

Tory Demagogy on Potato Rationing

The introduction of potato rationing, long expected in view of the acute shortage that occurred due to the severe winter and the dry summer, has once again been made the occasion by the Tories to clamour for the removal of rationing and controls in general.

When bread rationing was introduced, the Tories and their vociferous adjunct the Housewives' League, initiated a similar campaign. But every worker knows that the rationing of bread, due to the shortage of world wheat supplies, was necessary, and did at least ensure a supply to everyone.

That there is a potato shortage, no-one will dispute. Nor will the class conscious worker raise any objection to rationing as such. Where there is shortage, there must be rationing, otherwise the bulk of the supplies will go to those with the best lined pockets.

Almost as soon as the potato ration was announced, substitute vegetables, such as swedes, parsnips and turnips, immediately went up in price, since these vegetables are outside price-control. Unless there is price control introduced here, the farmers will grow more of them than of potatoes.

At the same time the workers have a justified grievance at the lack of variety in their diet and the cuts which the Government have introduced to save dollars. Far from the further austerity demanded by the Tories and the shameful capitulation of the Labour leaders, the cuts should be restored and any sacrifices should be placed on the shoulders of the rich who have access to the choicest of foods and luxuries outside the reach of the workers.

No class conscious worker will give the slightest credence to the demagogic campaign of the Tories regarding the general food shortage, including the present potato shortage. Their policy of cutting subsidies, which they openly advocate, would raise prices tremendously and make many basic foodstuffs more difficult to buy than they are even at the present time. The policy of their class brothers in America, where food is plentiful, has resulted in the raising of prices to the highest levels ever, the increases of prices more than offsetting any wage increases which the American workers have been able to gain as a result of strike struggles. The conditions of the European peoples under the governments of the same stripe as Churchill and Eden are far worse than anything we have to face in Britain.

What the workers complain of is, not rationing as such, but bureaucratic planlessness.

The small greengrocers complain they cannot get adequate supplies of potatoes from the wholesalers to meet the demand of their customers, unless they also take a certain amount of the more expensive vegetables and fruit—stuff which their customers cannot afford to purchase. The old racket of "conditional sales" is thus strengthened.

There is only one way to stop this and to ensure that available supplies of all vegetables are fairly distributed and at a price workers can afford to pay. The operation of the whole rationing scheme must be taken out of the hands of the bureaucrats of the Food Ministry and planned by popularly elected committees representing the Co-operatives, distributive trade employees, housewives, factory workers, and small greengrocers. These committees must have the right of access to the premises of the wholesalers, to examine their books and ensure that no black market deals are going on.

Royalist Terror in Greece

The Royalist terror in Greece today far surpasses in its brutality and savagery the infamous of the Metaxas regime of 1936. Beatings, arrests, tortures and hideous atrocities—this is the everyday story of the sufferings of the Greek workers and peasants who are fighting back at the Royalist terror.

During the rule of the Metaxas dictatorship in 1936, the average number of political prisoners incarcerated on the Greek prison islands numbered about 1,000. Today, there are more than 50,000 prisoners in these isles or in concentration camps, confined under the most degrading conditions of dirt, disease, hunger and overcrowding, who are condemned to slow and painful death.

At the time of the 1946 "Plebiscite" carried out under conditions of organised terror not only against militant workers, Socialists, Stalinists, Trotskyists, but even against Liberals, armed British troops stood by "maintaining law and order", 40 death sentences were carried out on Greek militants under the "emergency measures" introduced at that period. By August 20th of this year, 439 death sentences, under the same "emergency measures" had been executed upon militants, the last reported one taking place in Salonika. At the present time, batches of militants are being executed at the rate of 10 to 20 a day.

A further measure aimed against the freedom of democratic expression is the recent law by which printshops that publish papers

whose policy is allegedly "against the safety of the State" are to be seized and closed down, its staff arrested and summarily charged before courts-martial. This law provides for heavy prison penalties, and in some cases, death sentences for the responsible people. The Greek Trotskyist press, like other working class publications, is forced to publish its paper illegally.

Today, there still remain in Greece, 5,000 British troops whose task it is not to safeguard and protect Greek socialists and Left wingers, but to uphold the semi-fascist Royalist reactionaries in putting down the workers and peasants. Among the British troops stationed there, many are asking why a Labour Government should thus assist the Greek reaction. Without the aid of Anglo-American imperialism in the form of arms and supplies, troops and "advisers" the reaction could not maintain its dictatorship.

Workers of Britain! Trade Unionists and members of all Labour organisations! The struggle of the Greek workers and peasants is your struggle. Our class duty demands that our voice be raised in protest and in support of our class brothers in Greece.

Demand that the Labour Government end its reactionary policy against the Greek working class. Demand that every British soldier stationed in Greece be brought back immediately and that the policy of aiding the Royalist reaction by means of supplies, "military advisers", and military equipment be ended!

The Facts About the BIRMINGHAM BUS STRIKE

BY F. ATKINSON

For over two years, Birmingham Corporation Transport employees have been seeking a revision of the notorious Joint Industrial Council rates. They point out that new employees are entitled to a commencing wage of £4 13s. 0d., subject to compulsory stoppages amounting to 4/- a week.

After 10 years' service, the average rate of pay rises by only 8/-, or less than a shilling increment every year.

Exactly how unattractive the job is, can be gathered from the Liverpool Street Garage Publicity Committee's estimate that since 1939 there has been a labour turnover of 20,000 in personnel—all of whom have had to be trained and equipped. Normal requirements are only about 6,500. Regular employees report that there is a constant shifting of staff, which makes duty rotas chaotic.

£1 Increase Demanded—1/6½ Offered!

On September 16th last, an application was made for an increase of £1 a week. After a fortnight's delay, the Transport Committee rejected the men's claim and piously suggested they should go to the National J.I.C.

The garages replied by terminating overtime, including the eighteen month old All-Night Service, Sports Specials, and other non-vital trips.

This stung the Labour-controlled Transport Committee into action, and an immediate summons went out to a visiting Emergency Committee of the J.I.C.

After a purely perfunctory investigation, this body found against the men. And, as if to add insult to injury—offered an attendance bonus amounting to the princely sum of 1/6½ per week! Even this depends on perfect time-keeping over 13 weeks, and one "late for duty" cuts the sum down by a quarter.

Some garages struck at midnight on Saturday, November 1st. But the tie-up was not complete till 24 hours later. T. & G.W.U. officials, begged the men to return, as the strike "could serve no useful purpose" and was "holding up production." Needless to say, these officials had not reflected on the loss of production due to the 110,000 working days lost by the platform staff through sickness in 1946-7.

The Role Of The Labour Leaders

Councillor Gibson, Chairman of the Transport Committee, and an official of the Clerical and Administrative Workers' Union, made the statement that average wages earned at four garages were between £7 and £7 7s. a week. The four garages concerned were glad to hear that they had been granted a £2 rise—on paper!

As to the Councillor's claim that the men should first apply to the J.I.C., leading trade unionists explain that this is incorrect since the national rates are established as a MINIMUM, and not as a maximum wage. If this were not so, how does Councillor Gibson explain the fact that Coventry busmen can earn a basic wage as much as £2 over the equivalent Birmingham rate?

The previous week, the Labour leaders had been telling the electors how cheaply they get municipal services and how Aneurin Bevan's new Bill would mean a reduction in the rates of 4/-. Profit from the trading branches of the Corporation averages out at £4½ millions every year. If the Labour Lord Mayor, Ald. Bradbeer, (who also played his part in breaking the strike) had voluntarily cut out all banquets and other junketing in 1947, the busmen could have had their real several times over. And this refusal came from a Labour Council that only three weeks ago voted a £750 wedding present to the royal couple.

To crown the strike-breaking activities of the Labour leaders, the Ministry of Fuel and Power gave a special unrestricted issue of petrol to ALL motorists on a very generous scale—three gallons to 10 h.p. cars, and four and a half to cars over 10 h.p. to help break the transport strike. In the first two days, 40,000 gallons had been issued to 15,000 motorists at the rate of 400 an hour at each distributing centre. A supreme irony! The "black" petrol was issued in showrooms plastered with posters urging motorists to sign petitions against the abolition of the basic ration! Needless to say, very little of this petrol was used to get the workers to work. There was bitter comment on the large number of empty cars on the road.

The role of the E.C. of the Birmingham Trades Council (which is Stalinist controlled) in attempting to break the solidarity of the strikers must have disgusted every Trade Union rank and file in the City. On the sixth day of the strike the E.C. issued a statement urging the strikers to return. The action of the E.C. was all the more disgraceful, as they attempted to sugar their strike-breaking pill by

appearing to sympathise with the strikers. Had this body felt any real sympathy, it would have attacked those responsible for refusing to accede to the workers' just claims. Instead, the E.C., together with the Tory press, placed the onus on the strikers for holding up production, and demanded they resume work immediately.

Lessons :

If there is anything that this strike proved it is that Gren and Ison are no longer fit to lead. Their policy was such that it was difficult to know whether they represented the Transport Committee or the Transport and General Workers Union. If these officials were paid the average wage obtaining in the industry, so that their own livelihood depended on getting a rise for the men they claim to represent, they would soon put up a militant struggle.

One of the weaknesses of the strike was the lack of unified action by all garages. The busmen came out by separate decision of the various garages, and did not return as a unified body. A Central Strike Committee composed of delegates from the garages was an urgent necessity to control and co-ordinate the actions of all the Corporation Transport workers. Such a Committee could then have made contact with "Midland Red" workers, as well as transport workers in neighbouring towns, particularly West Bromwich, whose services interlink with those of the Birmingham Corporation.

What must be seriously discussed by the Transport workers is the formation NOW of a Central Committee that really represents the feelings in the Garages, with delegates from the depots to prepare for future struggles.

Interview with a German Worker

HAMBURG.

I was sitting in the bar talking to Oskar. We were drinking the tasteless concoction that passes for beer in Germany today and talking about old times—Oskar's old times, not mine.

For Oskar is one of those workers you can often meet in Hamburg. He has passed through every stage of the working class movement twice over, and is still ready for more. Long before I was born he was studying the Spartacus letters and organising soldier's cells in the Kaiser's army; and at a time when most of the revolutionaries I know were just beginning to find out what Marxism was all about he was taking part in mass demonstrations and fighting the police on Rathausmarkt. When I was a babe of two he was on the barricades with a rifle. And when Hitler was nothing more to me than a foreign politician with a funny moustache, Oskar was having hell beaten out of him in a Nazi jail.

But he survived the brown terror, and he survived the war; and he is still there, ready for the next round in the battle that has filled most of his fifty years. Oskar is a fighter, one of the best that Red Hamburg ever produced.

But he is often despondent these days, and there is much that he finds difficult to understand. It was hard for him to realise that the Communist Party of Germany, which he had helped to build out of the cream of the European working class, had become the degenerate organ of a despotic regime that had nothing in common with the Soviet Republic of Lenin and Trotsky. It is hard for him to realise that European socialism has dissolved itself into a sea of treachery and opportunism. And it is hard for him to grasp that the party of the British workers is supporting and carrying through the policy of robbery and despoliation that was announced last week.

There are 682 firms on the list for dismantling, most of them in

the British zone. And Oskar's is one of them. "Alan" he said to me, "why in the hell don't they send over some atom bombs and put us all out of commission at once? Don't the workers in England realise that we are being sentenced to slow starvation?"

I told him that someday the workers will see that they are getting nowhere with Attlee's comic opera socialists and would do something about it. That then they will learn to work with the workers of Germany, and not against them. In fact I tell him what I have had to tell all kinds of workers: that one day the British working class will wake up and see what is being done in its name.

But Oskar was still depressed. "I can see all that," he said, "but when? We Germans are going under fast. We are beginning to feel that struggling on is not worth the candle. I know that my comrades are going to fight—as they fought at Holmags. But you can't fight without hope at all. If the workers outside are going to gang up with their Governments against us, then the fight's over before it starts." We talked further, but you can't chase away the blues on German beer. And Oskar, as a German, is not considered fit to go into one of our clubs for a real drink (this is part of the programme of teaching Germans "democracy"). So we parted, and Oskar went to sort himself out at home.

Demontage, the fancy word they use for pulling factories to pieces and taking them for reparations, is the key practical question in Germany today. Nobody can get away from it, not even if he can afford some black market booze. The factories it is intended to dismantle do not, it is true, make up a large percentage of the total number of the plants in the two zones. But an idea of their importance to Germany's economic life can be gained by thinking over the size of the labour force considered necessary to break them down. 35,000 men working for two years and pulling down every hope of Germany's being able to stand on her own feet again! That is the concrete meaning of demontage.

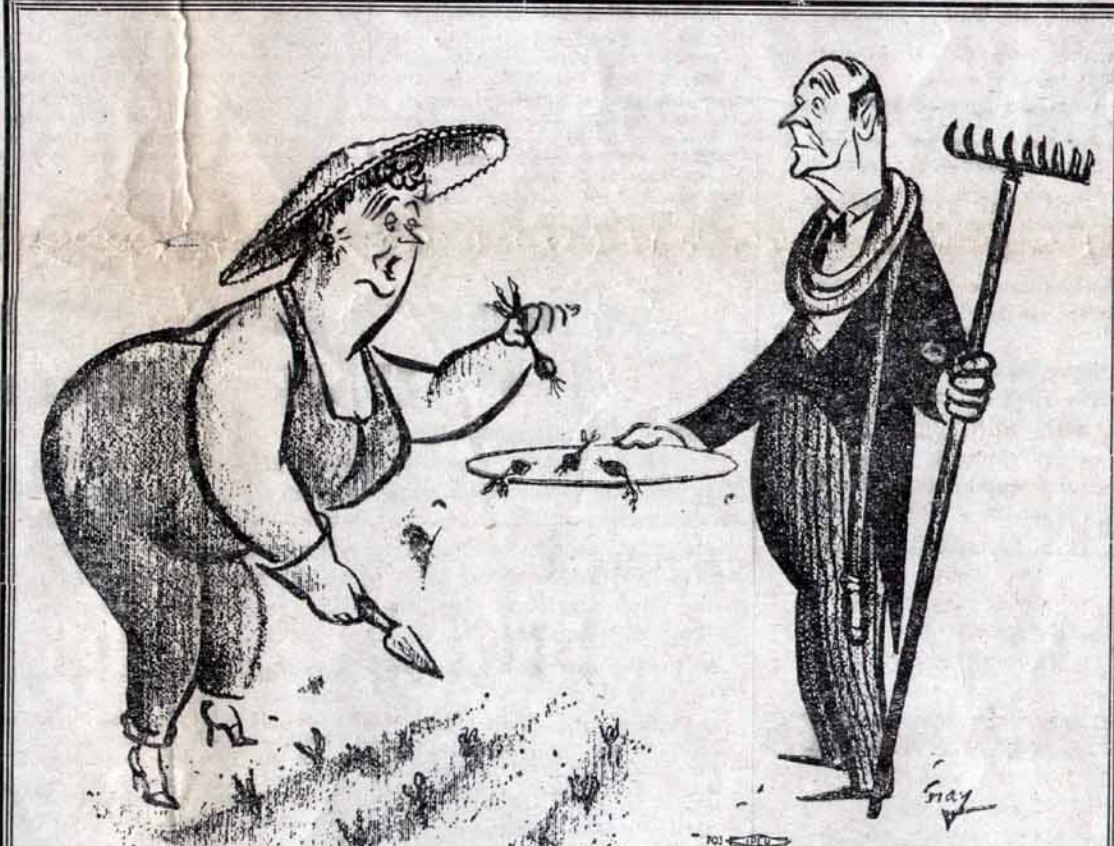
The workers will fight it, of course, as Oskar said they would. The leaders of the S.P.D. have not yet said anything to commit themselves, and the protest of the K.P.D. was only a mild one; but the workers in both parties are getting ready to resist the economic executioners.

Schumacher, leader of the S.P.D., and no revolutionary, pointed out at the party conference in July: "... by all calculations, no matter how little has been sent in reparations, I say that in reality Germany has more than fulfilled the reparations programme ... the patents, the production techniques and the results of German scientific research have been put at the disposal of the world ... large tracts of our food producing land have been taken, not from Hitler's Third Reich but from the territory of the Weimar Republic ... No, Schumacher is no revolutionary. He does not challenge the right of the Imperialists to take reparations. He merely points out, as a good accountant, that Germany's books balance and that there is nothing owing to anybody. And he is right.

The German workers owe nothing to anybody. If the failure of their leaders to stop Hitler can be laid at their doorstep—and I know that it can't—then they have paid ten thousand times over. You have only to be in their shattered homes and see their miserable rations to see that. No, Hitler was the creature of world capitalism; and the books will not be properly balanced and the account squared until world capitalism is overthrown.

"But," I can almost hear Oskar saying, "if the workers are going to gang up with their Governments against us, then the fight is over before it starts." And he wasn't talking of demontage only; he meant the fight for socialism.

ALAN McDONALD



"THEY OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED. ALWAYS ASKING FOR HIGHER WAGES. WITH A LITTLE INITIATIVE THEY COULD GROW THEIR OWN FOOD."

£50 Needed For Loudspeaker and Van

Conrades :	£	s.	d.
CARRIED OVER ...	35	15	6
C. Oxford	1	0	0
Bert (Govan)	5	0	0
Wales	4	0	0
Newcastle	13	2	0
North London	7	2	0
S.A. Readers, (Birmingham) ...	1	8	6
Croydon	6	6	0
Sam B.	7	8	0
Dave G.	15	0	0
Thames Valley	1	0	0
Nigerian	1	0	0
Featherstone Readers	1	0	0
South Kirby Readers of S.A.	5	0	0
J. B. (Coventry) ...	7	6	0
Anti-Fascist Shop-keepers in Dalston	9	6	10
Total to date ...	£54	1	10

TARGET - £100.

Jewish M.P.s

People keep writing to ask how many Jews there are in Parliament and in the Government. In some cases the requests come from those who wish to rebut anti-Semitic challenges that Parliament is "Jew-ridden"; in others, from those who claim that British politics are dominated by Jews. One correspondent asserted that there are 150 Jews in the House of Commons! Actually, there are only 28 ... One is an Independent; one is a Communist. The rest are members of the Labour Party. The four Jewish members of the Government are Mr. Shinwell, Mr. Silkin, Mr. George Strauss and Lord Nathan. None is at present in the Cabinet. (From the News Chronicle, November 11th—A. J. CUMMINGS.)

PARTY BUILDING

GLASGOW: Comrade Roy Tearse addressed the Open Forum on Sunday evening, Nov. 16th, the subject being "The Labour Government and Revolutionary Perspectives." An audience of about 150 gave a good reception to a hard-hitting speech which dealt at length with the attitude of the revolutionaries to reformism, the character and need for participation in the current struggles of the working class and the need for the revolutionary party. Comrade Tearse also publicly repeated a challenge to debate with any prominent member of the Communist Party "That Stalinism has betrayed the interests of the Russian Revolution." This challenge was made the previous week to the Stalinist, Quinn, after he had spoken on the 30th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. The Forum Committee, announcing the challenge, stated they would be able to stage the debate in two weeks time. No answer was forthcoming from the Stalinists. ... On Saturday, Nov. 15th, the Branch carried out a new canvass

in Blantyre, a mining area at which 64 "S.A.s" were sold in about one hour's work. It is intended to maintain and develop this sale throughout the winter. On Sunday, the Regional Conference of the S.T.U.C. at which Marquand spoke was covered and 66 "S.A.s" sold. ANTI-FASCIST ACTIVITY: London comrades have been active against the fascists at Ridley Road, Brixton, Earl's Court, etc. Comrade Gus Bayes was arrested at Ridley Road for failing to give up the pitch to the fascists. Although our meeting was the only one in progress, the police once again discriminated against us in favour of the fascists. He was fined 40/-, of which 10/- was collected outside the court from sympathisers. We are getting good meetings at Brixton where we took the pitch from the fascists. The rank and file of the C.P. and Y.C.L. are friendly. The North and South London local press, the national press and the radio have mentioned us in con-

nection with the anti-fascist struggle. Two comrades in North London toured the local shops adjacent to Ridley Road, and on the basis of the Party's work against fascism, they collected over £10 in 4½ hours. Our Open Letter to the members of the C.P. and Y.C.L. has had a good reception from anti-fascists, and support is forthcoming from friendly Stalinists. Over 2,000 were distributed. COVENTRY: Our comrades have covered all the L.P. election meetings with "S.A." Good initiative is shown by participating in the discussion at C.P. meetings. An Anglo-Soviet rally nearly developed into a debate with one of our comrades and the speaker on the question of Soviet millionaires. 65 "S.A.s" were sold at Pollitt's meeting. WALES: Comrade Haston had a good meeting at Neath where over 75 persons attended. A number of contacts were made. In the streets 95 "S.A.s" were sold the previous afternoon.

For a Marxist understanding of the Spanish situation, read:

"Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain"

by Felix Morrow

5/-

Obtainable from: Business Manager, 256, Harrow Road, London, W.2.