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# **solidarity**

**FOR WORKERS' POWER**

**VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1**

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# NO NOOSE IS BAD NOOSE

In 1959 it was the 'unofficial' strike at British Oxygen; in 1964 the Hardy Spicer affair and the 'unofficial' action of London Tubemen. The great discovery of 1966 was the 'workers' courts'. Without constant variations on this theme, something would be lacking in British General Elections.

Ever since the end of World War II the existence of an organized working class - and in particular of powerful shop organizations - has been the number one headache for the rulers of capitalist Britain, be they Labour or Tory. It has profoundly influenced their economic thinking. It has enjoined prudence when they would have preferred drastic action. It has prevented them from 'rationalizing' their economy in the way and at the rate they wished. It has given them a collective stiff neck, through constantly having to look over their shoulders.

The 'monster' meanwhile lies lethargic in its lair, seldom uttering more than a muted snort. The trouble is that everybody knows it is alive.

At election time the parties vie with one another in sacrificial zeal. They denounce one another for not having tamed the beast. 'Why didn't you go into the lair and do battle?'. Everybody wants to be St. George.

The 'monster' has recently stirred, causing a panic worthy of comment.

Last February, 50 men were brought in from another plant to work in the BMC repair shop at Morris Motors, Cowley. They were placed on a different and lower pay scale although doing much the same job. Q Block workers in the same depot decided on a one-day strike in sympathy. The decision was widely accepted. On March 3, only 8 men out of several hundred reported for work.

Next day the strikers refused to work with the blacklegs. A mass meeting was held. This was even authorised by the management, the workers being paid for the time they spent there! At this meeting some of the blacklegs were 'clapped on to the platform' and later asked to contribute £3 each (the equivalent of a day's pay) to the Q Block Sick Fund. 'No fines were demanded outright but it was

made clear to the men on the platform that there would be another stoppage if they did not agree in principle to contribute'. (1) The meeting was loud, long, noisy and down to earth. There was mass participation. No one apparently wore a wig, or used a latin phrase, or got up as the shop stewards entered. Only one man refused to pay.

A number of lurid details were mentioned by a news-hungry press. A 'hangman's noose' was seen suspended from a girder. Someone saw a chalked-up slogan saying 'Hang the bastards'. Much has been written about all this. For us, it makes no difference whether there was a noose or not or how many feet from the ground it happened to dangle.

A few days later reports hit the press about an earlier 'court'. This had been held last November at the Pressed Steel factory at Theale, near Reading, where 300 men make refrigerators. 250 of the men had walked out in protest against the management's suspension - without consultation - of 12 workers. A selective lock-out had followed, in which the management had allowed 15 people to report for work. Two weeks later these 15 people were summoned to a meeting of elected shop stewards, held in a railway hut, and were asked to pay £2 to £2.10.0 each.

The news of the trial triggered off a gigantic explosion. Capitalist papers and Tory MPs did their nut. They made all the expected noises and several more. They screamed of 'drum head court martials', of 'kangaroo courts', of 'jacquerie justice', of 'disgraceful intimidation', of 'lynch law', of 'barbaric informal trials', of the 'ordeal of the eight men arraigned with unpleasant solemnity before their fellow workers'. Mr. Hogg pointed out that 'demanding money with menaces was a crime for which you can be sent to prison for 5 years'.

The Labour leaders, acutely conscious of all those middle class votes, ran true to type. Ray Gunter spoke of 'the loathsome incident at Cowley' and of 'the filth of Cowleyism'. Mr. Callaghan spoke of 'the abdication of management in the face of anarchy inside their own works'. He stated that 'if management can't operate properly they should move out' (presumably to allow 'more efficient' managers to move in, who would stand no nonsense from their workers such as paid mass meetings in the firm's time). Lord Byers, for the Liberals, also got his squeak in, deprecating 'petty terrorism in industry'. The BMC management professed 'great concern' at the 'trial'.

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(1) Observer, March 20, 1966.

The Labour Attorney General called in the Director of Public Prosecutions, who demanded a report from the Chief Constable of Oxfordshire. Official society was on the move.

One of the reactions to the press campaign has been for militants in industry to play down the importance of the 'workers' courts', either pretending they never happened, or minimising their significance. Although understandable we think this is a wrong attitude. Without romanticising we think the 'workers' courts' are important. So do the more far sighted sections of the ruling class. Where we differ is that we support them.

Ted Heath, in one of his more perceptive moments, spoke of the Cowley episode as 'the visible tip of the iceberg'. The Daily Telegraph (March 18, 1966) commented on how few of these episodes ever reach the headlines. 'The general silence suggests not so much that intimidation and improper pressures do not exist, but that they are widely effective'. Under the title 'Workers' Tyranny', the Sunday Telegraph (March 13, 1966) inveighed against 'the evils that follow when paid union officials fail to keep control at factory level'. Ex-Labour MP Aidan Crawley, now a Tory, spoke of 'industrial power being used to undermine the rule of law'.

In a sense, what they say is right. Anyone with any industrial experience - and even some industrial sociologists - knows that in virtually all workshops workers exercise considerable control over the way the job is run. A good example is piecework and bonus earning, where an informally agreed ceiling is applied. Another example is resistance to speed-up of the line. Woe betide the 'rate-busters'. They will be subjected to all sorts of pressures to conform. They will lose popularity and the social contacts it implies. They might be 'sent to Coventry'. Their work might be damaged. They might find that inspectors (often the most militant section in any factory) apply more rigid production standards to their work than to that of other workers. The same sanctions apply to 'job-spoilers' (men who work too fast), to 'grasses' (informers) and to 'crawlers'. Most of these actions are not taken by any formally constituted body. They are part of the necessity to defend one's human existence at work. This is what no politician can understand.

What is basically at the root of all the recent hullabaloo is a vague and uneasy awareness, among large sections of bourgeois society, that working class 'courts' - or other forms of direct democracy exerted at the point of production - are a challenge to the very foundation of their law and order. Such activities in fact show a high level of working class consciousness. In embryonic form they represent a parallel concept of

'justice' and a parallel set of institutions, developing within capitalist society. These institutions are geared to different objectives and express different values from those of established society.

The main function of bourgeois courts is to defend the right of private property, the power and privileges of those who rule. The main function of workers' 'courts', or of similar rank and file institutions, is to defend and extend man's right to a human existence at work. This defence requires solid shop organization. To be effective it must be based on unity and solidarity. Blacklegging breaks the ranks and thereby constitutes a threat to the livelihood of others. This explains the hatred of workers for scabs, a hatred that is seldom understood by middle class 'liberals' - who proclaim the 'rights' of the scab to be of equal weight, in the balance of social justice, with the 'rights' of the striking majority.

In a free society such conflicts would probably not arise and if they did our attitude would be different. But we are not living in a free society. We are living in a class society. And the most unfree aspect of such a society is its factories. Thousands of workers are sacked each year for resistance to managerial encroachments. They are thrown onto the streets, often without a penny. These are the kangaroo courts of management, where the 'defendants' are not even allowed to speak, and where their 'records' follow them from job to job, making it impossible for them to find work in their own trade. This has happened to thousands of militants. It is a fact of industrial life. In such a society 'ratebusters', 'grasses', and 'crawlers' are not neutral. They are the Judas goats who intensify the managerial exploitation of their fellow workers.

Our rulers are really in a terrible dilemma. They want stronger trade union officials, more vigorous attacks launched on shop organization. But as the Guardian (March 15, 1966) cynically warns: 'The creation of a powerful trade union officialdom might make rebels appear the champions of individual liberty'. Even the Daily Telegraph (March 10, 1966) warns that if George Brown's early warning system is pursued to its logical end, the union movement itself may go underground and 'incidents like that at Cowley will surely multiply'.

In all their years in power the Tories could never curb the tremendous power of the working class. Their present hysteria is in direct proportion to their past impotence. Year in, year out, working class 'bloody-mindedness' remained the great ubiquitous, indigestible, incorrigible, uncontrollable fact of our society. It was too diffuse, too amorphous - and too deeply embedded -

to be tackled effectively. To the dismay and despair of millions of their supporters the Tories never got down to 'putting the workers in their place'. The acute Tory instinct for self-preservation dictated avoidance of a collision course and the clamour of their class conscious but politically illiterate rank and file went largely unheeded.

The Labour leaders are of course fully aware of the growing strength of the rank and file in

## ABOUT OURSELVES

This is the first issue of Volume IV of Solidarity. It marks five and a half years of somewhat irregular, but persistent, publication, and should give food for thought for all those who claimed we 'wouldn't last six months'. Anyone who looks at the 34 previous issues of the paper, at our 21 pamphlets and at our two books, as well as at a number of leaflets and reprints will recognize that we have published a mass of unique material, in a number of different areas of interest to libertarian socialists. Elsewhere in this issue a complete list of our pamphlets will be found.

Regular readers will have noticed a change in our appearance. The technical improvements cost a lot of money. An electric typewriter, recently bought at a cost of £120, is our biggest single piece of capital investment. As a result Solidarity will be improved visually, and we will be able to clear a massive production bottleneck which has been holding us up. We now have five pamphlets in various stages of production. We hope to bring them out by the end of the year and at the same time improve the regularity of the paper.

We are now heavily in debt with hire-purchase commitments. We have a mass of material to publish. There are thousands of people who are potential readers. We don't want to be crippled in the expansion of our work by debts. Please help by settling your debts promptly, sparing us the expense and effort of repeated reminders. Please also send every penny you can spare yourself, or get your friends or workmates to part with, to Solidarity (Don Kirkley), 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1.

industry. Returned to Westminster with an increased majority, they may attempt what has not been attempted since 1926, namely to destroy the industrial power of the working class in production. They have a weapon the Tories lacked: an army of quislings (trade union officials, labour loyalists, sometimes even misguided 'lefts'). All have called for the return of a Labour Government with a large majority. They must now accept responsibility for what will follow.

Ken Weller. John Sullivan. Bob Potter.

We have just published a joint pamphlet with Socialist Action (c/o Jim Radford, 5 Clockhouse Road, Beckenham, Kent). It is called 'K.C.C. VERSUS THE HOMELESS. THE KING HILL CAMPAIGN.' It is a 44 page quarto size pamphlet with a number of illustrations and costs 1/6 (2/- post free. There is a discount for bulk orders). We have printed 4,000 copies. It is in fact the biggest single publishing job with which we have been associated. The pamphlet documents the epic struggle of the homeless of King Hill. Its aim is to provide a blueprint for future struggles against bureaucracies in local government.

Since we launched the paper, in the autumn of 1961, our circulation has risen steadily. Our first issue sold 350 copies. We now sell about 1,300. If only more people began to sell Solidarity to their acquaintances we could substantially increase our readership. Just a few dozen more people taking 5 or 10 copies would make a critical difference to our economic position. More importantly it would make a substantial contribution to the influence of our ideas. If you think our ideas are important you owe it to yourself to help us push the paper.

After Easter we intend to organize a series of speaking tours in various parts of the country. Would individuals or groups, interested in having a Solidarity speaker, please write to us so that we can make arrangements.

We want help from our readers in other ways too. We still need much more material for the magazine: reports of struggles, articles, cartoons, cuttings, poems, photos, ideas - or just information which the powers that be are trying to cover up. We want Solidarity to be both more serious and more humorous, both brighter and deeper, with both more theory and more accounts of practical struggles. Those of us in London who sweat it out to produce the paper are not polymath geniuses. We need massive support from our readers. Some of the best stuff we have published has come from people who had never written before. Why don't you write something for us?

# BOURGEOIS MUSIC



We publish below two articles on this theme. One was written by our friend Jim Evrard, in Germany, the other by an unnamed bureaucrat in Peking. The contrast couldn't be more striking. They deal with different things. They illustrate different approaches, different attitudes, different ways of looking at the reality around us, even different ways of using the same words.

Jim sees the bureaucrat as a vulgar philistine, degrading words and ideas and thereby bringing a valid method of analysis into disrepute. Given half a chance, the bureaucrat - armed with State power - would promptly 'liquidate' Jim in the interests of a higher orthodoxy, of which he sees himself as the temporal embodiment.

Yet both claim to be 'marxists'. In relation to music this raises interesting problems. But the fundamental questions go much deeper. Our next issue will contain an article by Paul Cardan on 'The fate of marxism and the concept of orthodoxy' which seeks to tackle this kind of dilemma at the theoretical level.

Revolutionaries in the 'free world' come in all sizes, shapes and colours. But one basic conviction unifies most of them, and separates them from 'social reformers'. That conviction is: Capitalism stinks! The inhumanity around us is not an imperfection of the system. It is the system itself.

This belief rests on the assumption that there is a basic 'structural principle' or set of principles in capitalist society which permeates the whole society. This idea of one or a few structural principles penetrating a whole society is true not only for capitalism, but for any human society. In capitalism, perhaps the most basic structural principle is that found in the organization of the factory.

The structure of the factory has several salient features. One is division of labour and specialization. From this follows a separation between head work and manual labour, with the head worker at the top. The planners are separated from the executors. And the executors are held to be mindless. The organization of a factory is authoritarian and hierarchic. Communication in the other direction is perfunctory if it exists at all. The needs and wishes of individuals do not count. The organization is supreme.

Originally, in the days when capitalism was revolutionary, this organization of the factory had a function: to increase production. With time, this organizational principle became an end in itself, and spread to other areas of society. Witness the organization of trade unions and political parties today. This cannot help having an effect on human consciousness. People who live in a society dominated by this type of organization begin to think of it as the only natural, sensible and efficient way of doing things. This does not have to be formulated consciously - or clearly. In fact, we are educated so as not to be critical of our ideas. Don't forget who controls education and mass communication in our society.

When spokesmen for the ruling establishments in East and West decry workers' management of production, or direct democracy, as utopian they are often sincere. They are incapable of conceiving that any other form of social organization than the one they know can be practical or workable. If the

terms 'bourgeois forms of organization' or 'bourgeois consciousness' have any meaning at all, they apply to what I am saying here. In this sense, of course, the organization of a Russian factory, or of the Communist Party for that matter, is thoroughly bourgeois. Marx wrote in 'The Eighteenth Brumaire' you do not judge a man or a historical movement or period by what it says of itself, but by its actions.

Now if this capitalist organizational principle had such a strong hold on human behaviour and consciousness that it dominated even the Bolshevik Party in Russia, which wanted to abolish capitalism, we shouldn't be surprised to find it dominating more aspects of life than we may be aware of. Only in a context like this can a term like 'bourgeois' or 'factory' music have any meaning.

The analysis given here does not imply that there is a certain type of music which revolutionaries ought to like or not to like, and that if they don't or do they are 'bourgeois' or better still 'petty bourgeois'. It is just this style of overextension of a valid method of analysis which has brought this type of understanding into disrepute, much to the joy of the establishment.



Where the capitalist principle has found its way in music is not in melody, rhythm, harmony, style of play, or in the tastes of music lovers, but rather in the organization of the orchestra, which is a close parallel to the factory. One man management (the conductor), hierarchy, division of labour, in which the musicians are mere executors, playing from a score in which every note is predetermined, under the command of a conductor who dictates the interpretation. No leeway is allowed to a trumpeter in a symphony orchestra or commercial band to improvise on his own. The score sets every note and the director determines the musical interpretation. The individual musician plays his notes much as any other skilled factory worker does his given task.

But how does this connect with capitalism? How else can you play ensemble music? The questions are valid, but the answers are simple.

The factory organization of the orchestra does not exist in any other society, including India, Burma, China and Japan which all have old and highly developed traditions of music and musicianship. Even in Europe, it did not develop until the industrial revolution. Before the last century a composer did not write out ensemble pieces in full. He wrote the melodies and a concept for the piece. It was the musicians' job to improvise the rest, as in jazz today.

It would never have occurred to a composer to write out every note of a piece. The musician was a craftsman, not a machine operator. It was not until the 19th century that the modeling of the orchestra after the factory became complete, and the art of improvisation was lost in 'classical' music. The same process happens today to jazz musicians who go commercial. The jazz combo is not a factory yet. As saxophonist Ornette Coleman expresses it: 'I don't tell the members of my group what to do -- I let everyone express himself just as he wants to.\* The musicians have complete freedom, and so, of course, our final results depend entirely on the musicianship, emotional make-up and taste of the individual member. Ours is at all times a group effort, and it is only because we have the rapport we do that our music takes on the shape it does.'\*\*

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\* No wonder squares cannot hear anything but chaos in modern jazz.

\*\* From the blurb on the back of his album 'Change of the Century'.

But the large commercial band no longer leaves any of this freedom to the individual player, even though it gets much of its musical material from jazz.

The parallel with the factory has gone further. The antagonism between worker and management is one of the things which led to automation. If 'the trouble with industry is that it is full of men' then you can solve the problem to the extent that you eliminate men. Automation helps do that. In music, a counterpart to this exists in electronic music, where the composer works with the tape recorder in a sound lab, and puts his music on to tape exactly as he wants it. No musicians are needed.

This may sound far-fetched. But if you know something about the history of modern serious music, the comparison with automation is not so way out. Sometime around 1920, the Vienna school of composers developed a new concept of melody which reduced the orchestra to an assembly line. In this concept, a melody is not played by one instrument or section of the orchestra alone, but wanders from instrument to instrument. Take, for example, a melody consisting of 12 notes. A violin may play the first two notes, then a note from the flute, then two notes from the piano, three from a cello, a tap from a triangle, two toots from a trumpet, and finally a honk from a bassoon. If the musicians do it the way the composer intended, the impression is as if the whole orchestra were one single instrument with a wide range of tonal possibilities.





Now this type of music can sound quite pleasing to a listener with a trained ear. But from the point of view of player and composer there are two problems. Like any other assembly line worker, an individual musician does not derive much pleasure or satisfaction out of playing this kind of music. Moreover the type of coordination required to produce this kind of music correctly is so difficult to attain that the music is hardly ever reproduced exactly according to the composer's concept. Just like automation, the sound lab and tape recorder eliminate these problems, along with the musicians.



Revolutionaries may ask: what is the point of all this? Are we supposed to join a crusade against the symphony orchestra? Of course not. These facts about music, taken in isolation, don't lead much to anything. Their value is that they are one of the countless 'insignificant' examples of an important and all-pervading principle of our society. Consciously or not, capitalists have invented and developed in the factory a principle of social organization which today dominates the behaviour and consciousness of people throughout the world, including many who think they are revolutionaries. All of us, even the most 'revolutionary', are subject to a process of attitude formation by the mere fact of being alive in this society, not to speak of the influence of education and mass media.

Many develop enough insight to see through the crasser forms of this brain washing, yet succumb to its subtler forms. When 'revolutionaries' say that the crisis of the working class is the crisis of its leadership, or attack workers' management of production as utopian dreaming, they are not ill intentioned, at least not always. They are simply incapable of conceiving a world radically different from the one they know. They might like to, but cant.



This type of widespread poverty of intellect and imagination is the necessary product of an oppressive society. Capitalism like any other society of rulers and ruled, can stand up and justify itself only on irrational principles. Men with really free intellect and imagination will see beyond it and destroy it.

Difficult as it is, revolutionaries must try to achieve some of this freedom within this society, and teach it to others. Otherwise, the world will never see free men.

Jim Evrard.

## MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK

...Peking.

According to People's Music, number 8-9, August-September 1964: 'The militant task of the critic of music theory (is) to promote the proletarian and eradicate the bourgeois'. On March 4, 1965, a young man called Ma Yen Sheng had a letter published in the Peking paper Kuangming Daily in which he said that he had been guilty of 'deviation in the matter of music appreciation': 'Having listened too much to Western bourgeois classical music, I gradually had a blurred class viewpoint when looking at problems. After enjoying Beethoven's Ninth Symphony many times, I began to have strange illusions about the idea of "universal love" of bourgeois humanitarianism, which was presented in the choral section of the symphony. I asked myself: if the world is really filled with friendly love among nations, then will the world permanently rid itself of war and will there not be everlasting peace?'

Mr. Ma changed his mind 'as a result of the socialist education movement and my political studies'. He realised that 'listening regularly to Western bourgeois music can only paralyze one's revolutionary fighting will, and that is contrary to one's training as a successor to the revolutionary cause'. Today Mr. Ma listens to revolutionary music:

'In the past year I went to several concerts of revolutionary music..... in particular, after seeing the music and dance epic "The East Glows Red". I was greatly inspired and educated by the fighting songs and music that sing the praise of the splendid achievements of the motherland made in the past 15 years and of the great Communist Party and Chairman Mao'. Mr. Ma now charges that Western music which promotes 'the bourgeois idea that love is supreme' should be refuted as 'corrupt'. Mr. Ma concluded: 'From now on I will certainly love ardently revolutionary songs that inspire one and fill one with courage, and abandon Western bourgeois music that leads one astray. I will strive hard to remould my thought and contribute my due share towards the socialist cause'.

From 'CENSORSHIP'  
Monitored by Dick Wilcocks

## LAST SOLID

A gremlin broke loose and played gentle havoc with the typography and setting in our last issue.

On p. 6, 'Against the Law' did not refer to a new pamphlet. It refers to an excellent article on the Challenor affair published in vol. III, No. 9 of Resistance. We have enough trouble in supplying one non-pamphlet without being saddled with orders for a second.

On p. 11, the article 'Brickie's Broadside' should have been signed Nine Inch Navy. No, it's not a crude joke. It's just technical jargon for a brick-layer.

On p. 12, there was a non-footnote referring to Healyites. This was not - as one witty reader sug-

gested - a deliberate commentary on their political insignificance. We had intended a little ABC of Sects Anatomy. For instance:

Healyite: Believes in Russia as a workers' state (degenerated), in Labour Party as working class Party (also degenerated but to be supported - critically - especially at election time), in entrism, in Trotsky's transitional programme (1938) and in the need for Vanguard Party, because of what Lenin wrote in 1902. Dislikes Pablo. Quite unlike a Pabloite who believes in the need for a Vanguard Party because of what Lenin wrote in 1902, in Trotsky's transitional programme (1938), in entrism, in the Labour Party as a working class party (degenerated but to be supported - critically - especially at election time) and in Russia as workers' state (degenerated). Dislikes Healy.

As for the Malatesta article on the back page, it should have been signed Nick Walter and have included a final sentence, omitted for spatial and not for political reasons. This sentence read: 'In conclusion, John Sullivan's comparison of Malatesta with Ramsay MacDonald is beneath contempt or comment'. (For John Sullivan's reply, see p. 23).

# BORSTAL BOY

Young people are one of the most oppressed sections of modern society. Whether East or West, a 'good healthy dose of discipline' is suggested for the slightest departure from the norm. In Russia, 'stilyagi' are sentenced to hard labour in the virgin lands (these are not half as exciting as they sound). In Britain, their counterparts are sent to borstal.

The borstal sentence is imposed in a form that would not be tolerated for first class citizens, i. e. adults. Young people are just sentenced to 'borstal training'. No period is specified. In effect it is for four years, divided into two parts. The first, the length of which is at the discretion of the Home Office (in practice the borstal Governor) can last between nine months and three years. It is a period of 'training' in a borstal institution. The second is a 'period of controlled freedom under supervision', during which the boy or girl can be 'recalled' at any time the Home Office thinks fit. This recall, which is spent in specially 'tough' borstals, can last for the remainder of the four year sentence or for 6 months, whichever is the longer.

Many inmates are not even there for 'criminal' acts. They are there for such things as breach of probation, or for committing such sins as failing to inform the probation officer of change of address or place of work. Or they are there for mixing with the wrong people or in any other way not accepting supervision. Some are there for 'crimes' which - had they been adults - would have led to a fine or at most a very short sentence.

These institutions are specially run on semi-military lines to produce young people who conform to the most reactionary ideas. One of the basic aims is 'to teach respect for good craftsmanship and hard work ... the basis of every borstal is eight hours' work'. (See 'Prisons and Borstals', HMSO, 1960, p. 57). The ideal is the disciplined, drilled, cropped, uncritical, hard-working, religious piece of cannon fodder. But they fail: 40% of borstal boys are convicted again, many of them repeatedly. The borstal system fails to 'reform' nonconformists just as society does.

Unfortunately, it is not only the Colonel Blimps of this world who advocate borstal-like methods. Many traditional 'lefts' advocate such techniques, to be used for instance on young people whose hairstyle they don't happen to like. This is no coincidence. Borstals reflect modern society. So do the ideas of many lefts - and this however 'radical' the political party they may support. The conceptions of the 'left' as to what is a 'problem' - and their proposed 'solutions' - are very similar to those of the right.

We are against 'reforms' of the system, aiming at making it more efficient. We are against the whole system in all its manifestations. The only solution is a society where all, young and old, can develop their individuality to the full.

I had made up my mind that however bad it was going to be I had to go through with it. I was resigned to accepting the situation by the time I actually got to Portland borstal. This made the early stages a bit easier for me.

The morning after you arrive and have been allocated to your house you go before the Governor, with the other new receptions. He gives you a talk on how tough borstal training is and what is going to happen to you if you don't obey the rules and generally 'respond to training'.

Then you have to start learning the routine. According to the Governor you are there to be punished. Being shut away from society wasn't punishment enough for him; he was setting out to make life as hard for you as possible. He made it clear that he's the boss and you had better do what he says ...or else.

It was just like when I was in the Army. In fact the Governor was ex-Army and so were most of the other screws. Many of them are ex Provost staff from Army detention centres. In my opinion about 90% of borstal officers are ex-service men.

Most of them have an inferiority complex of one sort or another. They go into a job like this so that they can give orders and exercise power and authority over someone in an inferior position to them and who can't do anything about it.

The routine at Portland is like this. At 6 am you get up, change into PT gear and go out into the exercise yard for half an hour of physical jerks. Then you have a mug of lukewarm tasteless cocoa and change into your working clothes. At 7 am you come down for breakfast. Afterwards you fall in on parade and go off to your respective working parties. You come back to your house for lunch at 12. (You have an hour for lunch during which you can see any of the staff who are available, the housemaster, the education officer, etc.) Then back on parade and back to work. At 4.30 you finish work, come back to the house, get washed and changed, and come down for tea. After tea, from 6 to 7 is what is called 'silent hour' when everyone is locked in their peters. No one is allowed to speak, whistle, or sing. This is supposed to be the time when you can write letters home and generally meditate on your sins.

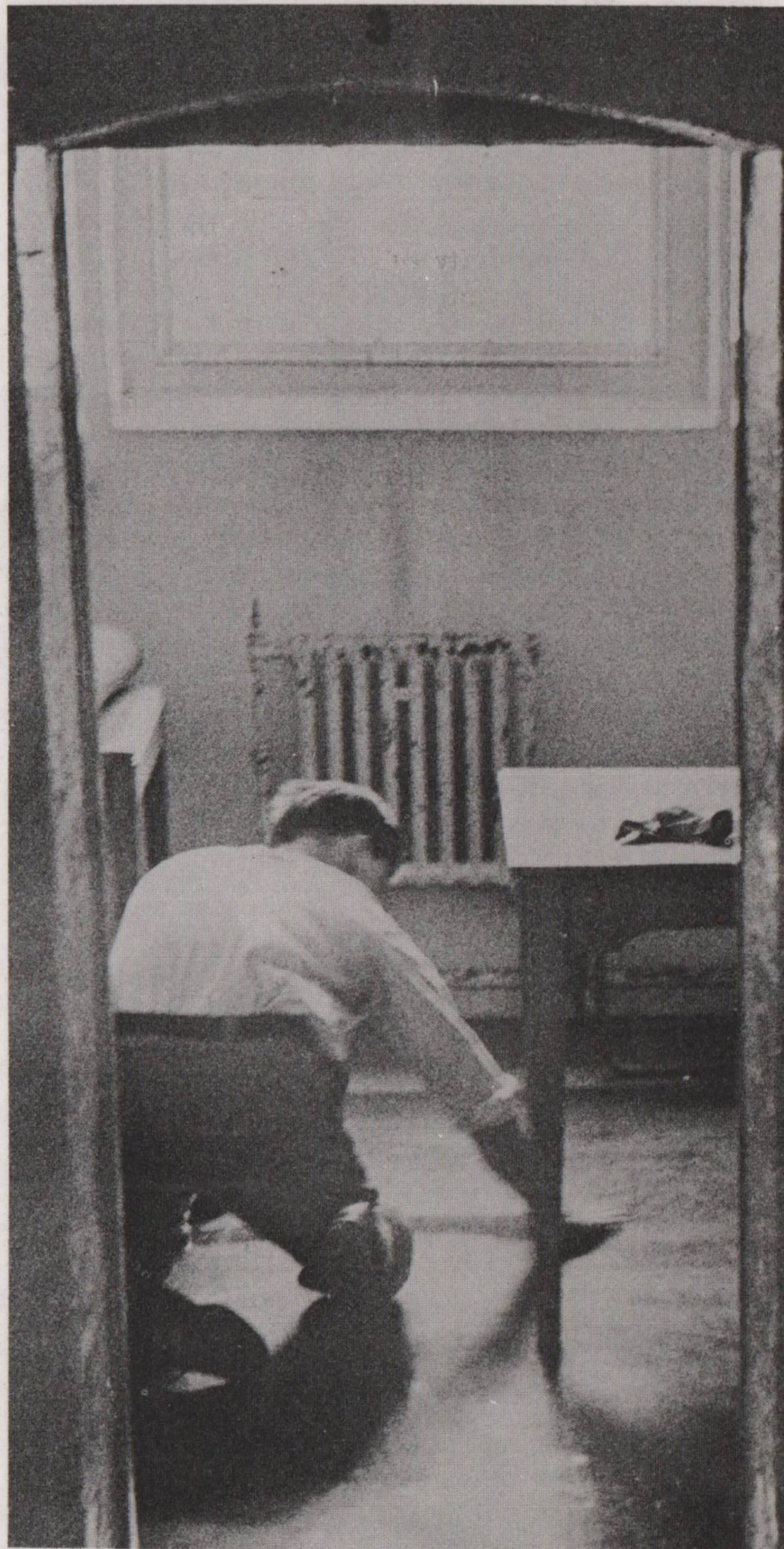
At 7 pm we are opened up for 'association', which means games: billiards, table tennis and so on. Or just watching television until supper at 8 o'clock. After that more 'association' until 9 pm when the lower grades go off to bed. The senior grades follow at 10 pm, when lights out. You follow the same routine day in, day out, all the time you are there. You have nothing to look forward to. Each day is identical to the next. You know in advance where you will be, and what you will be doing, at every hour of every day of every month of every year while you are there.

What they are trying to do is to break your spirit of resistance, especially in the first three months. They put you on what is known as the house-cleaning party. You just scrub all day: scrub floors, scrub walls, scrub ceilings, scrub anything they can lay their hands on.

But there are ways and means of shirking any job, no matter how well supervised, and whether it is scrubbing floors or making tables in the carpenter's shop. But it's still a relief to get off the house-cleaning party. None of the jobs are any good: as soon as you get on one job you are looking round for a way to get onto another.

The best job of all is that of orderly, which is given only to red bands. They can go more or less where they like in the borstal. They can even go outside without permission. These jobs go to the crawlers, to the people who go in there with only one idea - to say 'yes, sir! no, sir! three bags full, sir!' to the authorities.

What has the lad to do? We're not supposed to use our initiative in anything without being told. So we can turn this to our advantage. If we want to work to rule we can make life almost unbearable for the screws. For instance when we are marching to and from work we won't turn a corner when we come to it. We just keep straight on till we come to a wall and then just go on marking time until the screw catches up with us. This way the screw has to be shouting at us all day, telling us when to stop, when to start, when to turn, when to fall in and when to fall out. The screws look to us for cooperation; our using our own initiative makes their job very much easier and helps in the general running of the borstal.



Any act of exaggerated obedience to an order is classed as insolence and punished. But this does not stop us doing it. Once on a house master's inspection I was told to get 'all that junk' out of my room (he meant a pin-up on the wall). But I wasn't told specifically what the 'junk' was. So I started throwing out all the contents of the room, all the Government property, bedding, chamberpot, floor mat and all. The lads thought it was very funny; the housemaster didn't. Neither did the Governor. I got 14 days loss of pay and association.

If we cooperate with the screws, it's not out of fear or respect for them but because it's in our own interest to do so. Once a borstal starts running into the rough, there's a lot of tension and it's always the lads who come off worst. Usually it just starts off as high spirits on our part but the authorities don't look on it as this. More often it is called attempting to incite a riot or mutiny!

Nine times out of ten a riot is caused by complaints about the food: either there is not enough or it's not cooked properly. The food at borstal is just terrible. It's more fit for animals than human beings. The vast majority of the so-called 'riots' are caused by genuine grievances.

You only get a small wage and you can't afford to keep yourself in tobacco all week, so you have to rely on people who have a surplus to make it up. There are people who set up a business in this. They are known as 'barons'. They lend out a certain amount of tobacco, usually half an ounce, on condition that they are paid back double at the end of the week. It's quite a profitable business. As you can imagine, the barons quickly accumulate large stocks owing to the rate of interest they charge. Things can become very violent if a person cannot or will not pay back his debt.

What happens then depends on how strong the baron is, and on how popular the other bloke is. If he is popular the baron might get a shock and find out he is fighting the whole house if he tried to touch him. But if he hasn't much support and the baron happens to have a couple of strong arm boys ('daddies', they are called) under him, the welsher is liable to end up in hospital.

As a rule there is only one baron in each house. More than one can result in civil war, with half the house on one side and half on the other, continual bickering, and sometimes outbreaks of violence. The authorities will intervene if this happens. They know about the barons, of course, but as long as there is not too much violence and as long as they think that the baron can keep the boys under control and contented, they overlook his activities. This makes the running of the house that much easier, even though it is strictly against the rules.

When I arrived there was already one baron. I never entertained borrowing off a baron at all. The way I looked at it we were all in the same boat and if you have got a surplus and are going to lend it why expect more back? So I started a little business of my own. If anyone wanted the stuff I used to lend it them but I expected back what I lent. I didn't want any more and I didn't want any less.

This wasn't very popular with the other baron but it was very popular with the lads. It was doing one bloke out of a job but it was helping the majority. There was nothing the baron could do because it would have meant fighting the whole house. The house master knew what was going on, but he could see I was making a good job of it, and that I had them near enough pacified under my control so that as long as I stopped these continual battles between the other baron and the lads who couldn't afford to pay back what they had borrowed, he was quite prepared to let things ride.

Normally if you can't pay back what you owe to the baron the same week, you are given a further week to do it in, but the amount you owe increases by half an ounce for each successive week. By the end of the month you could find yourself owing three ounces for the original half ounce. It's very seldom that anyone can get hold of that much tobacco at once, so he usually gets beaten up by the daddies. There is only one way in which he could get out of this. Grassing on the baron to the screws isn't a way out. Once it's been openly reported to the Governor that a lad is threatened because of baroning the Governor has to take action. The baron will be sent to chokey (punishment cell). But of course the baron's daddies will get even with the bloke eventually.

## SOLIDARITY SCOTLAND

NOW OUT

Volume I, No. 6.

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63, Glenkirk Drive, Glasgow W. 5.

The only real way to work clear is by going over the wall. There is an unwritten law in every prison and borstal, among barons and prisoners alike, that if a man escapes and stays out more than 24 hours all his debts in that prison are rubbed out. If he eventually gets caught and is sent back to the same place, no matter what he owes, the lads will see to it that the baron doesn't attempt to claim it.

Each house is divided into 4 or 5 groups. Each group has its own captain and the house has a captain who is over the lot. The captains and house captains are just crawlers who suck up to authority. They have special privileges. For example they don't have to do PT in the morning and are allowed to stay up later than the other prisoners. The House Captain has almost the same authority over you as a screw. For example he goes round and locks everyone in their cells at night. He is doing a screw's job and none of the lads like him. We used to cooperate with these captains because it was to our advantage. If we didn't the screws could make it hard for us. If you make life difficult for them and put them to extra work they are going to make life difficult for you, mainly by opening their eyes to things they usually let you get away with, things that are against the rules like being able to go into someone else's cell, and things like that. These concessions are privileges that can always be withdrawn. The screws too can work to rule.

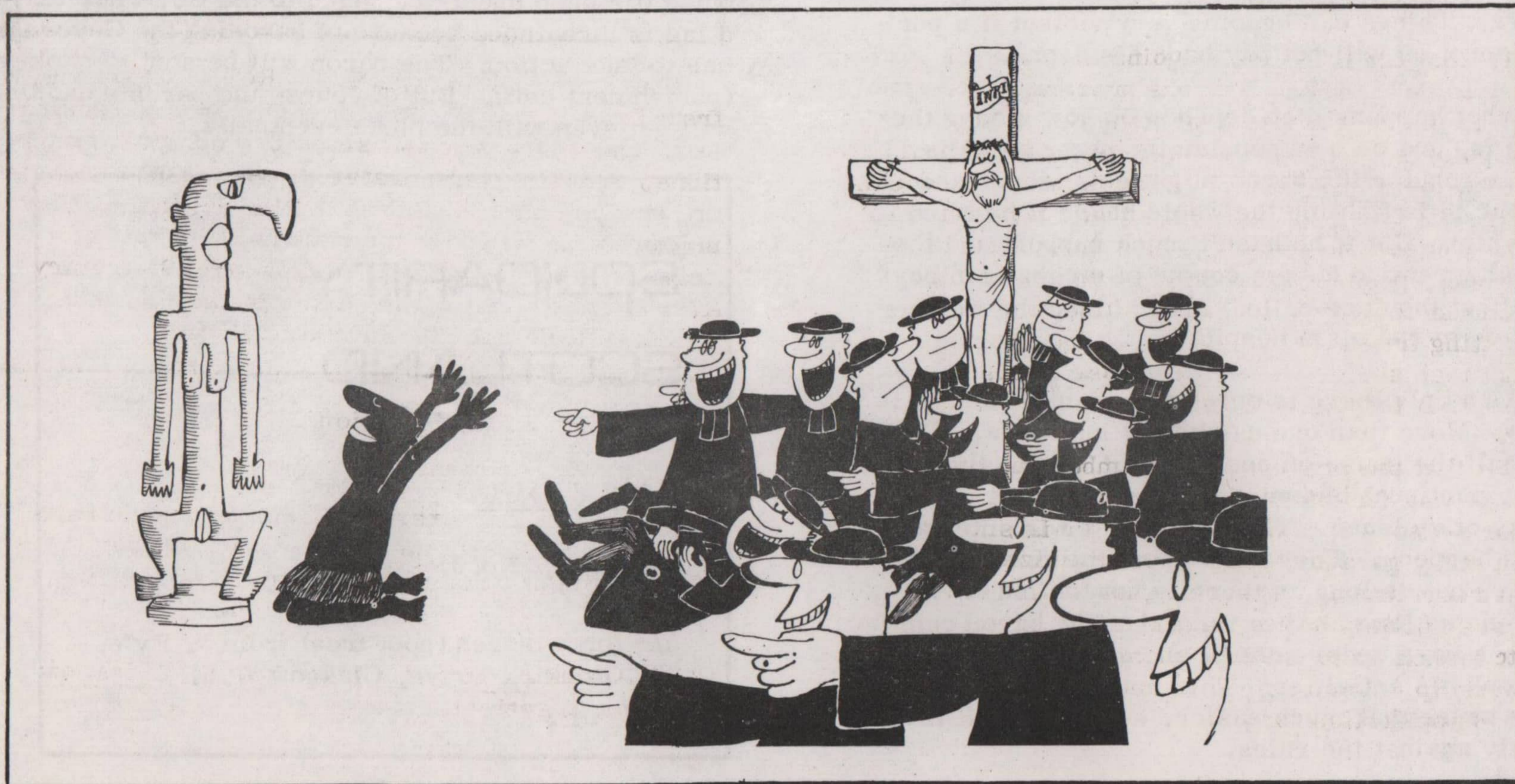
When I was outside I used to do a lot of active work for various left-wing political organizations. I had read a lot of works on politics. But in borstal

arguing and talking about politics, especially left-wing politics, is almost forbidden. The prison library doesn't cater for such tastes. And the books I had sent in were mostly banned as subversive literature.

If I had wanted Churchill's war memoirs, or the history of the Conservative Party, I expect I would have had them like a shot, and probably got out 6 months earlier. But as I was interested in the works of Trotsky and Lenin, I was looked on as an instigator of trouble. Any moans and groans, and I was considered the shit-stirrer. It's true I did try to stir things up a bit. When you get there it's obvious how absolutely lost most of the lads are in the evening. It gets boring looking at TV or listening to the radio night after night for two years. I tried to get them interested in politics, but after a couple of days the house master found out what was going on, and I was accused of being a subversive influence, of trying to start a mutiny and Christ knows what else. As a result I was almost forbidden to talk to anyone in groups of more than three.

Unless you were the sort of bloke who would read anything from the writing on the walls to Enid Blyton there was a very limited range of what you could read. The library had about 500 books, of which about 490 were westerns. The worst thing about being in borstal was the boredom.

Tom Lawrence



# BUSMEN ON THE MOVE

by BOB POTTER

## THE MEETING

On the evening of Sunday, March 6, 1966, I attended a meeting of the BUS CREWS ASSOCIATION held in Glasgow's 'Grand Hotel'. It had been called to discuss the intended sacking of BCA member Jimmy Scott by the Glasgow Transport Corporation, at the instigation of the Transport & General Workers Union.

The room was packed to capacity by rank-and-file busmen from the Corporation's thirteen depots, together with supporters from Central SMT (1) and the William Alexander Passenger Transport Organization.

There was certainly no sign of 'workers' apathy' at this meeting. Hardly anyone present failed to join in the discussion.

It was decided:

(1) that the BCA wasn't going to allow the sacking to go through. Various proposals were put as to the best methods of struggle. The most popular suggestion was that conductors should 'take their time' in collecting fares. The advantages of this approach were that while hitting the Corporation where it hurt most (loss of revenue), passengers would not be antagonised (on the contrary, for many of them would be getting free rides). Moreover the busmen would not themselves be forced to lose wages, as they would if they were on strike.

(2) that the present BCA membership (about 700) was far from satisfactory. One of the major reasons it is not much larger is simply that in many garages there is no organized effort at recruitment. Many busmen hadn't joined because nobody had asked them to. It was agreed to launch an immediate campaign for mass membership. Some delegates asked for as many as 500 application forms.

(3) that the BCA appeal to its members and supporters to stop paying contributions to the T&GWU, and the money be paid to the BCA instead. (2)

(4) that there be a march on Saturday morning, March 19, from the City Chambers to the Transport HQ in Bath Street, where members would collectively hand in their T&GWU membership cards.

All the above decisions were greeted with enthusiastic applause.

But what is the Bus Crews Association? What were the events that led to its formation?

## BETTY REID'S STORY

The first speaker was Betty Reid, a conductress from Ibrox Garage, with 22 years' service behind her. She told a story of steadily worsening conditions, steadily poorer rates of pay, constant speed-up, and repeated 'betrayal' by the T&GWU. The universal contempt of the rank and file for the union officials in general, and District Secretary Alex Grant in particular, had crystallized as a result of the April 1964 strike. (3)

(1) Scottish Motor Traction

(2) In one of the garages, Parkhead, more than a hundred BCA members had ceased paying T&GWU dues three weeks prior to the meeting.

(3) See 'Solidarity' Pamphlet No. 17, 'Glasgow Busmen in Action'.

In October 1963 the Glasgow Transport Corporation had introduced new schedules which had immediately been rejected by the men. A pay rise followed, and, in return, the T&GWU officials agreed to accept the schedules. Special meetings were held. Members at the various depots decided overwhelmingly not to work the schedules.

The Glasgow busmen soon found they were fighting an alliance of union and management. Alex Grant persistently refused to call a mass meeting of members, knowing full well that such a step would result in his being forced to declare the strike official. Instead he ranted and raved at the men, publicly declared that it was 'his job' to get them back to work. He spent a great deal of his time splitting one garage from another by telling the one that the other had 'gone back' when in fact it hadn't.

Most busmen agree that their main weakness in 1964 was the lack of communication between garages. This lack made it possible for the Corporation, the union and the press to spread considerable confusion.

Dissatisfaction with the T&GWU reached a new peak over negotiations for a 5-day week. Garages made it quite clear that they wanted a 5-day, not a 6-day week. But that didn't deter Grant and Co. from openly negotiating for 6 days. (4)

No wonder, then, that talk of forming a break-away union became commonplace. It was decided to hold a ballot in Ibrox to decide whether the majority were for remaining in the T&GWU or for breaking out. The result was:

To break away	167
To remain in	28

The BCA had been born. (5)

Betty Reid and her militant supporters asked those who were for the BCA to pay their subs to her and not to the T&GWU. That week the T&GWU collector in Ibrox collected about 10/-. The BCA collected over £18.

Betty summed up the position in her garage as follows: '5% of the busmen apologize for the T&GWU, 95% of them are hostile to it'. Although she could truthfully claim to be the founder of the BCA, she doesn't see herself as a 'leader'.

Talking of the strike, Betty said: 'I never really participated in the strike. I just went along with the majority - if they wanted to strike, I struck.

But personally I don't think I really believe in strikes. Similarly with the BCA. There was continual demand for somebody to do something, so I just said to the people, well, don't give your money to the T&GWU, give it to me'. They did just that.

## THE MOVEMENT SPREADS

It is argued by some that the collections should have continued every week. Be that as it may, it was not done. But the money the BCA had was to be put to good use. A leaflet was drafted and duly duplicated (being completely new to this kind of thing their printer was able to get away with charging £4 per 1,000 for a rather poorly duplicated quarto sheet).

Inexperienced or not, the BCA knew how to put their finger on the very pulse of today's struggle. They opened their case with a quote from Lord Citrine, billed as 'an experienced TUC leader' in The Times, August 5, 1965, saying: 'It is time for trade union leaders to make a stand against pressure from their own members'.

(4) 'Democracy' in the T&GWU really takes some understanding. First of all, Alex Grant, like all other full-time officials, was appointed from above and not elected by the members. Secondly, branch delegates to the District Committee frequently vote against the decisions of the branches they are supposed to represent. We have it from no less than Scholes (Scottish Secretary, T&GWU) that 'your shop steward or delegate can go forward to District Committee level and vote completely against his branch's mandate if his conscience so dictates, or if other delegates can convince him'.

And - just to rub salt in the wounds - members aren't even entitled to know how their delegates voted. District Committee minutes read out at Ibrox branch meeting on December 6, 1965, contained a letter from Hampden Garage requesting a roll call, i.e. a disclosure to all of how each delegate voted. The request was ruled out of order, as a roll call can only be recorded when agreed by  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority vote of the District Committee!

(5) Originally it was the 'West of Scotland Bus Crews Association'. The geographical terms were dropped from the name as soon as it was apparent it was to have a much wider appeal.



The leaflet proceeded to show how the T&GWU had an excellent record of doing just what Lord Citrine had asked them to do. It dealt with the refusal to negotiate the 5-day week, the general fall in the economic position of busmen over the years, and the refusal to withdraw from the National Joint Industrial Council, which many members feel is an obstacle to any forward movement in conditions of work and rates of pay.

All Glasgow garages were leafleted. Members started rolling in. Gartcraig was the first big breakthrough. Methods of recruitment varied from depot to depot. In Hampden an old school exercise book, headed 'Bus Crews Association' was used and anyone wishing to join was asked to sign. One hundred and thirty signatures were collected.

Leading BCA spokesman in Hampden Garage was Jimmy Scott, main speaker at the March 6 meeting in the 'Grand Hotel'. It was his threatened dismissal that had caused the meeting to be called.

## JIMMY SCOTT'S STORY

There was no doubt that the move against Jimmy arose from his activities for the BCA. He had publicly announced that he was not going to pay any more dues to the T&GWU, and had promptly received a letter from the management stating he could consequently no longer be employed by the Glasgow Transport Corporation. He was given a month's notice.

The bosses and union bureaucrats were trying to pull a fast one. First of all, in spite of allegations to the contrary, there has never been any agreement that all staff must be members of the T&GWU. On the contrary, the appropriate resolution on trade union membership, adopted by the Corporation on December 6, 1962, states:

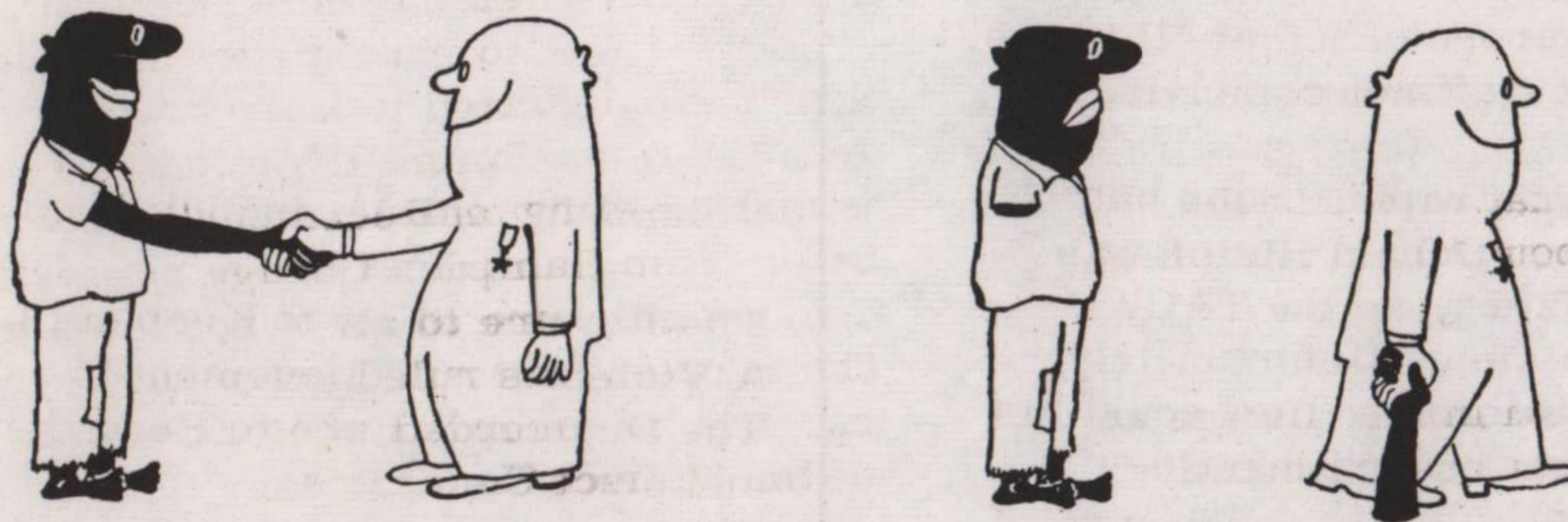
'It is the policy of the Corporation to encourage all its employees to be members of the trade union or association appropriate to their employment...'  
But

'... At no time would the Corporation or Heads of Departments be called upon to determine what was an appropriate trade union or association in the cases of any group of employees or individual employee'.

For the Glasgow Corporation to demand T&GWU membership (rather than BCA membership) was to fly in the face of their own resolution.

Jimmy also pointed out that the T&GWU rule book lays down a definite procedure to be adopted when a person falls behind in payment of contributions. After 13 weeks of non-payment, the member is 'lettered', and told he is lapsed. Jimmy received no such communication. Procedure was forgotten in the wild rush to get rid of this 'dangerous troublemaker'.

The victimisation motive behind the whole manoeuvre is apparent when it is born in mind that there are scores of busmen who have never joined the T&GWU. Many others are months in arrears. One garage collector quoted a case of a man who owed £4 (work that out at 2/- per week!). There had been no threats of dismissal against these people.



The cartoons are by Sine, from Dessins Politiques, J.J. Pauvert, 1965.

On protesting at his illegal notice of dismissal, Jimmy was told by the Transport bosses that he had the right to appeal, and that this was the reason he was given a month's notice. This is just nonsense - he was given a month's notice because the law required it. (6)

The meeting overwhelmingly endorsed Jimmy's right to be in the union of his own choosing. They supported his decision to appeal, and agreed to carry on the battle, legally if necessary. But most speakers felt the way to guarantee victory was to 'show the industrial strength of the BCA'.

'This right to choose one's own union is a fundamental right we could well lose, if we are not careful', Jimmy said. 'It's getting nowadays that the management and the union leaders carve everything up between them. It won't be long before the employers will be deducting the union dues from the pay packets - GTC is supposed to be getting a new computer for wages, and this has been seriously suggested.

'If we don't make a stand now, we'll have had it. Not only will our membership be decided for life, but so will that of our children. Indeed it won't be long before babies born in hospital will be issued with their trade union card as they come out of the labour ward!'

## PARTICK

### ANSWERS GRANT

The meeting was chaired by Donald Hutton, a driver in Partick Garage, an offshoot of Knightswood. Walking into Partick the first thing I saw was a notice on the door of the 'paying-in room' which illustrated the pointless and silly little disciplines the Corporation imposes on the men, even when they are away from the travelling public. 'Hats must be worn in the garage office at all times. Action will be taken against staff not complying.'

Recruitment in Partick was rapid. Soon half the staff had joined the BCA. Donald Hutton was one of the prominent organizers, so the T&GWU decided to arrange his expulsion. Unfortunately though, Donald had a lot of support. How could his expulsion be pushed through a branch meeting? That was the problem.

The T&GWU master minds came up with a series of splendid ideas. Hold the meeting in a different place from the usual one. Don't put anything about the proposed expulsion on the published agenda.

Arrange for the meeting to take place at a time when Donald would be working, and so obviate the unpleasant necessity of having to allow him a say in the proceedings.

The plans went ahead as arranged. Even the well beloved Alex Grant dropped in (he just 'happened to be passing'). Ah! But disaster! Donald had heard about their plans. The news spread like wild fire. Shifts were changed. People went 'sick'. And about 70 busmen turned up at the meeting (about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the whole garage). No apathy among the members here, Mr. Grant!

The shop steward moved the motion for Donald's expulsion. Grant took to the floor. He said he didn't care how the vote went. He ranted, raved, bullied. Shouted out about 'subversives', 'extremists', etc. He was determined to get Donald Hutton expelled - indeed he said he would personally take the matter not to the District Committee, not to the Area Committee, but to the General Executive Council.

Of the 70 members present, 60 opposed the expulsion (not all the 60 were BCA members, many were just opposed to the T&GWU bureaucracy). The majority then walked out of the meeting, turning out the lights as they went, leaving Grant and his miserable little clique huddled together in the dark.

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(6) Under recent 'Terminancy of Employment Act'.

## RESISTANCE

Volume 3, No. 11 includes:

The Forces: How to Keep out Legally.  
A Violent Peace Movement?  
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and other items.

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## THOSE AGAINST

At this point it is of interest to look at the people who have been most vocal in their attempts to bring the big stick to bear upon the BCA and its leading members. In Hampden, the acting shop steward, Brother McNamara was the second signature in the exercise book of BCA membership. Somehow, somewhere, somebody had been doing a little brain-washing, for now McNamara fights the new union with threats quite fantastic - for example telling staff that if they aren't members of the T&GWU, they won't be allowed to work overtime.

The expulsion of Donald Hutton was moved by shop steward David Marshall. Marshall had previously written a leaflet called 'A Phoney Agreement' which had been widely distributed. The BCA was later to adopt the basic principles of this document - the demand for rank and file control and for a truly negotiated agreement. How come the volte-face, Brother Marshall?

Similarly the District Committee asked Ibrox to expel Betty Reid, but the branch committee refused to do so. Chief gunner for Betty Reid was none other than Peter Callaghan, member of the Communist Party and one time delegate who voted against the branch mandate for a five-day week.

The only good thing that is ever said about Alex Grant is that he was a driver, in the early 1940's, in Larkfield Garage. He has always quite openly opposed the feelings of the rank and file and is noted for his bullying approach on all occasions. He has been compared to George Brown in more ways than one.

He lives in a world of 'subversives' and 'plots'. But his witchhunting somehow never falls on the C.P. He seems remarkably well acquainted with all leading C.P. industrial workers, and is Chairman of the 200 odd strong Glasgow Trades Council which is dominated by Party members and fellow-travellers.

What is the attitude of the Communist Party to the BCA? The Party is always opposed to any breakaway union. Its policy is, on the contrary, to 'capture' the leading positions of the established union. An industrial struggle always sets a problem for a Party member - on the one hand, as a militant, he wants to struggle, on the other hand he must bow to the Party's demand for 'respectability'.

Vanguard parties, such as the C.P., always support the bureaucratic set-up, for there is always the dream - or even the real chance - that by capturing the apparatus they can manipulate it in their own interests. Genuine rank and file movements cannot be manipulated from above, hence the united opposition to the breakaway from the various 'vanguard parties'.

This does not mean, of course, that individual Party members cannot play a valuable role in building the rank and file organization. But they do this in spite of their Party membership, rather than because of it.

To Glasgow busmen the T&GWU is just a company union. They see the decisions being reached by Grant and Fitzpayne (manager of GTC). They know that they themselves are in no way involved in these decisions. Until the founding of the BCA their attitude could have been described as 'neutral' - now they find they cannot remain neutral. The fight now taking place concerns them, and they are taking the initiative. This is illustrated by the success of the BCA 'Bulletin'.

## THE BULLETIN

It was decided that a small Bulletin would be the best way to build the organization, being at the same time an ideal instrument for propaganda. The first Bulletin ran to 9 pages. It was published in December 1965 and 500 copies were sold. Said Jimmy Scott of the Bulletin: 'It sells easily. All we need is a contact in each garage prepared to sell it; I sell £2 worth by myself, and I don't even try. They just come up to me and ask for one'.

A month later a second Bulletin appeared, also selling 500 copies. The sale of each edition brings in about £7 profit to the BCA. Although they don't see the money as important as the propaganda value, it is nevertheless a big factor. The third Bulletin, now under preparation, will run to 1,000 copies.

Anyone with any experience of running 'on the job' publications will know how difficult it often is for workers to write. The editors of the Glasgow Bulletin are not faced with this problem. The articles are pouring in - I saw three handed to Donald Hutton during the hour or so I was with him. The reason for the Bulletin's success is obvious. The members know that the BCA is their organization, they know that they will take the decisions, and that its success or failure, and the future of their job, depends upon them.

## PRINCIPLES

## OF THE B.C.A.

At this stage no 'constitution' has yet been finalized. The men know however the sort of thing they want. Their general aspirations are best summed up in a draft programme, published in their first Bulletin. Here it is in full:

### 'Programme for Change'

- (1) The initial 2/6d contribution will go to a fighting fund for halls for meetings and leaflets, etc.
- (2) The weekly contribution will be 2/-.
- (3) Legal Aid (if needed) will be taken care of by the first week's contributions.
- (4) Delegates from each garage will meet openly and observers from the rank and file can go to meetings at any time.
- (5) Minutes of meetings will be printed and distributed to all members.
- (6) No official to be permanent.
- (7) Delegates and officials to be elected by the members. No appointments from above.
- (8) Delegates and officials to be recalled at any time by majority decision of members.
- (9) Full time officials (unlike Grant) will always be on hand to attend to members' grievances. Two people are needed on the end of a phone.
- (10) Association members will decide policy and action. Delegates and officials will carry it out. All rank and file decisions will be automatically endorsed. (At present union officials refuse to endorse majority decisions by the members, thus making any action 'unofficial'.)
- (11) No agreements to be made with management without members' consent.
- (12) Officials' wages to be comparable with the Busmen's.
- (13) A regular bulletin

THIS WILL BE A DEMOCRATIC ASSOCIATION, NOT A DICTATORSHIP.

## THE FUTURE

News about the BCA travelled beyond the Glasgow Corporation. A petition appeared in Johnstone Garage, Western SMT, addressed to the T&GWU, demanding the union undertake some 'positive action' in the immediate future. The petition added that if a suitable answer was not forthcoming they would have no alternative but to join '600 of our comrades' in the BCA.

The brother who circulated the petition was warned that he could be 'sent to prison if his action caused any buses to come off the road'. (7) But an estimated 85% of the garage support the BCA.

Similar activities are going on in garages in the William Alexander group, and several hundred application forms have been requested by Stirling Garage.

Provided they keep up the offensive the Glasgow busmen could start a movement that could snowball. The political representatives of the ruling class, be they Tory or Labour, are agreed that the workers must be disciplined. Let's be under no illusions about this. The planned legislation against 'unofficial' activities is an attempt first to hamper, then to destroy job organization.

For more than two centuries workers have fought for the right to organize on the job. From this struggle were built the trade unions. But the unions today have become fully bureaucratized. The workers have no longer any control over them, but rather stand in opposition to them. Those 'theoreticians' who look for the 'dialectic' at work in society need look no further than the trade unions for an example; the unions have 'turned into their opposite'. They are today a very special part of the Establishment to be used against the working class.

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(7) Some people obviously can't wait for Labour's anti-union legislation to reach the statute book!

The official trade unions can be no more 'reformed' or 'taken over from below' than can any other part of the state apparatus, such as the army or the police. Nor can they be fought by imitation, i. e. by building 'oppositions' with 'left wing' officials and bureaucrats, rather than 'right wing' ones. The 'political' alignment of the trade union official is irrelevant. He can only exist by virtue of his being the functionary of the apparatus.

So the working class today is faced with a similar problem to that which faced it 200 years ago: the right and need to organize itself, for its own emancipation. Today no political party or trade union apparatus really represents the interests of working people. It follows that in today's situation meaningful working class activity and organization for struggle must, a priori, be 'unofficial'.

The building of genuine rank and file organizations - controlled by the men themselves as a real expression of their interests and aspirations - will meet with ferocious opposition and probably far greater violence from the masters of society than ever before.

But this does not mean that we have made no progress through centuries of struggle. On the contrary. We have learned that we can never entrust to anyone else (political party or trade union

leadership) the task of waging the struggle on our behalf. We must mobilize ourselves. The working class must manage its own affairs for no one will do it for us.

It is no abstraction for us, when we talk of workers' management of production. We are not talking of some distant millenium, in which the working class will at last take the decisions that concern it most, the sort of millenium envisaged by all traditional 'lefts' from 'Tribune' to the Trotskyists. For us the struggle for workers' management starts here and now, on the shop floor. It starts as a struggle to control the job and to create our own organizations for this purpose. When full time union officials spout about 'workers' control' they should politely be told that under a system of genuine workers' management there would be no place for the likes of them. Unlike so many on the 'left' we don't stand for workers' control in the future and hierarchical organization today. For us, the future must be created now.

This, in our opinion, is the really revolutionary implication of today's unofficial activities. Let employers and union officials do their nut. The working class is slowly groping towards a real understanding of these problems. The building of rank and file bodies for workers' control, here and now, is another name for the building of socialism. This is the job the Glasgow busmen have begun.

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## LETTERS

### THE APPRENTICES' STRIKE

John Chappell's article on the apprentices' strike (Solidarity vol. III, No. 12) makes some valid criticisms of the Communist Party and of the Socialist Labour League. But its intolerant style is remarkably similar to that of these 'revolutionary vanguards'. He offers no evidence to support his statement that these organizations wished the strike to fail: what motive would they have apart for some inexplicable passion for betrayal?

He explains the Communist Party's betrayal complex by the leadership's seduction by the flesh-pots of the Kremlin. This is nonsense. Most C.P. activists make considerable personal sacrifices both for their party and for the labour movement.

Nor are most C.P. manoeuvres and sell-outs a result of 'orders from Moscow'. They are explained by the penetration of capitalist ideas into the working class, with the result that even those who want to fight against the system are crippled by their reliance on bourgeois concepts of hierarchical organization and leadership. Similarly the S.L.L. (a self-sustaining bureaucracy, with no access to Moscow gold) attempts to substitute a leadership divorced from the actual movement for the conscious activity of the people concerned.

A declaration that we do not consider ourselves as leaders does not safeguard us from the danger of elitism. Both the C.P. and the S.L.L. are parts of the labour movement and unfortunately will remain with us, in spite of John Chappell's excommunication. It would be a pity if libertarian socialists were to join with them in the perpetuation of one of their mystifying ideas, that the present sad state of the socialist movement is due to the betrayal of this or that leadership.

John Sullivan.

## MORE ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY AT DAGENHAM

I was very impressed by Ernie Stanton's article on Fords (in Solidarity vol. III, No. 11). But I found his record of what happened in conflict with my recollections.

Ernie says that Halpin ignored the Party line in voting for a return to work. I have always understood that Halpin was following the Party line in selling out the dispute. This point should surely have been made since the article gives the impression (page 17) that Halpin was the traitor and the Party was whiter than white.

I get the impression from Ernie's piece that the sacking of Bill Francis was regarded as a surprise. Yet nearly every senior steward I spoke to in the months before the sacking told me that a showdown was imminent.

Security vultures had been seen spying on the shop stewards H.Q. It was obvious that the bosses were trying to catch a steward away from work without permission. During the summer of 1962, Blakeman, the Ford Labour Relations puppet, went to the PTA and warned all shop stewards that they must abide by the ban on shop meetings or face severe consequences. (It was the procedure for stewards to hold report-back shop meetings after the weekly stewards meeting.)

After Blakeman's threat, the stewards' meeting voted to stick their fingers up at him and continue with shop meetings.

Unfortunately, the right-wingers took fright and didn't hold shop meetings next day. It must have given Hennessy and his henchmen just the encouragement they needed to proceed to the showdown as undoubtedly there was union connivance.

I still feel that the joint shop stewards' organization embracing all the Ford plants should have been more alert to the danger signals.

I also feel that the stewards should have made known the imminent danger to the men. The trouble was that too many of them had grown used to only letting the men know what they wanted them to know.

It is little wonder that the legendary Ford army of militant workers became virtually ghost troops at the time of the showdown. They had been more or less sold out by everyone - the company, the unions and the stewards. Bill Francis got the kiss of death from his blood brothers.

But whenever I turn over the events of Fords in my mind, I keep coming to the same conclusion. There can be no effective fight against Fords and the union traitors while leading stewards are loyal to the Party line. Again and again I saw their militant talk become meaningless when situations demanded constructive action.

What depresses me about Ford's today is not only the oppression going on there. It is not only the automation of human beings. It is also the fact that Party members are still in leading positions in the shop stewards' organizations. Ford workers must be alerted to what the Party stands for, or they will struggle up again only to be sold out from all sides once more.

The last thing the Party wants is the workers to learn from history - because that will be the Party's death warrant.

Too often I saw in the past good militant stewards who were lulled into believing that the Party was the custodian of the workers' heritage. Men like Jack Mitchell were doing a wonderful job until they believed the fairy tales and joined the Party. They were never any real good again.

I certainly think that the Solidarity issues on Fords ought to be sold at the plant and I would be only too happy to help with this in any way I can.\*

Steve Gordon.

\* Any other volunteers?

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# MALATESTA

In vol. III, No. 10 we published a review by John Sullivan of 'Errico Malatesta - his life and ideas' (Freedom Press, 1965). In vol. III, No. 12, Nick Walter objected to some statements made in the review. J.S. now replies. This needn't be just a dialogue. Join in if you want to.

Nick Walter concentrates on how 'left' Mussolini was before 1919. He sees Mussolini as part of the 'left'...although also a nationalist. To my mind Mussolini's nationalism was an integral part of his politics. Nationalism holds that all the inhabitants of a country have a common interest; the concepts of the class struggle and of internationalism (which are at the root of revolutionary socialist politics) challenge this assumption.

Of course Mussolini was not an orthodox conservative. Fascism in both its German and Italian forms was distinguished by its demagogic slogans. In evaluating Mussolini, it would be more profitable to ask who financed him (the Ansaldo and Ilva heavy industry trusts and the Banca di Sconto, among others), and who provided the spearhead of his movement (the ruined urban middle class many ex-officers, certain layers of the 'gilded youth', etc...) rather than to accept Mussolini's more radical statements at face value. (1)

N.W. refers to Mussolini's approval of D'Annunzio's seizure of Fiume. Although many muddle headed Anarchists and Syndicalists welcomed the venture, this doesn't make Mussolini a 'left'. The whole grotesque adventure was endorsed and partly financed by the most rabid nationalists. It was also acclaimed by the syndicalist leader of the Maritime Union Giuseppe Giuletti (who was financing Malatesta 'Umanita Nuova'). There is no doubt that Malatesta himself supported the campaign. This is proof of Malatesta's confusion, not of his 'Leftness'.

The veterans of the Fiume campaign were to provide an important part of the strong arm squads of Fascism. As Rossi points out, 'the occupation of Fiume, as time went on, provided Fascism with a model for its militia, its uniforms, the names of its units, its war cries and its creed. Mussolini borrowed the whole of D'Annunzio's scenario, including his crowd scenes'. (2)

N.W. mentions Mussolini's support for the stay-in strikes. But this support was conditional on the workers leaving intact the existing structure of authority outside the factories. This agreed very well with the Syndicalists' traditional attitude of 'ignoring' the state! Syndicalist doctrine certainly opposed the bourgeois state, but saw it merely as a bureaucratic excrescence. It did not see the state as the necessary instrument of class rule. Syndicalists were therefore particularly susceptible to corporatist illusions. It is true that Malatesta realised that the state power had to be overthrown and destroyed. I don't equate the cynical opportunism of Mussolini and the Syndicalist leaders with the genuine illusions of the stay-in strikers.

A more reliable indication of the real nature of the Fascist movement is given by Mussolini's consistent and unhesitating opposition to the Russian Revolution, from its very earliest days.

N.W. claims that the left were 'confused because their new right-wing enemies had been their old left-wing rivals, and they were also divided among themselves'. But the chronic confusion and continual splits of the 'left' reflected its own heterogeneous character. N.W. considers that this was a coherent movement, which only lacked unity. In reality there was a collection of tendencies which had little in common. Should there have been unity for instance between the revolutionaries and the right-wing socialists, who were later prepared to take part in Mussolini's government?

N.W. attacks the revolutionaries of all shades for their 'contempt for compromise and their taste for violence'. On the contrary, the Fascist campaigns of murder and intimidation needed to be opposed by collective, concerted and efficient measures of self-defence. The later attempts on Mussolini's life were heroic, but only resulted in provoking repression.

The collapse of the Italian 'left' certainly deserves a deeper analysis than Malatesta provides. Much of his writings of the early 1920's could have been written 10 years earlier - or 10 years later. His recipes for revolution are timeless in that they do not distinguish between periods of upsurge and of retreat.

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(1) See Daniel Guerin 'Fascism and Big Business', New York, 1939.

(2) See A. Rossi, 'The Rise of Italian Fascism 1918-1922', London, 1938.

One of the seldom discussed causes for the collapse of the Italian 'left' was the ease with which Fascism was able to take over certain aspects of syndicalist ideology. Just as German Fascism borrowed from social-democracy, Mussolini stole his anti-capitalist rhetoric from the Syndicalist movement. Pasella, Bianchi, and many more of his lieutenants had been Syndicalist leaders. Mussolini's corporatist state had a constitution based on a kind of degenerated Syndicalism or perverted Guild Socialism. This helps to explain why so many foreign socialists, particularly Cooperators and Guild Socialists - and even some 'libertarians' - were impressed by Mussolini's regime. In this they resemble those 'lefts' who today still support Wilson because his government's anti-working class measures are wrapped up in socialist phrases.

Finally, I did not equate Malatesta with Ramsay MacDonald. I compared their similar habit of appealing to the eternal principles of Humanity, Justice, etc. Appeals to the eternal verities may lead to a kind of sick romanticism. (3) But dealing in abstractions also has an inbuilt advantage. Because abstractions cannot be critically examined one can avoid looking too closely at reality, and assessing real issues.

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(3) For instance 'We are living in a world where faith is always misplaced and hope is always betrayed, and somehow we contrive to keep hope and faith alive' etc... N. Walter, 'Men Against War', 1963.

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## SHOP STEWARDS' DEFENCE COMMITTEE

As a result of a meeting attended by over 200 workers at the Mahatma Gandhi Hall in London during January, a follow up meeting elected a provisional committee to try and organize various forms of activity around the defence of shop stewards and rank and file workshop organizations.

We are deeply concerned at the development of the Incomes Policy into a disguised wage freeze with the necessary sacrifices being at the expense of working people. It is clear that the main battle against the Policy will be conducted at the workshop and factory floor level led by rank and file militants and shop stewards. It is in this context that we see the proposed T.U. legislation as a logical next step to attack that section which represents workers most directly and effectively.

We see the proposed legislation as a threat to militant workers with fines and imprisonment and the subsequent damage it would cause to workshop organization. We are resolved to do our utmost to give maximum support to protect the militants and shop floor committees which have done so much in the past years to improve working class living standards.

In the present situation where the majority of the Trade Union bureaucracy supports the Government's Incomes Policy and anti Trade Union legislation, there is a growing need for a rank and file organization of trade unionists that will defend our common interests.

The policy of our committee commits us to assist any steward or trade union militant who finds himself victimized in any way. To give full support to all fellow workers engaged in strike action to defend or improve working class standards, whether the strike is official or unofficial, and to campaign against interference in our trade union affairs and the threat of legislation.

Our Committee will welcome help and support from any trade unionist irrespective of the union or industry to which he or she may belong. Our success will depend on creating a broad front that can concentrate on issues which will obtain the widest possible support from those in the T.U. movement who are prepared to fight in defence of basic working class principles.

The committee has no preconceptions as to the forms that the struggle should take. We would welcome the advice, assistance and support of all industrial workers, who should write in the first instance to the provisional secretary, Geoff Carlsson, 117 Carmelite Road, Harrow Weald, Mddsx.

Signed by the provisional  
committee :

Bill Taylor, AEU  
Geoff Carlsson, AEU  
Jim Higgins, POEU  
S.S. Khera, T&GWU  
Peter Turner, ASW  
Keith Dickinson, CAWU  
Bill Thompson, ASPD  
Roger Cox, AEU