

For Democracy in the Unions

The leadership of the T. & G.W.U. has given a further example of the bureaucratic high-handedness which has become a by-word in the Trade Union movement. Especially is it a feature of this particular union.

The Union leaders had been instructed to negotiate a wage increase of £1 per week on behalf of the Road Passenger Transport Workers. 7/6d. was accepted by these leaders and a national delegate conference of local officials, "having regard to the Government's policy on wages."

However, the rank and file were not satisfied. Feeling was particularly strong in the Lancashire area, especially in Wigan. Failing to obtain redress for their grievances by "constitutional" means, these workers were compelled to resort to their only available weapon: strike action. They decided to stage 24 hour token strikes on Saturdays.

There was a move to threaten strikers with dismissals. Instead of standing by the men, the Union officials had the effrontery to state that they would withdraw Union protection from any men thus threatened by victimisation. Not content with that, they went so far as to threaten those who participated in this strike activity with expulsion from the Union.

One resolution adopted by the official Passenger Transport Group Committee, and which was sent to branches, stated that if any member of the Union accepted membership of an unofficial committee set up to advocate strikes or any other form of unofficial action, he should be called upon to attend the Area Committee to show cause why he should not be expelled.

It is high time that these bureaucrats were given to understand that they are paid for one purpose only: to look after the interests of the members. And, the interests of the rank and file are best determined by the rank and file themselves. Democracy begins at the bottom, not the top. The Union leaders have the duty to take orders, not to give them.

The formation of "unofficial" rank and file committees has become more and more a feature in workers' struggles in recent years. This has been necessitated by the fact that the rank and file have been unable, because of blatant sabotage by the T.U. leaders, to use their official union machinery in their struggles. If the Unions were fulfilling their proper function there would be no necessity for "unofficial" committees.

One of the tasks of these committees, apart from co-ordinating activity on the job, is to organise a drive within



Industrial Notes

BY J. DEANE

MERSEY TUGBOAT STRIKE

LIVERPOOL, April 23rd:—

AGITATION AND UNREST IN THE SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT INDUSTRY ON MERSEYSIDE NOW INVOLVES THE STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT TUGBOAT INDUSTRY. 95% OF ALL TUGBOAT CREWS ON MERSEYSIDE CAME OUT ON A LIGHTING STRIKE ON APRIL 20th.

One small firm remained at work; the other five came out to a man—captains and engineers included.

Lightermen and boatmen promised their complete support, messages of Solidarity came in from Hull and other ports. Although the strike was of short duration the solidarity and militancy came as a great shock to employers and T. & G.W.U. officials alike.

The story behind this strike is similar to those behind the busmen's, the dockers' struggles—all sections of the T. & G.W.U. It is one of incompetence and betrayal by the Union leaders, and unscrupulous exploitation by the bosses.

Nothing was heard and overtime was stopped.

Colvin R. de Silva

1932-40: President of the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mill Workers' Union.

1935-40: President Lanka Sama Samaj Party, Ceylon.

1940: Arrested on June 17th and detained without trial for opposing war and leading strikes of workers—plantation, granary, harbour, etc.

1942: April 9th, Escaped from detention. Helped in formation of Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India with comrades from Calcutta, Bombay, United Provinces.

1945-47: General Secretary, B.L.P.I.

1947: Elected M.P. on Trotskyist ticket to Ceylon Parliament.

1947: Arrested in Madras for part in M.L.U. strike. Detained without trial. Exterminated from Madras. Author of "Socialism Rearmed: A Reply to Masani." "First Round of the European Socialist Revolution." "Whither the Soviet Union." Editor of "Spark," Trotskyist paper, 1946-7.

the official union apparatus for Trade Union democracy. The rank and file must not be intimidated by threats from smug bureaucrats. The firm stand of the Lancashire busmen in face of such threats is a victory for the real interests of Trade Unionism.

Last, but not least, the opinion of every member affected by a wage claim must be consulted by special ballot before any proposition, other than the original claim, is accepted. If this had been done in the case of the 7/6d. award the Union leaders would have looked a bit sick, because undoubtedly it would have been firmly rejected.

Employers' Threats

Since then the Tug Masters' Federation has tried every trick to intimidate crews, find a breach and smash the newly constructed Union organisation. Whole crews were sacked for refusing to work overtime; two captains were also sacked. But the solid front compelled the reinstatement of all.

Failing in these methods, the employers became tough with a general threat: All who refused overtime would be sacked.

Men's Reply

The reply was decisive and unanimous—a fleet of tugs came into dock and tied up. Led by skippers and engineers, and ignoring the pleas of the traitor Union officials, the men marched to the employers' offices.

T.U. Officials Call For Return

Though apparently slow to negotiate the men's just demands, the Union officials were not slow to

act to get the men back to work! A mass meeting was organised for the following day. This meeting was addressed by Area official J. Sealey, who persuaded the men to return to work unconditionally until May 11, when a general meeting would be addressed by a National official of the T. & G.W.U. (Waterways Section).

Rank and File Committee Formed

There being sharp criticism of Union leaders an official rank and file committee was also formed of representatives from each of the six firms. This committee will meet on May 10, to consider demands and policy, and will probably recommend strike action if the full demands are not accepted.

The Background

This is the first large scale strike of tugboatmen since 1926. Then, as a result of the betrayal, the disillusioned crews returned to work on the employers' conditions.

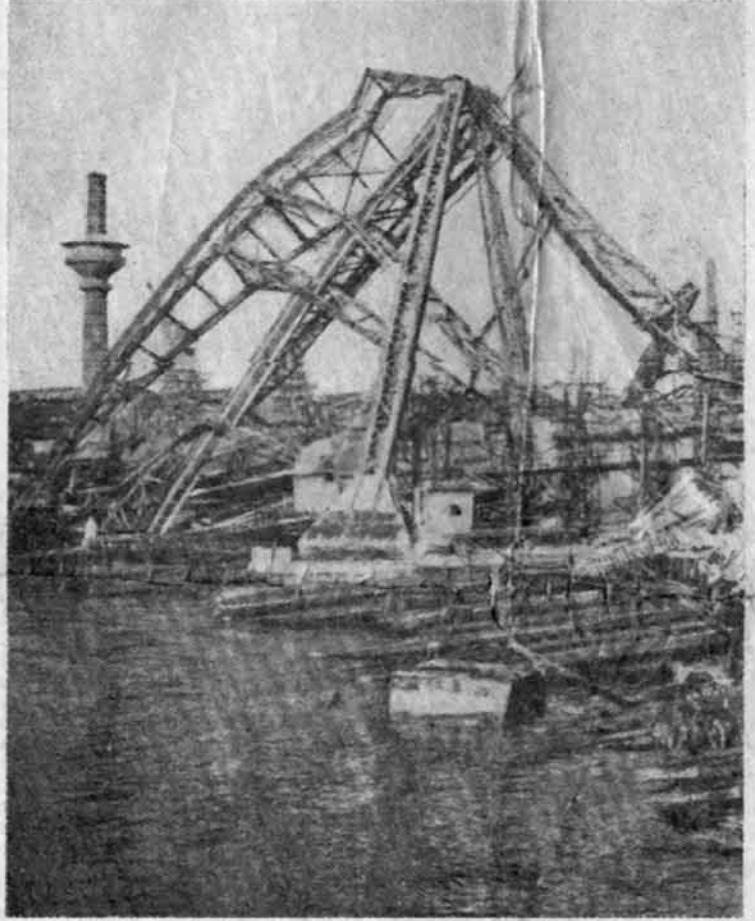
Scores were victimised and Union organisation collapsed completely. From then until almost 20 years later the men remained completely unorganised. Victimisation and the fear of unemployment enabled the employers to mercilessly exploit the tugboatmen, who had to work long hours with no overtime rates.

During the war, when conditions became unbearable, a few militants began organising—without any serious support from the T. & G.W.U.

Now crews, skippers and engineers are 100% organised. The importance of this industry is obvious when one considers that not a ship can be moved on Merseyside without tugs—no amount of organised black-legging could have smashed the seamen's strike had the tugboatmen also stopped work. Equally, no ship could have been moved during the dockers' or ship-repairers' strikes.

For A Port Committee

The elementary need on Merseyside is for a Port Committee composed of rank and file delegates from every section engaged in the shipping and port industries—dockers, ship-repairers, boatmen, seamen, tugboatmen, every section passing a dock gate. This would be one of the most important steps forward on Merseyside towards the real unity of workers whose interests are absolutely and daily dependent.



SCENE OF DESTRUCTION

in the yards of Messrs. Blohm & Voss, the largest shipyard on the Continent of Europe. The gantries seen in this picture, were not hit by Allied aircraft during the war. They were dynamited after the surrender of Germany. During the war 18,000 men were employed. Until recently 800 men were employed in an undamaged part of the plant repairing locomotives for German railways. But even that activity was stopped when the British Military Government ordered the dismantlement of what was left.

Instead of Germany's industrial might and the skill of her workmen being used for the benefit of the German and European workers, its great potential is destroyed in the name of a Government which calls itself socialist. Now, with the rivalry between East and West, the Allies are planning to assist the rebuilding—if only in part—of German industry. German capitalism kept the factories idle and the workers unemployed and hungry—Hitler prepared for war. Now the Allies do the same.

Only by abolishing the private ownership of the means of production and organising industry for use instead of profit, will the working class put an end to this disastrous misuse of the power of man over nature. The resources of Europe must be integrated and planned for maximum production for the benefit of the masses in a Socialist United States of Europe.

In extending our hand of solidarity to the German working class, the British workers must demand an end to the destruction of the very economic foundations of the socialist future in Germany.



YORKSHIRE: Ted Grant recently paid a visit to Sheffield, Leeds, and Kinsley, to visit our comrades in these areas. A discussion on Czechoslovakia was held at Sheffield.

GLASGOW: Doug. Garbutt, our Scottish Organizer spoke recently to five A.E.U. and one A.S.W. branches on party policy. The branch has attracted some new contacts and a study class has been formed in Dalmeir. Progress is noted in getting our anti-Fascist pamphlet into shops.

THAMES VALLEY: Considerable progress is reported from this district where our comrades are active in the political and union movement.

LONDON: Some local branches have started mid-week canvasses including the usual Sunday morning sales. Central meetings of other parties are regularly covered. At the Y.C.L. Conference 12 copies of the anti-Fascist pamphlet were sold.

In Brixton, 35 copies were sold at a Fascist meeting. To date, shops in East London have sold 32 of these pamphlets. May Day preparations well in hand. Party will march on May 1st with the London Trades Council from the Embankment to Hyde Park.

COLVIN DE SILVA, Trotskyist M.P. from Ceylon will be in this country for two weeks. The following meetings have been arranged for him: May 4.—Holborn Hall, London. " 5.—Slough. " 8.—Ceylon Students' Assn. " 12.—Manchester. " 13.—Birmingham.

EDUCATION: Our successful series of Sunday night lectures have now ended and during the summer months, One-day Schools will be held at intervals. Our series of open-air meetings will start in May in a number of London areas. Roy Tearse as our main speaker draws large crowds to the Sunday meeting at Hyde Park. Roy Tearse, held a very successful meeting in Oxford of students.

An audience of 30 attended his meeting at Ashford, organised by the Thames Valley comrades.

WHAT'S ON: COLVIN R. DE SILVA, Ceylon Trotskyist M.P., 8 p.m. Wednesday, May 5th, Manor Park Hall, Slough. "India, Democracy or Police State?"

MANCHESTER: Roy Tearse will address the Queen's Park Parliament on "Trade Unions in the Struggle for Socialism." Sunday, May 16, 3 p.m.

BIRMINGHAM: Colvin R. de Silva, Ceylon Trotskyist M.P., will speak on Thursday, May 13th, at 7.30 p.m., on "The Drive Against The Left In India." I.L.P. Room, 38 John Bright Street, Birmingham.

LONDON: Colvin De Silva to speak to the Ceylon Students' Association, 7 p.m. Nutford House Edgware Road.

LONDON: May 1st at 8 p.m. Come to the R.C.P. May Day Social and Dance. Held at 256 Harrow Road Paddington W.2. Band—Refreshments etc.

"SAVOY BOSSES Break Agreement"

In our October issue there appeared under the above heading, a report of a meeting of certain members of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers in which reference was made to the Savoy Hotel.

In this report it was alleged that the Savoy Hotel Ltd., had failed to implement an agreement into which they had entered because, having consented to accept the decision of an ad hoc Committee on certain matters in dispute they later refused to carry out the Committee's findings.

Having since made enquiries we now find that, in truth, before this Committee sat both the National Union of General and Municipal Workers and the Savoy agreed

that neither party should be bound by any recommendation which the Committee might make.

It was further alleged that the Savoy Hotel caused great delay in bringing the case of Piazza before the National Arbitration Tribunal and arrogantly refused to carry out the Tribunal's award; and also that they had not carried out the terms of the agreement relating to house representatives and house committees. We are satisfied that these statements were not proved by evidence given at the inquiry set up by the Minister of Labour.

In these circumstances "Socialist Appeal" desires to apologise to the Savoy Hotel Ltd., for any inconvenience caused to them by the inaccurate report and to offer to them an agreed sum in payment of damages and legal costs incurred by them in the proceedings for libel which they took in consequence of such report.



From a German P.O.W.

Dear Comrades,

Thank you very much for your dear letter, which I've received. Firstly, I'd like to tell you that I am leaving for home in a fortnight. I am very glad, of course, even if it looks very dark in Germany. Although I don't give up hope for an improvement. I also hope that I'll soon gather a strong group in my town, as I shall work for our Party as much as I possibly can. I know and have seen that our comrades all over the world stand at our side against the dominating class that is suppressing us. Our fight for Socialism will not be in vain. All workers will follow our lead in the struggle for a progressive society. We have to take the lead for them, and the Fourth International will win.

Now I will tell you my opinion as to Czechoslovakia. I think it's been favourable for the workers that the Revolution has taken place. Capitalism will not survive after this, although its place for the time being is taken by the Stalin bureaucracy. The change was not solely achieved by the Stalinists but also the workers played their parts. That shows that it was also the will of the people. Stalin won't succeed with his plans, as the Czechs are no Hungarians or Rumanians. It is very hard for them to control the situation, and I cultivate the hope that true communism will crystallise out of this. The Centre of Communism will wander to the

West and that is dangerous to Stalin. The mass upheaval was so strong that the Capitalists could put forward no resistance at all. This shows that facing a united mass of workers, the capitalists must surrender. Of course, its not an entire victory as yet as part of it goes to Stalin. Struggle to help the workers must be founded upon the logic of the class struggle of all workers all over the world. Stalin Bureaucracy doesn't follow any of these principles, but on the contrary uses her power for her own nationalistic ends. The time alone will show. The workers of C.S.R. will willingly agree to such policies and I hope they will be the first blow of resistance for the Stalinists. I can't write more, as I could only make it quite clear by discussion.

I hope to receive the answer to this letter still in this country and down below I'll give you my own address. Many thanks for Tommy's special regards.

So I'll finish, believing that I will see you again anywhere and anytime. Every comrade that happens to come to Germany is very welcome at my home. I'm very glad about everything you taught me and helped me.

I am greeting you with our special salute and wish your group all future success. Solidarity of all class-conscious workers and long live the Fourth International.

Your Comrade, Heinz.

Help our German Comrades



Send Food

To:— H. CHASE 256 Harrow Rd. London - W.2

Orphan German Children Queue For Food

COLVIN R. De SILVA
Ceylon Trotskyist M.P.

WILL SPEAK AT THE
HOLBORN HALL
GRAYS INN ROAD, W.C.1

on
"THE DRIVE AGAINST THE LEFT IN INDIA"
TUESDAY, MAY 4th — 8 p.m.

Organised by the London District Committee
REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY (Trotskyist)
256 Harrow Road, Paddington, W.2.

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Manchester Branch R.C.P.

Colvin R. De Silva
(Trotskyist Member of Ceylon Parliament)

will give a
"Report on India, Ceylon and the East"
at the ONWARD HALL (Deansgate)
WEDNESDAY, 12th MAY at 8 p.m.

Admission 6d. Questions and Discussion