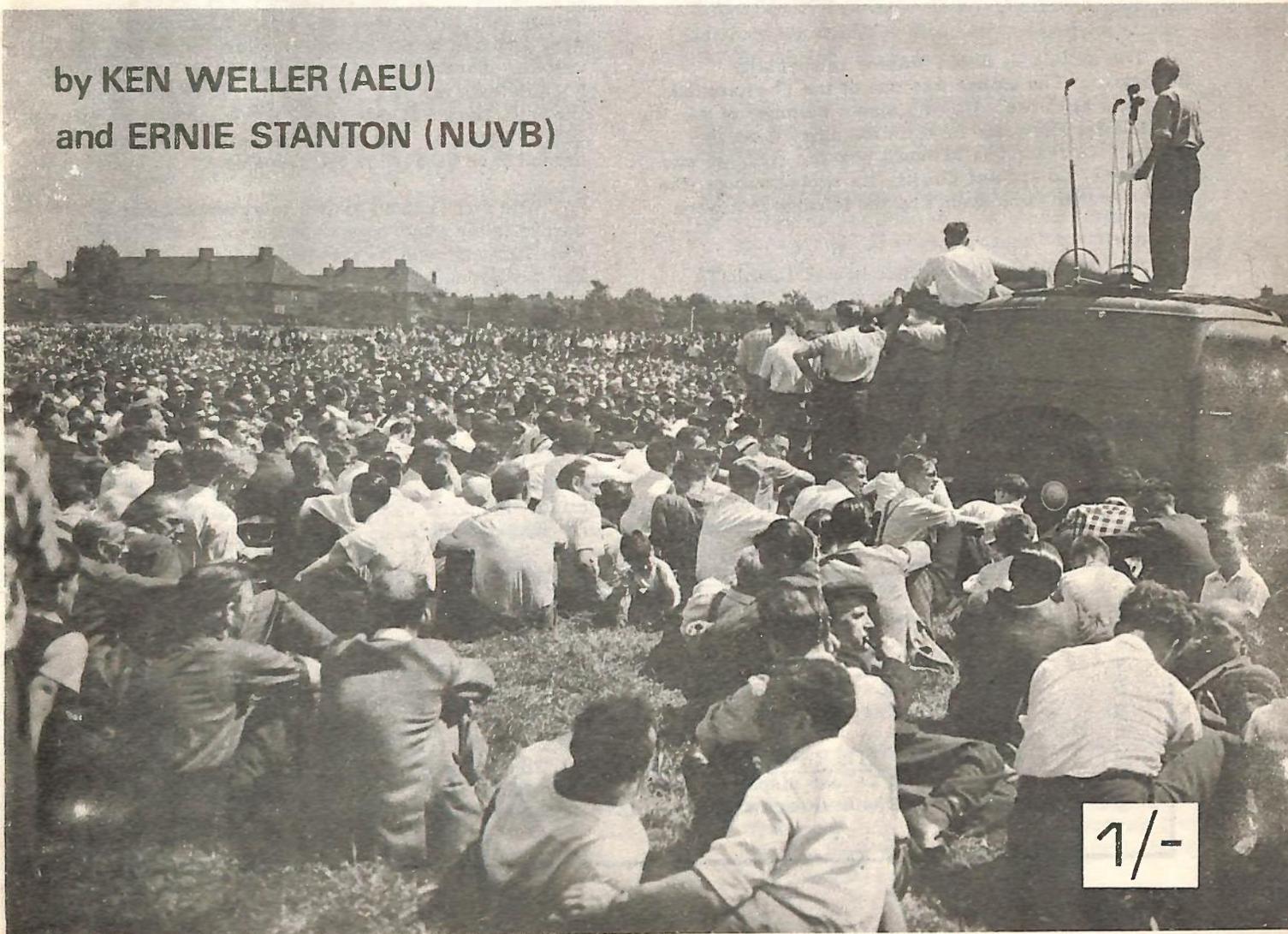


what happened at FORDS

by KEN WELLER (AEU)
and ERNIE STANTON (NUVB)



SOLIDARITY PAMPHLET NO. 26

ABOUT THIS PAMPHLET

This pamphlet consists of three articles previously published in SOLIDARITY (vol. III, Nos. 8 and 11), in 1965. We are reprinting them because we feel that the experiences and lessons of the defeat at Fords in 1962 need to be much more widely known by car workers.

The articles are complementary. The one by Ken Weller documents and exposes the role of the trade union leaders, whether 'left' or 'right'. It proves conclusively that the full-time officials actively participated in the destruction of job organization at Fords. It also shows how the defensive attitude of the Shop Stewards' Committees themselves helped prepare the way for their own emasculation.

The article by Ernie Stanton is specially important. The author was one of the 17 victimized militants at Fords. He was also a member of the Communist Party and he tells the story from the inside. He describes in detail how the struggle was organized, its ups and downs, its shortcomings, the mistakes that were made and the lessons that were learnt.

The final article describes how SOLIDARITY sees what is happening in industry today. It stresses the increasing collaboration between management and union leaders at the expense of the men, the increasing integration of the unions into the machinery of

the State, and the increasing threat to job organization and to hard-won rights in production. It suggests how rank-and-file militants can best struggle to defend their immediate interests, under these difficult conditions, and at the same time prepare the ground for a genuine struggle for workers' management of production, which for us is at the very kernel of socialism.

What happened at Fords has happened before and many times since. The Ford struggle was important because of its scale and because of the clarity with which the issues presented themselves. The time is long past when militants and shop stewards in the motor industry (and elsewhere) could delude themselves that they would be supported in real struggle by the national leaders of their trade unions. There have been far too many bitter defeats. Such defeats are now part and parcel of the lived-through, personal experience of an increasing number of workers. In all of these defeats, the trade unions have behaved in the same way.

The dirt can no longer be swept under the carpet in the pious hope that everyone will forget. Past lessons must be carefully studied. This pamphlet is produced in the hope that it will contribute towards the raising of consciousness and towards the building of liaison in the motor industry, which will make such defeats less likely in the future.

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FORDS : SOME LESSONS

by ken weller AEU

INTRODUCTION

For the moment, Dagenham is quiet. The wildcats have been tamed, Patrick Hennessy and his American executives rule the roost, Ford is king. This article attempts to describe what happened there.

Between October 1962 and April 1963, a struggle took place which ended in 17 leading militants being left on the cobbles. Several of these men were blacklisted and unable to find work in their own trade for well over a year.

The struggle showed in a very clear way the absolute conflict of interests between workers and 'their' trade union leaders, and the similarity of interests between these leaders and management.

What happened at Ford's closely followed a pattern well established in recent years. From Handley Page to Shell Mex House, from BLS P to Ford, the charade has been played again and again, with exactly the same end result: destruction of job organization.

Yet every time the situation arises again, the entire left repeats its old well-worn slogans: 'Make the strike official'; 'Press your union Executive for action now!'; 'BLANK is better than BLANK (1), he won't let us down'. (They always do.) If half the energy had been put into helping the men carry out the struggle themselves, a few more disputes would be won.

Although most of the events at Ford's took place several years ago, we offer no apology for discussing them now. No other full analysis has been written, and many of the facts are only just beginning to emerge. The lessons are timeless.

THE BACKGROUND

Everyone knows that Ford has had a long and troubled labour relations history. The management at Ford's claim that 100,000 man-hours were lost in disputes in 1960, 184,000 in 1961; 415,000 in 1962. Following the defeat of the men, the figures dropped to 3,400 man-hours lost in 1963 and 60,000 in 1964. (2)

The management calculated that in 1962 each worker at Dagenham, excluding the Paint, Trim and Assembly Division, lost 15 man-hours due to disputes, compared with 30 minutes per man per year at the 14 other Ford plants in Britain. In the Paint, Trim and Assembly Division the figure was 78 hours per man per year. The overwhelming majority of time lost in disputes was due to overtime bans rather than to walkouts or strikes.

(1) For BLANK read Cousins, Roberts, Hill, Berridge, Paynter, Lowthian, etc, according to your particular political affiliations.

(2) Information from evidence given to the 'Jack Court of Inquiry' by L.T. Blakeman, their Labour Relations Manager. (See 'Report' - Cmnd 1999, p.11) Figures for 1963 and 1964 were given to us directly, if unwittingly, by the Labour Relations Department at Dagenham.

A detailed breakdown of the 32 disputes which took place between May 28 and July 19, 1962 was made in the September 1962 issue of 'Ford Worker' the paper of the Shop Stewards' Committee. Of the 32 disputes, 28 were overtime bans and none of the remaining 4 exceeded an hour in length. (3)

Not a single dispute at Ford's since the war has been 'official'. The trade union officials have even signed a long series of agreements which have had the effect of undermining shop-floor struggles. For example on August 14, 1958, they signed an agreement which read:

'The Achievement of Efficiency of Operations'

The Trade Unions and the Company agree on the need:

1. to achieve efficient production by all reasonable means;
2. for the introduction of labour-saving machines and methods;
3. for the Company to transfer employees from one job or department to another, as may be desirable having in mind continuity of employment and flow of production.

It is not part of the duty of any Shop Steward whose constitution and duties are defined in the Procedure Agreement to deal with such matters in the Shop, but he may refer them for consideration by the Works Committee.' (4)

This agreement signed away the right to shop floor negotiation on nearly all the vital questions of 'managerial rights'. It is therefore no coincidence that over half the 'incidents' at Ford's were on just these questions.

Another agreement which was actually signed on the same day as the above was the 'Briggs Standardization Agreement'. This gave away many advantages which had been achieved by shop-floor negotiation at the better organized and more militant factory of Briggs Motor Bodies, originally a separate company but amalgamated with Fords in 1953 (it is now called the Metal Stamping and Body Division).

The proposal to standardize conditions had been bitterly opposed by the Briggs shop stewards, right from the start. For example, between February 1954 and May 1955 there had been 288 'incidents' at Briggs. Between August 1955 and March 1957 there were 234 more. Many of these were caused by attempts of the Ford management to introduce 'backstairs standardization'. This prolonged struggle culminated in the sacking of Johnnie McLoughlin, the bell-ringing shop steward. (5)

It is interesting to note that all the agreements referred to in this article were signed by officials of all the 22 negotiating unions at Fords, without regard to whether they were 'left' or 'right'. They were signed by 'Bill' Carron of the AEU, Douglass of BISAKTA and Jim Matthews of the NUGMW representing the 'right' - and by Ted Hill of the Boilermakers and Frank Haxell, late of the ETU (and the Communist Party) representing the 'left'.

Two other incidents further illustrate the activities of the trade union leaders. The first was the October 1961 40-hour week agreement, which had the effect of reducing the tea-break. The men refused to accept this and unofficially continued to take the old tea-break. After a dispute lasting until March 1962, during which the management vainly tried to implement the agreement, they eventually conceded defeat. (6)

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- (3) Incidentally, of the 32 disputes, only 9 were on wages questions. The remainder were about speed-up, supervisors and chargehands 'working with the tools', allocation of overtime, transfers of labour, reduction in the supply of protective clothing. Bescoby and Turner (in the May 1961 issue of 'Manchester School') estimate that 40% of disputes at Fords were over what they called 'management questions', such as individual dismissals and arrangements of working hours. In my view the proportion is much higher.
 - (4) From 'Agreements and Conditions of Employment - Hourly Paid Workers' (commonly known as the 'Blue Book'), published by the Ford Motor Company, July 1964, p. 32.
 - (5) This struggle was in many ways a blueprint of the big dispute later. Here too, the union officials stepped in to stop immediate action by the men, by promises of 'official action' - later. In this case also the militant was suspended while negotiations continued ... and continued ... and continued, with the end result that all initiative was lost and the issue was dead. In this case also there was a 'Court of Inquiry', which also came to the conclusion that the sacking should stand. In this case also the unions 'reluctantly' decided that no action should be taken (in spite of the fact that the AEU had held a strike ballot which voted 1,118 to 429 for such action).
 - (6) See Solidarity, vol. II, No. 3.

The second example was the 'secret' Halewood deal signed early in 1960 between the management, the NUGMW and the AEU. In this agreement, the two unions agreed to lower substantially wage rates for workers at Halewood, in return for preferential facilities provided to the unions by the management, in relation to recruiting members. This, incidentally, was a clear violation of previous agreements, signed by the same union leaders, for a single national wage scale for Ford workers. When news of the agreement leaked out, the other union leaders were up in arms. Their livelihoods were threatened! The plan nevertheless went ahead, but the TGWU was included in the carve-up. The scheme was actually introduced, but its operation defeated by the massive unofficial overtime bans at Halewood in March 1962. (7)

CARRON AND THE MILITANTS

Another aspect of the attitude of certain officials has been the campaign of vilification, both within and outside the union structure, against the shop stewards' committees. For example, William Carron (now Lord Carron), President of the AEU made a statement to the 'Sunday Dispatch' (now defunct) on February 24, 1957, at the height of the McLoughlin crisis. He said:

'For a long time now, subversive elements have been at work at Briggs. Last year alone, there were 200 stoppages at the plant. In my view these subversive types were responsible for most, if not all of them.'

We find the same man writing in the 'Ford Bulletin' (the paper of the Ford Motor Company) on August 3, 1962, right in the middle of negotiations which led to the later 'trouble', an article entitled 'Where is the Enemy?'. He wrote:

'The old need for unbridled militancy rapidly diminished with the reduction of our immediate major social and industrial problems.

One still finds pockets of militancy which are inspired by motives that cannot be accepted as being based purely on trade union principles.

These motives spring from attempts to change the system of government we have in the United Kingdom and would attempt to replace this system with one that has been rejected in Parliamentary and Local Government elections by an overwhelming majority of opinion.

Disruptive tactics with political ambition as a source of inspiration will not contribute to the further well-being of our citizenship or, for that matter, our membership, which depend entirely in these modern years on the produce of our factories and workplaces.'

Carron made it quite clear that he regarded his enemy as the 'militants', not the bosses. We agree with his diagnosis.

What lessons emerge from this record? Quite simply, that any appeal to, or reliance on, the union executives for 'support' against agreements which they themselves have signed, is rather misplaced. So are appeals for 'help' in protecting militants against attacks in which the union leaders actively participate.

THE STORY OF THE STRUGGLE

The first act in the drama came early in 1962, when the trade unions put in for a wage increase. Let us tell the story in the words of W.B. Beard, OBE, Chairman of the Ford National Negotiating Council. (8)

(7) See Solidarity, vol.II, No.9.

(8) From the November 1962 issue of the 'United Patternmakers Association Journal'.

'...They (the Ford management) were not prepared to consider any wage improvement until they had a firm assurance that these unofficial walkouts were discontinued and the procedure observed. They argued that if there was difficulty with the procedure, then the proper method was to amend it, but there had been no attempt on the part of a relatively small number of individuals to operate the agreement at all. Indeed, they just walked out on the job and as a result not only was production stopped, but many who were entitled to consideration of a wage increase were played off, because production had been halted. Side by side with this there was the general slackening in the demand for cars, and orders which they were unable to complete for they had missed the market. They also referred to work in some cases being off-standard. There was indeed a stalemate and the firm were clearly determined to exercise their function of management.

'It was also clear that we as an NJNC (9) could not justify the walkouts which had taken place and it was equally clear that until the firm received assurances that this body had some control of their members, no progress was possible. Here then was a deadlock, which somehow had to be broken. After thinking over this position for some time, I suggested to the management that perhaps a small committee could meet them quite unofficially (10) and informally discuss the problems of industrial relations with no holds barred, in order to make progress. We had three meetings and suggestions were made by both sides, some of which were subsequently amended, to provide for closer contact between NJNC, the local full-time officials and the men in the shop.

'The final result was agreement on proposals by the full NJNC which it is hoped will eventually make for better industrial relations. In addition a joint statement was agreed which will be given to every employee dealing with the problems which have arisen and the agreement reached by the two sides of industry.'

Buried in Beard's immortal prose is the story of how, in return for a 3d. an hour increase, the NJNC signed an agreement on October 12, 1962, which gave the Ford management carte blanche to 'deal' with the militants. The significant section of the agreement reads: (11)

'The Trade Unions recognize the right of the Company to exercise such measures as are expressed within the Agreements against employees who fail to comply with the conditions of their employment by taking unconstitutional action. They have stated, however, and the Company has acknowledged, that the Trade Unions shall not be required to share the responsibility of Management in taking action against employees who breach agreements. The Trade Unions, however, reserve the right to examine such cases.' (12)

Five days later Bill Francis, deputy Convenor of the PTA plant, was sacked. He was discharged for holding a report back meeting, during the lunch break, but on the Company's premises. This had been going on at Fords for years.

Immediately large numbers of workers stopped work. Next day there was a shift meeting and 3,000 men voted virtually unanimously to stay out until Francis was reinstated. Next day, October 19, a mass meeting of the PTA plant voted 5,317 to 6 to stay out. The men were solid. At a further mass meeting on October 23, 5,801 men voted for continuing the strike against 79 who voted to go back.

THE UNION OFFICIAL

Wee fat full-time union official
waistcoat bursting with status
Thirty years off the tools
grovels at the bosses' table
looking for a handout
for a dram
to give him strength
to climb on the workers' backs.

(9) The National Joint Negotiating Council, representing the management and 22 unions.

(10) Tut! Tut!

(11) See Solidarity, vol. II, No. 7.

(12) From 'Agreements and Conditions of Employment - Hourly Paid Workers', p. 15. (My emphasis throughout - K.W.)

At this stage the men were on top. Victory was within their grasp. They had stopped production at a time when it was vital to the Company that as many vehicles be produced as possible. All the signs showed that the Company was prepared to compromise in order to get production moving again. But the trade unions had still to act...

BACK TO WORK

On October 25, the Ford NJNC voted to recommend their members to return to work. This was put to a mass meeting on the 26th. The men voted for a return to work after they had had the clearest possible statement from 'their' officials that there would no be victimization. Kealey (TGWU) and O'Hagan (Blast Furnacemen) claimed that they had received such an assurance from Blakeman, the Company's Labour Relations Manager. (13) However, the point is without importance since it is clear that the Company had already made up its mind. That very same day they posted letters to their employees which stated:

'As the future of the Company and its employees depends upon its operations being on an efficient and competitive basis, there will only be employment available for those who are prepared to observe the rules, regulations and agreements; and also to cooperate with the Company in removing all restrictive and bad practices.'

The letter went on to say that only those who received such letters and signed them signifying their acceptance of the conditions therein would be re-employed.

The 'letter' led to scenes which hadn't been witnessed in England since the thirties. The pamphlet 'What's Wrong at Fords' (published by the Fords Shop Stewards' Committee) graphically described the situation:

(13) As late as June 1963 the report of the National Executive of the NUVB to the Annual Policy Conference of that union had emphasized that 'the men were persuaded to return to work and the Company promised that there would be no victimization'.

'The Company servicemen patrolled the gates and only allowed entry to people who had signed. The letter was scrutinised and the member directed to the department he was to work in. Many members were sent to strange shops where they had no idea what had been the customary speeds, local agreements, etc. Before starting work the member was interviewed by the foreman and told how much work he would have to do and "to watch his step" for there were thousands outside the gates.'

In fact supervisors were so zealous and provocative in the use of their newly acquired powers (in many cases using them to settle old scores) that on November 15, the Industrial Relations staff at Fords had to issue a warning letter to all supervisors because of the threat of further trouble in the plant. The letter said:

'The Company has done its best to make it clear all along that we are always prepared to meet the unions - and to go on meeting them - until we have jointly secured an end to the disruptions and unofficial actions to which we have been subjected.

'We have always sincerely believed that our problems - and we are always going to have problems - can only be solved in close cooperation with the unions.

'Everybody has made it clear how little they want a strike. It is now up to all of us to strive for harmony and good understanding inside and outside the factory.

'In the meantime it is obvious that a very heavy responsibility rests upon all supervisors who must be scrupulously fair in all their dealings. They must make every effort to secure goodwill and respond to it - and show a real understanding of any problem which may arise.

'The overwhelming mass of our employees have demonstrated their loyalty to the Company and the time to prove to them that their loyalty is valuable to themselves and to the Company is now. So although your job requires you to be firm, you must be fair, and always take the trouble to find out.'

MANAGER : Someone who can take 3 hours off for lunch without seriously disrupting production.

OFFICIAL STRIKE ACTION 'DEFERRED'

On October 31, the officials met again. They agreed to 'defer a decision on action until some of the points at issue were clarified'. A further meeting with the management was held on November 5, where because of the 'tough' attitude of the employers, strike notices were issued for November 18. The officials were, of course, not uninfluenced by the equally 'tough' attitude of the men, who in many cases only remained at work because of the firm and repeated promises of 'official action'.

On November 5, the NJNC again decided to defer strike action, after the Company had agreed that the sacked men would be considered as 'suspended' and that they should receive a payment of £7.10.0 a week while negotiations continued. On November 19, this 'ex gratia' payment was increased to £11 a week. At the same time the Shop Stewards' Committee set up a fund to bring the victimized men's income up to their normal wage.

In the meantime, the Shop Stewards' Committee had come to rely more and more on the National officials. A statement issued by the Shop Stewards' Committee early in November is a good example. It reads:

'Our trade unions have realized that if the Company is allowed to get away with this wholesale victimization of good trade unionists, if they can throw out any worker who stands up for his rights and refuses to be treated like a machine, then effective trade unionism will soon be buried at Fords. That is why our National officials are insisting that everyone shall be taken back and that no-one shall be victimized.' (14)

On November 20, a meeting of the Ford Joint Shop Stewards' Committee passed a resolution which in effect placed them in a position of absolute reliance on the 'goodwill' of the officials of the unions. The resolution which was formulated, moved and supported by leading Communist Party members, including Kevin Halpin (15) read in part:

1.
2. Bearing in mind the decisions of yesterday, each union must insist on all back immediately. Failing agreement on any individual, the union should refer the case to the NJNC on the basis of previous declarations to take action if all members are not taken back.
3. Insist that National officials refute the statement made by the Company on the future working of members in the plants.
4. That we insist that stewards should be allowed to function in the plant and operate all the customary agreements and we ask the National officials to ensure that this happens.' (16)

Ironically, on the same day (November 20th), the management also declared its common cause with the union leaders. In a factory 'Notice' they declared:

'At yesterday's meeting of the NJNC, the Company informed the Trade Unions of its determination to maintain law and order, normal working conditions, and efficient operation in the Company's plants. The Company stated that employees who indicated by word or action that they were not prepared to observe the Agreements and the Company's rules and regulations would not be retained in employment, nor would the Company continue to employ men who by their actions showed that they were solely interested in achieving disruption.

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- (14) From 'What This Fight Is All About', an undated leaflet issued by the Ford Shop Stewards' Committee.
 - (15) For a more detailed analysis of the role of the Communist Party and of the Shop Stewards at Fords, see the article 'What's Wrong at Fords' in Solidarity, vol. II, No. 11.
 - (16) Appendix C to 'What's Wrong at Fords', published by the Ford Joint Shop Stewards' Committee.

'The Company also emphasized that "wildcat strikes" would not be tolerated in future. Employees who went out on unofficial strike, and who are retained in employment, would be liable to lose a significant proportion, if not all, of the merit money that they might be receiving.

'These measures are designed to restore the joint authority of the unions and the Company, and to combat the activities of those employees who have no loyalty to either.'

The number of victimized men still without work was gradually reduced. Ford re-hired some of them and others found alternative work. Only 17 men were left out. On January 31, 1963, the unions again 'deferred' strike action (this time until February 18), although Les Kealey of the TGWU was still mouthing rather tired threats of official strike action. In a statement issued by Region No. 1 of the TGWU (on February 13), Kealey wrote:

'Should we not arrive at a just settlement with the Company prior to 18th February, then without doubt the whole of the TGWU membership at Dagenham will withdraw its labour.'

As February 18 approached, militancy grew, not only within the plant, but even amongst workers not directly affected; for example the Central Bus Committee of London Transport proposed that no bus-services should be run along the mile-long approach to the works. This proposal was endorsed by mass meetings of the bus garages affected.

THE JACK COURT OF ENQUIRY

By pure coincidence on February 18 the Minister of Labour appointed a Court of Inquiry 'into the causes and circumstances of a dispute between the Ford Motor Company Ltd., Dagenham and members of the trade unions represented on the trade union side of the Ford NJNC'. To make sure that the Court of Inquiry didn't deliberate in an 'atmosphere of coercion', strike action was again 'deferred' until after the publication of the Court's findings. (17)

The Court's findings were published on April 3, 1963. They contained nothing new: virtual 100% condemnation of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee and all its works, compliments to union officials, advice to them on how they should establish their control at Dagenham, etc. Even one or two minor criticisms of the Company were thrown in, to provide a facade of fairness. (18)

(17) For more information on the Jack Court of Inquiry, see Solidarity, vol. II, No. 9, and also 'Report of Jack Court of Inquiry, HMSO, Cmnd 1999, April 1963.

(18) It has been said that history repeats itself first as tragedy then as farce. About 18 months after the report of the 'Jack' Court, a Commission was set up by the Motor Industry Joint Study Group to 'inquire into Labour relationships at the Morris Motors Ltd. (Cowley) plant, with particular reference to recent stoppages of work, which within the past year totalled 254, accounting for approximately three-quarters of a million man-hours lost.'

The report of the Commission went on to say that the stewards ... 'have allowed themselves to lose faith in, and even become cynical about, not only management policy and competence, but also management attitudes and the existing means of handling disputes, including the agreed procedure'. The commission also found that 'when District officials are called in, it is customarily at the request of management'. The Commission recommended a return to procedure and the greater intrusion of District and Divisional officials into the affairs of the factory with a corresponding weakening of the autonomy of the shop stewards. This report and its recommendations were agreed to unanimously by all ten members of the commission, which included H. G. Barratt (Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions), G. H. Doughty (DATA), Les Kealey (TGWU), A. Roberts (NUVB) and Sir William Carron of the AEU. Management was represented by five leading managers in the motor industry, one of whom was (surprise! surprise!) L. T. Blakeman, Labour Relations Manager of Fords, Dagenham. Trade union leaders and management were now cooperating in the open, instead of secretly, as at Dagenham!

Immediately after the publication of the Jack findings, the Company ended its 'ex gratia' payments to the 17. The final fiasco came when the TGWU held a mass meeting of its members to decide whether they were in favour of strike action. Les Kealey, the main speaker, made his position quite clear. There would be no strike action unless there was an 'overwhelming' vote in favour. After 7 months of defeat within the factory, after a Court of Inquiry, after speed-up, intimidation and slander, after no less than 5 separate 'deferments', and after a very large exodus of workers from Fords who were not prepared to accept the worsening of conditions, (19) only a small majority of workers voted for strike action. This allowed Kealey to call the strike off.

Inside the factory the defeat was a bitter experience. Many militants had been taken back on the basis that they would not be shop stewards. Many others had to 'keep their heads down'. The mobility of the remaining stewards was greatly restricted. The lines were speeded-up to a literally man-killing pace (20) and in this way older men were forced out of the factory. (21) The trade union officials virtually took over factory negotiations. Steps were taken to by-pass the shop steward-dominated Joint Works Committee. (22) The wages at Fords became the lowest in the motor industry, and the profits the highest: £1,200 per year per employee. 'Everyone' was happy: the trade union officials had increased facilities in the plant and a nice office of their own to work in. The Company ruled the roost. Collaboration had paid off. Meanwhile the men were driven into the ground.

CONCLUSIONS

Amongst the many lessons to be learned from the Ford defeat, a turning point in post-war labour history, was the cumulative effect of the apologetic and defensive attitudes which everyone (even the men themselves) adopted towards the militants and towards unofficial action. The arguments put forward against the sackings by the officials, whether 'left' or 'right', were that the sacked men were not militants ... and therefore should not have been sacked. The only valid argument, and the one that would have rallied massive support, was that the men were militants, and for that reason had to be defended. Even the shop stewards' committee's main emphasis was that the sacked men were 'respectable, loyal, long-service employees'. The real issue (the defence of job organization) was thus played down.

The Court of Inquiry consisted of an urbane discussion between Professor Jack, the trade union officials and the management (23) on the best way to emasculate the shop stewards. For example Les Kealey (TGWU) said in his evidence to the Court (Daily Telegraph, March 6, 1963):

'My personal view is that Dagenham would be a happier place if the shop stewards were representatives of the unions the workers belong to. The problem now is how to get it altered ... Mr Kealey said the difficulty was in finding a tangible way of setting about it. One of the things he thought they could do was to try to stop the finance ... It is contributed mostly by our members twice a year through Christmas and Derby draws. We ought to be persuading our members not to take part in this to the extent they do.'

Even the Shop stewards' Committee was at best on the defensive. For example, one of its statements read:

'We regret, as any trade unionist must, that there have been unofficial stoppages because they show there is

(19) Fords has increased production in the region of 30%. For example in the cushion shop the increase had been 37%. In the week ending November 16, 1962, 209 men asked for their cards, many times the normal wastage for that time of year. The process continued for months.

(20) See 'Murder at Fords' (Solidarity vol.IV, No. 4)

(21) See 'After the Ford Defeat' (Solidarity vol.IV, No. 2) and 'Too Old at Fifty' (Solidarity vol.IV, No. 3)

(22) See 'The Path of Struggle' (Solidarity vol.III, No. 10)

(23) The men themselves, about whom presumably the Inquiry was concerned, were not represented.

a gap between the members and the union officials. We also feel that if National officials had taken a stronger attitude on some of the outstanding problems there would be less cause for strikes.' (24)

It is this sort of attitude which has placed the control over the destinies of men on the job in the hands of people with entirely different, indeed opposing, interests: the trade union leaders. There are four parties to any dispute: the state, the management, the labour bureaucrats, . . . and the men. And it is the Ford workers, on their jacks, who will solve their own problems. This is what the Ford struggle emphasized. Every gain at Fords was by the unofficial action of the men alone. Every defeat was the joint work of the management, trade union bureaucrats and state.

Never again must car workers leave the initiative in the hands of trade union officials. They must build up their own, independent strength. They must tell both management and officials where to stuff their agreements. The only way to win is to build up really massive strength within the factory, with strong links with workers in other factories in the group, whether at home or abroad, and with workers in the car industry generally. There is good reason to believe that some Ford workers have learned this lesson.

Here's to the next time!

(24) 'What's Wrong at Fords', published by Fords Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, p. 5.

MODERN CAPITALISM AND REVOLUTION.

by Paul Cardan.

A fundamental critique of the traditional left. The problems of our society: bureaucratization, political apathy, alienation in production, consumption and leisure.

What are revolutionary politics today?

4/3d., post free, from Heather Russell, 53A Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

TRANSMISSION BELT

'The Company emphasizes that wildcat strikes will not be tolerated in the future. Employees who go on unofficial strike must not assume that they will be able to return to their jobs automatically . . . These measures are designed to restore the joint authority of the unions and of the Company and to combat the activities of those who have no loyalty to either.'

Official Ford Motor Company
notice issued Nov. 20, 1962.

* * * * *

'The trade unions recognize the right of the Company to exercise such measures as are expressed within the Agreements against employees who fail to comply with the conditions of their employment by taking unconstitutional action . . .'

Statement signed by all Fords
unions, October 12, 1962.

* * * * *

'Unfortunately a number of stewards of certain unions at Dagenham have got into the habit of trying to solve their own problems.'

Statement issued by Les Kealey
Nat. Sec. Engineering group, TGWU.

* * * * *

'Press your union executive for action now.'

From 'What's Wrong at Fords',
pamphlet published by the Joint
Shop Stewards' Committee.

THE
BOSS
IS
THE

RECORD
OF
THE
RULE

In the Beginning was the Rule
And the Rule was in the Book
And the Rule was Boss
And the Boss was God
So the Rule was God.

But woe unto them that worketh to Rule
For the Rule worketh not
(Even as the Boss worketh not)
And upon them that abide by the Rule of the Boss
Shall great strictures and vengeance be visited
By the press of the Boss, thy God.

For the Rule worketh not
Even though It be written in the Book
By the Boss and His agents in the working class movement
Great therefore is the woe to the National Economy.

For the Boss thy God, who created the Rule,
Who created the Book,
Is the Creator of great confusion.

And they that worketh to His Rule
Shall post Epistles that shall not arrive
But be lost forever.
They shall sit all day in Great Confusion
In trains that runneth not
Even according to the Rule of the Boss, thy God
They shall assemble faulty components
Following blueprints that meaneth little.

For although He made Heaven and Earth
The Boss resideth outside of production
And knoweth not its ways and means
Therefore thou shalt do only the works of the Boss, thy God
- And this sparingly -
Thou shalt heed not His Rules
Thou shalt use thy loaf
Thou shalt take over His factories and manage production
For the Boss is both alpha and omega
The Beginning and End of Great Confusion.

E. Morse

(Reprinted from Solidarity, vol.II, No. 1)

INSIDE THE FORD DEFEAT

by ernie stanton NUVB

BACKGROUND

To understand what happened at Ford's in the autumn of 1962, we must go back at least a year.

At the beginning of 1961 the Company were preparing for entry into the Common Market. Stewards were shown films and lectured on the Company's plans. According to Ford's Market Research Dept. ten European motor manufacturers would have to go out of the industry within the next ten years so that the rest might survive. The Company asked all stewards to 'cooperate in achieving maximum efficiency'. The Ford Motor Company clearly had to be one of the survivors.

It was about this time that the American take-over bid occurred. Almost immediately the Company began to reorganize the Paint, Trim and Assembly (PTA) plant. Department superintendants, previously allowed considerable authority in resolving local problems, suddenly found that they could no longer negotiate with shop stewards. The Company began to merge departments while at the same time retaining departmental superintendants. Most of the higher supervision began taking trips to America and to Cologne. They would come back with all sorts of ideas on how to speed the job up.

By 1962 the speed-up had resulted in creating a large labour pool and an increased rate of absenteeism. The labour pool was used in two ways: a) to fill in for absentees, and b) to bring pressure for further speed-up. When the Company wanted to speed-up a line, the charge hand would approach workers individually and tell them that the department superintendant had been looking into their particular jobs. If a small operation was taken away and a bigger one put in its place it might be better for all concerned if the member protested that he already had too much. He would be approached in the same way two or three times more. Then the foreman would pay him a visit.

This time he would be told that he only had to try the new job. If the member accepted his new target on this basis he soon found that if he didn't succeed he would be hauled up before the line desk, confronted by the chargehand, foreman and superintendant, and told that he was 'disrupting the whole line' and that if he didn't make the extra effort they would have to sack him or put him in the labour pool (which meant a different job every day).

The Company refused to discuss the speed-up with shop stewards or with District officials. And National officials were always 'too busy'. They would only put in an occasional appearance when strikes took place as a result of the speed-up. They would then recommend 'a return to work to allow negotiations to proceed'.

After months of delay the FNJNC (1) would meet. The problem would be raised. The Company would claim 'the right of management to function as it pleased', and there the problem would remain.

During the five years that I worked at Ford's, my branch (Dag. 3 NUVB) sent resolutions every year to National officials, to the National Executive, and to the National Conference demanding that an agreement be drawn up with the Ford Motor Company on the question of time study and that a formula be devised with which Ford workers and union officials could determine what constituted 'a day's work'.

The NUVB officials assured us that they 'agreed in principle', but complained that other unions were not interested. Reports from other unions suggested that there too the officials 'would have liked to have done something about the speed-up', but would give the same excuse: 'my union is alright - it's the others'.

(1) Ford National Joint Negotiating Council.

Early in 1962 the PTA shop stewards' committee adopted the following resolution on speed-up:

'This Committee is opposed to speeding up our members and recommends the following policy:

1. Don't agree to timings. (2) They are not acceptable.
2. Operate on the basis of a fair day's work with a decent standard of quality, with the following alternatives: a) don't do the number if there isn't adequate labour; b) go down the line to prove the job isn't workable.
3. Collective approach, i. e. ratio of number of jobs to number of men to be held.
4. If the Company threatens workers, insist on the operation of the status quo (3) either a) on the original basis of jobs and men, or b) on men going down the line. This to operate while the problem goes through procedure.

This policy could operate. But if there is any victimisation of any member, we will recommend members to go into dispute because the Company would not operate procedure to the full before taking action.'

This resolution was proposed by Kevin Halpin, Convenor and member of the Communist Party. It would have been effective had he had any intentions of implementing it. In fact most of the time he worked against it.

THE GARAGE DISPUTE

On July 30, 1962, the Management informed the steward and convenor that they intended to reorganize the Garage Department. At 8 am the next day 27 men were taken off the lines. At 10 am another 18 men were taken off, making a total of 45 out of 179. No prior discussions had been held.

The Works Committee received a flat refusal when they asked the Company to put the labour back in to allow negotiations to commence. The Management even refused to accept a failure to agree.

At 3.15 pm the Garage Department walked out in dispute and the rest of the plant were sent home. The following morning the men refused to start work unless the Company returned the men. The

Company refused. The Garage went into dispute, the rest of the plant being sent home again. At the same time District officials recorded a failure to agree.

After a week National officials, such as Les Kealey (TGWU) managed to get their members back to work 'to allow negotiations to take place'. But before the men returned to work the Company made it quite clear that they intended the Garage Department to operate with 45 men short of the original labour force, and that they would still expect the original amount of work. They warned that if there was any restriction of effort resulting in a blockage of the assembly lines they would send the whole plant home (some 7,000 workers).

When the men of the Garage Department returned to work the Company, drunk with victory, carried out a general speed-up throughout the plant. This defeat laid the groundwork for the latter struggle.

The FNJNC met a month later. The trade union side raised the Garage dispute. The Management refused to discuss it and it was simply 'noted' in the minutes. The management then raised another issue concerning guarantees they had given in relation to the three-shift working in the Body group.

The Company had asked these particular workers to work three shifts for a trial period of six months stating that if the Company or the members concerned were not satisfied after the trial period they could return to the original day work. The men had made it clear both to the Company and the officials that they did not intend to continue the three-shift working. Despite this the Company stated that due to Britain's failure to gain entry into the Common Market they could not honour their guarantees. It would be necessary to continue the three-shift working. The union officials, always ready to cooperate, signed an agreement for a further (indefinite) period.

It is clear from these examples that the 22 trade union officials never acted in the interests of the members they 'represented'. It would be difficult to understand in whose interests they were working, unless it were their own.

(2) That is, the use of the stop-watch on jobs.

(3) That is, the situation to remain as it was before the dispute started.

This was the pattern set after the first year of the American administration:

1. Continuous speed-up;
2. Refusal of management to honour past agreements, ignoring custom and practice;
3. Refusing to use Procedure, claiming the absolute right to decide on all questions of managerial functions;
4. Ignoring District officials;
5. Reliance on completely subservient National officials.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Communist Party have been active in Dagenham for 25 years. At the time of the dispute they had a branch in Ford's of 110 members. Of these about 50 were stewards and held various union positions, i. e. Branch secretaries, Trades Council delegates, members of Branch committee, members of Shop committee, etc.

The Party branch met once a week with about 20 members attending. The Party had a District office at Ley Street, Ilford. This was the centre of operations for some 2,000 members in the South East Essex area, about 75% being industrial members.

Kevin Halpin was the Ford Communist Party branch secretary, prospective parliamentary candidate, member of the District committee and of the District secretariat. Many members thought that their discussions and their conclusions were genuinely reached by the Party branch, and that the facts would be sent to the District and Executive. In fact, it was the opposite. The 'line' would be handed down from the Executive to the District committee, then to the branch. Certain stewards were informed by hand-delivered letters, others by the Group Cadre.

Group meetings in the factory were always encouraged. A Cadre would be delegated to ensure that the members toed the Party 'line'. This was also the method of distributing literature and Party propaganda. Members were also encouraged to distribute leaflets and copies of the 'Daily Worker' outside the various plants. Because of the tremendous amount of propaganda distributed in and

around Ford's most Ford workers believed that the Communist Party had many more members than they had. This belief even existed on the shop stewards committee. Of course the Communist Party never discouraged this myth.

All Party members would be summoned to the branch, during shop stewards elections. The Party would decide who they would nominate. Many Party stewards, who did not attend the branch throughout the year, would suddenly find time to attend a couple of meetings. The Party always made it quite clear that members could not automatically expect the backing of the branch. But these members were always forgiven providing they were willing to toe the 'line'.

At the same time the influence of the Communist Party on the shop stewards' committee cannot be under-estimated. Over many years they had always been well represented on the various committees in Dagenham, always taking care never to gain complete control of any one committee, even if this meant supporting people associated with the right-wing. The logic of this was that they could always put forward militant policies, without any responsibility for carrying them out. The failures could always be blamed on the right wing.

The PTA Works Committee consisted of three Party members, three 'right-wingers' and one 'left'. Kevin Halpin convened 60 shop stewards. If a given department decided to take action in keeping with the policy on 'speed-up', Kevin Halpin would sometimes do his best to confine the action to that department and even to a particular shift. For example when the Garage dispute took place the A shift was out on strike for a week, while the B shift continued to work. The Garage steward was also a Party member. He had the embarrassing experience of opposing the Party Convenors' recommendation to return to work.

Some stewards would attempt to solve all their problems through the official procedure. Others used the procedure in a limited way, i. e. at Works Committee level. Some used the procedure and took direct action at the same time, regardless of what Halpin or the officials said or did. As a result a number of departments became very militant and were a constant source of embarrassment to the Ford Motor Company. But the Company was covered by the Procedure Agreement, i. e. mobility of labour. (4)

(4) This agreement was signed on August 14, 1958. See 'The Defeat at Ford's: Some Lessons', in Solidarity, vol. III, No. 8, p. 22.

THE NEGOTIATING COUNCIL

There is an uneasy atmosphere at Ford's when a FNJNC meeting is pending. Through various sources members are advised not to take part in any activities which might prejudice negotiations.

Officially there are two National meetings per year. In fact Ford Motor Company and the officials hold about four meetings per year, usually coinciding with the holiday periods. They feel that workers are reluctant to take action near holiday times.

As was pointed out in Solidarity (5) the 22 officials were always ready to trade away hard won conditions in exchange for small wage increases. At the same time they ignore all resolutions and instructions that have been put through the various branches during the course of the year.

The Ford Motor Company publishes its version the day following these meetings. A copy is put up on all the notice boards, near the time clocks. The terms are always straight and to the point.

(5) Ibid.

About a month later the branches receive a report from their officials. Although the terms are the same, there is usually a conflicting report as to the spirit and intention of the agreement.

Let me give an example: an agreement was signed in 1961 for the 40-hour week. (6) This bargained away our afternoon 'tea break'. The Ford Motor Company tried to implement the new 'agreement' the following week. The Ford workers used various methods to maintain their tea break. Some just stopped work at tea-time. Others went slow and wandered out of their working positions causing chaos with uncompleted jobs going down the lines. They had to stop the lines for longer periods in order to maintain continuity, because if one operation was incomplete other operators would not be able to complete theirs. After a month Ford Motor Company gave in and admitted defeat. The union officials then issued the report on the FNJNC meeting ... held a month earlier. Their report stated that they had agreed in principle that with the 40-hour week it would be possible for some areas of the factory to do without a tea break. They had not discussed which areas would be affected. At about the same time as the Company's admission of defeat, the officials said that it was the intention of the agreement that the Ford Motor Company would allow a reasonable time to lapse before abolishing the tea break in order that the workers could condition their minds to giving up their tea break voluntarily !!

(6) See Solidarity, vol. II, No. 3, p. 3.

work break

We draw the attention of all militants to the following outrageous proposals recently put forward by the management of a large North London factory:

'Due to increased competition and a keen desire to remain in business, we find it necessary to institute a new policy. We are asking that somewhere between starting and quitting time, and without infringing too much on the time devoted to lunch period, coffee breaks, rest periods, story telling, holiday planning, and the rehashing of last night's telly programme, each employee endeavour to find some time that can be set aside and known as the 'Work Break'. To some, this may seem a radical innovation. But we honestly believe the idea has great possibilities. The adoption of the 'Work Break' plan is not compulsory. It is hoped, however, that each employee will find enough time to give the plan a fair trial.'

We call on all sections of the movement to oppose these dastardly suggestions most vigorously!

BILL FRANCIS SACKED

During October 1962 the Ford Motor Company informed the steward in the Trim Shop (PTA) that a number of his members would be transferred. Due to a mistake in the office some of the work normally carried out in this shop had been contracted out to another firm, contrary to the agreement. The steward asked for an assurance that the members transferred would get first opportunity to come back to the department when work was available.

The management refused. The steward held a meeting, and it was decided to implement an overtime ban and one-day token strikes until the management gave some assurance that the members would be transferred on a 'first in, last out' basis and that those who went out would have first opportunity to come back when normal schedules were resumed.

The first token stoppage was due to take place on October 13, 1962. On the 12th the Convenor and deputy convenor were attending a lobby of the FNJNC. The management sent for Bill Francis and told him to call off the proposed overtime ban and the token stoppages. Francis refused, saying that it was not his department and that the management had admitted that the mistake was theirs. The management then agreed to all the Trim Shop terms. They then asked Francis to hold a meeting in the dinner hour to call the strike off. Francis did this and made himself unpopular in the process. Little did he know that at that very time the FNJNC were signing another agreement which would enable the Ford Motor Company to sack him for holding meetings during the dinner hour!

The following week the management informed the steward on B shift that they intended to speed up the door glass section on the 109 Consul Classic. The steward reminded the Departmental Superintendent that 12 months previously there had been a dispute on this job, and that the management and District officials had agreed that this job would not be speeded up while it remained in production. The Department Superintendent replied that A shift wanted the job reorganized and he intended to see that it was. Consultation with Bill Francis, A shift shop steward, proved that they had not approached the management.

On Monday, October 15, the men on A shift were informed that the Ford Company intended to reorganize the job. One man was taken off the line.

This resulted in an immediate drift down the line. The foreman replaced the man, and Bill Francis was called to the office.

The deputy Superintendent explained that he intended to reorganize the job, but was meeting resistance from three of the eight men left on the job. He then told Francis that he intended to replace these three men. Francis advised against this, reminding him that these men had been employed on the work for 14 years and had never been in trouble.

No further changes were made on the Tuesday. On Wednesday morning, at 8 am, the chargehand took the three men out and replaced them with another two. There was an immediate drift down the line which resulted in a stoppage. Bill Francis was called in again and told to get the men back to work.

Bill Francis and his co-steward said that they could not recommend a return to work in those conditions. They were prepared to start work if the management were prepared to negotiate. The Company agreed. Work started again, with the original 9 men. While the stewards were in the office, the foreman took a man out again. This resulted in another stoppage. Again Bill Francis got the men back to work 'pending negotiations'.

By 11 am the stewards had secured an agreement with the Department superintendent. They were about to leave his office when the Personnel Manager walked in, wanting to know what agreements had been reached. When informed, he refused to honour them and told the stewards that they could tell their members that if they could not meet with the Company's new requirements they could get out. The job would be run with eight men instead of nine. By midday the men had drifted down the line again and it was obvious that after dinner there would be another stoppage. Bill Francis and his co-steward were informed that when this stoppage took place the Company would send the whole department home.

At 12.50 pm Bill Francis and two other stewards called a meeting and informed the men of the Company's threats.

The men of the 105 Department were also in attendance. They proposed that if any members of 109 Department were sent home or victimized, they would immediately withdraw their labour. The Ford Motor Company were not prepared for this, as these members were employed on the new Cortina. After dinner the door glass Section continued with chargehands working on the line to keep the job in position.

At 4.30 pm Francis was sent for by the Personnel Department. He picked up Kevin Halpin on the way. Bill Francis was then told he was sacked for holding a meeting on the Company's premises. His cards and monies were made up and he was asked to sign for them. He refused. Halpin asked for the District officials to be brought in, as per agreement. This was refused. Ten minutes after leaving the office the whole plant walked out on strike.

Things were even more chaotic in the Body Group. Certain departments which depended on the PTA to absorb completed work held meetings. By 12.30 am roughly half the Body Group came out.

The Party stewards and members were in total confusion. Some held meetings and recommended support for the strike. They were successful. But many had hidden themselves. One member of 25 years' standing who had dominated shop meetings for years and had always moralized to the workers about their lack of militancy, suddenly forgot all his principles at the meeting. The steward of this

PARTY MILITANTS AND PARTY BUREAUCRATS

At the time of the Bill Francis dispute the Party had three convenors and one deputy convenor: Halpin, PTA; Jack Mitchell, Body Group; Jimmy Laurie, Chassis Group; Allan Abbott, River Plant.

On October 19, 1962, the Ford's branch of the Communist Party held its biggest meeting ever. Just about every member was in attendance. The subject was the sacking of Bill Francis.

Halpin and Francis reported the facts. Halpin recommended strike action on behalf of the PTA; 7,000 members would be involved. Jimmy Laurie, who was attending for the first time in three years, recommended a complete shut-down in all plants, his own employing 22,000 workers. Jack Mitchell, who was busy campaigning for District Secretary of the AEU, said he agreed in principle, but could not be sure how his members (11,000 men) would react. Allan Abbott was also non-committal. He said this was due to the craft status of his members (a few hundred). All Party members were finally committed to fighting for a complete withdrawal of labour immediately, on the basis of the lessons learnt on the Johnny MacLoughlin dispute. It was felt that the officials could not be trusted to get Francis reinstated unless there was a complete shut-down.

Members went into the PTA that same night. Stewards and ordinary workers held meetings all over the plant. Ford Service men showed some out of the factory but they re-entered and went to other departments to get the men out. The whole plant was in chaos. There was an immediate response, and by 10.30 pm that night the PTA was shut down.

SOLIDARITY

'Solidarity' is a paper (appearing more or less monthly), a series of pamphlets, a group of rank-and-file activists, and a frame of mind.

The paper and pamphlets have been appearing since 1960. The supporters - loosely associated in autonomous groups - are active in the industrial struggle, in anti-bomb and in tenants' struggles.

'Solidarity' does not see the crisis of the left as a 'crisis of leadership'. There are today too many leaderships to choose from. What is lacking is people prepared to think and do things for themselves. 'Solidarity' seeks to help all those ready to act on their own behalf in challenging bureaucratic society on any of a wide variety of fronts.

'Solidarists' enjoy their seditious, disruptive and debunking brand of politics. They don't care a damn on whose toes they tread.

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particular department, a noted 'right-winger', failed to get the department to support the strike but walked out with those of his members who on their own did support the strike, leaving the 'militant' in. Jack Mitchell also failed to take his department out, but came out on his own. Other leading Party stewards remained in and did not even hold meetings.

The following morning a hurried meeting was convened amongst Works' Committee members and shop stewards. It was decided that the PTA would hold its own meeting at Leys Hall, Dagenham. Members would be required to produce their Ford identity card. This was done to keep out the Press and others who had invaded the last big open meeting during the 40-hour week struggle. At the meeting the PTA members expressed their determination to stay out until Bill Francis was reinstated. The voting was 5,317 to 6.

The Chassis Group had not yet moved. A shop stewards' meeting voted in favour of supporting their brothers in the PTA. However, they were reluctant to stick their necks out and hold a meeting.

The day the meeting was convened Halpin said he had received a telephone call from Jimmy Laurie (Communist Party) explaining that the senior stewards, himself among them, had been threatened by the Ford Motor Company that if they held the meeting some of them would join Bill Francis. He asked Halpin to say that the PTA members had expressed the wish to go it alone for the time being, and to call the meeting off.

We will never know the truth about this phone call, but the meeting was called off, despite the fact that a couple of thousand night workers turned up for it.

The District officials (Fred Blake, NUVB; Harry Lyle, AEU; Harry Kendrick, TGWU; Jock Milne, NUGMW) attended a mass PTA meeting the following Tuesday. They reported that they had approached the management to seek a basis for a return to work. The management had indicated that they intended to correct the situation in the plant, which they said was '30% off standard'. They would not require the same labour force as before. In view of this the officials said they could not recommend a return to work. The voting was 5,801 to 79.

On Friday, October 25, the stewards attended a lobby of the FNJNC at Transport House. The Party branch felt it was imperative that Halpin attend. One member was left behind to attend a Communist Party District secretariat meeting.

The Transport House meeting was attended by 15 union officials. During this meeting Brother O'Hagan and Brother Kealey made their famous telephone call to Mr. L. Blakeman. Mr. Blakeman is supposed to have assured them that there would be a phased resumption of work with all members back within a week, and that the AEU would be left to deal with Francis, 'on a domestic basis'.

The voting to accept the Ford Motor Company's terms was 10 officials for, 5 against. Harry Matthews, NUGMW, was elected to put their recommendation to the PTA members the following morning.

HALPIN SAYS GO BACK

The Communist Party District Secretariat met that night at Ley Street, Ilford. Here it was decided to maintain and extend the strike to the Chassis Group. A member was delegated to inform Halpin the next morning, before the shop stewards' meeting.

The following morning, October 26, the member handed Halpin the message 'maintain and extend the strike'. Halpin called a meeting of the Works Committee members. He ignored the Party line and recommended that the Works Committee support the recommendation of the officials to return to work. Bearing in mind that the Works Committee consisted of three right-wingers, who were always ready to return to work, and Bill Francis, who had been hounded night and day by the Press and was in no condition to take any more decisions at that time, the recommendation was accepted by 6 votes to 1.

When Halpin put the recommendation to the shop stewards' committee, the hall was in uproar. Stewards pointed out the number of times the trade union officials had sold Ford workers out. Many were of the opinion that it was only a matter of a week before the Chassis Group would be forced to support us or be laid off. Nevertheless Halpin won by 4 votes.

Later that morning we attended a mass meeting at Leys Hall. Harry Matthews put the official recommendation to return to work to the members. It was pouring with rain and Harry took an hour to explain how they intended to get Francis his job back. He was met with jeers and cries of 'traitor'.

It was only the intervention of a shop steward that stopped Harry from being dropped into the swimming pool, which was empty at the time. Answering the statement in the District officials' report that the Ford Motor Company intended to make some workers redundant, Harry replied that only the night before, the Ford Motor Company had guaranteed the FN JNC that there would be a phased resumption with all men back within a week. He said that he had met the Ford Motor Company personally that very morning, where he had been assured once again that there was no question of redundancy. He pointed out, moreover, that leaving the question of Bill Francis as a domestic issue with the AEU did not mean we were abandoning the case. If at any time in the future the AEU required the assistance of the other unions, they would get it.

Halpin then played his ace. He announced that Francis would address the meeting. When Bill got on the box there were cheers for the first time that morning. Bill said that he had been an active member of the AEU for fifteen years. His District Committee was supporting his case. He was confident that his Executive would support him. The members were confused by the fact that the Shop Stewards' Committee seemed to be supporting the officials. When it was put to the vote there were still a couple of thousand voting to stay out until Bill Francis returned or grass grew over the PTA. But the recommendation to return to work was accepted. (7)

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- (7) For further information concerning Halpin's behaviour at Ford's over a long period, see 'The Kevin Halpin Story', in Solidarity, vol. III, No. 9.

THE PURGE STARTS

That afternoon the national press reported a Ford Motor Company statement that Mathews must have misunderstood the terms of the return to work. There would be 'some redundancy'. By Monday, about 600 Ford workers had received letters advising them that they would be required to 'cooperate with the Company' and to 'abandon all restrictive practices'. Those who agreed were instructed to sign the letter and bring it with them.

Officials were informed of these letters. They expressed their 'indignation'... but advised members to sign, saying that they would make it quite clear to the Committee that the letters were not binding as they were signed under duress.

As the members reported for work they were met by Ford's Service men on the gate. First they had to show their signed letters. They were then allowed in and told to report to the line desk. Here they were lined up and the foreman, after giving the old pep talk ('Work Standards', 'Cooperation', 'Restrictive Practices', 'The Sack') decided who he was going to keep and who would be transferred. Most of the first 600 to apply were people who were known for their cooperation. As the week went on more members drifted back. They were required to produce the signed letters. If they proved 'co-operative' they received a pass allowing them to come to work the next day!

NOTICE

'It has come to the notice of the Management that employees have been found dying on the job and either refusing or neglecting to fall over. The practice must cease forthwith. Employees found dead in an upright position will immediately be struck off the Company's payroll. In future, if a foreman notices an employee has made no movement for a period of one hour, it will be his duty to look into the cause, as it is almost impossible to distinguish between death and the natural movement of some employees. Foremen are advised to take very careful note and investigate by holding a pay packet in front of the suspect corpse, as this is considered to be a very reliable test. (There are cases where the natural instinct has been found so deeply ingrained that the hand of the corpse has made spasmodic clutches after "rigor mortis" has set in). The most successful test is to whisper "Sunday work". This has been known to restore movement to a body which has been motionless all week. The foregoing test should not be applied to foremen or assistant foremen, as in these cases movement of any kind is unnecessary.'

DOUBLE TALK

By the end of the week about 2,000 workers were re-employed (but not one shop steward). By the end of the second week about 2,000 more had returned (among them some 20 stewards). This was after a complaint by officials that no stewards had been employed. It had become clear that returning workers were being transferred all over the plant.

It is impossible to say how many members did not qualify for their gate pass to return to work the following day. We know the figure ran into hundreds. Many became so frustrated by the continuous speed-up and pressure from Supervision that they just smacked the chargehands or foreman and walked out. There was so much of this that Ford Motor Company complained to the officials, who suggested as a solution that more stewards should be taken back.

Those workers still out had received letters stating that if they were required they would be sent for. Members did not even know if they were redundant or not. Most of them continued to treat the situation as an ordinary strike.

The trade union side of the FNJNC met at Transport House on October 31. Shop stewards met Brothers O'Hagan (NUBF), Les Kealey (TGWU) and Alf Robert (NUVB). O'Hagan said that as far as the officials were concerned Fords 'had gone too far this time' in going back on their word that all would be back within a week and that there would be no redundancy. He said it was a challenge to his good name. When asked what he was going to do about the proposed redundancy, he replied that the officials would be meeting the Ford Motor Company on the following day 'to clarify the terms agreed on for the resumption of work and to demand the return of all members with cuts in overtime rather than redundancy'. Any redundancy would be negotiated on a 'first in, last out' basis. Brother O'Hagan then said that he would not go into any further details, as the press were outside and a 'misquote could forewarn the enemy'. The stewards, he boasted, could expect that when the officials met the Ford Motor Company 'the gloves would be off'!

OVERHEARD AT T.U.C.

'What with Sir Tom This and Sir Tom That, it's the tomcats we've got to worry about - not the wildcats.'

All through this period Halpin was insisting in the Party branch that Party members in the Body and Chassis Groups should hold meetings and seek to extend the strike. In answer to questions as to why he had recommended a return to work, when the Secretariat had instructed him to maintain and extend the strike, he said that during the meeting at Transport House he had learnt of developments of which the Secretariat was not aware. He asked that out of personal loyalty to him he should not be called on to go into details.

Many Party members who had returned to work in the PTA were very bitter at the lack of support coming from leading Party members. They were already threatening to resign. Because of this, Halpin then started convening Party meetings without telling the militants. This meant that he would only have the members he wanted at meetings, thereby guaranteeing results.

From the beginning of the 1962 dispute a small number of stewards from PTA met every day, first producing leaflets, later collecting addresses of union branches and shop stewards' committees from all over the country. As our position changed we kept the whole trade union movement informed by leaflet. The victimized workers were kept permanently employed addressing envelopes.

As time dragged on with the stewards from the Chassis and Body Groups coming into the office every day, the victimized workers began to ask when the organization was going to do something. Sometimes the discussion became heated. It was about this time that Halpin began to appeal to the victimized workers not to allow themselves to become isolated. Although our very position isolated us, he pointed out that as members of the I T A we were very much the poor relations as far as 'the office' was concerned. The Chassis Group paid half the rent and the Body Group the other. Halpin then elected himself to act as liaison between the victimized men and the Works Committee.

He pointed out to the victimized workers that as we had very little money in our fund, and no legal right to use the stewards' office or the duplicators, it would be in our interests to propose to the next Joint Shop Stewards' Committee meeting that we continue to struggle in the name of the Fords Joint Shop Stewards' Committee and that we share expenses bearing in mind the state of our funds compared to the enormous funds held by the Chassis

and Body Groups. Little did we know what this would mean to us, as victimized workers, later on. After this all leaflets went out in the name of Fords Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, 'Convenor Jimmy Laurie'. 'Speakers available' it said on the bottom of the leaflets

Immediately we ran into trouble. The victimized workers distributing leaflets both outside the factory and by post expressed the opinion that the leaflets should be written in much stronger terms, explaining to members the treachery of the union officials. Halpin, who wrote the leaflets, said that he felt we should 'strive for maximum unity'. The other stewards would only accept leaflets which gave support to the officials. As he was the only one to meet the Works Committee, we had to accept the position for the time.

A FURTHER STRIKE ?

On November 5, 1962, the FNJNC met at the Piccaddilly Hotel. It was agreed that due to purchase tax cuts on cars the Company was prepared to take back 530 men, but not 70 others who were described as 'trouble-makers' and had proved 'uncooperative'. The officials then asked that the 70 be included with the 530 and that, then, there should be a redundancy on the basis of last in first out, all things being equal.

The Company refused. An 'official' 7-day strike notice was put in, to start on November 11. Immediately two stewards (Party members and victimized workers) were sent as contacts to Liverpool. Their terms of reference were to gain moral and financial support. No payments had yet been received from any source.

The first contacts made in Liverpool were at Party Headquarters, Mount Pleasant. From there contact was made with the Halewood workers and Standard Triumph stewards.

From there we went to St. Helens, where we met the Lancashire and Cheshire miners. After that we went to Manchester where we met the comrades in Rusholme Road. Here it was arranged to meet dozens of shop stewards committees. Everyone expressed support.

As soon as we heard of the proposed TUC meeting on November 14 we returned home. When we arrived at TUC headquarters, most of the Ford shop stewards were already there. They attempted to lobby their respective officials as they arrived,

but without much success. Bill Carron told Bill Francis he was photogenic. As Claude Berridge arrived a half-hearted cheer went up from the loyal Party members. This was met by an even louder jeer of 'Fuck him, he's come to sell us out, same as the others'. Frank Cousins arrived in his Humber. When the officials emerged from the meeting the decision was to 'defer the strike to allow common sense to prevail'. As Frank Cousins stepped in front of the television cameras, surrounded by his members, he stated that under no circumstances would he accept any form of discrimination against his members.

The union side of the FNJNC met immediately afterwards and arranged to meet the Company on November 19. As the officials left this meeting, they calmed their members by stating that they would be attending this meeting with full powers to call strike action for the first time.

WEST END DEMO

The victimized workers proposed that instead of the usual lobby the November 19 meeting should have a demonstration outside the Cafe Royal in Regent Street.

Halpin was against this. He argued that if it was poorly attended it would destroy the Fords Shop Stewards' image and give the officials a way out. We pointed out that we had supporters all over the country who had been pressing us for a demonstration. We also felt that we should call a mass meeting of our members in Dagenham, as we knew that the PTA members were still loyal to their stewards. Also there was growing unrest in the Chassis plant. Halpin opposed this for the same reasons.

At a later meeting with the Works Committee it was agreed not to support a demonstration. Despite this members went ahead arranging for the demonstration. The Works Committee then deferred the next Joint Shop Stewards' meeting to the day before the FNJNC meeting was due to take place and piously recommended that 'any night shift workers who wished to attend would be welcome'. It refused, however, to welcome any of our supporters from other organizations claiming that this might encourage the officials to call off the meeting.

About 200 members attended the demonstration. The police forced those carrying placards to keep walking round and round Regent Street.

As the officials began to leave the meeting, members surged forward. They had been waiting for about 6 hours. It was reported that the Ford Motor Company was now prepared to take another 40 men back, leaving out 35.

One member asked Joe O'Hagan what had happened to his Executive powers and why hadn't he called the strike. O'Hagan pointed out it was too near Christmas, and that he had thousands of members to think about. The member then asked what they had been up to for the past 6 hours. Did he smell brandy on O'Hagan's breath? Were all the officials pissed?

Alf Roberts, NUVB, refused to meet delegations of stewards, stating: 'you people got yourselves into this mess. It's in our hands now. We'll decide what's best for our members in Dagenham'. These were the first words he had spoken since the dispute.

Claude Berridge left. We met him as had been pre-arranged in the 'Leicester Arms'. As soon as Claude reported the results, Halpin asked him why he hadn't proposed strike action. Poor old Claude did his usual act, pointing out that he was on his own on the AEU Executive. He couldn't afford to upset Mr. Carron. And anyway he would have been outvoted. Halpin then began to quote Lenin. But Claude knew other bits of Lenin and quoted back.

Claude told Halpin that there are 'casualties in every battle' and that he had 'better face up to the facts'. At this stage Halpin threatened to punch Claude and Claude threatened to punch him back. Jimmy Laurie pointed out that there was a reporter listening. Halpin left, threatening to expose Claude in the Party and to withdraw support in future elections.

VICTIMIZED WORKERS COMMITTEE

On November 20 the Ford Joint Shop Stewards Committee decided to write a pamphlet as an exposure. Halpin was put in charge. Another committee was also set up to organize support for the victimized men, made up of Works Committee members.

These members organized a full meeting and having thoroughly discussed their position, elected a new committee. For the first time in Dagenham, things went wrong. A committee was elected

almost entirely comprised of rank and file Communist Party members. Some members expressed the opinion that the case was no longer worth fighting. They intended to leave while the going was good. Halpin assured these members that as trade unionists it was their duty to stay and that we were sure of winning the day.

The average day of this seven man committee was spent addressing envelopes in the morning, having been out at 7 am distributing leaflets. Meetings would then be held to assess what could be paid out to our members from the Appeal Fund, and to decide what could be done next. In the evenings speakers would go to union branches to put our case. Victimized workers travelled all over the country doing this. Not one of the employed stewards even went to another branch to speak on our behalf. During this time Sid Harroway, Body Group steward and Industrial Organizer for the Communist Party, was canvassing the AEU branches in the area to support Jack Mitchell as District Secretary. (Mitchell had been re-employed when the victimization list had dropped from 70 to 35.)

Halpin found it increasingly difficult to control the victimized workers' committee. He kept trying to appeal to them on the basis of Party loyalty. He would then go to the Party branch and get endorsement for his proposals, which had already been outvoted by the victimized workers' committee itself.

In desperation he tried to work out the terms of reference under which this committee should work. He wanted to confine them to distributing leaflets. He even resorted to the threat of taking the Appeal Fund out of the hands of the victimized workers' committee, pointing out that the FSSC were the custodians of the Appeal and that we had no legal rights at all.

Arising from this the victimized workers' committee decided that in future we would not recommend our members to distribute leaflets that in any way supported the officials. We also decided that in future Halpin would no longer be allowed to act as a liaison between the Works Committee and us, as victimized workers. They could either meet the whole committee or none.

Early in December the British Motor Corporation shop stewards' committee invited the Ford shop stewards' committee to send delegates to Digbeth Hall, Birmingham. The idea was to find some more practical way of helping. The FSSC found that they were all 'too busy' that Sunday. No one could attend. So some of us victimized stewards went.

As we arrived at the Hall we were met by a chap selling 'The Newsletter'. He advised us that the Communist Party had boycotted the meeting from that end. Halpin told us not to take any notice of this bloke as he was a 'Trot'.

When we got into the meeting we found Dick Etheridge in the Chair and about 150 delegates present. But apart from him, Communist Party members were conspicuous by their absence. After we gave our report, many delegates expressed solidarity with the Ford workers and suggested one-day token stoppages in the area. Halpin and Etheridge quickly squashed this. 'It might be necessary in the future but at this stage we must give the officials yet another chance'.

As Christmas approached it became quite clear that the victimized workers were going to have a rough time of it. Because a strike had been called for November 14 we had abandoned our Appeal. We now had to re-appeal and it took time to get a response.

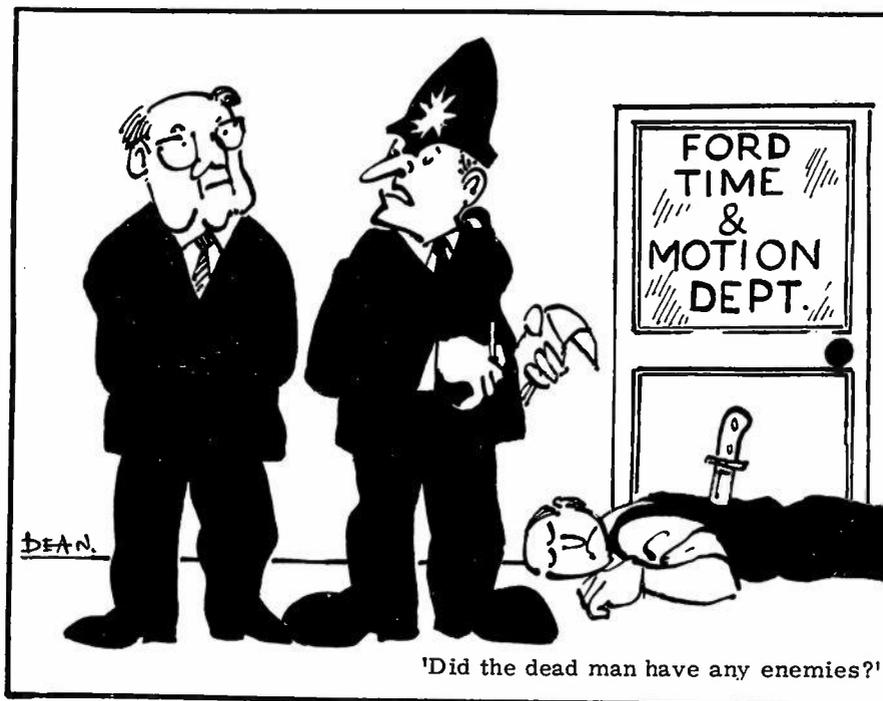
Bill Jones, the London busmen's delegate who had received over £2,000 from Ford workers in response to an appeal during the 1958 Bus Strike, made arrangements for some of our members to stand outside the garages with collecting boxes!! Our appeal was well received. People donated from all over the country. Some old people were sending 2/6 from their old age

pensions. Some shop stewards' committees were sending £25 per week. Our members were able to have a reasonable Christmas.

Unfortunately, the Ford Motor Company even blacklisted the children of the victimized men. It refused them permission to attend the annual children's party, held in the canteen, even though our members had paid into a fund for this purpose.

During December the Party branch continued to be in turmoil. The District Committee complained of the lack of organization in the branch resulting in no dues being paid. No District quotas had been paid either since the dispute.

By some strange coincidence the Communist Party at this stage circulated draft resolutions for their 28th National Congress, to be held in April 1963. Tucked away in the middle the technique of sell-out had been given a firm theoretical basis: under the title 'Building more Powerful Unions', it was stated: 'There is, however, a danger of shop stewards' committees which have in the past obtained useful concessions outside of District or National negotiations adopting an attitude of "go it alone", ignoring the importance of trade union pressure at a district and a national level and the importance of improved national agreements. Shop stewards' committees should discourage such tendencies.'



MOTORS, MANAGEMENT AND MODERN CAPITALISM

'In the first 6 months of 1965 more than 6 million man-hours have been lost due to strikes in the motor car industry compared with 1.6 million in the same period last year... Out of 400 or 500 strikes, only about 4 had been official.' The speaker: Lord Rootes, Managing Director of the Rootes Group. The date: October 2, 1965. The occasion: a press conference to comment on a meeting at the Ministry of Labour between the said Lord Rootes and a certain William (now Lord) Carron, President of the AEU.

This particular little gathering was euphemistically described by the press as 'representing both sides of the industry'. But if Lord Rootes' facts are reliable - and we have no reason to doubt them - they point to something quite different. This had not been a get-together of 'both sides of the industry'. Lord Rootes had wasted his afternoon, talking to a ghost. If 99% of the strikes in the motor industry are 'unofficial', where does the worthy Lord Carron come in? Who, but himself, does he 'represent'? He has no more control over the shop floor decisions of the members of 'his' union than he has over the weather. And, between ourselves, a good thing too.

There is a curious and widespread misconception about union officials, shared by employers and many on the 'left' alike. The employers see the full-time officials as important, meaningful, significant people, whom they can wine and dine, invite to productivity conferences, give lectures to on the 'national' interest, and with whom they can haggle, compromise, and sign agreements. The employers think the officials 'represent' the men. The union leaders of course, as interested parties, participate in this mystification. The dictates of pride and pocket coincide.

But many on the 'left' also see the union hierarchy as representing the working class in some 'distorted', 'very distorted', or 'extremely distorted' manner. Most of their political schemas and much of their industrial work are based on this premise. The two misconceptions interlock. They reinforce one another at every possible level.

Now if anything stands out in the events of the last few months, it is the increasing irrelevance of the union top brass, wherever the defence of job conditions is at stake. What also stands out is the increasing relevance and danger, for politically conscious militants, of the assimilation and integration of the top union apparatus into the structure of the State itself.

The employers recognize quite clearly what is taking place. Mr Richard O'Brien, BMC Industrial Relations Director, told a recent conference in Birmingham: 'While communications "down the line" are obviously faulty, communications between leaders of the trade unions and leaders of industry - and between either of these groups and the Government - are probably better than they have ever been.' (The Guardian, June 14, 1965) When Mr O'Brien speaks of 'communications' he doesn't only mean opportunities for yapping. He means links of a more binding and intimate nature. It is essential that working people realize what lies hidden behind these words.

Both the TUC and the Labour Party Conference have now endorsed, by substantial majorities, the principle of State legislation to enforce the compulsory notification of wage claims. From here to compulsory arbitration and then to the determination of wages by the State itself, there is only a narrow margin. Once such legislation is on the statute book, legal action could easily be taken against rank-and-file workers who dared challenge agreements entered into 'on their behalf' by the trade union leaders.

The Tories are already promising to introduce such legislation. Some of them, such as Sir Patrick Hennessy, Ford Chief and this year's President of the Society of Motor Manufacturers, are even arrogantly predicting that a Labour Government may do the dirty work for them. At a pre-motor show conference in London this worthy gent stated: 'It is my conviction, following the latest moves - the cooperative action between the industry, the trade unions and the Labour Government - that it may not be long before we see action to prevent unofficial stoppages'. (Evening Standard, Oc-

tober 12, 1965). The climate for anti-working class legislation is being steadily prepared. The foundations of a totalitarian set-up in industry are being laid at an alarming pace...

These basic trends have been obvious for a long time. But under a Labour Government they have gained considerable momentum. Let us look closer at some of the main pointers.

Early in September 1965 Messrs Wilson and Gunter met motor car employers and union leaders at 10 Downing Street. The car bosses were asked to make trade union membership a condition of employment in their plants. Most of the tough employers present are said to have been converted to the old working class principle of the closed shop... but they insisted that 'in exchange' the union leaders would have to impose tighter discipline on the rank and file. In an Alice in Wonderland scene, Mr Gunter told the employers that the only way to make the disciplinary powers of the unions more effective would be to accept 100% trade unionism! Unofficial strikers would then risk not only expulsion from their unions, but also loss of their jobs. (Daily Telegraph, September 13, 1965) To date no firm decisions have been taken but the writing is clearly on the wall.

What we have described in relation to motors is an increasingly widespread managerial attitude under the conditions of modern capitalism. (1) Taking industry by and large the unions are not being fought tooth and nail by employers as they were only a few decades ago. On the contrary. Employers and union leaders are working hand in hand 1) to 'increase productivity' (i.e. to increase the rate of exploitation) in the 'national' (i.e. the employers') interest; 2) to maintain 'discipline' in the factories or work places (i.e. to prevent workers from challenging aspects of the production process such as job manning, the introduction of new machinery, motion study, speed-up, etc, which both employers and union leaders 'agree' to be in the realm of managerial prerogatives. As we have repeatedly pointed out, the union leaders are quite prepared to trade away hard-won working class rights in production (tea breaks, etc.) in exchange for wage increases, usually quite small, and which the employers are not infrequently quite prepared to grant anyway.

(1) There are exceptions, like the management at Roberts-Arundel, Stockport, who still seem to be living in the 19th century, but the general trend is definite.

This is the face of modern capitalism which revolutionaries should study if they are not to tilt at windmills. There is no greater mistake, in a war, than to underestimate one's enemy. There is no more pathetic figure than the warrior perpetually fighting yesterday's battle. Modern capitalism isn't Martell and his scab printshop, scab buses and scab postal delivery service. It isn't a last-ditch fight (with cops, beaks and even troops) to prevent the union getting a foothold in the plant. These antics, which the odd dinosaur of the capitalist class may admittedly still indulge in, are not the essence of modern capitalism.

Modern capitalism isn't 'Keep the unions out of my plant'. It isn't 'Keep the unions divided so that we can play the one against the other'. It isn't even 'Fight the terrible menace of industrial unionism'. It is something more pernicious and much more subtle. It is 'Grant the union officials more status. Give them more power. Pay them better. Make their position more stable. Don't let them have to submit to election too often. Integrate them.'

Sir Miles Thomas, former vice-Chairman of Morris Motors (and now Chairman of the Development Corporation for Wales) recently 'praised the ability and intelligent approach of union leaders in general. He pointed out that the outlawing of unofficial strikes would greatly strengthen their hand.' (Daily Telegraph, August 26, 1965). Modern capitalism is for cooperation between unions and management, wherever possible, in order to maintain 'discipline' - in other words in order to allow the exploitation of labour to proceed smoothly and without too many upheavals. Under modern capitalism the employers - whether of nationalised or private concerns - collect union dues at source, deducting them from the men's wages. (This situation, which would make the union fathers turn in their graves, already pertains for many hundreds of thousands of workers in this country.)

Even 'industrial unionism' has won converts among the bureaucratic and managerial strata. Desmond Donnelly, that noted subversive, can write: 'The extreme multiplicity of unions must go. While rapid amalgamations must take place, I believe that the pattern of industrial unions adopted in certain countries - one union, one factory - must be the aim wherever practicable'. He adds, significantly: 'Only in this way can the union official be brought closer to the shop floor and invested with his proper status' (Sunday Telegraph, August 29, 1965). Sir Edward Beddington Behrens, ex-Chairman of Fisher & Ludlow, is now an advocate of industrial unionism. He points out that 'unions organized on an industrial basis can obtain excellent

terms for their members ... but they can also impose discipline. A few hundred recalcitrant workers cannot so easily impose their will. American trade union officials are paid the equivalent high salaries of their employer counterparts and deserve them', etc, etc. (Daily Telegraph, September 8, 1965) For militants to speak of 'industrial unionism' without further elaboration (branches based on the workshop, eligibility and revo-

cability of all officials, officials to be paid the average wage in the industry, complete control from below, at all levels) only adds to the confusion.

If shop stewards and militants in industry are to resist this subtle challenge to their very existence they should first of all seek to understand what is happening. They should recognize the peculiar disguises in which the threat to job organization is now likely to appear. They should see that part of the danger comes from people they still, somehow, consider as 'on their side'. They should recognize the social roots of the trade union bureaucracy and shed all illusions about being able to 'democratize' it - or to 'reform' the Labour Party, which is largely based on this bureaucracy.

Within the unions, militants should oppose all measures that tend to shift more and more power into the hands of the hierarchy or that seek to limit the role of the shop stewards or of shop floor organization. They should oppose differentials between the wages of union officials and the wages of those they claim to represent. They should oppose all measures tending to extend the tenure of office of these officials. They should oppose the constant trend towards increasing the number of appointed (i. e. non-elected) officials. They should seek to keep the union officials OUT of the plant, particularly during disputes, insisting on direct negotiations between the management and shop organization. They should have no illusions that in the course of this struggle they will succeed in converting the unions into something other than what they are. The steps are necessary in the defence of basic working class interests.

Militants should also seek to build solid links between workers at rank-and-file level, to strengthen job organization, to develop contacts and communications between factories in a given region and between regions. They should do this within the structure of the established unions wherever possible - but outside that structure if necessary. They should seek systematically to break down the barriers which divide workers, barriers which are today solidly reinforced by the very existence of a multiplicity of unions and by their increasingly bureaucratic structure.

Finally, militants should differentiate between objectives which are by and large obtainable through the union machinery (namely the small annual wage increase) and other objectives which can usually only be achieved by direct struggle at the point of production (and often in the teeth of bitter opposition by the trade union leaders). Among this latter group are job bonus and all other payments above the 'official' rate, but also all those other objectives which broadly speaking come under the heading of 'conditions of work'.

On issues of this last type the union leaders cannot move. They cannot support the men however much 'pressure' is brought to bear on them, for they are tied (2) to the employers by innumerable signed agreements, which recognize that certain areas of industry, namely the organization of the job itself and the disposal of the worker's time, are the prerogative of the boss and of the boss alone. Fortunately there are signs that workers are beginning to understand the distinction between these two groups of objectives. They rely on the union leaders for the first kind, on themselves alone for the second.

For instance on August 27, 1965, forty workers at the Coventry Felt Company (which produces 20 miles of felt a week for cars) downed tools because a 19 year-old girl had been sacked. Management alleged she had been spending too much time in the lavatory. A strike (denounced by the union officials) brought about her prompt reinstatement. Union leaders just cannot negotiate on issues of this kind. It can't be laid down by statute that employees with x years' seniority can spend y minutes in the bogs, whereas new recruits ... etc, etc. Only a united show of strength in the shop can win disputes of this kind.

Both sides in industry seem to be limbering up for what lies ahead. On whose back will the 'modernization' of Britain be carried? Just now the employers and trade union bureaucrats appear far more conscious of their interests than do working people. But the appearances are deceptive. Still waters run deep and things could change rapidly.

(2) They are tied whether they are 'right-wing' or 'left-wing' - in terms of the resolutions they may or may not vote for at union or Labour Party conferences.

