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JANUARY 29, 1961

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'AGITATOR' INTRODUCED

THE DECLINE AND DISINTEGRATION OF THE LABOUR PARTY CONTINUES
QUITE SMOOTHLY. EACH DAY IT UNCONCERNEDLY TAKES ANOTHER STEP
ALONG THE PATH TO OBLIVION.

This path has already been chartered by the Mollet 'Socialists' in France and the Ollenhauer 'Social Democrats' in Germany. One can be assured that both Gaitskell and Wilson have learned the lesson well. Who ever eventually leads the Party will unerringly lead it into the same historical garbage heap.

But the crisis in the working class movement is not restricted to social democracy. Although the majority of workers in Italy and France may still vote for Communist Party candidates, only a tiny minority participate in the 'political' life of these parties. Supporters of Stalinism will of course point to its

extension to Eastern Europe. But, after Hungary, does anyone seriously believe that these regimes enjoy the confidence and support of ordinary working people? Shrill voices will hasten to remind us that whatever the 'bureaucratic deformation', the property has at least been 'nationalized'. But to us, having your finger nails plucked out by state-produced pincers or your brains blown out by a 'peoples' pistol seems little better than being tortured or shot by the capitalist state. No doubt the Russian, Czech or Bulgarian workers hate their 'socialist' foremen or factory managers just as much as the British or American workers hate theirs.

(cont. overleaf)

On the fringes of the political pool the sects continue to split and split again. All that remains constant is their isolation and impotence. The Socialist Labour League is now in danger of having more professionals than members. When short of other sects to abuse, it turns in on itself and supplies its battle-starved leaders with the psychological satisfaction of a spell of 'class war'.

It is little wonder that the working class rejects all these organizations. Politicians assure us that this is because the workers are 'apathetic', made so by capitalist prosperity. We suggest the reason is more fundamental. The workers see in these organizations distorted images of the very society which in their everyday lives they are compelled to struggle against.

Each Party or group justifies its existence by the claim that it has the best remedy for all the ills of society. Each offers more efficiency, faster assembly lines, more goods, more bureaucratic centralisation, more discipline and more 'experts'. The working class, which spends its entire life in conflict with capitalist regimentation naturally remains indifferent to their self-interested appeals. When the class moves into action it does so outside and at times even against 'its' traditional organizations.

No one denies that socialism will increase production and raise living standards. But that is only one aspect of the task of the socialist revolution. For if socialism is to mean anything it must abolish the domination of man by man. It must establish a society where man lives not only in harmony with his fellow men but also with his own labour.

Socialism is infinitely more than 'two Jaguars, a coloured television set and a washing machine for every home'. It means the full, active

participation of the working class in every aspect of life, both economic and political, both at the level of the factory and at the level of society itself. That, as far as we are concerned, means nothing less than workers' management of society. This emancipation of the working class must be the task of the working class itself. No one will do the job for it. Every time the task has been delegated to others, bureaucracies have developed and batted on the workers' backs.

We see the task of 'Agitator' as being the propagation of such ideas. We therefore welcome the growing indifference of workers to the 'old' parties. Their suspicion of them is entirely progressive. In its struggle to assert itself against the domination and exploitation of capitalism both bourgeois and bureaucratic, the working class will create its own organizations as it has done again and again at every vital moment of its history.

Despite the official mythology, it was not the Bolsheviks who made the Russian Revolution. The glorious October of 1917, the valiant Commune of 1871, the heroic May Days in Barcelona in 1937 and mighty revolt of the Hungarian working class were all the result of mass action by thousands of ordinary working people. The 'vanguardists' may have led the process of degeneration. The creative, positive acts of historical social change have always been carried out by the masses themselves.

"WANTED!"

TAME

YOUTH"

By Sylvia Bishop, Harrow Central Y.S.
and Nick Ralph, Hampstead Y.S.

THROUGHOUT history all mass movements have realised the importance of mobilising the youth. Today's political movements are no exception. How are they succeeding?

The Labour Party recently started the 'Young Socialists'. They promised us freedom to organize, right, left and centre. And they circulated all their well-worn cliches about youth. What have they achieved in six months? After the initial rush of recruits, the life of the Young Socialists has settled back into the old routine of CND marches, CND parties, and occasional trips to Southend. Meanwhile in the Area Federations and Regional Committees the 'leadership' of the youth is fighting furiously over the question of submitting political resolutions, a right which has been denied to them.

However, apathy still reigns supreme, just as in all the political movements of the left. Despite the furious fuss of Trotskyites and earnest little Fabians, very few people attend meetings, except in obscure havens of pseudo-Bohemia such as Hampstead. Why this apathy? One reason is that Young Socialists have no power to run their own organization. Nowadays youth movements tend to autonomy. The stewards' committee of the Movement for Colonial Freedom is run by youth, for youth. It is natural that young people should prefer action to theorising, and spontaneous democratic action to executing edicts decreed from above. The action of the young people on the streets of St. Pancras, during the rent riots proves this.

'Permanent fixtures' do not enhance our youth movements. Who, at 15, would enjoy going to a first meeting to be confronted by such professional, evergreen youths as John Gollan, Alan Williams or Vivienne Mendelson, all trying their hardest to look like Peter Pan (and not succeeding too well), and all manoeuvring to obtain key positions for those they have pre-selected for the 'future leadership'. It would be enough to repel any reasonably conscious boy or girl.

With regard to the CND movement, the Ycnd enjoys autonomy, mainly because it has grown outside both the traditional organizations and the degenerated 'revolutionary' ones. But there was no really firm basis to this movement. Its decline is now in

full swing. Many members have descended from the clouds to realise that the only thing a march a week gets you is permanent blisters. They can see no results from their work and therefore become disinterested. There are not enough people in the movement ready and able to punch home the connection between Capitalism and the Bomb and to prevent these young people from becoming rather non-political, humane liberals.

Again in the Trade Unions very few young people participate fully. As soon, however, as an opportunity arises in which they can act as they wish, in the manner they wish, they do participate, as in the Clydeside apprentices' strike.

The whole crux of the problem is surely this question of participation. All these movements profess to be socialist. Surely one of the fundamentals of Socialism is the workers' permanent participation in the management and running of the economy. Youth movements should therefore be allowed to participate to the full in the making of all decisions and in executing all policies affecting them.

REMEMBER, Comrade Foot...

'Better one free man outside Parliament than ten gagged serfs inside.'

'The agitator who has a touch of the seer in him is a far more valuable asset than the politician ... if one must be sacrificed, let it not be the agitator.'

James Keir Hardie.

SONG OF THE ANTI-PARTISAN

Tune: Lilli Marlene.

Underneath the red lamps,
Near to Soho Square,
The New Left's congregating:
Its a Partisan affair.

Chorus

Through the tangled whiskers
Phrases struggle out.
Osborne laced with Hoggart
As liquor laces stout.

Chorus

Mass communications,
What they do to us -
Or rather to the driver
Of a London omnibus.

Chorus

We've waded through Conviction
Admired the angry Logue -
We've been convinced by Kruschov
That Stalin was a rogue.

Chorus

We castigate the Statesman.
It doesn't print our stuff.
But ask down Kingsley Martin -
He gives the club a puff.

Chorus

We're sorry for the workers
Who don't attend the club.
But talk of daily struggle
In a non-committed pub.

CHORUS

But why, oh why, are they not here?
Why must the workers stick to beer?
The New Left waits in anguish;
The Proles march on - elsewhere.

Samuel Stuart (or vice-versa)

France and algeria

The French General Staff proclaims: ' While carrying out Operation So-and-So , our troops killed 200 fellaghas; 20 French soldiers were killed.' Mr. Delouvrier, Delegate-General of the French Government in Algiers, declares: ' Algeria is being built. Pacification is coming to an end.' At the theatre it would all be funny. But it is not the theatre. Those people govern France. In Algeria, guns fire real bullets. Real electric current is used to torture real men. Young French bourgeois, dressed up as officers, lead man-hunting parties. In the French Parliament, they yap about a 'nuclear deterrent'. 'Should we or should we not', they ask themselves, 'have our own little French atom-bomb...in eight years time?' Thus they fiddle...

Never yet have government and people lived in such different worlds. Never yet have real problems been so doggedly avoided. What about the deserters? They don't exist! The '121'? Moscow's agents! Youth? In its place, doing as it is told! The UNO? A gang of covetous crooks! The general situation? We've never had it so good!

When one reaches this state of voluntary deafness and blindness, one is on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

The alternatives are clear. Either the French bourgeoisie and its Government will face the facts (i.e. the unyielding resistance of the Algerians) and draw the appropriate conclusion (to give ground) or the internal situation will rot still further.

But giving ground in Algeria would jeopardise powerful interests, those of some strata of the ruling class, of the settlers, of the Army, of some sections of the political apparatus itself. On the other hand it would speed up the 'decolonisation' process in the French 'Community'.

So, they don't give ground. They bury their heads, instead.

But we are no longer in 1958. Youth revolts more and more. It refuses this war. After the students, Young workers are now beginning to oppose it in a variety of ways. Workers determined to struggle against the war are still in a minority. But discontent is growing. Not only because of Algeria. All problems are interlinked: every day, workers go through the experience of what the 'glory of France' really means. Purchasing power drops. Rhythms of work are stepped up. Tiredness increases. Workers are more and more tied to their machines. Must one become a brutalised zombie to afford a refrigerator? This is the real link up: the Algerian war and de Gaulle, de Gaulle and the employers, the employers and productivity.

For six years, the working class has endured the Algerian war. They reacted from time to time, but youth continued to be drafted overseas. In 1956, the workers voted for peace. The parliamentarians they had elected granted full powers to Guy Mollet, who used them to continue the war.

Since 1958, de Gaulle has been making promises, and the unions have been urging workers to sign petitions. The war continues. Youths are still being sent to Algeria.

Perhaps votes and petitions are of no use? Who wills the ends must will the means. The means are mass action, strikes, demonstrations, civil disobedience, occupation of the railway stations, opposition in all its forms.

In France the large section of the student youth is ready to struggle. Some young workers too. They must fight together. They must unite their strength. The rank and file itself must determine what forms of organization and what methods of struggle are needed. To achieve this, they need take nobody's orders. All that is required is a group of students or workers determined to action. That could spark it off. A massive unity could develop. The movement would rapidly grow. The habit of waiting for what the 'leaders' will say or of fighting in isolation must be overcome. Determined groups of students or workers can not only themselves undertake local actions, but, by participating as organized bodies, they can give backbone to any demonstration the traditional organizations may be compelled to call.

Marching from 'the Bastille' to 'the Nation', as in 1958, will not overcome the class enemy. Much more is needed.

Last June, Japanese workers and students occupied the streets of Tokyo for three weeks and fought against thousands of armed cops. They did not want Ike in Japan. Night and day, they remained in the streets. Ike did not come.

Last July, Italian workers and students in Genoa did not want the fascists to hold their congress in their town: they poured into the streets in thousands and remained there. The fascists went home.

In France, too, a fight is possible.

(translated from a recent special issue of POUVOIR OUVRIER, agitational organ of the Socialisme ou Barbarie group.)

YOUTH IN INDUSTRY - by

KEN WELLER AEU

NEW industrial techniques have brought many changes into the workshop. The large scale subdivision of tasks and the increased complexity of the product have turned a skilled man (say a toolmaker who would complete a job from start to finish, including all machining and in some cases even designing) into an operative, covering just one part of the job. In most sizeable factories now, they have Tool Fitters, Tool Room Turners, Jig Bcrers, Tool Designers, etc., instead of the old time, all-round tool maker.

This, and the improved educational levels, has resulted in the effective demise in many industries and areas of the time served tradesman. The vast majority of skilled men in engineering today have served no apprenticeship and what's more don't notice the loss.

Those apprentices who are being trained, in the larger factories at any rate, are being trained with a view to their eventual employment in various executive jobs such as production engineers, progress chasers, time study men, etc. In the larger firms very few apprentices nowadays stay at work on the bench.

These apprentices often receive ridiculous wages. They often however receive in other ways, benefits which young workers who are not apprentices but are on the same wages do not get. For example they often get free technical books, subsidised meals, days off with full pay for technical education with expenses paid, etc.

Both for this reason and for purely craft reasons young workers are often divided from each other by snobbery and jealousy. The Apprentices' Strike was a good example of this: only the apprentices struck. In many cases young workers who work under even worse conditions stayed at work. This is a sad commentary on the relations between workers.

These barriers are often encouraged by trade union officials. Even trade unionists of the narrow sort feel there is some connection between strong shop organization and the control of influx of new labour by refusing men, however skilled, who have not received apprentice training.

At the same time apprentices are systematically separated from the men. They are frequently moved from shop to shop, or placed under the control of special apprentice Supervisors. Previously, they used to be attached to a particular workman. The firm often sets up a phoney

Apprentice Committee to organize the social activities of the apprentices and direct their energies into safe paths. In some cases this has rebounded, for example in the apprentices strike some of these committees organized and led strikes in particular factories quite independently of the established shop stewards' organizations, although with their sympathetic support. One such case was the strike of over 200 apprentices at Standard Telephones and Cables.

There are of course many exceptions to this trend away from the apprentice-trained tradesman: on the Clyde and in Shipbuilding and Shiprepair in general the apprentice-trained tradesman is still the rule.

There are also many places, especially the smaller works, where apprentices are used purely and simply as cheap and easily disciplined labour.

A very serious problem is the employment of young workers who receive the same low rate of wages without any of the benefits which apprentices get. These workers out-number apprentices and at the same time 'stay on with the tools'.

Besides being heavily exploited these other young workers are virtually excluded from representation in the factories. Trade union officials and others with mental rheumatism bemoan the fact that young people are not joining the trade unions. But why should they? Have the trade unions done anything for them?

The problem within the factory remains. The Ghetto into which young workers have been placed must be destroyed. This won't be done by the trade union Moguls but

only by the factory and shop organizations, and by the young workers themselves.

It is no solution to this problem to set up, as some unions have done, Junior Workers Committees. These committees in any case have no powers. They only increase the isolation of the more advanced young workers from the basic industrial organizations. In my opinion the emphasis should be placed on integrating apprentices and young workers with the existing factory organizations. Young workers should have their own stewards and where possible young workers' committees in the factories. These would cut across the artificial barriers of snobbery and sectional interest which exist between apprentices and other young workers.

LEAGUE NOTEBOOK

What Gerry said:

- (1) 'Don't talk while I'm interrupting.'
- (2) 'My mind is made up. Don't confuse me with facts.'

'Written laws are like spiders' webs. They will entangle the poor and weak. The rich and powerful will easily break through them.'

Anacharsis (600 B.C.)

'AGITATOR' INTRODUCED (continued from page 2)

'Agitator' does not see its job as the creation of a new leadership - it rejects all messianic cults and concepts of an elite. There is of course a need for a revolutionary organization but the organization must be built by the working class, and be controlled by them, and be their instrument of struggle, not a self-appointed 'leadership' bellowing its instructions into their ear.

The main purpose of our paper will be to bring to workers and to isolated groups of revolutionary socialists throughout the country the experience of other workers, of other struggles and of other socialist militants. Everything in capitalist society conspires to keep people in the dark on these matters: the kept press, the traditional organizations, the conditions of modern life itself, with its increasing division of labour and its tendency to separate what should stand together.

We believe that up and down the country people are constantly brought into struggle against bosses and bureaucrats, that they are constantly striving to assert their wishes, their ideas and their way of doing things against wishes and methods imposed upon them from above. The lessons of these struggles must be popularised. They must be widely disseminated. Otherwise they will be lost.

We appeal to our readers. Write to us. Tell us of your struggles and of your experiences. Tell us of the people around you who are challenging this or that aspect of established society. We will tell other militants and other rebels about it. We will stir it up, to the best of our ability.

We plan to appear as often as possible. Perhaps once a month to start with. Perhaps more often. It all depends on YOU.

THRUPP AND MABERLEY STRIKE.

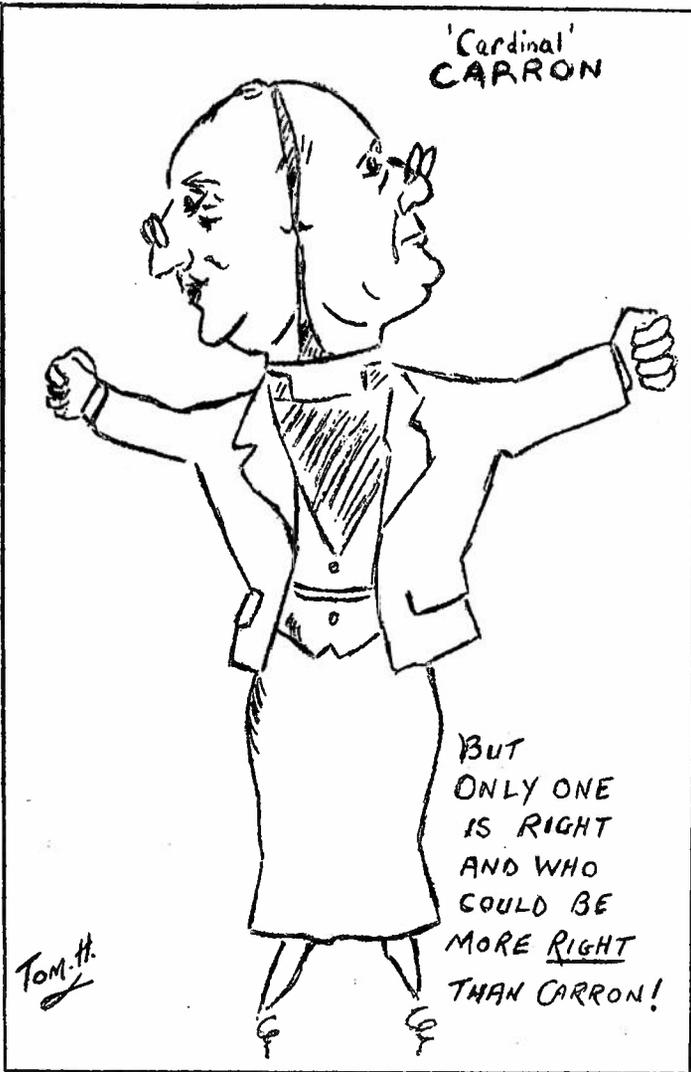
By Tom Hillier, AEU.

700 men at Thrupp & Maberley's coachbuilding works, part of the giant Rootes empire, recently gave another example that workers are not prepared to accept the conditions of the 1930's.

The management decided to sack 154 men. This was later reduced to 15. The immediate reaction was for the men to come out solid with the backing of the rest of the group, including the hardened militants of the British Light Steel Pressings.

After this show of solidarity and a grand march to the Motor Show at Earls' Court, where pickets stood for several hours, the

(continued on Page 10)



the Socialist Labour League.

We hope 'Agitator' will be a forum for these and other ideas and that it will wage a struggle against all injustices, all orthodoxies, all humbug, and all manifestations of bureaucracy and authoritarianism. It should also be a guide to action.

'Agitator' must avoid the mistakes which have plagued the left for the past four decades. It must analyze the errors made, get out of the rut and start off with fresh ideas and unlimited confidence in the rank and file.

The organization built around 'Agitator' should mirror the kin of society we envisage and not passively reflect the authoritarian society in which we live.

We wish you the best of luck and we'll help as best we can.

Fraternally,

Harry Forrest

THRUPP & MABERLEY (continued from p.9)

usual tea and cigar meeting took place between the union officials and the management.

Then we had the usual let down. The men went back, disheartened. The clear lesson is that rank and file action is the only answer to the boss. Don't trust the union bureaucrats, who betray the workers' solidarity and sell these disputes out again and again.

A LETTER FROM EXETER

Dear Comrades,

We in Exeter welcome the appearance of 'Agitator'. We hope it will popularise the ideas outlined in your previous publication 'Socialism Re-affirmed', ideas which we feel sure will help regroup the forces scattered, by the struggles fought out in the Labour Party, the Communist Party, and

THE SEAMEN'S STRIKE

This article was written by George Foulser, a rank-and-file seaman for many years and Chairman of the London Seamen's Strike Committee during the first Seamen's strike last July. During the second strike Brother Foulser edited the rank-and-file paper 'Seamen's Voice'.

* * * * *

British seamen have never had a real union. A company union is not a real union.

The British Sailors' and Firemen's Union obtained recognition in 1912. This was after a hard and bitter struggle, in which men were killed in Liverpool on what is still known as Bloody Sunday. The general secretary of the union was then Havelock Wilson. His name is execrated by the British seamen to this day, for the way he sold them to the shipowners after their hard battle for union recognition.

After World War I, the union's name was changed. It became the National Union of Seamen (NUS). It had betrayed its members so thoroughly that a new union, the British Seamen's Union (BSU) came into being. I do not know whether the BSU was any better than the NUS but it certainly could not be any worse!

The shipowners and Havelock Wilson were alarmed at the growth of the BSU. About 1924, a development took place which riveted the chains of slavery firmly onto British seamen. The shipowners agreed to recognize only the NUS, and in return Wilson promised that the NUS would never take strike action against the shipowners. From then on, no British seaman could sign on a British ship without an official form called PC5. This form was not valid without the stamp of the Shipping Federation doctor and the stamp of the NUS. A BSU stamp was not valid. Starvation forced the BSU seamen back into the NUS.

When the British General Strike took place in 1926, Wilson kept his pledge to the shipowners. He even went to the length of suing those NUS branches which had issued strike pay to their members, on the grounds that the General Strike was unlawful!

There have been three NUS general secretaries since Wilson. Each has crucified British seamen daily as thoroughly as their notorious predecessor. The NUS constitution is now foolproof as regards stopping the rank and file from ever getting control of the union. The only officials to be elected (and this only in theory) are the Executive Council. In the event of an opposition candidate for an Executive Council position, a vote-teller is appointed by the local NUS secretary - and naturally the official candidate wins every time. Under the NUS constitution a vote-scrutiny is not allowed!

When Wilson died he was followed by Spence. Then came Jarman. Jarman died shortly after World War II. The present dictator - Sir Thomas Yates, CBE, nightclub-owner and director - then took over.

British seamen had seized the wartime opportunity of forming rank and file committees aboard ship. Yates co-operated wholeheartedly with the shipowners, not only to smash the ships' committees but to oppose any signs of militancy amongst seamen. A new scheme was introduced - the Pool. Since 1947 every port has a local Pool Committee of which the NUS is part and parcel. Only the Central Pool Committee, being all shipowners, has no NUS representation.

This infamous Pool system has taken their livelihood from no less than 7000 British seamen. Their only crime in most cases has been that of opening their mouths against bad conditions aboard British ships. Those seamen still on the Pool are pressured to sign a two years' contract with the Pool, and become what is called 'established' seamen. Such contracts oblige a man to take a ship he has never seen, from any port to anywhere. They are known in the USA as 'yellow dog' contracts. Seamen refusing to sign these contracts are classed as 'unestablished' men, and are flagrantly discriminated against regarding employment.

The shipowners and their NUS jackals have been greatly helped by the postwar retention of conscription in Britain. They recruited youngsters wholesale into the seafaring industry. They then held the threat of dismissal from the seafaring industry - with consequent call-up into the army - over the heads of the younger men to keep them quiet. In spite of these handicaps, British seamen fought back by strike action in 1947, 1949 and 1955.

In 1947, Sir Thomas Yates repudiated his own signature on a statement that if the seamen returned to work their rank and file representatives would be allowed to sit at a conference with the NUS and the shipowners. After the men had gone back to sea, Yates calmly stated that he had only signed in his personal capacity, and not as general secretary of the union.

As soon as conscription came to an end, British seamen moved into the attack once more, this time on more equal conditions. They struck twice this year - the first time in July for three weeks, and the second time in August for seven weeks. During the strike periods, British ships abroad struck by the score to support their comrades on the picket line back home. The seamen's demands were:

- (1) a 44 hour week (56 hours at present)
- (2) a £4 a month wage increase
- (3) a genuine democratically elected rank and file seamen's union leadership.
- (4) repeal of the 1894 Merchant Shipping Act. This new demand was added after the jailing of Patrick Neary, the seamen's leader, and other seamen under the iniquitous Act of 1894.

THE MEDAL
OR
FIFTY YEARS A MINER

Bro. Neil Sweeney has been a miñer at Betteshanger pit, in Kent, for over 20 years. His son, Raymond, was one of the 140 young miners sacked earlier this year by the National Coal Board. Neil remained underground for the full duration of the famous stay-down strike that followed. He was then sent by the NUM branch to tour the Scottish coal field, to raise financial support for the Betteshanger men.

Neil Sweeney has written a number of poems depicting various aspects of a miner's life, which we hope to publish from time to time.

I

This is my day. I'm on the stage
Done fifty years, and here's my wage
My breath is short, my hair is thin
My just (?) reward... a bit of tin!
Fifty years, when I look back
On the struggle and the strife,
Why wonder then you hear me laugh
And curse the miner's life.

II

Up at five, crawl to a bus
Coughing like to choke
Down the pit, toil and sweat
'midst dust and powder smoke
Gaffers here, officials there
And all their cry is 'coal'
Swing that shovel, fill them pans
Or you'll go on the dole.

III

Lockouts, strikes and poverty
The miner faces them all,
Then a gets a medal.
Haven't they got gall
Those people who present him
With that little bit of tin
'Tis time the miners told them
Who commits the sin.

IV

If and when he can retire
After fifty years below,
Won't he think it's something
This tin medal he can show?
For fifty years of service
A Medal... are you proud?
On the day you get that medal
They can fit you for a shroud.

(continued from Page 12)

Under the 1894 Act a seaman can be served with a writ for conspiracy, also an injunction to stop him speaking or aiding a strike in any way, that is merely for addressing his fellow-seamen. The writer, who was chairman of the London Seamen's Rank and File Committee in the July strike, had both a writ and an injunction served on him, though of course like all other seamen he ignored any attempts to silence him, unless advised by the National Committee. After Neary was jailed in the second strike, the seamen fought and spoke more militantly than ever. It is probable that if Neary's jailing had not created so much indignation among the British working class, the writer and the rest of the seamen to whom injunctions had been issued would have been arrested not long after Brother Neary.

When the seamen returned to their ships, it must have seemed to many shore-workers that they had gone back with very little to show for their magnificent effort. That just means that you shore blokes don't know seamen. The regular weekly meetings now held by all NUS branches, and the official promise (for what it is worth) to take up all the seamen's demands, are as nothing to the real achievements of the strikers and the National Seamen Reform Movement.

Since the strike finished, the seamen's rank and file movement has doubled in strength, and in the speed of its development towards a 100% organized and educated movement which will be invincible in the near future when it goes into action. I am not being over-enthusiastic. I am being conservative.

All ports now have a permanent NSRM office. These deal with port organization, including ships newly arrived in the UK from deepwater voyages; and they keep the ships' committees of the locally manned ships in touch with the developments at home. Men joining ships often give their Advance Note to NSRM funds.

While the NSRM is embarking on a programme of education regarding the policy and future aims of the movement, the rank and file seamen are doing a remarkable job of self-education. The waterfront pubs and cafes today are witnessing something they have never seen before: seamen's discussion groups which discuss one main topic: how to develop the rank and file movement. If you only knew the hope we seamen have since the birth of this movement, the knowledge that this is something which is going to lift seamen out of slavery, because it can be controlled only by the rank and file themselves!

The first steps have been taken to establish unity with rank and file workers on shore. In Liverpool, the portworkers' liaison committee is now the Seamen and Portworkers' Liaison Committee. The unity of the London seamen and portworkers by solidarity-links on the lines of the Liverpool men's committee is already being discussed by the London seamen. It is hoped that such unity will become a fact in the near future.

CUBA

The events in Cuba are of real interest and importance to revolutionary Socialists. The following article, contributed by comrade McIntyre, is intended to provoke a discussion on the Cuban revolution and we hope that our readers will also write their views and opinions for subsequent publication.

* * * * *

THE British press has followed the American in hiding the Cuban Revolution from us by a smoke-screen of half-truths and misinformation. Rumours of impending American invasion make it imperative that the British working class movement should understand now why the defence of the Cuban revolution is our concern.

We, like the Cubans, live under the shadow of American imperialist power; the Cubans, unlike us, have risen against it. Before the revolution American capital dominated Cuba and especially the raw sugar production. Cuba, a naturally rich country, was tied down to this one crop, profitable for the owners of the estates, unprofitable to the peasants. The peasants lived on black beans and rice, suffered from malnutrition and had incomes of under £2 a week. The government of Batista ruled by corruption and military force. America and Britain both supplied Batista with arms.

We shall be told - and are being told already - that Cuba is falling into the hands of the Communist Party. All the evidence is that this is false. The Communist Party only joined Castro's 'Movement of July 26th' (the date of the first rising against Batista) when it was already clear that it was going to win. It was not even the first political party to join. What made Castro's victory was the fact that he so identified himself with the peasants that the peasants were able to identify themselves with him.

What makes the Cuban revolution a socialist revolution is not the fact that its leaders have socialist theories, but the fact that the peasant masses have been stimulated into activity, transforming themselves and their society alike. They are the first peasants in history to have passed from a society of large private estates to state co-operative farms, without an intervening period of farming private small-holdings.

Those theorists who think they know better than ordinary working people what ordinary working people are have always said that peasants could not make socialism. Now we see that the development of capitalism on a world scale can once more open quite new possibilities and quite new hopes.

This least theoretical of revolutions has moved forward step by step. It has nationalised the largest part of privately owned industry. It has reduced rents. It has continuously kept the whole people in action. Now it faces two dangers, apart from the American threat.

First, it needs to elaborate new political forms, people's councils, perhaps, to express the new social forms. If it fails to do this, it may never be able to defend these forms against attack. Secondly, the Cuban government has had to accept Soviet aid. This was unavoidable, but it may help to drag Cuba into the Cold War and when a revolution is forced on to the defensive, bureaucrats always tend to replace revolutionaries.

Past revolutionary failures of Stalinists and Trotskyists have left the Cuban revolutionaries without any real international working class movement to which they could appeal. We shall help ourselves as well as the Cubans if we learn all we can about their revolution and do what little we can to defend it.

HISTORY 'A LA CARTE'

or Mr Pearce and all that!

In the last issue of Labour Review (October-November 1960) the Socialist Labour League hired historian, Brian Pearce, 'hammers' at those who have dared criticize Trotsky's ruthless suppression of the movement of the Kronstadt sailors, in 1921. Pearce quotes the veteran French revolutionary socialist, Alfred Rosmer, as an authority for some of his statements.

In the same article Pearce also vituperates against those who consider Russia to be a capitalist country. Mr Pearce neglects to inform the credulous members of the SLL that Alfred Rosmer happens to hold the view... that Russia is a 'state capitalist' country.

Apparently, the prolonged and thorough training Mr Pearce received in the Communist Party was not all in vain.

SACKINGS

BY ERIC MORSE

'Here's your cards, chum. You've got the sack. Don't let it worry you; it's just a seasonal thing, normal at this time of year.'

'Please to take your cards, mein Herr. But not to worry. It just a seasonal thing is. Herr Adenauer his permission for you not to work has given.'

'Monsieur, vos papiers. Our respectful regrets, to you and to 2,999 others who have worked for Renault, for our General, and for our glorious Vth Republic.'

So it went on last month. In England, the Rootes group felt it had made enough cars for the time being. In Germany, Borgward received 'permission' from the government to sack its workers. In Paris, Renault, the pride of French nationalised industry, threw 3000 out of the gates - or tried to.

Platitudes from on high assured anxious workers that this was not a crisis but a 'normal' 'seasonal' event, something like Christmas or April Fools' Day. But whatever its meaning to the 3 nations at large, it was no joke for thousands of motor workers. Nor did they take it amiably: Borgward's workers did not wait for government permission to voice their views. Parisians blocked the Renault gates 7000 strong. The Press bleated its alarm at seeing 'Peace in Algeria' banners in the forefront of the demonstration. 700 men at Cricklewood launched a strike that grew to 10,500 throughout the Rootes Group in 24 hours.

Reporting the Rootes battle, 'The Star' (now extinct) issued subtle instructions to its readers on what to think. In heavy type it told us that the strike would mean hardship for 'thousands of workers outside the Rootes Group'.

A sinister note was sounded that 'agreements pledging strike support exist between Rootes factories in Acton, Coventry, Dunstable Luton and Canterbury'. Mr Geoffrey Rootes was reported as saying that the strike was 'totally wrong' and could 'bring nothing but harm to the work people, the company and the industry'. And to make it all look nice and neutral, The Star added one short sentence from a Shop Steward: 'We have decided to continue every effort to spread the strike.' (We're not even told why! There's a real wildcat for you).

But lets be fair. Why should The Star worry whether or not the strikers have a case? This is only a 'normal', 'seasonal' little sacking. The Minister of Labour was at pains (labour pains?) to say that other work was available. The Chancellor seemed pleased that his credit restrictions were

working so well. He proposed to let them go on working!

Who the hell do these pious clowns think we are? Cattle, to be milked or slaughtered at will? Or men with lives of our own to live decently and securely? Just look at the TUC! They chose this moment to parley with the bosses on limiting the right to strike. They should have broken off relations long ago. While workers are losing hard-won conditions, rates and pension rights, or have to start from scratch in new jobs (if the Minister can find them), our Knights indulge in witch-hunting chats with gentry who get parting gifts of £20,000, if they lose a directorship.

We all know the motor industry is in a bad way. It's been a jungle for years and we don't need experts to lecture us about it on seasonal occasions. The workers at Rootes, Borgward, Renault and elsewhere have struggled to live in it, have tried to make it work for far too long.

In one month we've seen that

neither capitalist boss nor government bureaucrats can run the industry in a sane manner. Their expertise stops at making a quick profit while the going is good - And to hell with tomorrow.

We've had these muddlers on our backs for long enough. If they cannot do a better job (and they can't because you can't run an industry from an office, without having a clue about real shop-floor problems), let's get rid of them.

We must campaign for taking the factories into the workers' own hands. We will make them supply peoples' needs, starting with the conditions of those who work in them.

Workers must be guaranteed a job that they themselves can control, instead of churning out car after car, in the vague hope that enough advertising will make someone buy them.

AMPHIBIANS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

A few weeks ago the East London New Left Club requested a speaker from the striking seamen. Who should roll down the gangplank but our old friend Barnacle Bill Courteney, straight from the good ship 'Clapham'.

This ubiquitous gopak dancer, whose marine experience is confined to the occasional day trip to Southend, spun, we gather, his usual salty yarn.

"A LAW UNTO THEMSELVES"

or

'IS THE WORKING CLASS A GREAT CONSPIRACY?'

'Agitator' claims that all workers, in the course of their working life, inevitably and repeatedly come into conflict with the way capitalists and bureaucrats run production.

Workers challenge, in this way, the right of boss or brass hat to impose on them tasks and ways of work about which the vast majority of the persons concerned have had no say whatsoever. Workers retaliate by organizing a constant resistance which may take many different forms.

This struggle is just as important a part of the class struggle as is the fight for higher wages. It challenges the way the boss runs 'his own' business. It challenges the 'established relations of production'. And it challenges them at their most vulnerable point - at the point of production itself.

This struggle has an essentially progressive and basically socialist content (if by socialism we mean workers' management and not bureaucratic management).

The following lines are reproduced (without permission) from a recent issue of The Daily Telegraph. They describe the feeling among dock employers at the end of the recent tally clerks strike. As usual, the employers squirm at this sort of challenge. All the more reason why we should stress its profoundly positive aspects.

One exporter, who 'insisted that he remain anonymous' said:

'The people on the docks in London are a law to themselves.' He added that if his name was disclosed he feared obstruction.

'My loads would be held up even longer; objections would be raised against the containers of my goods; some mysterious "go-slow" move would develop; and perhaps more than usual of the containers would be dropped, and damaged. These things happen all the time, and nothing can be done about it.

'One of my drivers finds it absolutely hopeless to visit one shed on the docks. Some time ago he had a row with the foreman there. Now he can get absolutely nothing done for any lorry load he takes there.'



ENTRY TACTIC