



Plumbing Trade Union:

- A NEW CRISIS

By a Newsletter Industrial Correspondent

Smethwick

From page 3

the tallest in the Midlands—by carrying out several redevelopment plans.

He said he stood up for the English people in Smethwick. The town was too overcrowded. 'If you have got to have immigrants, we feel that where there is no housing they should be made to go to certain areas instead of being concentrated in five or six areas as they are now.'

'Nobody is against a coloured doctor. There is nothing personal in this. Eskimos would have created the same problems,' he added.

He said he had to deal with many personal problems of white people afraid to be in a minority.

There were also problems of shortage of maternity hospitals and shortage of beds. Ninety per cent of the maternity cases, he claimed, were coloured women, because midwives refused to go into the homes of coloured people. Coun. Finney felt that in many other cases coloured people were given priorities.

SEPARATE CLASSES

There was a danger of children contracting tuberculosis from immigrant children in schools—although teachers had fought a 'separate classes plan' to segregate children.

'We are a second-rate nation because the coloured man is given first place every time,' he maintained.

Coun. Finney complained that following interviews with the press his statements had been twisted to enable newspapermen to sell more papers through sensational headlines about racist councillors.

'But I'm not a racist,' he said.

His statement about the capitalist press is probably true to a certain extent. One cannot pick up papers in the Smethwick area without reading most nights some story with 'colour' or 'immigrant' in the headline.

One paper quoted a member of a coloured and white darts team as saying: 'We cannot understand what the fuss is about in Smethwick.'

But this article did not in any way play down the racist feeling that the papers have helped generate in the town. Also quoted in the article was a Punjabi University student, now a toolsetter, who said the trouble in Smethwick was that most of the Indians were older, rougher and more illiterate types.

Such articles are aimed at not only splitting white and coloured workers, but also use one class of Indian against another.

(Next week: What is racialism and how is it used?)

Dr. Allen

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Lancaster University. The speakers stressed that the trial was the result of the successful general strike in Nigeria and that it was an attempt to make Nigeria safe for imperialism by beheading the labour movement. They called for action by the British labour movement and condemned the government for its failure to act.

A noticeable feature of the demonstration was the absence of many so-called 'lefts', including members of the Communist Party.

Both the Leeds 11th AEU branch and the Leeds South ETU branch have passed resolutions protesting at the imprisonment. Leeds Central ETU branch voted to accept a letter from the Leeds University Marxist Society asking for support for a committee to defend the four in jail. A collection of £2 was taken.

FIFTY students and Young Socialists marched through Newcastle last Saturday in protest against the sentences.

The students were from Newcastle University, Rutherford College of Technology and Durham University. They marched to the offices of the 'Evening Chronicle' and to the BBC where the defence committee presented press statements.

Twelve hundred students at Newcastle University have now signed the demand for the immediate release of the prisoners.

Linwood plan—no solution for car workers

From BOB SHAW, Our Scottish Correspondent

AS a result of pressure by workers at their factory in Linwood, Scotland, Rootes Company have conceded that they will operate a work-sharing plan for the production workers.

The plan, which, of course, requires little sacrifice for the Rootes bosses and a lot of sacrifice from the men, means that during a cycle of five weeks, production workers will be laid off for one week.

As part of the bargain made with the stewards the Linwood workers are to accept greater mobility of jobs in the factory; some workers will also be further downgraded in pay and the skilled sections will remain on full time.

The first point to be made about this agreement is that suspicion is raised by the praise which has been made about the plan both by management, trade union leaders and the capitalist press.

When the track workers went on strike earlier in the year for higher earnings, which they claimed were fully justified by the increased output of the factory, they were attacked viciously by all these officials for their lack of responsibility. Rootes management have not undergone any change of heart, nor have the press.

HARD-PRESSED

Now it is the hard-pressed production workers who will have their wages cut for a further period in order to 'save' jobs. They will also be subjected to pressure in the factory during which many will be forced to find other jobs.

A convenor claimed that

the redundancies will now be met by 'natural' wastage. The track workers know that that means.

Skilled sections and production workers will be even further divided by the agreement. The whole factory should have taken a common stand to work the shorter week and to fight for an agreement with no loss in pay.

MANOEUVRE

Rootes management will manoeuvre to sufficiently weaken any opposition to their plans so that the next boost in production will be pushed through without opposition. In the future the Rootes workers can be sure that the conditions which will be imposed will be worse than before.

But the management may not have it all their own way. There is now circulating in the Rootes factory a rank and file sheet called 'Impact'. In its pages it puts down all the feeling which the workers have for the management.

It shows that militant opposition to Lord Rootes and Company is growing and that development of leadership which will fight for socialist policies is beginning to come forward.

IMPORTANT moves are afoot in the Plumbing Trades Union which may well be passing unnoticed in many parts of that union, but which could have serious implications in 12 months' time or less.

Many PTU members were puzzled earlier this year when an article in the June issue of the union journal by Hugh Kelly, General Secretary, appeared, suggesting in a veiled way that the union's voting procedure should be changed. Under the cloak of claiming that the percentage returns of ballots in the union were dismally low, Kelly hinted at the possibility of 'once and for all' elections. That officials should not have to stand for re-election.

Whilst this article caused barely a stir in the union, circulars which have been appearing at branch meetings since then show clearly that there are some people in the union who are seriously campaigning for changes in the system of elections. Latest and most serious proposal being canvassed advocates a change of Section 2 Rule 3 of the union's rule book. Under this rule at present Executive members are nominated and elected by members within the division for which they sit on the Executive Council.

The campaign now afoot seeks to change from that procedure to one where each EC member is elected by a national ballot of members. The effect of such a change would undoubtedly work against left-wing candidates. In an industry where contracting work is an important section of the union's activity and militancy generally high, a candidate standing in a division is generally known to most of those eligible to vote, but may well be hardly known outside the division.

Scottish bus workers ban overtime

Newsletter Correspondent

COMpletely frustrated by the long, drawn-out negotiations at national level over pay and the introduction of the 40-hour week, bus workers in Glasgow and other West of Scotland towns decided to ban all overtime working and operate a work-to-rule—the ban came into operation at midnight last Saturday.

The national negotiations, which affect 92 cities and towns throughout Britain, have now been going on for two months with no sign of an agreement to improve the rates of pay, introduce bonus payments and a 40-hour working week.

Glasgow bus workers are demanding that the City Transport Department should meet the claim independently of the other parties concerned in the negotiations.

In April this year Glasgow bus workers fought a tenacious struggle for improved conditions in a strike which lasted for a week. On that occasion they had to fight against the City Transport Department, local officials of the Transport and General Workers' Union, and a scurrilous witch-hunt by the press.

CONVINCE

The employers and the press are once more trying to convince the general public that the bus workers are entirely responsible for the chaotic transport conditions arising from the overtime ban.

On this occasion, however, the action of the bus workers has the support of the local union officials. This is an indication that the workers' cause is so strong that the union officials are not able to oppose it.

But the bus workers must see that no compromise is reached between the union officials and the employers which may weaken their fight. Already an agreement has been made with the Transport Department to operate the modified schedules which are worked during the Glasgow Fair holiday when about 40 per cent of the population are away.

This is an attempt by the Corporation to minimise the effect of the overtime ban.

Mr. Alex Grant, secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union agreed to meet the Transport Committee on Monday and is reported to have said, 'If the committee look at it in the right way the whole thing can be resolved.'

The only way in which the Transport Committee can look at the matter to the satisfaction of bus workers is to immediately concede their demands for improved pay and the shorter working week, in full.

STRAIN

With 500 unfilled vacancies it can be imagined what strain is placed on the city's 6,000 bus workers to man all the services, particularly during the winter months when the incidence of illness is high.

The present dispute does not only involve Glasgow Corporation bus workers. Scottish Omnibuses, S.M.T., W. Alexander & Sons are also affected by the ban which is being operated in Lanarkshire, Dumbartonshire and Stirlingshire.

In West Lothian, workers at the Broxburn Garage are reported to have come out on strike after a conductor refused

to operate the ban. In Aberdeen bus crews say they will be meeting this week since the negotiations are getting nowhere.

Late news

ON MONDAY, Edinburgh bus crews decided to support the demand for an immediate settlement of the busmen's claim by direct action.

Two hundred bus workers attended a meeting on Monday morning and 500 attended a similar meeting in the evening.

Union officials were unable to give any lead into action from the platform.

A motion for a token strike on December 22 was thrown out in favour of a decision to stop work every Friday starting on November 27 until a settlement of the claim has been reached.

Union officials put the motion to a vote without allowing any discussion and closed the meeting immediately the vote was taken.

No preparations for the strike were made or discussed. Rank and file bus workers, however, are raising the question of a demonstration and how to link up with other areas already in dispute.

Featured

Something along these lines occurred recently in the election of the Scottish executive committee member where the local press prominently featured attacks on the left-wing candidate who was surprisingly defeated.

What makes the present moves of such importance is the fact that both the General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary of the PTU are due for retirement in about 18 months' time, thus leaving not only these two seats vacant but two seats also on the executive.

It is obviously feared in right-wing quarters that these seats may well be taken by left-wing candidates.

Perhaps there is no coincidence in the fact that the PTU is at the moment in advanced stages of negotiations over amalgamation with the Electrical Trades Union whose right-wing leaders have had much experience since taking control of that union on advantageously securing alterations to election procedures.

Dockers get lesson in arbitration

FOUR hundred Newcastle dockers had a lesson in the nature of arbitration last week.

An arbitration panel of the National Joint Council of the Port Transport Industry rejected their claim for extra payment when employers sent them home before the end of a shift.

This has meant that the dockers work at piece-work speed for a good part of the day and then get little more than the national minimum.

Last September the men decided that they would stop work at 2 o'clock every day in support of their demand for extra payment, which is given in other ports.

They ended this action when the union put the claim to arbitration.

REFUSE

The fight is now back where it started and a meeting last Monday decided that dockers will now refuse to work on a shift system when this is required by their employers.

In Middlesbrough, dockers are still being penalised when they leave work after dealing with a certain amount of cargo in accordance with a traditional practice.

For the third time, last week, the Dock Labour Board suspended hundreds of men. And for the third time the entire labour force of over one thousand dockers on Teeside stopped work for three days with the suspended men.

Clydeside apprentices' strike premature

STARTING at Connell's shipyard on Monday, November 16, the walk-out of apprentices on the Clyde reached a peak of 3,000 by Thursday.

The strike call came from individual apprentices from Manchester who told the lads on the Clyde that thousands were out on strike in Manchester and Liverpool.

By Friday it was becoming clear to the apprentices that these figures were untrue and many factories were preparing to return to work over the week-end.

The strike was not only premature but completely unorganised. The demonstration which was scheduled to take place on Thursday in the centre of Glasgow ended in chaos. Only 500 apprentices turned up for a mass meeting and march from Fairfield's, Govan, on the following morning.

RETURN

By this time the apprentices themselves were beginning to raise the question of a return to work in order to build factory committees and support for the national strike call on March 29 made by the Manchester Direct Action Committee.

At the meeting of the apprentices strike committee on Saturday, 'leaders' admitted the truth of the reports that the majority of the apprentices were back at work in Manchester, but claimed that they had a letter from Bristol giving support—this letter was not produced.

They also said they had received messages of support from Southern Ireland, indicating the apprentices there were coming out.

In spite of the premature nature of the strike, tremendous enthusiasm was shown by the apprentices for the demands for improved rates of pay, 35-hour week, longer holidays and trade union negotiating rights.

In many factories apprentices have returned determined to build their committees and recruit all apprentices into the unions and to build a big organisation in preparation for the big fight in March.

Axle workers vote to go back

STRIKERS at the Salisbury Transmission axle factory voted to return to work on Monday morning after a two-hour meeting to discuss terms, on Saturday.

This strike, which the press claim has 'dislocated an export section of the motor industry for nearly a month', involved 250 members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union.

Men at Salisbury Transmission were claiming an all-round increase in piece-work rates. According to the district organiser of the AEU the management had proposed 'a revision of some of the rates'. (Our emphasis)

Although the strike was declared official by the union leadership in the AEU no fight was put up to call on support from other sections of the industry.

STRONG

The axle workers were in a very strong position since the parts they supplied to other factories were essential before a car could be exported.

But instead of seeking to involve the men in the factories which were affected by the strike, the union officials merely left the axle strikers to fight on in isolation.

Now the management of Salisbury Transmission is probably in the position to arrive at a settlement on its own terms and not those of the strikers.

A win for the axle workers on the question of increased rates would have strengthened the position of other car workers in the Midlands in the future, this is what the car monopolists were so afraid of.

Railmen warn: further action may be taken

ALthough the union officials of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen persuaded men in the South-east Division of the British Railways to call off their go-slow, railwaymen have warned that unless future talks yield their bonus they will take further action.

This warning came late last week after Albert Griffiths, general secretary of ASLEF, appealed for a return to normal working and stated that the union was prepared to fight for a high productivity bonus for all footplate staff.

TALKS

The British Railways Board has apparently agreed to hold talks at a national level to discuss a demand for a £3 3s. bonus a week.

What the railmen now face is the possibility that their union representatives will be fobbed off with just any kind of bonus.

With the Labour government appealing for restraint on the question of wages whilst the monopolies continue to make their millions of pounds profit, the railmen will no doubt be asked to be content with a small increase.

But the locomotive men, who showed a militant determination in the face of continuing Tory press attacks during their go-slow, must unite their struggle with that of the London busmen who are fighting against the introduction of winter timetables.

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