

THE NEWSLETTER

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HARLAND STRIKE: CLYDE STEWARDS MEET

By **DAVID FORFAR**, convener of shop stewards, Harland and Wolff, Scotstoun (Glasgow)

STRIKE committee at Harland and Wolff's—where the fitting section has been out since December 8 in a struggle against redundancy and victimization—has convened an emergency conference of Clyde shop stewards this week. The conference will discuss the fight against redundancy and organize support for a struggle in which two vital principles are at stake: the right to work-sharing instead of dole-sharing; and the right to maintain a shop organization without victimization.

Fifteen thousand leaflets calling the conference have been distributed, in which our fight is shown as not a struggle against the Harland combine alone, but against the Clyde Employers' Confederation as a whole. There is such big support for the conference that a much larger meeting hall had to be booked than at first arranged.

Over the past few weeks twenty-two workers, mainly fitters, have been paid off at Harland and Wolff's.

The workers imposed a ban on overtime and a 'work to rule', in an endeavour to force the employers to retain these men and share the available work.

But these measures failed and redundancies continued. The last pay-off, of two fitters, included the sub-convener of shop stewards, a man who had been employed in the factory for four years.

This was a clear-cut case of victimization.

Intended smashing shop organization

Moreover the management insolently declared that it had further redundancies in mind.

The employers' intention was clear. Not only was the threat of the sack to hang over every worker's head, but the shop organization was to be smashed—obviously a prelude to an attack on general working conditions.

In these circumstances we were left with no alternative but to withdraw our labour.

The principles involved in this struggle are of urgent interest to every Clyde worker.

Each week the employers are throwing more and more men on the dole queues. The purpose is clear. The growing pool of unemployed will be used to reduce the standards of those still at work.

The fight against unemployment must be made within the factories and yards.

No time has been lost in developing the campaign to win support for our fight. Within hours of the beginning of the strike circulars explaining our struggle and appealing for finance were sent out to every major factory and shipyard in the area.

We have sent delegates to see shop stewards' conveners in

(Continued overleaf)

LONDON TRADE UNIONISTS TO DISCUSS SUPPORT FOR MINERS

A meeting is to be held under the auspices of The Newsletter in the Holborn Hall, London, on Sunday, January 11, at 11 a.m., to discuss how London trade unionists can support the miners in their fight against sackings.

The miners' case will be presented by Jim Allen, a rank-and-file miner from Lancashire.

STRIKE WON FIVE MEN'S JOBS BACK

A complete victory has been won by the thirty-three plumbers and fitters employed by Norris Heating Engineers on a building site in Runcorn (Cheshire).

The strike began when five men were sacked, and ended when the firm reinstated them.

AUBTW DISTRICT DEMANDS REINSTATEMENT OF EXPELLED MILITANTS

THE Sussex district committee of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers has gone on record against the expulsion of Brian Behan and other militants from the union.

The Brixton branch of the AUBTW has unanimously condemned the executive for the expulsions, and has demanded the reinstatement of the expelled members.

The branch also decided to submit a resolution to the next annual conference asking for action on unemployment, and to nominate Mick Gammon as Trades Union Congress delegate.

The current issue of the Building Worker contains yet another attack on militants in the AUBTW. This time it is from the pen of the president, Harry Weaver.

THE NEWSLETTER'S CHRISTMAS BREAK

There will be no issue of The Newsletter next week. The next issue will be published on Saturday, January 3,

We wish all our readers, supporters and contributors a very pleasant holiday—and remind them that the weekly deadline for receiving copy at this office is Tuesday afternoon. So post early for The Newsletter, all the year round!

BELVEDERE: EMPLOYERS BUDGE A LITTLE

By Our Industrial Correspondent

REPRESENTATIVES of the employers and the seven unions concerned met last week to discuss the Belvedere dispute.

Although John Browns were present at the talks, Sir William Arrol, the other firm concerned in the mass sackings, failed to appear.

Browns claimed that instead of the 180 men they originally employed on the job, they would need only some thirty-five men to reopen it. Later that total would be raised to eighty.

After opposition from the unions to these proposals, Browns finally agreed to send each man previously employed by them a registered letter, asking him to make an application for re-employment.

COMMENTARY

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

SCIENCE is rapidly, often dramatically, pushing back in all directions the boundaries of human knowledge. There are two realms in particular where mankind stands on the threshold of exciting discoveries: the realm of the very small and the realm of the very big. The whole pattern of scientific discovery up to now suggests that the physicists will before long find a form of motion of matter underlying the movements of electrons and the other particles of the atom. At the other end of the scale, the macrocosmic end, it is suggested by Professor Lovell in his Reith lectures, new light will soon be thrown on the origin, nature and mode of development of the universe, thanks to the new science of radio-astronomy with its radio-telescopes and subtle mathematical tools.

Nor will the elaboration of new scientific laws to generalize and explain the new discoveries bring any end to experiment, inquiry and the constant improvement (but never perfection) of our theories about the universe. Like the atom before it, the electron will yield up its secrets to the human brain only to pose a whole series of fresh problems. Yesterday's mysterious secrets turn into scientific truths today, and into commonplaces tomorrow—and still the tide of human knowledge sweeps on. It never stops. Here and there backwaters are left for a time (the common cold, for instance) but there is no problem that in itself is too tough to be solved.

One cannot help reflecting, however, what a pity it was that Professor Lovell included in his popularization an occasional swipe at materialists. 'The materialist . . . evades the problem.' 'Only the materialist can turn aside unmoved . . .' That might have been good enough in the days of 'The Mysterious Universe', when idealist writers cast alternate handfuls of stardust and mystical verse into their readers' eyes in order to preserve the belief in God. It is not good enough today. The whole progress of modern science has confirmed that the materialist world outlook and the dialectical method are the only philosophical instruments that will help men to understand the world, to change it and to control it.

Dialectical materialism held that the atom was both inexhaustible and real (when bourgeois philosophers were crying out that matter had 'disappeared'); the discovery of the sub-atomic particles and the harnessing of the great store of energy within the atom have proved both its inexhaustibility and its objective existence. Dialectical materialism holds that the universe is qualitatively infinite; that the world was not created by any supernatural agency, but always has existed and always will exist, though we cannot yet determine the forms taken by matter in the remote

past and the remote future. Professor Lovell says there are two alternative hypotheses: that the universe in its present state expanded from one 'primeval atom'; or that matter is continuously coming into existence. Despite his excursion into metaphysics, neither of these hypotheses implies a supernatural origin of the world. And the only way of deciding between them is not to speculate, not to pray for revelation—but to go and look through a radio-telescope and use one's brains! Whichever hypothesis is found to be right the door to further inquiry and further knowledge will not be closed, but only just opening. Ahead there lie, not gods, but fresh problems for men to tackle in their endless, and noble, quest to understand the universe and to conquer it.

These ideas underlying all genuine and fruitful scientific research are applied by Marxists to the study of human society. The same fearless spirit of inquiry; the same refusal to accept revelation in the place of experiment and investigation; the same refusal to close the door to further research; the same insistence on theoretical clarity: these are the hallmarks of the Marxist approach. But the discoveries made by Marxism in the sphere of social science arouse class and caste prejudices in a way that the discoveries of the natural sciences never do. For Marxism boldly challenges all the prejudices and shibboleths of a society that is divided into hostile classes. It openly and frankly declares that the working class alone can overthrow this society and build a new one. And its students are not content to remain in the libraries and armchairs: they plunge into the thick of the social conflict, so as to teach something—and learn something.

This passionate regard for scientific method and theoretical clarity in the sphere of social science is dubbed 'dogmatism' by those who have learned nothing and forgotten nothing in the past two years, and who substitute eclectic phrasemongering for serious work in the working-class movement. 'The Trotskyists . . . share all the dogmatism of the Stalinists without any of their achievements.' So declares a writer in the latest issue of *Universities and Left Review*. The venom here is matched only by the ignorance. The existence of a serious Marxist analysis of the Stalinist epoch in the Soviet Union has saved thousands of people for Marxism in the past two years. The growth of rank-and-file movements under Marxist leadership is becoming a substantial thorn in the flesh of British capitalism. There are those who would clap even a radio-telescope to their blind eye, so as not to see the signals that even *The Times* and the *Financial Times* can read. To mutter 'dogmatism' in face of the small, but significant, achievements of the nascent Marxist movement in Britain is to display an unwillingness to grapple with new phenomena that is hopelessly provincial, short-sighted and complacent and—alas—hopelessly unscientific.

CLYDE STRIKE (Continued from front page)

most establishments. And everywhere there has been support.

I myself was able to address the annual meeting of the Rolls-Royce shop stewards, also affected by redundancies, and was warmly received.

An appeal for support is being made to the Glasgow dockers.

The strike has now been officially endorsed by the Glasgow district of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, which has

'blacked' all work that may be farmed out from the factory.

We are confident that the Clyde workers will quickly realize that our fight is a test case on the Clyde on the questions of redundancy and victimization.

We must not be defeated. Too many defeats have been gained by the employers in these matters.

Victory for Harland's workers will mean defeat for the Clyde Employers' Federation. Victory can be won, with the backing of every shop steward and worker in the area.

Pit Closures: Twenty Questions and Answers

BY BRIAN BEHAN

(1) Why is there a crisis in the coal industry?

The crisis is part of the crisis of capitalism, the system of private ownership of the means of production.

Under nationalization the miners have been used to provide cheap coal for capitalist-owned heavy industry. No one knows how much per ton the big capitalists pay for their coal.

Without the miners the employers could never have recovered their markets and profits after the last war.

In getting increased production out of the miners, the capitalist class had the help of the Labour and trade union leaders, who preached that capitalism had changed and that never again would the miners have to worry about the dole queue.

All the glib promises made by these people—who never dug any coal themselves, of course—have been broken.

Capitalism has not changed. The reins of power are still in the hands of the big employers. And as their system cracks they try to solve their problems at the expense of working men.

The National Coal Board is deliberately taking the opportunity, while coal stocks are rising, of creating a pool of unemployed miners in order to beat down those in work.

To reopen two of the pits which are being shut will cost £20 million, the same as the cost of giving four weeks' holiday with pay to the whole industry. And the colliery stocks at present held come to four weeks' supply.



(2) Is there no future for coal now, with the turn to oil burning in the power stations?

The NCB itself states that for 100 years coal will still be the main source of power for industry.

The only reason for cutting coal production now is that the employers are restricting production in steel and other basic commodities.

They are doing this now because it is more profitable for the employer to keep goods scarce and prices high. Profits will always come first.

(3) Will the next Labour government solve the problem by adopting a national coal policy and expanding production.

No, Labour's present programme cannot expand production, unless the other industries that coal depends on are nationalized, the arms programme cut and compensation payments stopped.



(4) Has nationalization failed?

No. The idea of abolishing private ownership of the means of production is still a valid one. What happened under the Labour government was that nationalization was carried out in the interests of the capitalist class rather than in the interests of the working class.

The ex-owners received outrageous sums of compensation for broken-down mines. And the employing class kept its grip on the mines through jobs on the NCB.

(5) Is cutting opencast mining the answer?

No. The Coal Board has already agreed to cut some opencast mining, yet underground men are to be sacked. And even if all opencast mining were stopped, more and more underground miners would be sacked as the capitalist crisis continued.

(6) Will the Coal Board take advantage of the sackings to cut piece-work prices and speed up generally?

Yes. This is already happening in a number of places. If

the NCB gets away with these sackings it will soon have the miners back to pre-war conditions.

(7) Is the Coal Board going broke?

No. Its profits last year were over £32 million.

(8) Why then is the NCB showing a loss?

There are three reasons for this.

First, the enormous burden of compensation that has been paid to parasites who sweated the miners for years before nationalization. Interest payments last year amounted to £26 million.

Secondly, the miners are subsidizing cheap coal to industry. That is why the prices charged to individual industrial consumers are kept secret from the miners.

Thirdly, coal which was imported at a heavy loss was subsidized by the NCB to the tune of £11 million in 1957.

(9) What changes should the miners demand in order to put the coal industry on secure foundations?

It is impossible to plan coal production in a way that will benefit both the miners and the working class as a whole

THE PROPHET

'The one industry in Britain where there is no fear of redundancy or overproduction is coal. We need all the coal we can produce as far ahead as we can reasonably foresee. We have no output ceiling.'

—James Bowman, in a speech to the conference of the National Union of Mineworkers, July 1956. As chairman of the National Coal Board, Sir James gets £7,500 a year.

unless all the other industries on which mining depends are under socialist ownership and can be planned accordingly.

The miners must use their strength in the Labour Party and outside it to demand that the next Labour government extends nationalization to all the main industries.

(10) What changes should be made within the nationalized industries, including the mines?

In a planned, socialist economy, workers who had direct experience of a particular industry, and who were loyal to socialism, would be in charge of the board of that industry.

(11) Would there not be the danger that these same workers would become corrupted and as bad as the old board?

Yes, this danger exists. To guard against it workers' councils would keep a check on those running the industry and have a real say in the fixing of stints, piece rates and so on.



(12) Would miners ever be unemployed under socialism?

Never. The first need of a socialist government would be to expand coal production.

Without the burdens of compensation and private profit coal could be produced so cheaply as to enable the British working class to supply the needs of millions in Africa, India and elsewhere who are crying out for machines that are built with the help of coal.

(13) How can miners fight for socialism?

By refusing to be driven back to pre-war conditions.

By using the miners' vote in the Labour Party and trade union movement to demand the introduction of really socialist measures.

By kicking out of the trade unions and Labour Party all who are more concerned with getting honours and titles from the employers than with fighting for the miners.

By realizing that no government could resist for one single day the power of the miners, united with other workers, using their industrial and political power to resist sackings and impose their will on the employing class.



(14) What should miners demand immediately?

That not a single miner be sacked. If the Coal Board wants to cut production, it should not be at the expense of the miner. Production can be reduced by restoring to the miners the seven-hour day, without any loss of pay, and by giving them another week's holiday.

That the miners have access to the books and records of the management in order to see what is 'economic' or 'un-economic'.

That all compensation payments should cease at once, and the money should be used to end the scandal of no proper sick or pensions scheme for the miners.



(15) What should the miners do to back up their demands?

They should hold public meetings and demonstrations up and down the country, to tell the Tory government that if it proceeds with the sackings then it will have to face a national coal stoppage.

(16) Should other workers be worried about the sackings in the mines?

Most certainly. The employers always start by attacking

the miners. This happened in the twenties. Defeats for the miners in 1921 and 1926 meant years of hardship and hunger for the whole working class.

Already aircraft workers are threatened with the sack, and the National Dock Labour Board is considering cutting the register of dockers.

(17) What can other workers do?

They must realize that 'an injury to one is an injury to all', that it is in their own interests to help the miners now.

Meetings of other workers should be held to hear the miners' case, and these meetings should be asked to adopt resolutions backing the miners up and demanding that the executive of every union pledge full support.

(18) Can the working class defeat the Coal Board and stop the sackings?

Yes. The Tories, on the eve of a General Election, are anxious not to have an all-out stoppage. This is why the day wage men got the 7s. 6d. without strings—as a device to separate the working miner from his comrade who is getting the sack.



(19) Can the government afford to keep the sacked miners on?

Yes. They can always find unlimited cash for their friends in the army and elsewhere if it is deemed necessary.

If the miners have saved the nation—as we were told—then it is not unreasonable to demand that while fortunes are being made out of their labour, then their conditions must be improved.

(20) Can the working class sack this Tory government?

Yes. If they offer united resistance to the employers' attacks, they can sweep the Tory government away and put a Labour government with a fighting socialist policy in its place.

What Next for Britain's Portworkers?

By PETER KERRIGAN, Liverpool portworker

OLDER men on the docks remember the thirties very well. The humiliation of the stands. The 'muscle feeling'. The scramble for a job.

They remember the 'blue eyes' system—the whisper of 'You're staying behind' into the ear of the favoured ones.

The militant was isolated. The man who refused to overload a sling on the last ship was left standing.

For the employers those were the good old days. In that peculiar phraseology the employers like to use, they were the days of a 'better employer-employee relationship' than has existed since the end of the second world war.

Organised resistance to employers

They were also days to which the docker is determined never to return.

But unless his determination is expressed in organized resistance to the employers' plans, the docker will be flung back into the conditions of the hungry thirties.

'To ensure greater regularity of employment' is one of the stated aims of the Dock Labour Scheme.

Today regularity of employment is the exception for the majority of dockers. The number of men without work is higher than at any time for six years.

Already the shortage of work has sharply reduced the living standards of a great number of dockers.

Ever since the end of the war most dockers have worked regular overtime. Because of the failure of trade union leaders

to carry forward the fight to raise basic pay, the standards of these portworkers have become dependent on a week of fifty-two hours, plus occasional Saturday and Sunday work.

Now that overtime is not so readily available the docker—particularly in ports where piece-work earnings are low—is beginning to realize more clearly just how inadequate is his basic pay.

Three paltry half-crowns

At the recent inquiry into dockers' wages, trade union spokesmen declared that the docker needed 35s. a week to bring his real wages up to what they were at the end of the war. Since that time the cost of living has gone up by 84 per cent., but wages have risen by only 55 per cent.

Dockers were given a 7s. 6d. increase after that inquiry—7s. 4d. after a deduction of twopence which is being put into a fund for purposes yet unspecified.

These three paltry half-crowns have already rolled away in increases in rents, coal, fares and food since the award was hastily agreed to by the trade union leaders.

The docker signing on is near the starvation line. Many dockers now live on new housing estates miles away from the dock. Their rents are higher, and fares eat a large slice out of their fall-back or attendance money.

Two calls a day mean dreary, wasted hours waiting on the dock road, with money spent on snacks and cups of tea.

Today a docker with four children who goes home at the end of the week with his basic wage has less in his pocket than he would receive from national assistance.

Yet national assistance scales are based on what are considered to be the absolute minimum nutritional needs.

Want to end militancy

With fewer men in the Scheme, tonnage handled has gone up by 4½ per cent. since 1945. The extra productivity, however, has not meant steadily better conditions for the docker.

On the contrary, now that the Scheme has produced a 'surplus' of labour, the employers are seeking to use it in an attempt to increase their power over the men on the docks and drive all trace of militancy out of dockland.

The employers have as one of their aims the break-up of the Dock Labour Scheme. In 1955 they proposed to the Devlin inquiry that the 'principle of joint control of the Scheme, by employers and unions, should be replaced by control of an organization of representatives of the employers alone'.

In the recent Tooley Street 'black meat' strike it was only the commendable spirit of the men in the ranks which prevented a break through the scheme.

The employers flooded in non-registered labour in an attempt to smash the men's stand for trade union principle.

Trade union officials shamefully gave assistance to the employers when they signed the infamous 'perishable goods' agreement.

That agreement, if operated, would make strikes against even the worst conditions impossible—if dockers were handling cargo that in any way could be termed 'perishable'—or else it would allow the employer free use of non-registered labour to break the strike.

Scheme

FROM the docker's point of view there is much that is wrong with the Dock Labour Scheme. In many ways, it gives added power to the trade union bureaucrat and the employer to discipline militancy and enforce onerous conditions such as compulsory overtime.

But the employers chafe under it because they have only an indirect control of labour. They want even more power over the docker, so that as profits become harder to get they can squeeze more out of him.

They want to be able to hold a knife-point directly at the back of every serious and active trade unionist. One of their demands to the Devlin inquiry was that 'all those who incite unconstitutional action should be liable to dismissal'.

They look upon even the meagre provisions of fall-back and attendance money as a luxury. The more so when their levy is increased as a result of the number of men proving attendance.

The big master stevedore or the shipowner will spend more in a round of drinks after a board meeting than a docker receives in fall-back.

But dividends and profits are a thousand times more important to him than a pittance for men who move the cargoes.

Want cut in register

The employers' plans are clear. Immediately, they want a cut in the register. They want to push the 'surplus' into the rapidly growing pool of unemployed.

The way they have been using permanent men shows what conditions they want in place of the Scheme. They want a small permanent force, with the rest of the dockers on the Labour Exchange—to be drawn on when it suits them.

It was the boast of a Liverpool employer that, given 5,000 or 6,000 weekly workers and mechanization, he would run the port efficiently.

In such circumstances the majority of dockers would be like seagulls, grabbing a crumb here and there. Weekly workers, having committed themselves by contract, would be forced to do any type of job for which they were required.

And the out-of-work fringe would be a constant threat which the employer would use against the weekly worker.

Like others of their class the port employers have been itching for a show-down which would smash organized militancy once and for all.

Before the last wage increase was granted they were preparing for a bitter struggle. Some of them were enraged that the Cameron report should award even as little as 7s. 6d.

Warning about fighting abilities

But big business and the Tory government had been given a salutary lesson by the busmen, and by the Tooley Street and other London dockers. They had been given a warning about the fighting abilities that can be roused in the working class.

So the show-down on the docks did not take place, although it was reported that preparations had reached the stage of the authorities' taking over Haringay Arena in London as a distribution centre and training certain army units for work on the docks.

Show-down

LET no docker be under any illusion. The show-down which the employers wanted over wages has only been postponed. Their aim is not only to prevent wages rising, but to worsen drastically the conditions of the portworkers in the interests of their profits during a period of slump.

To get that desirable state of affairs (desirable for them), they must crush the docker's spirit.

In a recent (October 1958) issue of the Docks and Harbour Magazine—an authoritative journal of shipping and port employers—their aims were set forth in an article called 'A Remedy for Dock Strikes'. The author called himself 'Poseidon'.

He declared that the disciplinary powers of the Dock Labour Board had proved ineffective. The 'welfare activities for which it is responsible,' he wrote, 'are achieved, so many think, at too high a price.'

His propositions were: that the employers should cut down on their number; and that the Board should be done away with.

To these proposals he added another. It was that 'absorption or integration' of the 'blue union' into the 'white' 'must be carried out by legislation, and the sooner the better'.

'Strike to end strikes'

Now, note carefully what was said in the concluding sentences of that article:

'The point will certainly be made that in the early stages of the cure a strike will be precipitated. This is undoubtedly true. Appeasement over the years encouraged and tolerated strikes at regular intervals . . .

'There is much to be said for the strike to end all strikes. It is a fact remembered still, that the General Strike ushered in the longest period of peace within living memory.'

The employers are ready for battle. That is the conclusion to be drawn from this article in an authoritative employers' journal.

By beating them down in struggle, by breaking up the Dock Labour Scheme, by creating a pool of dockers on the Labour Exchange hungry for work, by victimizing the militants, the employers hope to destroy the dockers' fighting spirit and solidarity.

Struggles of our forefathers

They hope to set docker against docker and port against port. They want to return the docker to jungle conditions, to the days of dog eat dog, to conditions where men fight each other for work.

Portworkers must organize and fight back now. Every militant docker must be seriously concerned with building unity

in struggle on every dock and between ports.

The only way to defeat an enemy who is preparing and organizing for a show-down is by more powerful preparation and better organization.

Over half a century ago our forefathers organized in struggle against bestial conditions and inspired the Labour movement in the fight for the dockers' tanner.

Since then the traditions and dignity of dockland have found their highest expression in the way it has rallied to the call 'an injury to one is an injury to all'.

The noted solidarity and fighting capacity of the docker are the guarantee that the employers will not be able to carry out their plans. But that guarantee lies solely in the rank and file.

There is no trace of it in the leaders of the Transport and General Workers' Union, which organizes the majority of British dockers. If the employers' offensive has gone as far as it has then the responsibility rests on these leaders' shoulders.

Designed to tighten 'discipline'

Such advances as were won on the docks during the post-war boom were won by the activity of the rank and file and against the opposition of TGWU officialdom.

When, as a result of the strength in the ranks, these leaders were given any concessions in negotiations they almost invariably handed the employers something in return.

The most blatant example of this was the agreement which caused the strike of 1951. The union leaders accepted 2s. a day increase, and in return agreed to a worsening of conditions through the introduction of new manning scales as well as measures designed to tighten 'discipline'.

These trade union leaders have not only failed to fight on behalf of their members but have actively helped the employers in the victimization of militants.

But for the cowardice and failure of these 'leaders', the Dockers' Charter and much more could have been won during the post-war years when trade was booming.

Actively opposed Charter fight

In 1945 the Dockers' Charter was adopted by a national delegate conference of dockers' unions, and thus became official policy.

It consisted of the following demands: 25s. daily rate; two weeks' annual holiday with pay; payment for statutory holidays; reduction of hours to forty a week; a retiring allowance for aged and infirm dockers; welfare services in all ports.

The leaders of the TGWU not only failed miserably to put up any real fight for the charter but actively opposed the rank and file's fight for it.

When Merseyside dockers were on strike in 1951 demanding the charter Deakin denounced them. He declared at a Press conference on February 8 of that year that the charter—officially agreed—was 'impracticable'.

'Impracticable' to demand pensions for old dockers! 'Impracticable' to demand better welfare facilities! 'Impracticable' to demand a living wage and the forty-hour week!

That is the type of leadership the dockers have suffered under since the end of the war.

To cover up sell-out

To cover up their sell-out on the recent wages demand, the present leaders declared their intention of pressing forward for pensions for old dockers.

That was nothing but demagogy. For they refused in the past to back the rank and file in the struggle for pensions at a most favourable time for such a struggle, when trade was at its peak.

They viciously attacked militants who were demanding that, instead of reducing the employers' levy, the Dock Labour Board use the increased revenue to compensate old dockers who had given their life and strength to the industry.

Splitters

THE way the TGWU officials have treated the 'blue union' is further evidence that their first interest is the defence of their own privileges and power.

Disgusted at the failure of TGWU officials to fight for the men they claimed to represent, unable to express their needs through this union's machinery—with its permanent officers blocking all demands and using their power in the union and on the Board to victimize militants—the northern dockers joined the 'blue union'.

Their right to be members of the union of their choice was in accordance with the principle operated in the past by the Trades Union Congress before the big trade union bureaucracies consolidated their power—that a transfer of union membership should be accepted if it was voluntary.

That right was sanctified in the eyes of every serious trade unionist by the fact that men were prepared to make the great sacrifices of a six weeks' strike to defend it. And, finally, their membership was established in a court of law.

But TGWU officials never accepted that the northern men had any rights at all.

They have used every method in an attempt to destroy the 'blue union'—every method, that is, except to build the TGWU as a fighting organization against the employers and a magnet for the docker striving to maintain and better his conditions.

Bludgeoned or driven off

They look on the dockers who left the TGWU as 'their' property, a source of revenue to be bludgeoned back under their control or to be driven off the dock.

At the TUC two years ago, delegates from the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers proposed that the TUC should encourage a united campaign between 'blue' and 'white' to eliminate non-unionism on the docks.

TGWU officials have opposed such a campaign. Discussion on it was shelved at the TUC by a 'previous question' motion—a trick performed by a well-known member of the Communist Party.

Rather than organize against non-unionism, the TGWU officials have organized to try to deprive 'blue union' men of their jobs. If they had put half the energy into a fight against the employers that they use in fighting the 'blue union', then dockland today would be a far better place.

'Please remember this—no docker who is not a member of the TGWU is entitled to anything,' wrote P. McSorley, a full-time TGWU branch secretary, in the November 1958 issue of Merseyside News, the official organ of the docks section of the TGWU on Merseyside.

The guiding line for TGWU officialdom is clearly: 'There is no union but MY union and no unionists but those who contribute to my salary.'

The biggest crime of those trade union leaders today is that they are trying to split the dockers in face of the employers' offensive. They are doing it so as to avoid their responsibility to fight unemployment.

Bold words, but despicable

The editorial in the Merseyside News declares boldly: 'We must lay the blame [for unemployment] fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the present government.'

But those bold words become all the more despicable when we see that these trade union leaders want to evade a struggle against a cut in the register by putting 'blue union' men off the dock.

'If redundancy is to start,' the editorial ends, 'it won't be our members who go first.' Note the 'first'!

The suspension of the 'blue union' from the TUC is meant to help these people to dodge their duty to fight redundancy.

In the interests of the TGWU leaders the TUC General Council put demands to the executive of the NASD that it

known very well could not be carried out.

Now it suspends the union from the TUC so that TGWU officials can declare its members to be 'non-unionists' and can ask the Board to sack them.

This is a betrayal of the interests of all dockers. An unholy alliance of TGWU officials and employers to decide who should be sacked from the dock can end only in the weeding out of all militants, including those in the 'white' union.

Any retreat in the fight against unemployment will only aid the employers' offensive.

Solidarity

UNITY in dockland to prevent a return to the conditions the employers want to impose is an urgent necessity. But that unity will have to be built in the teeth of opposition and sabotage by TGWU officials.

Policies are needed that can unite 'blue' and 'white' dockers to defeat the employers' plans.

The biggest and most immediate problems arise from the shortage of work. The demand of militants in the industry for many years now has been for an increase in fall-back pay and attendance money, and for one call a day.

These demands must be part of a new Dockers' Charter, one that can unite the rank and file in struggle.

The employers want to maintain their profits by passing the burdens of the slump on to the backs of the workers. They must be given warning that a cut in the register will meet with immediate and complete resistance in all ports. 'White' and 'blue' must fight together against sackings.

Must find a place

The forty-hour week is now more 'practicable' than ever, with the shortage of work, and so are pensions for the old men, so that they can afford to retire. These demands must find a place again in the charter for portworkers.

If the demand for 25s. was justified at the end of the war then—bearing in mind the rise in the cost of living—a demand for 45s. is justified today.

Compulsory overtime is an even sharper issue with the shortage of work, as the employers will seek to use the men they hire for any hours they wish, while other men are unemployed.

The rank and file of the TGWU and the 'blue union' must fight for 100 per cent. trade unionism on the docks, and for the rights of 'blue union' members to be in the union of their choice.

In 1945 a strong national link-up of dockers in solidarity action won 3s. a day—the highest wage increase since before the war.

There is need for the same strong connexions between each port today. There is need for connexions between the 'blue union' and rank-and-file committees of the TGWU.

This was the pattern of organization which successfully combated the London employers in the compulsory overtime strike of 1954.

Socialism

FINALLY, and above all, the docker must realize that the problems he faces are the same as those faced by the whole working class. The world of dockland is not a world of its own.

The employing class is engaged in an offensive all along the line. Defeat or victory for one section of the workers affects every other section.

No worker today can afford to be 'non-political'. Aiding and abetting the employers is the Tory government. And the problems of unemployment, of defending living conditions, lead straight to socialist conclusions—for it is the unplanned system of capitalist production for profit which is responsible for the slump in trade.

The docker must play his part in fighting for a socialist society. The nationalization of the port industry should be an aim expressed and fought for by every militant docker.

Complete and secure decasualization can come about only in a nationalized port industry which is part of a planned socialist society, with planned international trade.

Only then can there be a real Dock Labour Scheme in the interests of the docker and the whole working class, in a Britain where workers will no longer be exploited by shipping monopolies and port employers whose first interest is to maintain and increase their profits.

DIRECTORS GET £6,000 EACH: WORKERS GET THE SACK

MASS meeting at the Associated Automation factory, Willesden, endorsed the shop stewards' decision to reject the sacking of about fifty skilled workers from the instrument division.

The unions concerned have been asked to convene a conference to press the workers' claim for the right to keep their jobs.

The Associated Automation shop stewards' committee has issued a leaflet to explain the dispute to trade unionists in Willesden, and to workers in other factories owned by the Elliot group.

It points out that 'curiously enough the sackings are proposed shortly after the announcement that Elliot's have finalized negotiations with Consolidated Electrodynamics of Pasadena, California, for the production in Britain of a wide range of analytical and control instruments of a new type'.

Other factories in the group 'are working excessive overtime, and are miles behindhand with their delivery dates'.

In the Observer of November 30 Mr Leon Bagrit, one of the leading personalities of the Elliot group, was described as a 'visionary whose nearest point of focus is round about the year 1970'.

'This visionary and his eight co-directors collected between them in 1957 the tremendous sum of £46,665 in directors' fees,' the stewards point out. 'So the directors, who don't produce anything, get over £6,000 apiece; and the workers, who produce everything, get the sack.'

Constant Reader

A Ministry of Police?

FOLLOWING the Home Secretary's moves to prevent locally-bred policemen being appointed chief constables, we now have a demand by Earl Winterton, backed by the Daily Telegraph, for an inquiry into the autonomy of provincial police forces.

There are obvious advantages to the ruling class, in a period of increasing class conflict, in making control of the police as remote from popular control as possible.

But R. A. Butler's great-aunt would not have approved. Josephine Butler, a notable fighter for good causes in the latter part of the last century, was particularly alert to the danger to liberty from centralizing tendencies in relation to

the police.

One of her numerous pamphlets was called 'Government by Police' (1879); she warned against encroaching police powers and called for vigilance and counter-measures—first and foremost 'the placing of all police under municipal control', not excluding the Metropolitan Police.

Not for Great-Aunt Jo

Awareness of the menace of police despotism was one of the reasons why Josephine Butler embarked on the campaign for which she is best remembered—against the Contagious Diseases Acts.

For over twenty years, in the reign of Victoria the Good, we had a régime of licensed prostitution in barrack and dock-yard towns such as Colchester and Chatham.

The 'morals police' in those centres were empowered to detain, inspect, register and thereafter keep under supervision any woman they chose to regard as a 'common prostitute'.

The indignities, abuses, tyranny and corruption that resulted can easily be imagined.

Daring many insults (for taking any interest in such matters) and occasional physical assaults, Mrs Butler—the sort of determined middle-class 'do-gooder' who in tsarist Russia shot Grand Dukes stone dead and who nowadays marches on rocket bases—waged a long battle with tongue and pen until she gained the satisfaction of seeing the Contagious Diseases Act repealed in 1886.

Geese and ganders

Discussion around the Spring case, when a worker brought an action to prevent himself being obliged to switch from the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers to the Transport and General Workers' Union, brings up the general problem of how far one is justified in utilizing capitalist institutions and facilities to defend oneself in a conflict within the Labour movement.

(In a different way this was, of course, the problem that confronted my colleague Peter Fryer when he found the Daily Worker refusing to publish his dispatches from Hungary.)

An interesting view on this point was given some years ago by a prominent figure in the movement, who in 1928 had been debarred from holding any official position in his trade union.

'I took the best legal advice in the country on this ruling and was informed that if I cared to challenge it in a court of law there was no doubt that the executive committee would lose the case.

'I was strongly tempted to do this, but was reluctant to take my case into a capitalist law court.

'I see now that I was mistaken. It is sometimes necessary to use any weapon that may be at hand to defeat such unscrupulous tactics as those which the mandarins of Lifton House (the headquarters of the [Boilermakers'] Society) had been guilty of.'

This quotation comes from Harry Pollitt's 'Serving My Time' (1940), p. 186.

Schools on strike

Teachers' current discontent about salaries, and discussion about methods of enforcing better terms on their employers, are good reasons for recalling that it was only through strikes that they won their present negotiating system.

Under this system the scales of payment agreed centrally in the 'Burnham Committee' are binding upon local education authorities.

Mr Asher Tropp, in his history of the teaching profession ('The School Teachers', 1957) writes:

'Early in 1923, in consequence of attempts in several areas to lower teachers' salaries the executive [of the National Union of Teachers] adopted the principle that no "cut" should be accepted which would bring any teacher below his correct position in the existing scale.

'In fulfilment of this policy it was necessary to accept definite challenges in Southampton, Gateshead and Lowestoft.

'In Southampton the schools were closed for three and a half months, in Gateshead for two and a half months and in Lowestoft 163 teachers were out for eleven months and over 1,600 children received special instruction from the "dismissed" teachers in welfare centres.'

The government intervened to bring the local authorities into line, when they saw that the teachers meant business; and early in 1926, when some local authorities again refused to implement Burnham decisions, and the NUT began moving into action, the government, which was preparing for the General Strike, formally laid it down that Burnham scales be compulsory everywhere throughout the country.

Honi soit qui mal y pense

With the New Year Honours' List soon to be upon us, doubtless more than one trade union official is wondering what will be in it for him.

The delicate question of Tory honours for Labour leaders is discussed in V. L. Allen's fascinating book 'Trade Union Leadership' (1957), from which I take the following thought-provoking passage (pp. 38-9):

'The attitude of some union executives is to treat an Honour to a general secretary as an honour to the union.

'For example, when the general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation was knighted in 1935, his union journal recorded that "we feel that our Chief Administrative Officer has enhanced the prestige of our great organization".

'This assumes that there is an identity between the ethical basis of the trade union and the society in which it operates; that the same conception of honour holds for both.'

A clarifying storm

The Press attack on the 'Trotskyists' will probably have a very healthy effect in some quarters. For many years, so long as they viewed the Communist Party as their main enemy, the ruling class saw fit to flirt mildly with some 'Trotskyist' ideas, or at least tolerate their dissemination.

The effect was to prejudice many workers and intellectuals against these ideas. The present onslaught will enable such people to look at 'Trotskyism' more objectively.

Similarly, the tsarist government tolerated Marxist writings because it had got used to seeing the Narodnik terrorists as its only dangerous foe, and it welcomed any criticism of the latter.

Quite a time elapsed before the censors woke up and started cracking down on Marxism, realizing that it was a far more serious menace to the régime than the Narodism it combated! Lenin describes this in his 'What Is To Be Done?' (1902), a little book relevant in numerous ways to current problems and tasks.

BRIAN PEARCE

LETTER

READER BARKER WANTS TORIES OUT FIRST, THEN 'WORK HARD FOR A LEFT POLICY'

BEING a regular reader, and still also a Right-wing socialist, I feel I must answer your headlines in the November 29 issue, 'It's Slick, but not what Labour Needs', and December 6, 'This is Our Answer—and Our Policy for Labour'.

Yes. 'The Future Labour Offers YOU' is slick and glossy and all the rest. And yes, it will win the election, I am sure about that much.

It would be much easier if there were full support from the militants rather than a tug of war with them pulling the other way.

I say: let's kick the Tories out first, then work hard for a Left policy, because until the Tories are out we will get nowhere at all.

One thing more. The Labour government of 1945 did carry out all their promises, even if they were not all successful.

Leeds 12.

G. T. Barker