AGITATOR

FOR WORKERS POWER

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FOURPENCE

Revolutionary Organisation

I. 'WHAT IS NOT TO BE DONE.'

The term 're-thinking' is often used as an excuse for not thinking at all. One hesitates to use it. Much re-thinking has nevertheless to be done by revolutionary socialists. A cursory glance at the Labour movement in Western Europe today should convince anyone of this dire need. More and more ordinary people show an indifference bordering on contempt for the mass Labour and Communist parties of yesterday. The old men of the 'left' attempt to resolve this crisis by repeating in ever more strident tones the dogmas and concepts that were good enough for their own grandads.

We here wish to examine one of the most fervently adhered to dogmas of the 'Left': the need for a tightly centralised socialist party, controlled by a carefully selected leadership. The Labour Party describes this type of organization as an essential feature of British democracy in practice. The Bolsheviks describe it as 'democratic centralism'. Let us forget the names and look beneath the surface. In both cases we find the complete domination of the party in all matters of organization and policy by a fairly small group of professional 'leaders'.

As none of these parties have ever been successful in achieving a society where the great mass of people control and manage their own destinies, both their politics and their organizational methods must be considered suspect. It is our opinion that the type of organization required to assist the working class in its struggle for socialism is certainly a matter for serious thought.

Post-war capitalism has certainly provided more jobs and better paid ones than many may have thought possible. But its drive to subordinate people to the process of production has intensified at an enormous rate. At work, people are reduced more and more to the role of mere button-pushing, lever-pressing machines. In the 'ideal' capitalist factory human beings would only perform the most simple, routine tasks. The division of labour would be carried to its extreme. Managers would decide. Foremen would super-

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vise. The workers would only comply.

In the body politic, omnipotent social institutions similarly decide all issues: how much production will be 'allowed' to increase or decrease, how much consumption, what kind of consumption, how many H-bombs to produce, whether to have Polaris bases or not, etc., etc. Between those who rule and those who labour there exists a wide and unbridgeable gulf.

Exploiting society consciously encourages the development of a mass psychology to the effect that the ideas or wishes of ordinary people are unimportant and that all important decisions must be taken by people specially trained and specially equipped to do so. People are encouraged to believe that success, security, call it what you will, can only be achieved within the framework of the accepted institutions. The rebel, the militant, the iconoclast may be admired, even envied, but their example must be shunned. After all, no one can really challenge the powers that be. Just look at what happens to those who try!

Ironically enough the very organizations that have set themselves up as the liberators of the working class and the champions of their cause have become facsimile replicas of the very society they are supposedly challenging. The Labour Party, the Communist Party and the various Trotskyite and Leninist sects all extol the virtues of professional politicians or revolutionaries. All practice a rigid division within their own organizations of leaders and led. All fundamentally believe that socialism will be instituted from above and through their own particular agency.

Each of them sees socialism as nothing more than the conquest of political power, and the transformation by decree, of economic institutions. The instruments of socialism, in their eyes, are nationalization, state control and the 'plan'. The objective of socialism is to increase both productivity and consumption. The elimination of economic anarchy and the full development of the productive forces are somehow equated with the millenium.

Labour's nationalized industries are proof of the attitude of the Social Democrats. The Bolsheviks would replace the Robertsons and Robens with people loyal to the Party. The Soviet experience makes this quite clear. As early as 1918 Lenin had stated 'the revolution demands, in the interests of socialism, that the masses unquestioningly obey the single will (emphasis in original) of the leaders of the labour process.'* By 1921 he was saying 'It is absolutely essential that all authority in the factories should be concentrated in the hands of management... under these circumstances all direct interference by the trade unions in the management of factories must be regarded as positively harmful and impermissible'. **

Trotsky wanted to militarise the trade unions. Is it very far from this to the statement, issued by Stalin's Central Committee in September 1929, that 'Soviet Union Communists must help to establish order and discipline in the factory. Members of the Communist Party, union representatives and shop committees are instructed not to interfere in questions of management.' ***

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* 'The immediate tasks of the Soviet government'. Isvestiya of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, No. 85, April 28, 1918.

** 'The role of the Trade Unions under the N.E.P.'

*** Reported in 'Freiheit', German language paper of the American CP, September 9, 1929.

TWO DEMONSTRATIONS

1) LEADING WITH THE REAR

By ANDY ANDERSON

SIT DOWN ! Some of the 5000 stood up to rub their dead ends and stretch their legs. 'Stop walking about! SIT DOWN!' bellowed a field marshall of the 100-Committee. We felt a bit uneasy. We had just been told 'get your feet out of the road' by a tall gent in a blue overcoat and a helmet. 'SIT DOWN! This isn't a circus' roared the marshall again. No, it wasn't. The clownishly dressed few were lost among the 9000 people who walked from Marble Arch to Trafalgar Square.

WHO SAT ? Bertrand Russell had rounded off speeches of an unusually good 'plinth' quality. About 5000 people had then moved down Whitehall. They seemed very ordinary. Of course, there were many young people. This is important and makes nonsense of the moaning old fogies who tell us the youth are all like the Young Conservatives, who know and care nothing about the things that matter. Naturally, there were intellectuals, writers and artists. And of course, the dockers and workers of Fords-Dagenham were not there en masse — but some were present, clearly to be categorized as 'working class'. Some of the intellectuals and artists could neatly be fitted into the 'middle class' bracket. But what of the many demonstrators still not pidgeon-holed by the statisticians of the sectarian Left? Whose dogma will be dusted to fit them? 'But they've got illusions, comrade!'. Sure, they have. Only the re-incarnated messiahs see everything with crystal clarity.

Outside the Ministry the rump of the marchers sat down. A number of people who had intended to be law-abiding, on seeing the squatting multitude, somehow felt compelled to make posterioral contact with the cold concrete.

LAW-BREAKERS UNDER WATER ? Police stood at four-yard intervals facing the body-littered pavements and listened attentively to periodic briefings from itinerant sergeants. Clanging bells broke the calm. Three fire engines arrived. The crowd was unmoved. Now we noticed the coppers had rolled capes under their arms. 'We're in for a drenching' thought the crowd. Some of us took the fire engines' registration numbers. What would the Fire Brigades Union have to say about this? Still the crowd made no move. Intimidation failed. The fire engines slipped away, in silence.

Here we were, breaking the law. No one tried to stop us. A tall young undertaker in black suit and bowler hat walked solemnly by on the other side of the road. He was leading a straggling wake of half-a-dozen Mosley supporters. They all carried bundles of papers. Grim expressions hid their embarrassment. Self-consciously they wailed 'Action!'... The funereal leader seemed deep in thought. Well might he be. The basing of Polaris-carrying submarines, each capable of inflicting 16 Hiroshimas somewhere, showed the contempt of those in power for the anti-bomb movement. But after this demonstration they should not be so smug. Five thousands Saturday afternoon law-breakers in London represents a much larger number throughout the country.

LABOUR PARTY FAILED THE ESTABLISHMENT. What is so important about this campaign is the complete failure of the Labour Party to contain it. In the past, whether one thinks of the Boer War or of Suez, a political party has usually managed to control big movements of dissent. In the anti H-bomb campaign of the fifties and sixties, this has not happened.

The struggle is organized outside and independently of the political parties who shout loudest their concern for ordinary people. Through various avenues of thought many have arrived at the conclusion that more effective action is essential. It does not matter how phoney we may believe some of these avenues to be. The Labour Party has appeared unattractive. Its leaders are no longer able to convey the impression that they have even a radical approach to the most critical issues of our time. The illusion that the members have control over the actions of their leaders is quickly slipping away.

The similarity between the campaign and 'unofficial' movements in industry is apparent. When a dispute takes place in industry and workers know their union leaders won't move, they act independently.

The Communist Party only changed their line to support of the Campaign last May. The Trotskyists support the Kremlin equivalent of the Tory policy:'while the others have the H-bomb, so must Russia'.

CHALLENGE TO STATE. The same strands of thought (of both Campaign supporters and unofficial strikers) are now beginning to be applied to the whole phenomenon of the State. People are realising that institutions such as Parliament, the Judiciary, the Police and the Armed Forces cannot be 'used' to change policies which are in the interests of those in power any more than any of the traditional political organizations can be used for this purpose. We don't really believe there has been a change of heart at Scotland Yard because a plain-clothes man addressed one of our group as 'Sir' and bought a bob's worth of 'Agitator'. The view that the State is an arbitrator, a sort of God suspended in a social vacuum, acting for one side or another depending on righteousness is being doubted or rejected. There is a perception,

however dim, of the real nature of our society, wherein a certain class of people control all the means of mass propaganda...

IMPLICATIONS. These respectable rebels are beginning to see that as the campaign progresses a point will be reached where the State will act violently against them. However limited this recognition, it is very significant.

Some may have illusions about how much they have achieved by this 'sit-down'. But it is a lead -- a lead with the rear, if you like. As one Left sect * forecast (although through illogical reasoning): 'Every spectacular sit-down will demand as its successor an even more spectacular one...' Precisely ! There is every reason to hope that through action campaigners will reach a better understanding of the political implications of their attitude. For this and other reasons we believe it the height of sectarianism not to join in this movement.

There was a cold breeze and it was growing dark. Big Ben boomed 5.30 pm. I stood up and rubbed my backside. 'SIT DOWN !' bawled a copper... or was it a marshall?

2) 'BATTLE' OF BELGRAVIA

By KEN WELLER

On February 29, a clash took place between several thousands demonstrators marching from a mass rally in Trafalgar Square and police barring the way to the Belgian Embassy. The events of that evening highlight certain weaknesses in this and similar recent demonstrations.

It was obvious from the start that the police would not let the marchers get within striking distance of the Embassy. They never do, in marches on embassies. But the Parliamentarian organizers of the demonstration were blinkered by their fetish of 'pressurizing' this or that. To them the demonstration was just a gambit in a game of political one-upmanship. They made no real preparations.

They blandly organized the march as if the marchers were to be allowed to present a petition at the Embassy door. In fact Fenner Brockway discreetly presented himself (with the petition?) at the embassy sometime

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* Socialist Current special issue 'The limitations of passive resistance'

before the march arrived at Eaton Square. Why was he not with the demonstrators? Did he expect trouble? Was this the triumph of discretion over valour?

If police violence was expected -- and most people expected it -- the organizers had a duty to decide what they were going to do. In the event of police provocation they could have advised the marchers to turn round and go home. Or they could have decided on some form of non-violent resistance, such as sitting down and blocking the road. Or they could have decided to march on to the Embassy, regardless. A properly prepared march, of the size of the one in question, might have done this, given the relatively small number of police (about 200 men on foot and less than a dozen on horse).

Instead confusion reigned. We saw perfectly sincere MCF stewards, many of them with long records of courageous activity against fascist thugs, acting as amateur policemen themselves, holding the crowd back on the two occasions in which sections had broken through the police cordons. At the same time other stewards were actively participating in the struggle to reach the Embassy.

In spite of the courage of some of the crowd, in which individual members of the Communist Party and Socialist Labour League played a notable part, the police easily chopped the marchers into small fragments, arresting 26 people in the process.

The main lessons of the 'battle' are:

a) that every such demonstration should have a clear objective, known to the demonstrators.

b) that a decision should be taken, collectively as far as possible, as to what methods should be pursued to achieve the objective decided upon.

c) that proper preparations should be made in advance. By this I do not mean fussy, detailed instructions as to how many should march abreast and as to the speed at which they should advance. I mean that marchers should know exactly where they are going. On February 29, while marshalls were exercising unnecessary supervision, most of the marchers -and even some of the stewards -did not even know where exactly the Belgian Embassy was! The MCF 'leaders' had no idea what they were going to do if and when they got there.

Towards the end of the demonstration part of the crowd decided to march to the headquarters of the Union Movement, in Vauxhall Bridge Road. They did not consult Mr. Brockway or any of the other 'leaders'. Most of these had gone home, anyway. The crowd proceeded to the premises of the white supremacists who, they felt, fully supported what imperialism was doing in the Congo. And there they gave vent to their anger.

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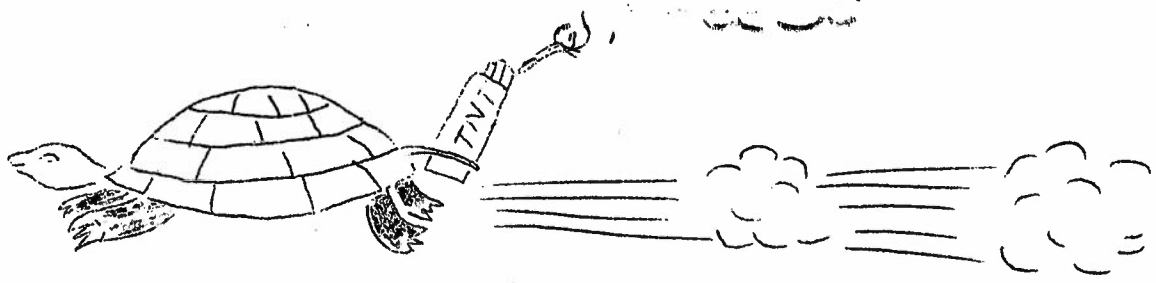
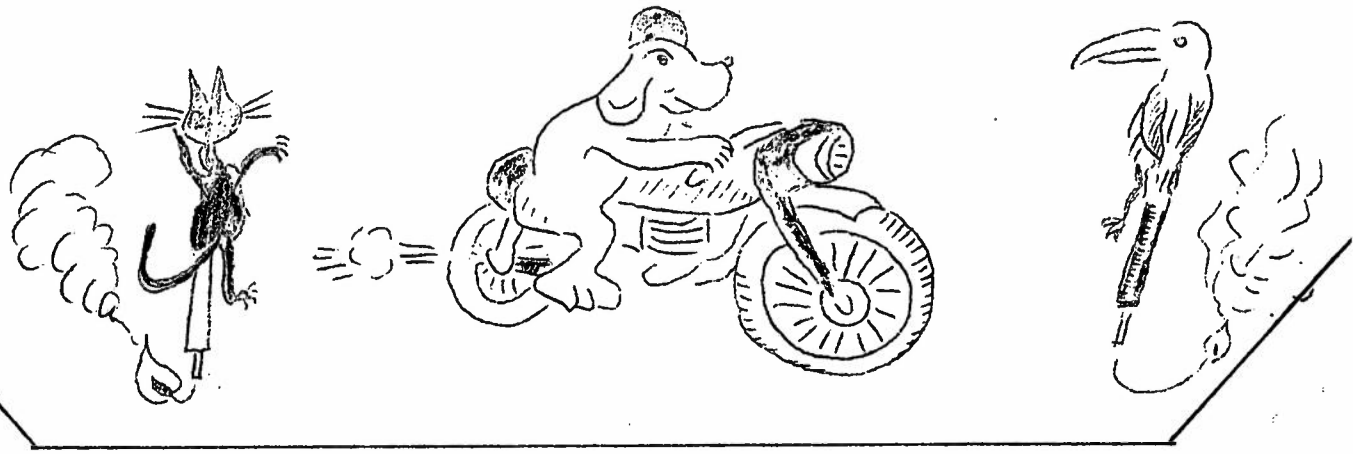


CARDINAL SAYS:
"MAKE YOUR PETS FAST!"

'Pets were included in a call for a family fast-day on Friday, February 24, issued by Cardinal William Godfrey, Archbishop of Westminster. 'What we save thereby can be offered for the hungry and starving', says his Lent message.'

The People, 12.2.61



OUT SHORTLY:

'BY THEIR WORDS YE SHALL KNOW THEM...'

or

STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH.

Selected correspondence, fully annotated, between the 'National Secretary' and certain ex-S.L.L. members. A documented exposure of 'democratic centralism' in action

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'MY PARTY, RIGHT OR WRONG!'

By JIM PETTER

The first major demonstration after the 1957 Aldermarch was the mass Lobby to Parliament. Hourly meetings were arranged in Central Hall. It was hoped that many more supporters would arrive than could be accommodated in the House of Commons. At these meetings, enthusiastic Labour Party members appealed for recruits. 'Join the Party' was the slogan, rather than 'Ban the Bomb'. The ordinary demonstrator, even when a loyal Party member, felt pretty disgusted at these tactics. Cases are on record of the Party actually losing members.

Later that year Voter's Veto became an arguing point. Logically, the refusal to vote for any candidate who supports nuclear weapons makes sense. In practice it means that the Labour Party is the sole loser. The most vociferous opponents of the Veto were the Victory for Socialism group who managed to square the circle by advocating unilateralism on the one hand with acceptance of Labour Party policy (1958 version) for an 'independent deterrent' on the other. One of the arguments used to amalgamate these incompatibles was that there were some 90 Labour MPs who 'supported' CND. That these 'dissident' MPs loyally voted every year for the defence estimates, and that few of them were willing to be seen on official CND platforms was overlooked. When the election came, we were reassured 'it would be different'.

The election came. An overwhelming majority of Labour candidates toed the Party line. They did everything possible to keep the Bomb from becoming an issue. Only where Labour had no chance were candidates free to campaign for unilateralism... in the hope that they might win over a few liberal and non-conformist votes. CND, influenced by VFS, issued a directive: supporters might help their nearest unilateralist candidate rather than force the issue with a Labour candidate who stood for the deterrent.

Since the election, CND has been wavering. Some still believe that the Labour Party can be won over to unilateralism; others are beginning to question whether the Party is the vehicle which can grasp the implications of unilateralism. The Douglas and Scarborough Conferences showed a widespread revolt against the Labour hierarchy. A great many rank and file delegates were not prepared to accept compromise on the policy of the deterrent. The Party leadership has tried both fraud and the big stick to defeat this revolt.

Neither the TGWU nor the AEU motions define Party policy with sufficient clarity. 'Middle of the road' MPs like Crossman have attempted to bring 'unity' by claiming that if they can accept 90 percent of Conference policy, surely we can forget the remaining 10 percent. But it the 10 percent that Crossman and Co. will not accept which most CND supporters regard as vital. Unless CND fights to retain the principle that there are no circum-

stances in which the use of any form of nuclear weapon can be justified, by this or any other country, then CND will cease to matter.

In its structure CND is an oligarchy. The London Regional Council is the only body which has attempted to make itself democratic. It has influenced the National Committee to make some concessions to democracy. Nationally, CND believes in NAMES. Most groups are content to allow their thinking to be done by a few literary and theological publicists. The New Statesman of February 10 contains an ominous leader and a still more ominous letter. John Freeman is responsible for the leader and the letter is signed jointly by Kingsley Martin, Ritchie Calder and Benn Levy (the last three, of course, are CND Names). The argument in both contributions is that the Labour Party can adopt unilateralism without sacrificing anything of its policy, which depends upon the Bomb. The technical achiements in the USA and Soviet Russia are such, the argument runs, that both can now withdraw into a heartland bristling with mobile intercontinental missiles, and threaten each other with mutual, certain and immediate destruction; foreign bases have become obsolete; NATO need no longer be armed with nuclear weapons. 'Our' job is to increase expenditure on conventional weapons; we therefore renounce nuclear weapons and wait with clear consciences for the crash of doom.

All this is hailed as a compromise in the best British tradition. Unfortunately, it is all too probable that those whose loyalty is to the Labour Party rather than to a socialist future will fall for this. Something of this sort will almost certainly be canvassed in CND circles. Should it gain support it will be the end of CND. Some will return to active work in the Labour Party, others will join in, more enthusiastically, with the Direct Action Committee.

The DAC has never pretended to have any democratic nonsense about its structure. It is a self-appointed and self-perpetuating ad hoc body, which has had an enormous turnover of committee members during its four years of existence. It is essentially evangelical. It believes in sudden conversion rather than reasonable conviction. The dramatic, the emotional and the apocalyptic are the basis of its propaganda. Its appeal is more to the non-conformist, the frustrated and the misfit than to the worker who has a job to keep down in the factory, a wife and family to nurture at home, and a trade union to which to look for protection. This is not to deny the dedicated service given by the DAC and its small band of supporters.

When we say that under no circumstances can the use of nuclear weapons ever be justified, we are placing the issue in its moral setting. But we are no abstract moralists. As socialists we believe that society makes its own morality. The morality of capitalism condemns itself because it would also condemn mankind to annihilation. It is a denial of the basic instinct of self-preservation. In seeking to solve the dilemma of the H-bomb, we are seeking a new morality which will require a new society in which to flourish.

Socialism presumes that man can at last control his own destiny. That destiny can only be achieved through the conscious will and struggle of those who work, of those who will actually build the new society. It is this conscious, independent will that socialists seek to encourage and develop. It will

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SHAGGY DOG STORY

Down to Olympia we went. This was it! Cruft's... the greatest dog show of the capitalist world. Dogs, more dogs and yet more dogs. Big 'uns, little 'uns, in fact everything but cheap 'uns. There they were, mixed up with debs, gamekeepers, retired colonels, and people like us.

We listened with awe, as the experts discussed with one another: 'The stupid bitch (the judge, apparently) doesn't care for brindles. Passed mine and gave a first to that clod-hopping thing instead!'

We moved on, passing the hot dog queue, to look at the mastiffs. A breeder informed us that all one needed to enter Cruft's was five shillings and of course a dog (his pups were from £50 up).

'Of course' he said 'a mongrel could do all a pedigree could and was probably healthier'. But who'd pay £50 for a scruffy mongrel? How much does it cost, we asked, to keep a mastiff? 'Costs aren't important to me' he replied, 'I must have a dog that won't frighten my maids. It's a helluva job to keep staff nowadays'.

We sympathised, left him and went to see the bulldogs. Here was the symbol of England, fat, lazy-looking and pugnacious... the Tory of the canine world!

Behind a counter displaying dog foods we saw a woman vainly trying to interest people in her stand. We moved forward: two illuminated pictures stared starkly at us; they depicted starving and ill-treated children (British, not Congolese). The female was hawking competition leaflets. We paid our bob and filled in the questionaire. We had to place in order of importance certain listed requirements for a happy home. As we placed religion bottom of the ratings we'll be surprised if we win anything.

My mate remarked one could judge this country's feeling for animals when one noticed that whilst our Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was prefixed 'Royal', our Children's Society was merely 'National' !

Not wishing to disturb the aristocracy at the buffet, we blew out and had a cuppa in a cafe. We mused over the show and concluded that class was not the monopoly of humans, although ours is self-imposed. My friend reminded me of an old joke:
Pedigree: 'I've got two firsts, two seconds and I'm highly commended.
Mongrel: 'H'mm, not bad, mate. I've 'ad two fights, two f---s and I'm 'ighly delighted !'

TOM HILLIER

WHAT NEXT FOR ENGINEERS

By Ken Weller, A.E.U.

'AGITATOR' Pamphlet No. 3.
Price: 8d (post free) from:
E. Morse, 3 Lancaster Grove, NW3.

CONSTITUTION WAY

[A STUDY IN STRIKE-SMOTHERING]

By a printworker.

The surface appearance

Many trade unionists regard the printing unions as a model of how workers should be organized for the defence of their interests. Their financial strength is impressive. Subscriptions are at least three or four times higher than the national union average. Much printing work is tied to very tight schedules. Newspapers and magazines must be published on time or they are so much waste paper. Many employers cannot risk any sort of stoppage.

The printing unions exercise some control over recruitment into the industry. This allows them to prevent too much recruitment from depressing wage rates. Wages and conditions compare favourably with conditions elsewhere. On the surface the power of the printing unions is very impressive. But scratch a little and they will be found to be instruments as inadequate for the defence of working class interests as any other traditional type of union today.

During the last ten years there has been a substantial increase in production but the last two national wage settlements - one involving a long strike - failed to squeeze any important concessions from the employers. The printing bosses are more united and stronger than for many years. They are starting a series of local actions designed to undermine the strength of the printing workers. Below, we describe a case history of how a powerful employer decided to test the strength and solidarity of the union organization - and how totally inadequate it proved to be.

Isolation

Fleetway Publications (part of the 'Mirror Group') have a large factory at Gravesend. To attract skilled labour from a wide area (Rochester, Chatham, Maidstone, etc.) London rates of pay and conditions prevail. This means a basic rate £3 higher than the local trade union rate plus many extras (higher overtime rates, a four-night week for night workers, higher night rates, etc.). Fleetway is like an oasis in the desert. London, where similar conditions exist, is too far for many to be able to travel to. During what follows this isolation must be kept in mind.

For as far back as anyone can remember, there has never been a serious industrial dispute at Gravesend. Before the Daily Mirror acquired control, Fleetway (then the Amalgamated Press) was allowed slowly to run down. The owning company lacked interest in anything beyond milking the assets (a study of their balance sheets from 1948-57 will prove this point). The

Mirror group found the milking process had seriously depleted the business and are now beginning to 'tighten up'. As a result of the take over the profit needs of the company are much higher. Profit requirements are not only related to the invested capital; they are also related to the price paid to the previous owners and to the return required on the invested capital. The new management felt it necessary to assert its power at an early stage. Tea breaks were cut. Then a militant member of the machine-minders' chapel was given fourteen days notice for an alleged irregularity at the clock.

Victimisation

Clocking-in and out is a means of social degradation usually 'reserved' for the manual worker. Workers revolt against it subconsciously. They abuse the system until it becomes a farce. This is the situation at Fleetway. Workers clock one another in and out wholesale. The management know about this. They have ignored it for years. People have been seen on trains hours before being clocked out after working overtime. A time keeper once clocked between twenty and thirty people out half an hour late (he had been paid a shilling by each person). Nothing was done.

So when on Tuesday, January 3, a member of the machine minders' chapel was called into the office and accused of clocking someone else in that morning, it did not seem, to start with, very serious. The chapel have an agreement with the management that if any member is wanted by the management for a serious interview, he shall be called through the Father of the Chapel. The FOC was not present at this interview. He knew nothing about the proceedings. As a result of the irregular nature of this interview, of the fact that it broke an agreement, the unions could have refused to recognize any consequences flowing from it.

On Wednesday, January 4, the same machine minder was given fourteen days' notice for the alleged clocking offence. The chapel committee met the same evening. They declared that the member had been victimised. They decided, as per constitution, to meet the management and ask for leniency ! A small section of the chapel wanted to down tools immediately. The constitutionalists prevailed.

On Thursday, January 5, no meeting with the management took place. The management claimed they were too busy with wage calculation work. On Friday afternoon, January 6, the FOC and his deputy met the manager. They pleaded for leniency, unsuccessfully. They later seemed worried, 'because victimisation could not be proved'. As if any employer will admit the real reason behind this kind of sacking ! It was considered too late on Friday for a Committee meeting. One was arranged for Monday, January 9.

At this meeting, no effective action was decided upon. Instead it was agreed to ask the House Chapel to instruct all employees to refuse to use the clocks until the notice was withdrawn. The committee's decision that this was a case of victimisation, was endorsed by a general vote of chapel members on Tuesday morning, January 10. The House Chapel, which consists of representatives from the

various chapels, met during Tuesday afternoon. It decided to meet the management again, and again to plead for leniency. As for any action, it was felt (not unreasonably) that this should first be taken by the chapel in dispute.

On Wednesday, January 11, in the best tradition of liberal democracy, the house chapel once again pleaded for leniency before the manager. The pleas were rejected. Perhaps some action would now be taken. No. The constitutional channels had not been exhausted. The chapel officers thought the matter should now be placed before the trade union branch. The Branch secretary was asked to telephone the Head Office of the Typographical Association in Manchester. Could the chapel request the suspension of the dismissal notice while negotiations continued? By the time the Branch secretary had contacted Manchester 'negotiations' had ceased. There seemed little point in making the enquiry !

On Thursday evening, January 12, the Branch Committee met. The results of its deliberations were that it decided to raise with Head Office the legal point about whether a worker could be dismissed for an action which the management could not prove.

By now more than a week of the fortnight's notice had gone. Many workers were becoming impatient. Some wanted to strike immediately. Most thought that 'all constitutional paths should first be explored'. Some members of the House Committee expressed the view that neither the machine-minders' FOC nor his deputy seemed to be putting forward much of a case. They were perhaps not unduly worried at the prospect of losing a member who had been trying (in the face of their opposition) to persuade the chapel to act like an organization of the working class?

Friday, January 13 saw the most peculiar incident of the whole affair. The machine-minders' chapel committee although holding that one of its members was being victimised, decided, at the management's request, to raise the overtime limit. Chapel members cannot work more than 25 hours overtime per fortnight without the permission of the chapel. The Committee did, however, convene a full chapel meeting for Monday evening, January 16.

During the weekend the dismissed member himself discovered the 'awful truth'. There was no basis in the legal point raised by the branch committee. In capitalist law the only right the worker has is the right to receive proper notice before he is sacked. The employer need give no reason for dismissal.

Intransigence

Monday, January 16 was the last day on which any serious action could be planned by the workers themselves. The notice expired on Wednesday.

During the morning the Branch secretary received a telephone call from Head Office. Would the branch request the management to suspend the notice until a national organizer could visit the factory? This request was refused by the management. In the face of this intransigence it seemed possible that the chapel meeting, called for that same evening, would decide to stop work. Three days notice of the meeting had been given, and the committee had asked for overtime to be kept to a minimum. A large meeting seemed certain. But the FOC suddenly cancelled the meeting!

He had no authority whatsoever for this action. Only the convening

body (the committee) has a right to do this. When the FOC was asked to call the committee together he refused. The matter, he said, was in the hands of the branch. The chapel could therefore take no action. He quoted branch rule 20 in support of his view. Rule 20 reads: 'Should any matter arise affecting the interests of the trade, no steps shall be taken by any member until all the facts relating to it have been laid before the branch committee, and by them submitted to the E.C., whose decision shall be final'.

The word 'until' is the key word. As all the constitutional steps had been taken, action could surely now be taken by 'any member'. No one reading the rule correctly could possibly interpret it as the FOC had done. So outrageous, in fact, was this interpretation that Committee members demanded that the committee met that same evening to overrule the FOC's interpretation. But the damage was done. The last day for action had passed.

The Committee decided however to call a chapel meeting for Tuesday evening, January 17. This meeting was doomed. No proper notice could be given. One third of the members were working overtime or on night shift. Others were sick of being messed about with meetings cancelled and then recalled.

The chapel meeting was held on the Tuesday evening. It was poorly attended. A large majority of those present were in favour of a stay-in strike, starting the following day. Strike action was the only possible action at this late stage. But such was the weakness of the officials and the demoralized state of the chapel that this, the supreme body, no longer felt confident in its own decisions. The scab element, the weak and the apathetic exercised a veto without moving a finger. A proposal was put to the member the following morning that the chapel should cease work but stay in the factory. After a secret ballot this was defeated by 56 votes to 31. Most of those who voted against the proposal did so, they said, because direct action would jeopardize the chances of the national organizer succeeding when he arrived. But the obstinate facts remained. A member had been victimized. The chapel had not done a thing about it. A weak and demoralized chapel had been exposed for all to see.

On Monday, January 23, a national organizer of the Typographical Association met the management. He failed to secure reinstatement. Like most officials, he seemed very concerned to explain what a busy man he was. He claimed however to have 'modified the management's attitude'. They had kindly agreed that if ever they required more labour the dismissed man 'would stand the same chance as anyone else of securing a job'. When it was put to him that this did not seem much of a concession, he asked 'What have the chapel done?'. The chapel, he was told, were waiting for him. An employer, he said, could sack anyone he liked. But didn't the trade union movement exist, we asked naively, to prevent this sort of thing? He departed muttering about industrial discipline.

Conclusions

This may seem a very trivial case. Its implications are however important. In a highly organized

section of the most intensively unionised industry in the country, an employer was able to victimize a man. Fleetway Publications print magazines which have to be ready by a given date. Action by the workers would have been very successful. No money would have been lost. Any time lost in dispute would have been made up later by overtime working. Why then was no action taken?

We have mentioned the isolation of the factory. Other influences were also at work. Many of the social concessions made by capitalism to the worker act as restraining influences. There is no adequate state pension scheme. Many private schemes prevent the worker from facing a disastrous fall in living standards when he retires. Many workers covered by such a scheme are reluctant to risk their job once they have passed the age of 40. A fairly good pension scheme exists in Fleetway.

Many young people have tremendous debts (houses, cars, etc.). They cannot risk a single week without full money. Many trade unionists are also freemasons. Others belong to the same club as their foremen, etc. These people feel no attachment to working class ideals. They desperately and unsuccessfully seek substitutes. This is a very wide problem. It concerns the whole ethos of the movement.

But what of the people who wanted to take some kind of action? An interesting fact about this group was that it was comprised of non-politicals, many non-'socialists' and even Tories. This shows the relative unimportance of the traditional capitalist political divisions.

The majority were too readily persuaded to allow 'constitutional processes' to work... at the expense of action. The whole idea of pleading for leniency, instead of demanding the withdrawal of the dismissal notice, should have been fought. At no time were the full facts placed before each member of the chapel. This should have been done at the very beginning. Some form of action should have been proposed from the start. If, as soon as the man was told he was due to be sacked, an immediate ban on overtime had been instituted, then each worker would have felt involved in the struggle. They would have been committed. Later strike action, if necessary, would have found much wider support.

One thing stands out very clearly. Constitutions and rules help the employer. They act against the interests of workers.

(continued overleaf)

RENAULT WORKERS FIGHT SACKINGS

A GRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF RECENT STRUGGLES AT THE RENAULT WORKS IN PARIS & LE MANS.

Written by rank-and-file French metal workers.

'AGITATOR' Pamphlet No.1. Price 6d Post free

A few copies still available from: E. Morse, 3, Lancaster Grove, NW3.

Trade union machinery is so much part of the establishment that no help can be expected from this quarter. Only the workers can defend themselves - no one else will. If the working class builds an organization and this organization fails, the result is disastrous. At Gravesend sincere trade unionists who wanted to act in defence of their principles now feel demoralized. A number have reacted by withdrawing their support from the chapel. This is unfortunate but who can blame them? If working class organizations are not even able to defend their own members, then of what use are they?

Situations similar to the one described are occurring throughout industry, in increasing numbers. The need for independent organization, on the job, by the workers themselves, is becoming daily more obvious. In some cases, it already exists. This is the only way forward.

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'MY PARTY, RIGHT OR WRONG!'
(Continued from page 9)

not be encouraged by the good intentions, either of those who seek the unity of the Labour Party through compromise, or those who believe that exhibitions of self-sacrifice can redeem the world.

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REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION
(continued from p. 2)

None of them argued for the working people themselves managing and organizing industry and the affairs of society, now. That was a carrot to be nibbled in a distant future.

This conception of socialism spawns the bureaucratic parties that today constitute the traditional political organizations of the 'Left'. To all of them the determination and application of policies are a matter for experts. Gaitskell scorns the Scarborough decisions because they were made by people whom he considers to be intellectually incapable of comprehending matters of international importance. The Communist Party and the Socialist Labour League oppose British H-bombs but support Russian ones. Their leaders consider the millions of people who want to end all H-bombs as being sentimental and uninformed. They have obviously not read the appropriate volumes that would 'clarify' them and make them see how essential Russian bombs really are.

The businessmen insist on the importance of their managerial rights. So do the leaders of the political organizations of the 'Left'. This rigid control from above creates not efficiency but the very reverse. Whenever decisions are taken at higher levels and simply transmitted to the lower orders for execution a conspiracy against both leaders and orders arises. In the factory the workers devise their own methods of solving work problems. If bonus can be made in five hours, well and good. Work is skilfully spread over eight and a half hours. Supervisors lie to departmental managers. These, in turn, lie

to works' managers, who lie to the directors and shareholders. Each seeks to preserve his own niche. Each seeks to hide wastage, error and inefficiency. In the hierarchical organization of the modern factory where work is not a matter for common decision and responsibility, and where relations are based on mistrust and suspicion, the best 'plan' can never be fulfilled in life.

This is repeated in the political parties. Officials have an existence to justify. Members who are nothing more than contributors to party funds and sellers of party literature are regularly called to order to explain how many papers they have sold and how many contacts they have visited with their leader's latest line. Those who attempt to discuss reality or to think for themselves are denounced as either 'sectarians', 'opportunists' or just 'politically immature'. The factory managers never really know what is happening in their factories. The political 'leaders' really don't know either what is taking place in their own organizations. Only the leaders, for instance, believe the membership figures issued.

Bolsheviks argue that to fight the highly centralized forces of modern capitalism requires an equally centralized type of party. This ignores the fact that capitalist centralization is based on coercion and force and the exclusion of the overwhelming majority of the population from participating in any of its decisions. The most highly specialised and centralized bodies under capitalism are its means of enforcing its rule - its military and its police. Because of their bureaucratic centralism these organizations produce a special breed of animal noted for insensitiveness, brutality and other moronic qualities.

The very structure of these organizations ensures that their personnel do not think for themselves, but unquestioningly carry out the instructions of their superiors. Trotsky, as far back as 1903, believed that the marxist movement should have a similar structure. He told the Brussels Conference that the statutes of the revolutionary organization should express 'the leadership's organized distrust of the members, a distrust manifesting itself in vigilant control from above over the Party'. *

Advocates of 'democratic centralism' insist that it is the only type of organization which can function effectively under conditions of illegality. This is nonsense. The 'democratic centralist' organization is particularly vulnerable to police persecution. When all power is concentrated in the hands of the leaders, their arrest immediately paralyses the whole organization. Members trained to accept unquestioningly the instructions of an all-wise Central Committee will find it very difficult or impossible to think and act for themselves. The experiences of the German Communist Party confirm this. With their usual inconsistency, the Trotskyists even explain the demise of their western European sections during World War II by telling people how their leaders were murdered by the Gestapo !

The overthrow of exploiting society is not a military operation to be planned by a Secretariat of amateur Generals, armed with a library of marxist textbooks and an outdated military manual. A social revolution can only take place providing the working class itself is conscious of the need to change society and is prepared to struggle. Its success is dependent on the disintegration of the capitalist institutions more than on their military overthrow. Unless whole sections of the military can be either won over or neutralized, then the taking of power is impossible.

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* see Deutscher 'The Prophet Armed', p. 76.

LEXICON FOR MARXICOLOGISTS

CADRE: residue left after a faction fight.

CLASS ENEMY: yesterday's comrade.

CLASS STRUGGLE: squabble over assets.

CONTACT: bloke prepared to listen.

CLOSE CONTACT: bloke prepared to listen... and repeat.

ENTRISM: marxist convincing disillusioned Labour Party members to remain in, so they can vote for the expulsion of the marxist at a later date.

JACKALS (HYENAS, ETC.): Stalinist designation of Trotskyists and other left critics.

LINE: longest distance between two points (because of tactical zig-zags).

OPPORTUNIST: one who believes that what the masses do is more important than what the Central Committee thinks.

PETTY-BOURGEOIS: bloke with steady job who washes behind ears.

RAT GROUPS: Trotskyist designation for left critics.

'TAKING THEM THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE': convincing a militant who rejects the Labour Party that he ought to join to reform it, knowing his experiences will convince him that this is impossible.

REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION (continued from p. 17)

Because of their basically reactionary ideas and methods of organization neither Social Democracy nor Bolshevism are able to understand or express the real needs of people. The dynamic of any socialist movement is the desire of people to change the conditions of their lives. The Hungarian revolution was more than a struggle for an extra ten bob a week. It was not a struggle for an extension of nationalisation or for more 'efficiency' in Government departments. Millions of Hungarian people rose against their oppressors because they wanted to determine the conditions of their own lives and to manage their own affairs. For a brief, heroic period they replaced the society of rulers and ruled with direct democracy, where every representative was not only elected by direct vote but was revocable at any time. The ideas of committees appointed from above and of 'panels' commissions' would have been quite alien to them. Surely political tendencies whose organizational methods are the very antithesis of what the working class has demonstrated, in practice, that it wants, should re-examine all their ideas and previously held theories.

TO BE CONCLUDED

CULTURE :

'THE WC MYSTERY'

by andy with apologies to bill (or francis)

The national press recently reported that when Sir Winston Churchill went to the south of France to continue his holiday, he took with him his pet budgerigar, Toby. Soon after arrival, the bird escaped from its cage. Winston offered a 50 francs reward for its capture.

MUCH ADO ABOUT TOBY

ACT III, Scene 1. A hamlet in Southern France

(WC stands in the wings, flushed and excited, Corona aggressive, two fingers cocked impudently to heaven)

Enter an Inspector of the RSPCA de France.

Inspector: Toby or no Toby - now is the quest on.
Whether he's nobbl'd or fried with frogs for supper,
With slings and arrows seek the French a fortune -
For fifty francs (nouveaux?) will see their troubles
And discomposure paid for. - Toby, - he sings, -
No more; où est l'oiseau du grand Monsieur?
The heart-ache! - poor Winny scratches the smooth place
He once had hair to - is't a retaliation
By one whom he had dish'd? Today - they sleep -
They sleep? perchance they scheme: - ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death could Peter come
And, brushes deeply dipp'd in sordid oils,
Paint pretty poll like prol' sparrow;
Thus make calamity for such small life.
Or have parties' whips, scions of his time,
Oppress'd by words in this proud man's vocab'lary,
Sought vengeance in belov'd birdie's cage and
Flung wide the tiny orifice? Has Toby
With impatience flown straight to Marianne who,
Mindful of Marlb'rough, his quietus made
With a bare bodkin?.....etc.

REVIEWS

A NEWS & LETTERS PAMPHLET (62 pages - 25 cents)

WORKERS BATTLE AUTOMATION

By Charles Denby and others

'No doubt automation is a 'scientific' achievement, but this scientific achievement has no life outside of production'.

In a sentence is here exposed the latent terror in automation... exposed in a manner the 'technicians' and literary economists dare not expose it, not in all their pamphlets of learning and wisdom for the Stationary Office and other 'unbiased' publicity organs of industry and State.

For automation is geared to the industrial empire in which it was born. And that empire is itself the base of the political empire through which those who manage production and run society dominate the lives of ordinary people. Already these tycoons and statesmen can take all they need. They did so before automation stuffed even more into their horn of plenty. Yet, still they continue, craving and grasping for more, in the endless race for industrial 'progress'.

Not a ton of Earth's minerals is lifted but the tycoons must disembowel the planet for more. No sooner has a conveyor been speeded up than it must be accelerated yet further. Its human attendants must serve and feed it still faster. No sooner has the scientist, chemist or mathematician answered the latest batch of problems than his brain is called upon to solve the problems engendered by the new state of affairs that he and his labour have just brought about.

There comes a time when the pace grows too fast for human effort, physical or mental. The brains and hands of scientist and worker are then set to building those machines so symbolic of automation, the robot monsters of erstwhile science-fiction, the transfer machine, the feed-back controller and the electronic computer. These devices, surrounded by suitable clouds of mystical and pseudo-scientific jargon about 'ergonomics', rapidly betray the innocent layman's hopes of an end to arduous human labour. In the rat race for survival, waged by the competing capitalist regimes, automation is not an alternative to human sweat but a necessary supplement to the powers of men, already strained to their physical and mental limits.

'The men who watch the machine actually don't have too hard a day's work..... The work that the machine puts out pushes the people ahead... those men are sweating and slaving. There are sixteen jigs... three men on each jig; each group is to get thirty-seven jobs an hour... We are degraded to a cog in the machine. We don't use the machine; it uses us.'

'The loneliness brought about by these machines is terrific... you have no one to talk to. Before there used to be eight or ten guys doing the same job..... you're fighting in your own mind and every minute you look up to see what time it is'.

'Ford used to employ 80,000 at the River Rouge plant in Dearborn... Today there are fewer than 40,000... I have never seen so many men and youngsters, especially negro men, pushing ice-cream wagons and selling magazines, rags and junk as I do now.'

'There is a pace to be kept... a tremendous pace on these computors, because the thing stressed... is the enormous cost of the machine. Any minute... you waste by making a mistake they log against you. There is a row of switches... If you raise or lower one by mistake you might waste three or four hours, and sometimes it can multiply... You have a time clock so that they know how many hundredths of an hour you spent between jobs... It develops a temseness in me. They've got the whole thing built up to the degree that you don't dare make mistakes, and yet you've got to go fast.'

We also find in the pamphlet ideas for the future, demands for the life that people could derive from automation if they were its mastors instead of its slaves. Various aspects of life in the speed-up society are described.

The pamphlet lays down no line for workers to follow; in fact it has some cutting comments to make about the political pundits, Stalinists, Trotskyists and others, whose dubious wisdom claims to have found immutable answers to the workers' new problems. It calls on the workers to discuss their lives in their own way and to offer their own, various, suggestions about the way forward. If its only service is to do these two things, and to inspire others to join in on this pooling of experience and ideas, it has made a contribution to the socialist cause. Let's have more like it.

E. MORSE

Copies of this pamphlet may be obtained from: F. Williams, 148, Wakefield Street, London E.6., Price: 1s.

'PSST ! PASSED ANY GOOD RESOLUTIONS LATELY ?'