the semi-independent national combines of shop stewards such as the power and car workers combines has been stepped up.

The struggle against the bureaucrats cannot be won by fighting them on their own chosen ground, according to rules which they determine. Nor can it be won by filling their waste paper baskets with resolutions. Only through the building of strong independent industrial organizations of the rank and file can the union bureaucrats be broken and by-passed.

It is valueless for militants to hold full-time trade union posts except on the same basis as a revolutionary would sit in the House of Commons: to expose it and to use the position as a propaganda platform. However I can think of no cases of this having been achieved. Even if it were attempted most unions already have, or would soon make, provisions to remove such 'agitators'.

The trade union officials are not the only 'trojan horse' within the working class movement. There are many trade unionists of the narrow craft type who see trade union organization as a sort of fence, whose main purpose is to keep other workers out. This mentality is fostered by both officials and boss. It is absolutely reactionary and must be rooted out.

### 3. TRADE UNION

### AMALGAMATION

The problem of working class unity will not be solved by the amalgamation of trade unions into one big union with one big bureaucracy. This demand in my opinion is a red herring. We already have before us the awful example of previous amalgamations. The National Union of General and Municipal Workers, the Transport and

General Workers Union and the AEU are all the result of scores of fusions. It is difficult to see what benefits the membership have got out of these fusions. What is certain is that these unions became even more monolithic and undemocratic.

The stewards' organizations which unite workers on the job are far more important and valuable than amalgamations which unite full-time officials.

## 4. CLASS AND PARTY

The various parties of the left which claim to support the shop stewards' movement often have a characteristic attitude towards it. They see it as a sort of pack horse to be fed with carrots or coaxed into carrying their political tendency or sect into positions of power. They are blind and deaf to the fundamentally socialist content of an independent working class movement in and of itself. Indeed it would be true to say that they do not want an independent movement. When they use the term they mean 'independent of everyone else but them'!

The Communist Party has a chequered history in this respect. Its members in industry include many of the most class conscious militants. Its industrial groups provide a framework for struggle. But it has consistently subordinated the rank-and-file movement to its various electoral manoeuvres in the unions.

In 1958 the Shop Stewards Committees at Firth Browns (Sheffield) and Fords (Dagenham) jointly called a National Shop Stewards Conference. The

Communist Party stewards play a leading role in both factories. The Executive of the AEU banned the Conference. After the industrial department of the Communist Party had discussed the matter, the organizing committee withdrew the invitations, leaving Bro. Caborn, the convenor at Firth Browns, to carry the can. He was suspended from holding office for a year.

The Power Workers Combine was formed some time ago to fight for improved conditions in the power industry. As usual, the reaction of the full-time officials was rapid and hostile. The unions (ETU included) declared that following the last settlement the Power Combine was no longer necessary. On Nov. 14, 1960, Frank Foulkes, 'Communist' President of the ETU and Chairman of the Electricity Supply Industry National Joint Council stated: 'unofficial bodies are not in the best interests of the industry'. Bro. Wake, secretary of the Power Combine, was then disciplined by the AEU. Bro. Berridge, Communist Party member of the Executive, allowed this to be done without audible protest. Bro. Wake resigned as secretary of the Combine. Leading Communist Party members of the National Committee of the Combine later moved suspension of all meetings of that body until... August 1961!

One must not harbour any illusions as to the probable attitude of the trade union leaderships when confronted by any attempt by workers to prepare their own struggle and to wage it themselves. The union leaders will oppose this by every conceivable means - by cunning and by calumny, by gentle persuasion, by brutal refusal and by time-consuming manoeuvres. Workers seeking to act in an independent manner will rapidly come into conflict with the union bureaucracy.

In this struggle those who see the problems in the clearest manner can play a decisive role. They

can warn against bureaucratic manoeuvres and help outwit them. They can systematically answer the 'arguments' of the trade union leaders. They can themselves provide channels of information as to what is going on elsewhere, whenever the official trade union machinery prevents the dissemination of such information.

If small groups of militants get together on this basis in workshops and offices with the simple objectives of breaking the near monopoly at present exercised by the unions on information and on communication between workers, and of permitting workers freely to express their needs and wishes, they will soon get the hearing and support of many workers. Workers are suspicious of professional agitators, who import from outside slogans obviously made elsewhere. But they will listen to people from among their own ranks who are trying to express what the majority are thinking and feeling.

We are therefore in favour of a revolutionary organization which brings the experience of one section of the class to another, which tries to bring out the deeper lessons of these experiences and which itself participates to the greatest possible degree in the day-to-day struggle of the working class.

## 5. INDEPENDENT ACTION

There is more nonsense written and spoken about disputes than on any other industrial question. Many 'militants' and 'left-wingers' only demand of the union leaderships that they declare more disputes official.

The problem is a much more fundamental one. We believe that the control of a dispute should be in the hands of the workers involved. What we want is workers' control and management of disputes now as well as eventual workers' management of industry.

The trade union officials are increasingly recognizing strikes official as a method of intervening in disputes, in which otherwise they would have no influence.

In many strikes the unions have declared the dispute official, so that workers can be instructed to go back to work. In other cases payment of dispute benefit has been made conditional on the men returning to work.

The union does not grant dispute benefit at all in the vast majority of cases. When it does it is usually weeks after the men have returned to work.

An illustration of this was the dispute at John Brown Land Polders in January 1960. The men struck work over the victimisation of the convenor. After waiting for about eight weeks (presumably hoping that the men would be starved out) the Executive Council of the AEU declared the strike official. Very soon after this they instructed the men to go back to work, without their convenor. The men refused and stayed out for a further four weeks. They won the strike. The E.C. then refused to pay them strike pay for the period which followed their instructions to return to work. A similar sequence of events took place at Handley Page in April 1959. The officials got the men to go back by saying that they were certain to win the case by negotiation. Bro. Knight, the convenor who had been blatantly victimised, is still out on the stones.

It is not unknown for officials verbally to support disputes in conditions which they know doom them to defeat. This often has the effect of weakening job organization. A militant factory is a thorn in the side of the officials as well as the boss. All that the officials want of their members is that they should pay their dues and shut up. A classic example was the London bus dispute of 1937.

The rank-and-file movement on the London buses which appeared to be so firmly based was outmanoeuvred and smashed by Bevin in the 'Coronation strike' of 1937. He deliberately allowed the rank-and-file controlled Central Bus Committee to take over the strike in order that they might discredit themselves. Similar rank-and-file success to that achieved among the London busmen had not been won among the tram and trolley men, nor among the provincial busmen, and all these groups were effectively held back by Bevin, making the defeat of the strike inevitable. The leaders of the rank and file could then be ousted from office and their organization broken up.' (Brian Pearce: Some Past Rank and File Movements).

To us, it is a matter of secondary importance whether a strike is declared official or not. What is important is that the men in dispute should themselves decide their actions. By this we mean what the objectives of the struggle should be, the methods to be used to achieve these objectives, any change of tactics in the course of the struggle, the question of accepting or rejecting any proposals by the management (or the union officials) and of course the basic question of whether

and under what conditions to return to work. It is all very well moaning about officials selling out disputes, but you won't stop sell-outs by electing 'progressive' officials. The only way to stop betrayals is for the workers themselves to decide when to stay out and when to go back.

## 6. REDUNDANCY.

This difficult and complex problem cannot be solved by the loud shouting of simple slogans. The struggle against redundancy requires a high level of consciousness and militancy on the part of the workers involved. The basic demands should be 'No Sackings' and 'The Sharing of Available Work'. These however raise further problems. We give below what we consider to be some useful suggestions and ideas worthy of discussion.

1. The restriction of output by the workers themselves by the use of such methods as working to rule, overtime bans or taking one day off (or whatever is required) a week.

2. The widest solidarity action in the event of sackings. This means hitting the boss where it hurts most as well as at the actual factory where the redundancy occurs.

3. The control of hiring and firing by the men. There have already been actions taken on these lines. For example at Renault's London factory the men struck work because the firm practised victimization by refusing to give a well-known militant a job he should have had.

4. In the event of being defeated in the struggle against redundancy, the maintenance of the factory organization must be fought for. The demand of 'last in, first out' might have to be raised as an alternative to the flushing out of all the shop stewards and militants. This is an alternative if the workers are not prepared to strike for the more positive demands such as 'No sackings' and 'Share all available work'.

## 7. DISPUTES.

A symptom of the comparative disorientation of the movement is the unrealistic and unanalytical approach to disputes. To most militants the term dispute means only one thing: straightforward strike action. However there are many other methods of coercing the boss, some of them extremely effective in particular cases. Nowadays the pattern of a typical strike will be for the men to walk out, leaving one or two pickets (any more would be 'provocative'). The pickets endeavour peacefully to persuade scabs not to work, that is if the police will let them. Of course in face of this timidity the police become more and more arrogant.

We should study attentively some of the struggles in America and France during the thirties. It would benefit us to learn these lessons well. Where effective, 'stay-in' strikes should be used. There is little fear of blacklegs in such cases. The police are unlikely to attempt eviction with all the valuable machinery around.

Another tactic which was used effectively at Shell Mex House and elsewhere is mass picketing. This consists in putting the whole strike force across the gates, calling on the widest solidarity help from other sections of the working class. Other tactics include rigid go-slows or Canny. This has many similarities to a stay-in strike. The only difference is that the workers pretend to work and the firm has to pay them.

The use of these methods could help settle many of the present long drawn-out strikes very quickly. The failure to use different types of action is a sign of the deep penetration of the ideas of the bureaucrats into the movement. Such actions threaten their hold of the reins of the movement, just as they threaten the boss's management of the factories. The union bureaucrats have an absolute indifference to the sacrifices made by those in dispute. A good example of this was the London bus strike. Who can deny that with the effective support of other sections, even of the TGWU only, let alone the broader movement, the strike could have been won, and quickly? Yet the men were kept out for eight weeks. At the end there was no real change or gain.

New forms of struggle must be developed to fit the various situations facing workers at the present time. Facing up to this has been delayed for too long.

## 8. SOLIDARITY ACTION

To some the working man is a sort of robot, in whose head, at the word strike, a bell rings and a light flashes, and who then immediately,

without further thought, supports any and every action in sympathy. Understandably such people are often disappointed and yap about the apathy of the working class.

Of course workers are not like this. They think about things the way most other people do and their actions are guided by self-interest and emotion as well as thought. They don't often come out in support because some 'leader' says the word.

The development of widespread support for all class actions can only be based on the consciousness of the workers involved. This in turn rests on the information which they receive from other workers and on the links they have with them.

The trade union machines consciously and by their very nature divide and isolate workers. Industry is divided from industry, factory from factory, craft from craft, and workers of one country from workers in another.

To a certain extent the working class has built its own channels of communication. Action taken is usually a result of this. A good example was the Rootes strike of October 1960, when workers at Coventry, Canterbury, and Acton came out in support of the Parupp and Maberley men. The strike was led by the Rootes combine, and the officials played their usual role of persuading the men out in sympathy to go back 'pending negotiations'.

One of the most interesting aspects of this strike was, in our opinion, the way it showed the existence within the factories and combines, of a funny sort of double vision. On the one hand the men recognized the incapacity of the trade union officials and therefore built their own organizations quite independent of the bureaucrats. At the same time they retained a loyalty

towards the official machine which allowed the officials to step in and sell out the dispute.

This arises because on the job the constant disputation the workers have with the management over rates, conditions, etc., compel them to recognize the need for organization at factory level. Most of them are only conscious of the need for this independent movement in relation to the solving of ordinary factory problems. They view the struggle against redundancy and sackings as a national problem, i.e. outside their own compass. Lacking confidence in their own ability to solve such big and important problems they are willing to delegate their powers to the trade union officials.

This attitude and lack of confidence of the workers is reinforced by the actions and propaganda of the so-called advanced workers, particularly the Communist Party members. They invariably encourage the formation of inter-factory and combine committees and often occupy the leading positions in such committees. Their policy however is subordinated to the winning of positions inside the union apparatus, a tactic which involves the obtaining of alliances with 'left' bureaucrats and the protecting of their own positions inside the unions. A genuinely independent shop stewards' movement cannot exist however without entering into a thoroughly irreconcilable struggle against the union leadership. Such a struggle would jeopardize all the sought-for alliances and even the positions of the Stalinist officials. Communist Party members, however well-meaning, therefore encourage the illusions of the workers, develop their hopes that the officials will do the job for them and strengthen the workers' conservatism.

## 9. CONDITIONS OF WORK

There are many problems facing engineering workers; so many in fact that they cannot all be discussed here. But we can consider some of the major ones.

1. All attempts by the employers to bring in new types of machinery, or new methods of production must be resisted until agreement is reached with the workers involved. In the meantime there should be refusal to work new machines or use new methods.

2. Closely linked with the foregoing is the fight against the imposition of all forms of time and motion study, or work study, and the use of stop-watches or cine-cameras. This not only implies a defensive struggle against the use of those methods in new areas. It implies an aggressive struggle to root them out where they already exist, a far more difficult proposition.

3. Massive sub-contracting, whereby the employers by-pass relatively well organized factories by sending their work to small unorganized fly-by-night rat shops, who often produce work much cheaper, must be resisted. This struggle can take two complementary forms.

a) stopping the firm sending work out by the action of the men on the job, or by such methods as declaring the work black.

b) by the extension of job organization to the hundreds of thousands of unorganized engineering workers who sometimes work under terrible conditions.

How to solve the problem of organizing these shops? The most popular slogan advanced by the 'lefts' is for the unions to organize a recruiting drive. Quite candidly we consider this demand a waste of time. A more useful and feasible solution would be for groups of factory or combine committees to come together in particular areas and organize their own drives to develop job organization. Such activity would provide a useful and positive job for the rank-and-file committees. Certainly more useful than discussing whom to support in the next elections.

4. The launching of a campaign against the York Memorandum and similar agreements and their revocation if necessary by the unilateral action of the rank and file.

5. The disciplining and blacklisting of 'snideas', 'rate-busters' and all workers who break the decisions arrived at by their workmates. These men are traitors to their class and should be treated as such.

6. All agreements signed by the trade union leaders which contain sections promising trade union cooperation in bringing in new techniques and increasing labour productivity must be fought. Examples of such agreements are the Engineering Agreement of May 1957\* which in return for a few paltry shillings a week promised such cooperation and the Shipbuilding Agreement of January 1961.

This bargaining away of controls which have been established by workers over many years of struggle in return for a few bob, is yet another illustration of the fact that union officials and the men on the job have different interests.

These national agreements have to a large extent been ignored within the factories. In our view it is the job of militants consciously to fight against their implementation.

7. An extremely important group of demands are those which establish facilities for shop stewards such as absolute freedom of movement within the works. Such demands often have to be fought for against bitter managerial opposition. They include payment at average earnings for all time spent on shop business, and a whole series of associated demands such as full use of telephone facilities.

Freedom of movement by the shop steward is already quite widely established. The other demands are less generally accepted. Many firms try to isolate the shop steward by restricting his movements. Others make it very difficult for him to do any organizing because of the heavy loss of piecework earnings involved. These demands which go much further than the formal recognition by the firm of shop stewards are often the issue around which the first struggles in newly organized factories develop.

Ways and means must be sought of explaining and giving the widest publicity to these proposed measures so that they can be fought for by militants fully conscious of exactly what is involved.

\* The annex to agreement of 23rd May, 1957, states: 'The Executives of all the Manual Workers' Unions affiliated to the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions will use their full influence to bring to an end without delay all practices which are contrary to the well-being of the industry, including, for example: 1) unconstitutional stoppages of work, 2) embargoes on overtime, 3) all restrictions on output or earnings. This provision will not, by itself, be used to reduce piecework prices.'

contrary to the well-being of the industry, including, for example: 1) unconstitutional stoppages of work, 2) embargoes on overtime, 3) all restrictions on output or earnings. This provision will not, by itself, be used to reduce piecework prices.

## 10. DIVIDE AND RULE

The employers use many methods which have the effect of dividing the workers amongst themselves and putting them into competition with one another. Some of the more obvious examples can be fought:

1) Attempts must be made to control all piecework and bonus earnings and the pushing up of prices. The aim of this is eventually to destroy the piecework system, since by keeping production at a set level and pushing up prices, piecework will become meaningless.

Equally pernicious systems are those of gang and group bonus. Here the piecework is paid on the production of a group (as against individual piecework). This causes pressures by the faster workers on the slower ones who tend to reduce average earnings. This also often produces a division between the active shop steward and those he represents. While the shop steward is organizing and negotiating with the foreman, he is not producing. In highly organized and conscious shops, these problems can be overcome to a certain extent. Although gang bonus has a progressive aspect, namely that of equalizing all wages, it remains nevertheless a serious danger.

This is a difficult and controversial problem. I have heard very good militant support gang bonus in preference to individual bonus. The whole subject needs to be discussed. There appears however to be general agreement amongst the more advanced elements in the factories in favour of the abolition of piecework.

2) Strict supervision must be exerted on all overtime and all selective overtime stopped (the system where

only the 'blue-eyed boys' get the overtime). In the event of any dispute or redundancy overtime must be absolutely banned. The general aim in relation to overtime should be its total abolition as soon as possible.

One positive development in recent years has been the narrowing of the gap between skilled and semi-skilled workers. The apprentice-trained elite is playing a decreasingly important part. This development is to be welcomed, if only from the point of view that it breaks down the artificial barriers that divide workers.

Some employers also welcome these developments for entirely different reasons. They see the subdivision of tasks as largely eliminating the highly skilled men. Nowadays of course only a small section of skilled men have gone through the mystical palaver of an apprenticeship.

3) All staff and clerical grades should be consolidated together with the manual workers into the same combined shop stewards' committee. This committee should negotiate and speak for all. Workers should refuse to recognize the artificial separation of workers according to the colour of their collars.

4) All disputes between workers should be settled amongst themselves. The personnel or labour relations departments should be boycotted in these disputes. There must be no running to the foreman to settle disputes between workers.

5) Perhaps the most conscious and highly organized forms of 'divide and rule' are those which have been developed in some of the car factories, notably Standard Triumph and Fords.

The system developed there is constantly to break up work gangs and redivide the men up. Send one

man or group of men to one shop, others to another or even to an entirely different factory. This is being done constantly. The management are obviously prepared to accept the loss of production entailed in return for the weakening of job organization.

The struggle against these tactics is very important. These methods should be opposed by a struggle to maintain established gangs or work groups. The present position where the management can herd men like cattle from job to job is a sad commentary on the situation in industry which has developed as a result of the concentration on purely wages questions to the exclusion of all else.

6) The most important artificial division between workers are wage differentials. Every struggle which tends to decrease these differentials is worth supporting. One of the fundamentally progressive aspects of control of earnings by the men is the implied equalisation of wages.

## II. SHOP AND FACTORY ORGANISATION

The proposals given below are not in any way new. This does not however lessen their importance. Most of the proposals are already generally applied. Others are not.

The primary demand of factory organizations is that the employers should recognize them as the sole bodies representing their workers.

1) In every shop a shop committee should be elected on a section-

nal basis (that is by the various departments or sections in the shop). All decisions of this committee to be open to challenge and reversal at a shop meeting, which would in any case decide on all major questions. The shop stewards should be frequently elected, at shop meetings. Both the shop stewards and shop committee men should be subject to instant recall by the men they represent. Shop organizations should not recognize union boundaries.

2) There should be a combined Shop Stewards' Committee in every factory which would elect its own convenor. The shop stewards should regularly report to their shops on all decisions reached.

This committee would only take decisions on questions affecting the whole factory or several shops. The shops would have the widest autonomy. All major questions such as disputes, etc. should be voted on at mass meetings of the workers concerned.

3) Combine committees should be created, or strengthened where they already exist. These should cover a national company or industry, and discuss and take joint action on a national basis. These combines should eventually be linked into a National Federation of Combines Committees covering the whole engineering industry.

4) Shop, factory and combine funds should be established as widely as possible and be based on a regular levy of the workers represented. They will enable them not only to finance their day-to-day activities, but also to give financial aid to sectors in dispute.

5) It must be recognized that capitalism is international and that to fight it effectively the workers of the world must unite. The proposals

facing workers in Renaults in France and Volkswagen in Germany are similar to those faced by BMC workers in this country. The building of international links by and for the workers themselves is a very important task. In the past, workers who would pride themselves on their militancy have in fact blacklegged on their brothers abroad. A good example of this was the steel strike in the USA. Hundreds of thousands of tons of steel were shipped to America to help break the strike. This was covered by a conspiracy of silence, in which both employers and trade union leaders participated. So much steel was exported that car workers in this country went on short time. There was not a whisper of international solidarity action.

## 12. CONCLUSIONS

This article was written in an attempt to start a discussion amongst militants. But yapping is not enough. From discussion we must move into action.


We want to hear from all engineers who feel that they are in general agreement with the views put forward, or who feel that they form a basis for a useful discussion. By useful, I mean that can lead to effective action.

In our view one of the first tasks at the present moment is the creation of a modest bulletin written by and for engineering militants which would be independent of any political sect. The task of this bulletin would be to lay the basis of a future movement, by drawing together militants through the exchange of information and experience.

As links between workers strengthen, so will the solidarity action of the class. We call on all those workers who are for an independent working class movement, based on the factories, to get in contact with us, so that steps can be taken to build these links.

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