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Threepence

"It is indeed curious to consider men make the gods that they themselves worship."

—THOMAS CARLYLE.

'ANARCHY' AT DAGENHAM

THE Court of Inquiry into the dispute at the Dagenham works of Briggs Motor Bodies has commenced its investigations, and the evidence up to the time of writing has confirmed our own analysis of the situation.

More important than that, it is publicising the alternative which the workers themselves are creating to the sterile and bureaucratic trades unions.

Small wonder, then, that we are told that the situation which existed at Briggs was 'sheer anarchy', and although we have our own reservations at the sense in which the words are used, it is clear that what they really mean is that the 'underdogs' were claiming too much say in their own affairs for the liking of the top-dogs.

We have on many occasions pointed out in these columns the falsity of the situation wherein trade union officials make agreements at national level, or even at management level, which have to be imposed upon the rank and file who have not been consulted. Such agreements are no more binding upon the individual trade unionist than are the treaties made by governments upon the individual citizen.

This points to the distinction always made by anarchists between being 'represented' by somebody else—who take decisions in your name—and delegating somebody to carry out decisions which you have already made yourself. The one leads to irresponsibility on the parts of both the representatives and the represented; the other to responsibility in a functional relationship.

In discussing the Briggs affair (last week and previously) we pointed out how the official trade union leaders were jealous of the power and influence of the shop stewards. But we maintained then,

and still do, that the stewards' organisation represents something much truer and nearer to the form that a workers' organisation should take than does the trade union itself. It allows direct expression of the workers' needs and abilities, while the official machinery provides nothing but delay, frustration and meaningless compromise. Except for the officials. For them it provides jobs, position, privilege—status. Of course they are going to resent anything which may appear to be a threat to that.

But that's just too bad. Just as in society at large we have to combat the power-seekers, so do the workers in industry. And just as we maintain that social institutions should exist to serve society, so the organisations of industrial workers should exist to serve them, and through such organisations could the workers serve society. But while the workers are continually being exploited by their employers, and the official unions accept that situation and tacitly support it, we can hardly expect workers to think in terms of serving society.

Stewards Not Represented

In the Court of Inquiry, the central figure in the dispute, bell-ringer John McLoughlin, is being refused permission to take part in the proceedings 'as a party'—and so are the shop stewards. At the beginning of proceedings last Monday, counsels representing Mr. McLoughlin and the Joint Shop Stewards Committee at Briggs asked that their clients should have the same rights to offer witnesses, cross-examine, and make representations as the employers and the official trade union side would have.

Lord Cameron, who is conducting the inquiry, replied that neither the shop stewards nor Mr. McLoughlin could take part in the pro-

ceedings as "a party". However, he saw no reason why they should not have the right to "watch" the proceedings and submit representations through counsel.

This means that right from the start the position of the workers involved in the disputes is not going to be fully presented. The two parties who will be allowed full say—the unions and the management—are already agreed together on the need for industrial discipline and both want to curb the power of the stewards. These two parties have already made agreements which are not acceptable to the workers at the bench—and as long as the rank-and-file are not better represented the court of inquiry is simply a waste of time.

The Briggs management's viewpoint was put by Mr. L. T. Blakeman, their labour relations officer, who stressed strongly what he called the dissension within the T.U. organisation. Much to the embarrassment of the T.U. officials present, Mr. Blakeman said that this dissension 'reveals an inability on the part of the trade unions to exert effective influence on their members in honouring all agreements, and in unwillingness by the members to be subjected to any form of control'.

But Mr. Blakeman should never have been under any misapprehen-

sion about that. John McLoughlin was sacked because he called a meeting which decided on strike action in contravention of the procedure agreement drawn up between the union leaders and the management. But as far back as January 1955—two years ago—the shop stewards' paper had stated quite clearly their attitude to this agreement.

Document Rejected

Mr. Blakeman himself quoted from a workers' publication for January and February, 1955, in which it had been stated that the workers wished to make it quite clear that in once again rejecting the procedure document, "which denies us a single essential principle of trade union democracy," they could not allow wrangling to delay progress on outstanding matters relating to wages.

For two years, therefore, Mr. Blakeman has known just where the workers stand. They have not accepted the procedure agreement—because they know, as workers in every other industry know, that 'procedure' is invariably invoked in order to stymie their demands. Mr. Blakeman quoted further: 'We must sharpen our attitude in these matters to make both our employers and the unions thoroughly aware where we stand.' Mr. Blakeman

said that, the note of triumph was echoed in the March issue of the publication where the headline was used, 'Draft Four Laid to Rest.'

In spite of this, however, Mr. Blakeman and the union officials went ahead and on August 23, 1955, the procedure agreement was brought into operation at all the company's plants.

The agreement was based on the simple principle that wages and major working conditions should be negotiated at national level and domestic matters at local level. It established clearly defined machinery for dealing with problems emanating from the shop floor, and the general principles stated that at each stage every attempt would be made to resolve issues which had been raised and that until such procedure had been carried out there would be no stoppage of work or other unconstitutional action. And every worker knows just what that means: delays, frustrations, bureaucracy, rejections.

Mr. Blakeman then had the effrontery to say: "We were encouraged to believe that this agreement, which had been in no way imposed but freely negotiated, would be accepted at all levels."

It was not imposed on the union leaders—it was freely negotiated by them—but what about the men in the workshops? They had expressed their opposition to the agreement for months beforehand—but still it went through at top level.

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GHANA & AFRICAN FREEDOM

The Prime Minister advanced to the microphones . . . "We prefer self-government with danger to servitude in tranquility!" "Free-dooooom! Free-dooooom!"

The crowd chanted as their dark and emotion-spent faces left the meeting; wistfully I watched their toga-draped bodies wander off in the fading light of the setting sun . . . I sat brooding. How had he conquered them? He had held in the palms of his hands; he had poured scorn on the claims of the opposition; he had allowed no mercy for a contrary opinion; and it seemed that that was all his followers wanted. Prolonged British evasion and aloofness had made them ready to embrace certainty, definiteness . . .

The greed of British business-men and the fumbling efforts of missionaries had made an unwitting contribution to this mass movement by shattering the traditional tribal culture that had once given meaning to these people's lives, and now there burned in these black hearts a hunger to regain control over their lives and create a new sense of their destinies . . .

What I had seen was not politics proper; it was politics plus . . . It bordered upon religion; what I had seen was a smattering of Marxism plus the will to be, a thirst for self-redemption! And I suspected that Nkrumah himself was but an agent provocateur to the emotions of millions—emotions which even he did not quite grasp or understand in all of their ramifications . . .

—RICHARD WRIGHT: *Black Power.*

nothing from the past, they think and act along the lines of their persecutors and oppressors".

If we were to say to a citizen of Ghana, the former British colony of the Gold Coast, that from an anarchist point of view, he had merely changer masters, he would reply "So much the worse for anarchism if it elevates theories above observable fact". Because he knows that to have squeezed out the British without bloodshed, by continually forcing their hand, in the 'Africanisation' of the government, at a pace which ten years ago would have seemed impossible, is a remarkable achievement; because he has seen during the régime of the Congress People's Party, a "tremendous release of creative energy" in the development of the country; because he knows the simple truth of Kwame Nkrumah's remark that "it is better to be able to manage your own affairs, or mismanage them, than not to be free to manage or mismanage your own affairs"; and because he is well aware of the important repercussions which Ghana's independence will have on the whole of Africa.

Kwame Nkrumah has succeeded

where the older generation of nationalist leaders in the Gold Coast failed, because, learning from his student days in America and Britain, he has built up a centralised streamlined political machine, with loudspeaker vans, great rallies, flags and songs and an atmosphere of religious revivalism. Where the opponents of the CCP have had scruples, he has none. When the American Negro writer Richard Wright interviewed the opposition leaders he found them baffled and resentful. He discussed Nkrumah with Dr. Danquah: "Dou you think he'll keep power for long?" I asked.

"Yes; until the illiterate masses wake up," he said.

"Why don't you try to win the masses to your side?"

I watched a grimace come over his face; he looked at me and smiled ruefully.

"Masses?" he echoed the word. "I don't like this thing of masses. There are only individuals for me—"

"But masses form the basis of political power in the modern world to-day," I told him . . .

And suddenly it flashed through me that this man was not a politician and would never be one.

It was the same when he interviewed Professor Busia, the leader

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'Militant' American Farmers

About 7½ per cent. of the milk ordinarily shipped to wholesalers for the metropolitan area was reported withheld by farmers yesterday in a widening demonstration seeking higher prices. This represented about 700,000 quarts. Major milk distributors said, however, that full consumer supplies here were assured for to-day, and to-morrow. Violence erupted in scattered areas. Some dairymen were pulled from their trucks and beaten. Thousands of gallons of milk were dumped. A number of trucks in Unionville and Warwick, N.Y., were fired on. None of the drivers were injured.

Dynamite blasts were touched off in front of two homes near Sussex, N.J. Kerosene was poured into milk supplies in some places in Orange County, N.Y.

Milk supplies for New Jersey, upstate New York and Pennsylvania also were being interrupted in part by the boycott begun Sunday.

Five men were arrested by state police near Monroe, N.Y., to-night after a rifle was fired into a milk tank truck on Route 17, causing its load of milk to run out on the highway. Another man was arrested at Montgomery when a rifle was found in his car, state police said.

Scores of troopers were sent into Orange County from points as far away as Albany and Long Island. It was reported 150 troopers were patrolling the county early this morning. Troopers dispersed crowds that had gathered around creameries in Montgomery, Middletown, Warwick, Unionville, Washington and Circleville.

Troopers in Orange County planned to

escort all trucks coming into New York.

The Rev. John Dorney, executive director of the Tri-state Master Dairy Farmers Guild, asserted in Branchville, N.J., late yesterday that 7,000 to 9,000 farmers in the three states were withholding milk. These, he said, included his organization's 3,500 members, with individuals from other groups. He forecast a rise to 25,000 participating by Saturday.

(New York Times).

WORLD WHEAT PRODUCTION DOWN

ROME, FEBRUARY 25.

World wheat production for the current crop year of 1956-7 is likely to be about 121 million metric tons, some two million tons below production for 1955-56, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation reported to-day. The figures do not include production in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Canada.

In the United States and Canada efforts to cut production had been defeated by high yields. The United States crop was put at 27,100,000 tons, 7 per cent. above the previous year's output, and there are stocks of 28-million tons. Canadian production rose by 1,200,000 tons over the previous year's production of 13,400,000 tons.

Production in Western Europe dropped from 37,800,000 tons in 1955 to 31,900,000 in 1956, in spite of increased harvests.—Reuter.

