

# Unity Is Strength

## Lessons of the Haulage Strike

By J. DEANE.

WITH 15,000 DOCKERS JOINING THE STRIKE, THE MOVEMENT OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE ROAD HAULAGE WORKERS ADVANCED A FURTHER STAGE. THE WHOLE OF THE ORGANISED WORKING CLASS IS SOLIDLY BEHIND THEM. LET THE PRESS PRATE ABOUT THE "PUBLIC INTEREST!" THIS IS THE PUBLIC, THIS GREAT MASS OF ORGANISED WORKERS GIVING THEIR POWERFUL SUPPORT TO THEIR CLASS BROTHERS.

This magnificent display of working class unity in face of the bitter opposition of the Government, the capitalist press and the Trade Union officials, is an inspiration to all sections of the workers. Not since 1926 has such a spirit of solidarity and class brotherhood manifested itself among the organised workers of Britain.

The whole of the organised trade union movement understands that if they allow the use of troops as blacklegs to go unchallenged, the very basis of the Labour movement will be undermined. The workers of Smithfield, Covent Garden, Billingsgate and other markets, porters, slaughtermen and dockers are fighting for a principle on which the trade union movement was built in the past.

### SMITHFIELD SHOWED THE WAY

The statement made on behalf of the 2,000 Smithfield workers by Brother Joe Richards, Chairman of the Meat Section of the Smithfield Transport and General Workers Union Branch, puts the position clearly for all trade unionists:

"However, on the introduction of troops, we feel that as trade union members with deep trade union convictions, it would be impossible for us to continue to remain at work while blacklegs in uniform are doing the work of striking lorry drivers.

"We resolve that we will not return to work until all troops are removed from what they may feel is an unpleasant task in which they are now employed, and we further call upon every organised trade unionist to act in the same way."

The workers in uniform, large numbers of whom are members of trade unions, have been compelled to act as blacklegs. But they have shown where their sympathies lie by the collection of money for the strikers among the soldiers at Smithfield and among R.A.F. personnel.

This spontaneous movement of class solidarity from all sections of the working class is in itself a victory. It is a warning to the employers and to the Government that an attack upon one section of the workers will meet with the united resistance of other sections. The old trade union slogan: "An injury to one is an injury to all!" is again inspiring the working class.

### THREE MAIN LESSONS OF THE STRIKE ONE

The transport bosses and the Government thought they could bring the strikers to their knees by bringing in the troops. But the organised workers paralysed their efforts to bring the haulage workers to

(Continued overleaf.)

The following Telegram was sent to Attlee by the Political Bureau of the R.C.P.:

"REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY PROTESTS AGAINST THE USE OF TROOPS BY THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT AS STRIKE-BREAKERS. LABOUR WAS PLACED IN POWER BY THE WORKING CLASS TO ACT IN THEIR INTERESTS NOT AGAINST THEM."

Jock Haston,  
General Secretary.

## BOSSSES EVADE LAW

TODAY EVERYONE FROM THE CAPITALIST PRESS TO THE LEADERS OF THE T. & G.W.U. ADMIT THE JUSTICE OF THE HAULAGE WORKERS' CLAIMS. BUT IT HAS TAKEN DETERMINED STRIKE ACTION TO BRING THIS HOME TO THEM.

There was no protest from them when the Central Wages Board, after 9 months of negotiations, rejected the workers' demands and accepted the insulting proposals of the employers. The Union representatives on the Wages Board did not stand out for the just demands of the workers.

What the strikers struggled for was a living wage and civilised conditions of labour: a 44 hour week, abolition of the vicious system of the accumulative week, a regulated day, and a 12 day holiday. That is all.

The average wage of a driver outside London is £5 per week. Only drivers of very heavy vehicles get more than this. Attendants on long distance vehicles outside London get £4 10s. 0d. London drivers are only a little better off. To get anything like a living wage, the Haulage workers are dependent on overtime pay. But the accumu-

lative week allows the employer to work his men 10 hours a day on four days, 8 hours on the fifth, and stand off on the sixth, thus the workers lose the 1½ hours overtime they should have been paid on each of the first four days.

With the heavy road expenses, the haulage worker is not able to manage on the hopeless inadequate wage.

### EMPLOYERS EVADE LAW

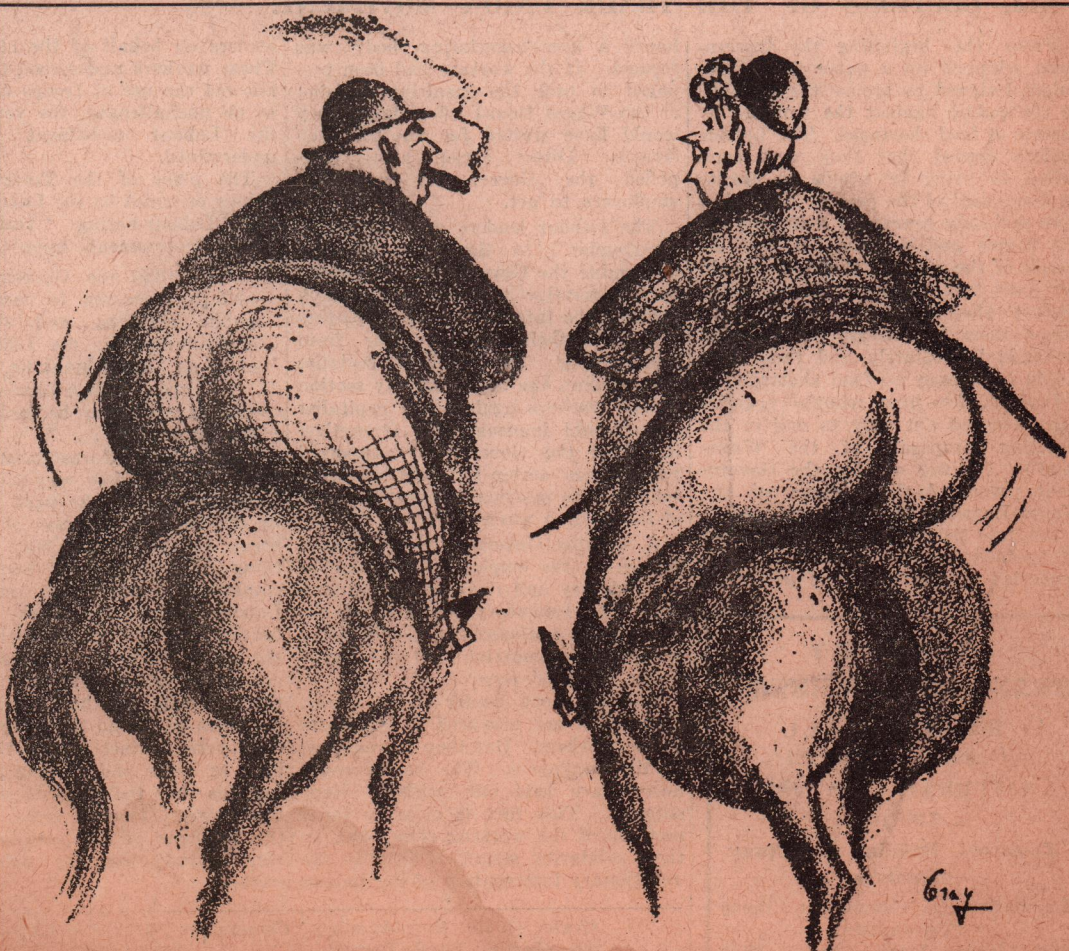
In no industry have the employers earned such a bad name for evading payment of statutory wages, and for breaches of law affecting hours, as the Road Haulage bosses. In the year 1937-38 there were over 11,000 convictions for breaches of the law on the question of hours. In 1936 the "Committee on the Regulations of Wages and Conditions of Service in the Road Motor Transport Industry (Goods), under the Chairmanship of Sir James Baillie, was

informed by the employers themselves that about 90% of the bosses were not observing the "fair wages" established by the National Joint Conciliation Board which was set up in 1934.

Since 1939, the Road Haulage Board was set up and its decisions were legally enforceable. Yet even today the statutory wages are very often not paid. Between December 1940 and December 1943, out of 52,600 workers whose wages were examined, it was found that 10,000 of them were underpaid. A sum of £82,300 was involved.

The Road Haulage workers were not prepared to wait another nine months while the owners were enriched at their expense. They want decent conditions and they want them NOW. Strike action was the only effective method of showing the employers and the Union leaders that they meant business.

C. VAN GELDEREN



"Those strikers think they've got us with our backs to the wall — but they'll see that we're not so soft!"

# T.U. MIS-LEADERS MUST GO !

That the Trade Union bureaucrats no longer represent the interests of the membership was sharply demonstrated in the strike. Instead of leading the struggle for the betterment of the workers' conditions, the officials of the T. & G.W.U. devoted the Union funds, its organisation and its resources to smashing the struggle.

The overwhelming majority of the T. & G.W.U. were solidly behind the Haulage strikers. The Strike Committee had the unqualified support of the rank and file. The top leadership, Deakin, Clay and Company were left high and dry, without authority and regarded with the utmost contempt by the members. Yet these bureaucrats attacked the strikers as an "irresponsible minority" refusing to recognise the strike and withholding strike pay. The fact of the matter is that it is the union leaders who are the irresponsible minority, flouting the democratic decisions of the majority of the union.

The relation between the bureaucrats and the rank and file was clearly shown at the Stratford meeting of the strikers where the members responded to his strike-breaking speech with shouts of "RESIGN!" "CHUCK HIM OUT!" "YOU LEAVE IT TO US!" "SCAB!" "SERVE US, NOT THE BOSSES!" "TELL US THE OLD, OLD STORY!" Outside the meeting hall, Deakin had police protection to his car, so hostile were the members of his union to his strike-breaking role. So much does he represent the majority of his union that he had to be protected by the capitalist police from the members.

Despite the colossal power of the T. & G.W.U., the largest Union in the world, we see the Assistant General Secretary, Clay, accepting the proposals of the Wages Board on the plea that the "independent" members had accepted them! This is how these cowards serve the members of the Union. Small wonder the rank and file have such contempt for them.

They shout about "constitutional procedure", yet the constitution foisted upon the members was consciously designed by Bevin and his ilk to defend the leadership from the rank and file, and not at all as should be the case, the rank and file from the leadership. The T. & G.W.U. bureaucrats have devised the ingenious method of vertical organisation into trade groups and horizontal organisation into regions or areas. This enables the bureaucrats to rig elections to the leading and highly remunerative posts.

The gap between the leadership and the rank and file is greater in this union than any other in the country. The leadership openly stands on the side of the employers and the state

against the workers. It is precisely this which gives rise to the tremendous development of the unofficial movements in this union. This movement is as yet in its embryonic stage. It is necessary that the militants consciously develop these movements and strive to co-ordinate all the militant currents which are expressing themselves. To succeed in this urgent task, it is necessary that these movements base themselves upon a clear programme which will convert the Trade Unions into revolutionary instruments of the working class.

Such a programme put forward only by the Trotskyists, is feared by the bureaucrats. It is for this reason that Deakin singles out the Revolutionary Communist Party for slanderous attacks. At the Stratford meeting Deakin accused the Trotskyists of wishing to "destroy this working class organisation which we have built up in so many laborious years." He said the strikers would reject our propaganda with the contempt it deserved!

But the strikers were not fooled. On the contrary, they rejected his insidious propaganda on behalf of the boss class.



**T.U. LEADER :**  
**"DON'T STRIKE BOYS !**  
**WE GOT OURS !"**

This is the policy that Deakin and his fellow bureaucrats fear:

The struggle of the workers may continue within the trade union itself. The workers must remove the traitors who are agents of the class enemy in their ranks. Out with the misleaders! Replace them by rank and file militants!

Restore democracy into the Union. Demand the annual re-election of all officials, subject to immediate recall. If the officials fail to serve the workers who elect them, they must be removed.

Abolish the constitution which protects the bureaucrats from the members. Fight for a democratic constitution which will safeguard the rights of the members.

An end to the fat salaries of top officials. Give them the average wage of the worker in the industry.

## UNITY IS STRENGTH

(Continued from Page 1.)

their knees. Had the Strike Committee taken the same bold and class conscious attitude expressed by the Smithfield resolution, the strike would have spread even more extensively and even more solidly. If the workers had followed the policy of restricting the strike to the affected haulage workers as advocated by the Strike Committee the greatest weapon would have been struck from under them. Fortunately the other sections of the workers understood the implications of the troops being called in as blacklegs and rallied to the aid of their class brothers.

### TWO

The top Union officials use all the old manoeuvres to undermine the strike and weaken the Strike Committee in which the workers placed their confidence and trust. As with the last dockers' strike, the top Union officials sought to undermine the Strike Committee and lead them to capitulation. This was the aim of the meetings between Deakin and the Strike Committee, the results of which were not reported back to the rank and file. Haulage workers! Remember how the Dockers' Strike Committee replied to these manoeuvres: **Consult the rank and file on all questions. No Decisions must be taken except by meetings of the strikers. Without rank and file meetings there can be no democratic decisions.** This is one of the most important lessons for the striking workers.

### THREE

The workers on strike must establish a tightly knit National Strike Committee with roots in every area, representing all sections on strike and maintaining regular contact by means of daily strike bulletins and daily mass meetings. All sections of the workers who have come out in solidarity must be represented on the National Strike Committee. They too must be consulted before any decision is taken. If the workers stand firm and instant action is taken by workers in solidarity against touching "black" goods, the haulage workers must win. The employers will be forced to give in. The Government will be compelled to withdraw the troops.

If the Strikers implement these three vital needs, then victory is assured.

The rank and file are standing firm for their full demands:

**No Capitulations !**

**No Compromises !**

**No Victimisation !**

**Re-instate All Workers !**

**For the immediate withdrawal of the Troops !**

## THE ROLE OF THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT

**A WAVE OF INDIGNATION IS SWEEPING THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AT THE ROLE OF THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT IN THE STRIKE OF THE TRANSPORT WORKERS. RESOLUTIONS OF PROTEST HAVE BEEN PASSED BY ALL SECTIONS OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.**

From the beginning the Government whipped up a panic press campaign designed to arouse the hostility of the public against the workers by threats of food shortages. The Labour leaders argued that they were compelled to bring in troops to ensure food supplies to the people. Had they been seriously concerned with food for the people and meeting the just demands of the workers the strike would not have taken place. Firm action against the employers would have forced them to concede the workers' demands immediately and thus there would have been no food shortage.

Instead, for nine months negotiations dragged out only to end in the insulting proposals of the Wages Board. On top of this the Government permitted the findings of the Wages Board to be further postponed.

The tale that negotiations could not be speeded up are exposed as rank hypocrisy by the fact that within 24

hours a new negotiating body was formed. If the workers had been prepared to take the insulting decision of the Wages Board lying down, they would have waited for another nine months. Direct action alone compelled the Government and the employers to act.

The Labour leaders argued that to "surrender" to the strikers would undermine the Government. It would only undermine a Government which protects the interests of the employers and seeks their support. Far from undermining a genuine socialist Government, the action of any section of the workers against the capitalist class would immeasurably strengthen it. Had the Government supported the workers' action it would have consolidated its position amongst the mass of the British workers.

A socialist Government would have replied to the employers' sabotage of the industry and their refusal to concede the elementary demands of the workers by nationalising the industry without compensation and placing it under workers' control.

Actions speak louder than words. They were not prepared to surrender to the workers. But they surrendered to the employers. The bosses could never have held out without their support. This fact is clear to large sections of the working class, who by their solidarity struck a blow at the reactionary intervention of the Labour

leaders on behalf of the class enemy. These workers understood that if they allowed the use of troops as blacklegs to go unchallenged, the very basis of the Labour movement would be undermined.

The place of the Tories in 1926, is now occupied by the Labour leaders. The Labour-hating "Daily Mail" ironically comments upon this fact:

"In 1926 the Government took certain measures to maintain the public services, and these were characterised by the Labour movement as 'strike-breaking'."

But today it is a Labour Minister who says he may be forced to take similar action. . . ."

The Labour Government has behaved in the same way as the Tory Governments of the past. The stab in the back by the use of troops to break the strike can only mean one thing: that it stood on the side of the employers against the men. The Labour leaders forced the sons and brothers of the working class to do the dirty work of the bosses. They conscript workers allegedly to defend the interests of the "nation", and use them to defend the interests of the employers against the working class both at home and abroad. It is not for this that the workers put Labour into power. It must cease to protect the interests of the employers and stand firmly on the side of the workers.

### SUPPORT TRANSPORT WORKERS !

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