



# Letters

To the Editor,

## Detention Barracks

Glasgow,  
20th October, 1944.

Dear Comrade,  
Having just been released from Chorley Military Detention Barracks (No. 2 D.B.) after 6 months' sentence, I would like to confirm in general the description of D.B. conditions which were exposed in your September issue. As at Chatham Detention Barracks, there is the same continual effort to "make good soldiers" by breaking the spirit of the men and keeping them in a state of fear and humiliation. If a man finds it impossible to accept in silence the cattle-herding treatment to which he is subject all the time, he soon finds himself "on a report", and punishment for quite trivial offences usually consists of 2 or 3 days P.D.1 (Punishment Diet No. 1) or a week's P.D.2—together with a loss of three to eight days remission.

P.D.1 consists of 2 or 2½ slices of bread and a mug of water in place of breakfast and again in place of tea. No dinner.

P.D.2 is the same with a small portion of gruel and a couple of dirty potatoes added at mid-day. And it must be remembered that this is imposed on men whose "normal diet" whilst under Detention is lacking badly in sugar content, Vitamins C, D and B, with no fresh fruit or vegetables of any sort continuously over a long period; and who are expected on this diet to expend MORE energy (on P.T. drills, marches, etc.) than the normal.

Also, I must report that although rare, physical brutality is not totally abolished. There was a case in my last week or two, of a soldier under sentence being thrown to the floor by a "screw" (guard) and his head banged on the ground till it was cut open. Owing to a little "thoughtfulness" on the part of the Staff Sergeant in forgetting to take the precaution of first locking up all the other prisoners, his action was witnessed by at least two soldiers—of whom prevented the "screw" from hitting his victim with a rifle.

I don't know if any enquiry has yet been made into this particular case but the names of the witnesses and the victim are available. This, in any case is only one example where, I know by experience, the use of force was followed threats, which although technically forbidden, are by no means infrequent.

Earlier this month I had complained to the Warrant Officer on duty—backed up with witnesses' statements—of threats of physical assault.

## TANNER at the Stoll

South London,  
19th October, 1944.

"Socialist Appeal,"  
Dear Comrade Editor,  
I am very surprised that the report of Tanner's speech at the Stoll Theatre contained in the last issue of the "Socialist Appeal" under the title "Tanner Prepares New Sell-Out" by Ann Walker, contains a number of inaccuracies. Such inaccurate reporting can only do damage to our paper which has established a tradition for truthful and accurate accounts.

To report accurately is sufficient condemnation of Tanner and the other Trade Union bureaucrats.

In the interest of correct reporting which is necessary at all times for the prestige of the Party, and therefore in the interests of the working class, I offer criticism of the article.

Firstly, as I understood Tanner, he said, not that Joint Production Committees should supersede Works Committees, but that the scope of the Works Committees should be broadened to include Production problems. This in itself is bad enough, because it means a sell-out on the lines that workers have become all too familiar with during the war. The Joint Production Committees have been used mainly for the purpose of speed-up, and penalising the workers for lateness and absenteeism, etc. The advanced workers know the role of these Production Committees and how they have served the interests of the employing class against the interests of the workers.

Secondly, in dealing with the exclusion of quite a large number of members, he suggested more rigid card inspection, which of course, we support, and that as the stewards were extremely busy with so many new problems, other means should be taken to ensure that brothers did not drop out. I, and other of our brothers in my work-shop understood this to mean card-stewards or such like.

At any rate, such revolutionary, or rather counter-revolutionary measures, as the article suggests, is only possible through the democratic machinery of the union and would mean a change of Rules which could only be done by the Rules Revision Committee. This Committee is elected by the National Committee. There are a sufficient number of democratic checks to prevent any attempt in this direction at this stage.

Thirdly, in regard to the removal of the assistant organisers by the ruling of the Appeal Court, both sides (E.C. members and F.A.C. who voted this) agree that there is need for more assistance to organisers. But the majority of the Appeal Court decided that the rule that the E.C. used did not

I would say however, that most (not all) of the "screws" are not deliberately vindictive, but simply carry out to one extent or other, the orders that they are given "from above."

Many officers like to pose as being kind-hearted and solicitous of the men's interest, most pained to have to inflict their barbaric punishments. Possibly some of them are—perhaps it does give them sorrow that such treatment of the men is "necessary" (!?) but that does not make the starvation and humiliations any the more bearable.

Most of the men "inside" have been abroad fighting, they were told, for freedom, decency and democracy—well Detention Barracks helps them to understand a little more clearly. They are sampling the "freedom" and "democracy" that the system has ready for them—if they'll stand for it. Yes, many of the soldiers leave the Detention Barracks more class conscious than when they entered it.

Yours sincerely,  
ex-Private C. P. Stanton.

## A Soldier on Bulgaria

R.A.F., C.M.F.  
7.10.44.

Dear Comrade,  
The only local news is of a recent demonstration by the Communist and Socialist Parties to the nearby grave of a local martyr. The demonstrators were mainly older peasants, and comparatively few youth.

You have heard of the recent formation of soldiers' soviets in the Bulgarian army, with the use of the Red Flag and the clenched fist salute. On September 21st, Major-General Velchev (Minister of War) issued an order to the Bulgarian Army in which he forbade the use of the Red Flag and clenched fist salute, and instructed army commanders to set up Committees of inquiry to advise on cases of military personnel recently arrested.

Yours,  
R.  
12.10.44.

Dear Comrade,  
Regarding the news of Bulgaria in my last note to you, here is some more to supplement it.

Apparently the coldness of the Russians' attitude to the recent revolutionary manifestations has disillusioned many Bulgarians. According to some accounts, red flags and clenched fists were less in evidence in Sofia, where the Russians ignored them, than in Plovdiv, where there were no Russian troops.

There is no local news at the moment  
All the best,  
R.

# 34/6 A DAY FOR N.U.R. BOSSES

BY SID BIDWELL

At the Special General Meeting of the N.U.R. to be held in November, two outstanding items will occupy most of the 90 odd delegates' attention. They will be considering the draft of a new programme which, if adopted, will become a charter for rail workers. They have, also, to accept or reject an E.C. proposal to establish two scales of Union contributions which involve an increase of 1d. per week per member on the General Fund.

In the case of the former item discussions in the Branches, District Councils and National Grade Conferences have been reaching fever heat. The Union's Annual Conference held in July last, threw out the E.C.'s programme as being inadequate to meet the desires of half a million rail workers. As a result a special committee was set up consisting of E.C. members and Annual Meeting representatives on a departmental basis.

The document drafted by the Committee has been thoroughly discussed by the Branches. In many cases special meetings have been called by Branches up and down the country to consider it.

The document's proposals concerning wage rates seek to keep all adults within the orbit of a £4 10s. minimum and a £6 maximum. The major criticisms made so far, are that the rates mentioned are based upon pre-war prices and cannot be considered adequate in the present period. As promotion in the industry is rigidly departmentalised and grades are placed in groups, a justifiable demand is being made that all grades shall have the right to aspire to an equal maximum.

It is therefore, anticipated, that at the Special Meeting the chief proposals of those seeking amendments will be along the lines outlined above.

## PROPOSED INCREASE IN CONTRIBUTIONS

By no means of less importance is the E.C.'s proposal to increase members' contributions. They are proposing two scales i.e. 8d. and 1/- . At the present time, membership of the various benevolent funds is optional, and the General Fund is 5d. per week. They now want to make it 7d. on the G.F.

It is pointed out that the existing scale of contributions is the lowest of all Trade Unions, but, it must be borne in mind, so are the wage rates of the workers in the industry. In introducing their proposals, the E.C. talks of the necessity of preparing for the future, and hints at coming fights when a large bank balance will be required. At the Conference the E.C. spokesmen will, no doubt, link the programme with the need for increased contributions.

## 34/6 A DAY FOR OFFICIALS

As we have stated hitherto, the volume of antagonism on the part of the rank and file members to the headquarters squandering which goes on, is tremendous. The fat salaries of the officials as compared with the shocking wage rates on the railways, is a subject for discussion in every signal box, and mess-room. If a vote of the members should be taken, we are sure, 75 per cent would be in favour of an immediate reduction of salaries and the introduction of a method whereby T.U. representatives would get actual expenses and not a flat rate payment irrespective of expenses as they do now.

To crown it all, a decision was carried increasing the official's payment by 5s. per day, making the present rate 34/6d. per day. Some A.G.M. delegates will seek to justify this on the grounds that Hotel expenses have increased. This is quite true, but what prevents the representatives from lodging with rail workers, as delegates to the National Grade Conferences have to do for the most part?

It is well known that a representative whose home is in the vicinity of the meeting makes a handsome profit on this flat rate system of payment. The position is disgusting when we consider the finances of the N.U.R. are made up from contributions made at sacrifice from platelayers and porters, whose basic wage rate in the industrial and rural areas is less than 50s. a week with war wage increases added.

To this we reply that only a Labour Government pledged to socialist measures of nationalisation without compensation, with Workers Control of production, would mean the elimination of the capitalists and their system with its inevitable slump and boom—mostly slump.

The end of the article dealing with unity, etc. was correct. The publication of this criticism, which is in the democratic tradition of the working class movement and the best demonstration of the democracy enjoyed by our organisation and its members. I hope this will be appreciated by our brothers and comrades in the working class who have raised criticisms of the article.

We stand four square for the A.E.U., and oppose any attempt to injure it; we are against splits; against tearing up of cards, and for a struggle in the union for the militants to educate themselves up to the ability to run for positions in the A.E.U. and the replacing of the present reformist leadership by one that will follow a militant policy of struggle against the bosses and for socialism.

Yours fraternally,  
Jim Piper.

## FOR A MILITANT FIGHTING FUND

To be sure, it is necessary to build up a fighting fund which will sustain the workers when they are on strike. But the members want to know if this is what it is actually required for. If it is, so then let us commence a fighting fund obligatory upon all members—a fund which cannot be touched by the squanderbugs of headquarters.

What is most imperative at the moment, is that the members who realise the position and know that a show down between the rank and file and the leadership is coming fast, should get together, draw up a programme of simple demands to propagate inside the Branches and District Councils.

Whether the reckoning with the leadership results in wholesale tearing up of cards—and we have had symptoms of this already—or whether the Bensteads and Watsons will be ousted to make room for a leadership fresh from the industry, depends upon the co-ordination of militant activity. The former picture would be disastrous and would only facilitate the coming attacks of the employers and their government.

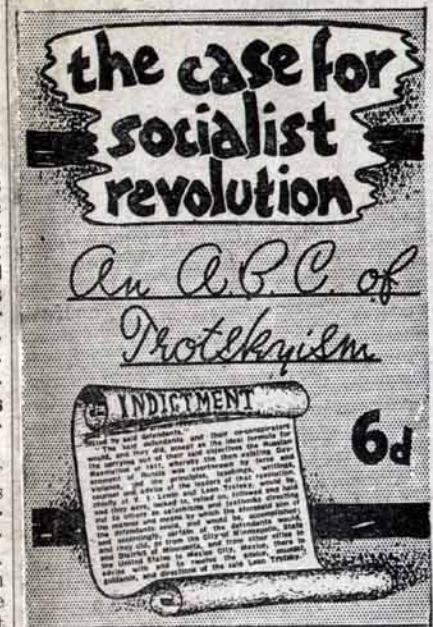
The Union is the property of 405,000 members who, for the most part, have allowed their organisation to degenerate under a bureaucratic leadership thoroughly immersed in smug self-satisfaction and willing apostles of boss ridden arbitration machinery.

Long hours of duty and continual Sunday work in the first two or three years of the war resulted in a sharp decline in Branch attendances. There are now signs of greater Branch attendances with an influx of new and younger blood which, if it continues, bodes ill for the bureaucrats.

E.C. members and A.G.M. representatives cannot hold their positions for more than three years. This principle should be applied to the General Secretary and his Assistants. If salaries were scaled down, instead of being presented with a long list of candidates, we would have a considerably shortened list, but we would know they would be the most sincere workers setting out to serve their fellow workers and not only themselves.

The problem of cleaning the N.U.R. is inseparably linked with the need for rejuvenating the whole Labour Movement, capturing it for the membership and turning it into a fighting instrument on behalf of the working class.

These are most urgent questions if we are to end, once and for all, the capitalist system which breeds poverty, fascism, unemployment and war.



# WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

## Question to Trade Unionists

BY JOCK MILLIGAN

Many workers in Trade Unions are tearing up their cards. Attendance at some Branch meetings is smaller than ever before. Many militants with years of activity to their credit; with a devotion to the economic struggle of their class which has earned them the respect of their fellow workers and the enmity of the boss are becoming disillusioned. "What can we do?" they ask. Our leaders are too busy looking after the interests of the employers to bother about us.

Examine the role of Bevin since he became Minister of Labour especially the reasons he gave for introducing that vicious and pernicious Regulation 1A(a), also that other piece of anti-working class legislation dealing with those young lads (commonly known as the Bevin boys) who are condemned for life to go down the pits; whether they like it or not. Nationalisation of the workers for the mines, not nationalisation of the mines for the workers.

However, Bevin does not stand alone. The Tanners, Hicks, Lawthers, Marchmonts, etc., not forgetting Sir Walter Citrine, have indeed served our employers well. Yes, the capitalist lackeys have got such a control over the organisations we and our fathers before us fought for, and suffered to build; that it is now an instrument that hinders, rather than advances our cause.

"What can we do?" The leaders won't stand for strikes at any cost, no matter what the provocation from the employers and the justice of the workers' case. Although they know that the workers only strike as a last resort when there is no other remedy. (It's unpatriotic, they say). If we take unofficial strike action they do everything to suppress us. We get no notice pay, our best shop stewards have their credentials taken from them, and we are sometimes expelled from the union. The leaders won't negotiate until we return to work. Then negotiations are so long drawn out that before a settlement is reached, the real issues are lost sight of.

"Yes, what can we do?" Let's not minimise any of the difficulties before we tackle their solution. We are in an imperialist war, and while the military General Staff may be launching a big offensive on the Western front, their other General Staff, the bosses and the Government are launching their offensive attacking the workers everywhere.

This attack is going to be intensified and our trade union leadership is going to sell out more and more. Therefore the workers now, more than ever before, need their mass organisations, every serious trade unionist now, more than ever before, must put his back into the work of building them.

The new struggles, like the former struggles, will take place in spite of the union bureaucrats efforts at sabotage.

The British trade unionists will sooner or later come to recognise the union bureaucrats for what they are, and will come up against the burning task of replacing them. The most class conscious militants now should be ever more urgently organising to grasp the great union machines from the hands of the bureaucracy. One can understand a certain disillusionment on the part of the rank and file trade unionists. But these tendencies must be resolutely fought. In this era of extreme social unrest, the Unions must serve the workers in the conflict with the bosses. And this means that the union machines must be turned into uncompromising opponents of capitalism. These great national working class organisations must be seized from the hands of the boss class servants, the bureaucrats, and put into the service of the masses who built them. If the union militants fail to perform this task, the coming struggles of the

workers will be sold out by the agents of the boss class in high places in the unions.

Most union militants and revolutionary shop stewards appreciate the necessity of the task. Those who toy with the ideas of ignoring the union machinery or turning away from it into purely shop or ad hoc organisations must be convinced of the need to make their voices heard in the Union. We have a powerful weapon in the shop stewards committees. Historically on a higher level of working class organisation than the unions, the two supplement each other. The functions of the shop committees exceed the functions of normal union activity. The question of workers' control, is constantly present in the activities of shop committees. But the shop committees must make the union in their own image, must drive to make the local union and national union organisations follow a militant policy.

During the last war the paralysis of the official trade union movement gave rise to the Shop Stewards Movement. Elected by all the workers on the job, irrespective of craft or of trade union membership, they created a hundred per cent class counterweight to the will of the union bureaucrats.

Trade Unions normally embrace no more than 20 to 25 per cent of the working class, and that, predominantly, the more skilled and better paid layer. This organisation, based on the branch, does not give direct representation in negotiations between workers and employers, but indirect representation through the cumbersome district and national committees. Factory organisation as against branch organisation, breaks down the barrier of craft, of the distinction between skilled and unskilled workers and the antagonism between trade unionists and unorganised sections of the workers.

Their united demands, conveyed by worker delegates, elected and controlled by all the factory workers, assumed an imperative force that could not be easily side-tracked by the boss or the trade union bureaucrat. Nevertheless the Shop Stewards Committee (or Works Committee, the name is unimportant) fought for a hundred per cent trade unionism. They thus carried the fight directly against their own reactionary leadership; made use of the National Organisation; fought for strike and victimisation pay, etc., and ensured that after the war period and the awakening of the spontaneous movement, a strong trade union organisation would remain.

Just as the development of large scale machine manufacture drew scores of trades and crafts into one gigantic enterprise and gave production a social character, so must the industrial workers' organisations correspond to this development. The Factory or Workers' Committee is the form of organisation that serves this purpose best. The Trade Union bureaucrats, in line with their general conduct, will resist the creation of these committees as they resist every bold step along the road of mobilising the masses. However, as the movement sweeps on, their resistance will be partly broken.

The employers, backed by the Government, have launched their offensive. They succeed only to the extent that we are disorganised. Wage slavery rests upon the disunity and competition between the workers contending for their mouthful of bread.

Close the ranks! Attend your Branch meetings! Strengthen the Trade Unions; weaken the stranglehold of the bureaucrats! Fight in your trade union branch and factory, or works depot for the creation of real democratic fighting union leadership and that all T.U. officials should receive no other wage than that enjoyed by a first class Tradesman in their respective trades, irrespective of their position in the Union.

# Belfast "Young Christian Workers"

BY J. HANNA

The attention of the political world in Northern Ireland has once again been focussed on the Falls Road area of Belfast. The ever-present problem facing the workers' movement, that is the misplaced outlet for the militant feelings of the young nationalist workers, has again been brought to the forefront.

During a drive for election popularity by the Stalinists late in September, two meetings held by them on the Falls Road, were smashed up by demonstrations of the "Young Christian Workers"—an organisation of young Catholics. Disturbances, such as the loud beating of dust bin lids, and the singing of Catholic hymns, forced the abandonment of the meetings within fifteen minutes of the start.

The demonstrations of the Young Christian Workers resemble the actions of the Unionist thugs at meetings before 1939 when the police only intervened after the damage had been done—a sinister parallel for militant young nationalists.

The Young Christian Workers is the offspring of the Catholic Church—the arm with which it hopes to smite any turn towards Communism. It has international connections in many countries in Europe, being founded in Belgium in 1914. It has "militant" slogans such as: "Youth demands it, Christ commands it—Workers, we must conquer!" and "Deeds not words." Its paper in Ireland, "New Youth" published every two months, has many

Labour Party. They can only help to drive these young militants into the hands of reaction.

This movement is similar to the unionist and Orange movements. It must be branded as being just as reactionary.

The main problem in Ulster is to achieve the unity of the "Orange" workers with the "Catholic" workers against their common enemy—British and Irish capitalism. The whole aim of the capitalists, both Protestant and Catholic is to divide and split the workers by sectarian issues and thus retain the control in their own hands. They succeed in doing this by pitting and inciting the workers against each other by religious means. It is for this reason that the Catholic minority is persecuted. But the Protestant workers can only achieve their emancipation by the support of the nationalist minority. The Nationalist problem can only be solved by the support the Catholic workers receive in their struggle against discrimination and persecution from the ranks of the Protestant workers.

Neither "good neighbourliness" with De Valera, nor support for Brooke can attract the militant nationalist workers. They look for a programme of power to the workers, for the breaking of the chains of capitalism, and for the achievement of a workers' Ireland federated to a Socialist United States of Europe. They can achieve this only under the banner of the Irish Section of the Fourth International,

(Continued next column.)