

## ST. HELENA

## Isle of poverty

THE RECENT visit to London of Fred Ward, secretary of St. Helena General Workers' Union, has drawn attention to the plight of this and other forgotten islands. St. Helena, chiefly known as the exile of Napoleon, was much prized by French, Dutch, Spanish and English traders and mariners engaged in voyages between Europe and the Indies. British since Cromwell's days, the island declined in importance with the opening of the Suez Canal and further declined with the development of bigger and faster steamships.

Situated in the South Atlantic, 4,477 miles from Southampton and 1,140 from Africa, the island is only 10½ miles long by 6½ miles, with a population of 4,700 of mixed races. Although picturesque and possessing a mild climate, St. Helena cannot develop tourism because of its remoteness.

Fred Ward says: "Our island could be a paradise, but now we are a hell, with the dole and growing bitterness." Ward went on to state that unemployment is rife and £2 5s. the average family income.

The General Workers' Union asks the British Government to invest money in developing local industries. Certainly there is need and scope for these, but the people of St. Helena have not the initial means to do it themselves.

Apart from the simple humanity of aiding islands, there is a world need to maintain them in habitation. Even now they are still useful to navigation, air and sea, and for the study of weather, oceanography, zoology and astronomy. Halley visited St. Helena in 1676 to observe the transit of Venus and Darwin in 1836 to study fauna and flora.

St. Helena has a "dependency", Ascension, 760 miles away, rather smaller and with a normal population of less than 200. Britain and the U.S.A., however, are both interested in the military value of Ascension in an age of ballistic rockets, and some are finding work there—in the case of men from St. Helena on a basis of annual exile. This sort of development, however, does not seem very popular in either of the islands. Does one wonder why?

## ICFTU woos African workers

BRUSSELS. The tenth anniversary Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, meeting in Brussels in December, agreed to establish an African Regional Organisation with greater autonomy than is enjoyed by the European, Asian or Latin American regions. An African will be appointed as one of the seven vice-presidents on the executive board of the I.C.F.T.U., another as a member of the executive board sub-committee, and a third as an assistant general secretary.

The background to this decision of the I.C.F.T.U. to grant in full the demands of its African affiliates presented by Tom Mboya, general secretary of the Kenya Federation of Labour, is the struggle for the allegiance of African workers now being waged between two trade union internationals (the I.C.F.T.U. and the Communist-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions), the Roman Catholic African Confederation of Believing Workers, and the projected all-African trade union federation, due to be launched at a conference to be held in Casablanca, Morocco, in May. A preparatory conference was held in Accra in November, and Tom Mboya is already under fire from trade union leaders, especially in Ghana and Guinea, who advocate an African federation completely independent of the two cold-war power groups.

At present 20 African trade union federations are affiliated to the I.C.F.T.U., claiming a total membership of 1,286,121, nearly 900,000 of whom are in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. There are less than 400,000 members in tropical Africa, and the Ghana T.U.C., which with 85,000 members forms the second largest group of these, seems likely to break away from the I.C.F.T.U. when the all-African federation is formed.

## No workers' control in Yugoslavia

THAT ALL is not as rosy in Tito's Yugoslavia as some Marxists and left-wing Social Democrats like to think is indicated by Tito's own strictures to the central committee of the Yugoslav Communist League recently. *The Times* Belgrade correspondent reported (November 24) that Tito "rebuked speakers for glossing over shortcomings in party conduct and Communists occupied in industry and economic enterprises for causing justified popular discontent by their continued exercise of privileges and their 'absolute master' attitude to the workers."

"His principal target was the managerial class, but the state of the party as a whole is obviously the subject of its leader's serious concern."

"The executive committee came out strongly last year against the abuse of official privileges and other undesirable features which were causing serious discontent among workers who could daily see the difference between their own status and standard of living and

that of privileged Communist officials, and resented the fashion in which many factory managers had reduced self-management to a mere formality."

"For a time matters improved, but slowly those occupying important economic posts resumed their old practices. It seems that the trade unions recently again assembled material about officials who were once more ignoring or reducing the rights of workers' councils, granting favours in such matters as jobs and flats and penalising workers who dared to criticise them."

Tito said that justified bitterness was being caused among workers by what he described as "negative occurrences" in the economic field.

## Mexican labour in U.S.

EL PASO, TEXAS. The U.S. Labour Department has registered a new agreement on Mexican farm labour in U.S., which came into force on December 1, 1959.

Most important items are that the employer must satisfy the Department that enough U.S. workers are not available, though offered the same wages offered Mexican labour; any employer who ill-treats Mexican workers or breaks his agreement will not be eligible to hire Mexican labour and employers who do not give preference in hiring U.S. workers will also be ineligible.

Some Mexican workers, mostly farm labourers, are allowed to enter the U.S. with temporary work permits, often covering the harvest periods only, but many more enter "illegally". Very many of these cross the Rio Grande by swimming or wading, hence the name "wet backs".

The daily Press of El Paso and district has published pictures of Mexican workers "illegally" entering Texas from the waters of the Rio Grande, while the sheriff looked on. The story alongside explained that while the sheriff did not interfere, he knew where these men would work and, if they had any trouble with their employer, he, the sheriff, would be able to arrest them for illegal entry into the U.S.

Living conditions of these Mexican workers are often bad. In 1959, three camps in California were closed because insanitary conditions were a danger to public health.

## Those dark, Satanic mills

A reminder that the "dark Satanic mills" still rear their ugly heads in one form or another comes from that most up to date of industries in the wonderland of technological progress, America. Five uranium processing mills, one of which has been operating since 1947, were accused by the Atomic Energy Commission in November of violating safety regulations imposed in 1957 by exposing their employees to radioactive dust and contaminating the air and rivers. Last May six other mills were accused of similar offences.

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## WORLD LABOUR NEWS

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## East African railway workers strike

THE STRIKE of 23,000 African railway workers in Kenya, which began on November 12 last, was seriously impaired by blacklegging by so-called "loyal" staff and by lack of solidarity by the Uganda and Tanganyika railwaymen, who ignored appeals from the Kenya Railway African Union to strike in sympathy.

It was called in protest against the refusal of the East African Railways and Harbours Administration to agree to an independent inquiry into the conduct of a European building supervisor at the Nairobi engineering workshops, whom the union accused of ill-treatment of African workers. This refusal led the union to demand the removal of the supervisor from his post. The employers described the accusation as groundless, but eventually agreed to a committee of inquiry as a condition of a return to work.

They also agreed to discuss the question of more pay, included in six additional demands made by the union during the course of the strike. These demands were for higher minimum wages, revision of grading and responsibility to improve wages all round, a 40-hour week in place of the present 48 hours for shift workers and 45 for those on heavy duties, better housing, Africanisation of railway services, and a general commission of inquiry into the running of the railways.

During the strike the E.A.R. first called for volunteers from its own staff and from their families to undertake extra duties, or for transference to other posts. It was, unfortunately, to be expected that European workers would scab on their brother unionists, but that the Asians should have joined them as bosses' men was, to say the least, short-sighted. One day they will certainly need the solidarity of African workers. There was a small number of African scabs.

Things took a far more serious turn when the appeal for scabs was addressed to the general public, including retired railway employees able to drive locomotives or undertake other specialist duties, such as telegraph work or acting as stationmasters. In a colony with a reputation as discreditable as Kenya's, it is easy to believe the E.A.R.'s claim that they were inundated with offers of help. Blackleg labour enabled the Administration to keep open a majority of the stations and to run only slightly reduced services.

The bosses reckoned without the solidarity of the other African unions, however. Tom Mboya, the most prominent of the African elected members of the Kenya Legislative Council, who is also general secretary of the Kenya Federation of Labour, to which most of the Kenya African unions are affiliated, threatened a general strike. The other transport unions, including road haulage workers, taxi drivers and dockers, expressed their readiness to come out in sympathy, and were authorised to do so if the railwaymen were still on strike on December 2. The International Transport Workers' Union demonstrated their solidarity by contributing to the strike fund. Three days before the ultimatum expired, the East African Railways gave in, agreeing to consider all the union's demands, which they had formerly refused to discuss.

The E.A.R. is also having trouble in Uganda and Tanganyika. A week after the African railway workers had come out in Kenya, more than 19,000 African railwaymen in Uganda struck in support of their demand that the minimum wages of skilled and semi-skilled workers should be raised from 74s. to 120s. a month. As in Kenya, the bosses were able to rely on European and Asian and some African scabs from their own staffs to operate trains and lake steamers. The Uganda Trade Union Congress threatened to call a general strike from November 27 in support of the African railwaymen, but left them in the lurch at the last minute, with nothing but vague promises of adopting "other ways and means" to support them.

In Tanganyika a strike of African railway workers was called for December 9 in support of demands which included a minimum daily wage of 4s. and revision of the grading system. The Tanganyika Federation of Labour was informed of this decision in a letter from the union's general secretary, Kasanga Tumbo, who declared: "We also sympathise with our brothers in Kenya and Uganda."

It is a great pity that more active sympathy was not shown in

response to the Kenya railwaymen's appeal. From a purely practical point of view, such lack of co-ordination of tactics between the three African railway unions would be incredible if it were not the general rule nowadays among unions with far longer experience to learn from.

In Britain the transport workers are splintered into several handfuls of rival unions, which are frequently in a state of bitter rivalry. If the past triumphs of solidarity between unions have been forgotten by most British workers, it is not to be expected that they will be able to teach the Africans much about militant unionism. As for the lesson of one Boss, one Union, most of them have never even heard of it.

## ARGENTINA

## Lock-out is fiasco

BUENOS AIRES. The Argentine plumbing workers, organised in the Regional Workers' Federation, FORA (section of the IWMA), have been laughing at an unsuccessful attempt to provoke a lock-out against them by the sanitary engineering firms.

This attempt has been made by the Sterman and Chacon companies, both in dispute with their personnel over a claim for the six-hour day.

Having failed to break the fighting spirit of these workers by means of a Press and radio campaign, in which the FORA was accused of political speculation with the six-hour demand—one it first put forward in 1902—the Sterman-Chacon alliance tried on September 17 to drag in other firms, with the express aim of provoking police action against the workers.

Apart from six tiny firms, however, the bosses' appeal for "solidarity" met with deaf ears and 99 per cent of plumbing work continues uninterrupted by the threatened lock-out, which has proved a dismal failure.

La Protesta

LATER...The struggle took a far more serious turn with the arrest on Oct. 31 of FORA militants Carlos Kristof and Raul I Arias on trumped-up charges of "terrorism". Kristof on protest hunger strike in National Prison from arrest to November 13.

## VENEZUELA

## Workers' congress

THE CONGRESS of the Confederation of Workers of Venezuela was held in Caracas from November 13-20. A special invitation was sent to the International Working Men's Association, and the return air fare from France of our General Secretary, Germinal Esgleas was paid by the Venezuelan movement.

More than 1,000 delegates, representing over a million workers attended and there were direct delegations from other Latin American countries such as Uruguay, Cuba, Mexico and Haiti.

In addition to the IWMA, there were fraternal delegates from the World T.U. Federation (Communist), International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (Socialist) and the International Confederation of Christian Workers (Catholic).

The Venezuelan Confederation contains all tendencies within the working-class movement of that country, including the Syndicalist. During the Congress, which decided to remain independent of a existing labour internationals, the different international delegates gave speeches of greeting. The friends of the IWMA in Venezuela are working actively for our ideas.

BRITISH GUIANA—Essential services were reported to be affected when nearly 11,000 members of the federated unions of Government employees went on strike during December.





## The best of all possible worlds...

**PORTUGAL**—Manuel Acosta, aged 31, of Aguiar, has been sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment by the plenary court of Boa Hora for subversive propaganda against Dr. Salazar's régime. Seven people, including a lawyer, were sentenced in Lisbon during November to terms of imprisonment ranging from one to five years, with the loss of political rights, for subversive activities.

**HUNGARY**—Evidence of trials and executions continues to leak out of Hungary. Dean Kalman Roller, director of the division of the University of British Columbia Faculty of Forestry, formed from teachers and students from Sopron University who fled during the rising, said that 15 teenagers were executed in September and that 150 others would be executed in groups as they reached 18, the age of liability for capital punishment in Hungary. At least 10 other death sentences were mentioned by Sir Leslie Munro in his report to the United Nations, including those passed on "counter-revolutionaries" from Ujpest, an industrial suburb of Budapest. Recent sentences of imprisonment include those on Ferenc Merey, educationist (10 years), Sandor Feceke, cultural editor of the Communist Party organ *Szabad Nep* before the revolution (nine years), and Genó Szell, former ambassador to Rumania (five years). A Hungarian official recently admitted that a large group of young people were tried last February and March for "political crimes committed in 1958". It is not known what sentences were passed on them.

**NORTHERN IRELAND**—Two women suspected of being members of the Irish Republican Army were arrested in Belfast on November 19 and interned under the Government's special powers.

**SOUTH AFRICA**—Coloured voters in Cape Province boycotted the first elections held since they were removed from the common parliamentary roll. The 12 unopposed candidates standing were declared elected to the Union Council for Coloured Affairs, where they will sit alongside 15 other stooges nominated by the Government. In Durban mass protests are being made by Africans, Asians and Coloureds against the first proclamations there under the Group Areas Act. It is estimated that more than 100,000 non-whites will be dispossessed of their homes and business premises in the racial re-zoning taking place. In Windhoek, South-West Africa, on December 10, police and troops opened fire with rifles, pistols and stenguns on African demonstrators taking part in a boycott of the municipal council in protest against the order to move from the present location to the new township of Katutura, where they will have to pay £2 a month for housing instead of a hut tax of 3s. 6d., and higher bus fares to the places where they work. Twelve Africans were killed and more than 40 wounded.

**RUMANIA**—In an attempt to stamp out Zionist sympathy, the Government is again arresting and trying Jews on trumped-up charges of treason and espionage, reports *The Times* (November 3). Among those sentenced are Efraim Zinger, journalist (20 years), and Israel Hart, who was for 10 years a caretaker and cleaner in the Israel Legation in Bucharest (18 years). Some of those arrested are being charged with "crimes" for which they have already served prison sentences. These include Dr. Leo Fried, formerly general secretary of the Zionist Organisation, who is still suffering from tuberculosis contracted during his previous imprisonment, and 70-year-old Dr. Ernst Horvath, whose poor health may make another prison term tantamount to a death sentence.

**TURKEY**—Ulku Arman, editor of the Opposition newspaper *Ulus* ("The People"), who is serving a sentence of two years and four months imprisonment for publishing articles derogatory to the Governor of Istanbul and the Turkish Government, went on hunger strike during November. About 10 journalists are serving sentences of two or more years in Ankara and Istanbul prisons, with many more in provincial prisons.

**EAST GERMANY**—Sentences of 15 and 12 months' imprisonment respectively were passed on the owner of a public house and his wife in November for allowing customers to listen to Western radio broadcasts and to see West German television programmes, especially *As Far As Your Feet Will Carry You*, a programme based on the experiences of German prisoners-of-war in Russia.

**CEYLON**—A Bill to restore the death penalty, abolished in 1956, was passed by the House of Representatives on November 24. On the same day the state of emergency, under which the Press is gagged and the police can detain indefinitely any person remanded in connection with the murder of the former Prime Minister, Mr. Bandaranaike, was extended for a third month.

**POLAND**—Following the expulsion of Mr. A. M. Rosenthal, Warsaw correspondent of the *New York Times*, on November 11, the paper itself was banned from Poland in December. A Govern-

ment spokesman told Mr. Rosenthal: "The question of falseness or otherwise does not enter into the matter. You have written very deeply and in detail about the internal situation, party matters and leadership matters, and the Polish Government cannot tolerate such probing reporting."

**SOUTH AFRICA**—Mr. H. Barzilay, news correspondent of the National Broadcasting Company of America, has been expelled from South Africa.

**TIBET**—The Dalai Lama on November 14 accused the Chinese of genocide. In addition to mass butchery, he said, they have sterilised Tibetan men and women and deported nearly 10,000 children to China.

**GHANA**—Under the Preventive Detention Act, detention orders were made on November 11 against nine people accused of organising violence during elections in Brong-Afafo and Ashanti. Three of those named were among a group of 61 members of the Opposition United Party, acquitted of conspiracy by the senior magistrate of Kumasi only a week before.

**U.S.A.**—The failure of the Mississippi authorities and the Pearl River County grand jury to act in bringing to trial the men who lynched Mack Charles Parker, 23-year-old Negro, while he was held in custody on rape charges, was described by the Federal Attorney-General, Mr. W. Rogers, on November 17 as "as flagrant and calculated a miscarriage of justice as I know of." In Fayette County, Tennessee, election officials and the Democrat executive committee of the county were charged by the Federal Government on November 16 with violating the Civil Rights Act by denying Negroes the right to vote in a primary. In Miami the City Commission has ordered the city manager to reverse his decision to open the city's recreational facilities, including swimming pools, to Negroes.

**RUSSIA**—Edward Crankshaw (*Observer*, November 15) reported that Jehovah's Witnesses have been on trial in Odessa and Mtsensk for "subversive activity". The outcome is not known. Three members of a sect called Pentecostals tried in the Crimea were sentenced to six, five and three years in a labour camp. Continued persecution of Jews is reported by Patricia Blake, staff correspondent of *Life*. Following a two-month visit to Russia, she writes that all over the country synagogues are being closed and prayer meetings raided, and that official attacks on the Jews as "thieves" and "enemies of socialism" have resulted in pogroms in Kiev and other places in which synagogues have been broken into or set on fire and Jews beaten, and even killed. Jews "are being systematically excluded from higher education, Government service, medicine, teaching and other professions."

**INDIA**—Fourteen people were killed and more than 200 injured in Kanpur on November 3 when police fired several times on demonstrators demanding that a head constable said to have molested a woman be handed over to them.

**CHINA**—The *People's Daily* of November 2 complains that "some time ago the spirits of departed capitalism reappeared in an attempt to drag our people back to the old path of the small-scale and selfish mutual-aid groups or to the individually working households." It calls this opposition to the communes "merely a small adverse current", but *Observer* correspondent Dennis Bloodworth, describing (November 22) in detail the substantial concessions made recently to the Chinese peasants, says that as a result the commune "loses its original character as an all-embracing collective in which all ownership is lodged. It becomes instead, in effect, a form of local government."

**FIJI**—The banning of a speech by Mr. James Anthony, secretary of the Wholesale and Retail Workers' Union, to oil worker members of his union who went on strike on December 6, led to riots and the looting of European shops in Suva. A curfew and the banning of assemblies of more than three people was proclaimed, while hundreds of special constables were enrolled and armed with rifles. The strike ended on December 15, when agreement was reached for an increase in the oil workers' minimum wage of 10s. 6d., bringing it to £3 11s. a week, with corresponding increases for those on higher rates.

"It is suggested, for example, that the defeat of the Labour Party implies a decisive rejection of Socialism. This certainly would have been the case if the Labour Party had held aloft the banner of Socialism in the course of the Election and before it.

"But it did no such thing. On the contrary, with the exception of steel and road haulage, Socialism has been put firmly to one side and the Party fought its main battle on issues that can only be described as pre-1914 Liberalism brought up to date."—Aneurin Bevan, *News of the World*, October 11, 1959.

"Our clowns do not give enough attention to fighting bourgeois ideology. Today, the politically untrained clown cannot be a good clown."—Prof. Yuri Demetiev, Soviet Academy of Sciences.

A clown may not be a good politician, but a politician may be a good clown.

## BRITAIN

## After the Election

THE SHOUTING and tumult of the British General Election had not died away before the Labour spokesmen burst into two other forms of noisy activity. Inquests on "Why we lost", after the manner of a defeated boxer's manager, and dire threats of industrial strike action to redress the balance. We shall not deal here with the Labour Party's inquest, leaving that to the coroner, but we are interested in the threat of trade union warfare.

Chief of these threats, though more restrained than the lesser ones, came from Aneurin Bevan. Writing his stint in the *News of the World*, October 11, 1959, Bevan stated: "Groups of trade unionists, especially those in key positions, will accept the logic that has now been triumphantly vindicated at the ballot box. That is, make as much as you can, how you can and when you can."

There is nothing new or startling about such threats. Prof. Harold Laski, then Chairman of the Labour Party, giving the 1949 Sidney Hillman Lecture in the U.S.A. during the party's term of office said: "There are few observers not aware that, were the forces of Conservatism to regain the right to govern in the next period of British electoral history, constitutional democracy would be in serious jeopardy, for they seek to alter both the direction and the pace of social change. In such an institutional pattern, the free trade union would have to struggle for its life."

*Trade Unions in the New Society* (Allen & Unwin)

So it's not new and not startling, either. Such persons are either carried away by a sense of theatre, or are the victims of their own propaganda. Nothing could be further from the truth. For many years, long before the war and still more since, trade union officials have built a delicately adjusted system of friendly relations with both the employers and the Government of the day—Tory or Labour—though some have said, in brutal language, that they preferred to deal with the Tories. In negotiations there is certainly a feeling of conflict, though it resembles most closely the conflict of lawyers or players; certainly some chess games arouse more feeling. But before,

## BULGARIA

## GOVERNMENT ADMITS FOOD SHORTAGE

THE RULERS of Russia and her satellites have recently had plenty of cause for rejoicing and boasting: the launching of Sputniks II and III, the successes of Khrushchev in the United States, etc. But they have had good reason to divert attention towards the moon, in an attempt to eclipse problems on earth, which apparently become increasingly difficult for them to solve.

In Bulgaria, the rulers have also celebrated the 15th anniversary of the régime's accession to power and the opening of a new hydro-electric plant. Amid all this rejoicing, however, there has been a discordant note.

Barely a week after a long report by Yougoff on Bulgaria's "great Socialist achievements", *Rabotnitchesko Delo*, organ of the Bulgarian Communist Party's Central Committee, published a leading article (September 17, 1959) expressing concern at many infringements of State discipline. It says nothing new to the Bulgarian people or those who already know the realities of life in the so-called Socialist States, but confirms facts which have existed for some years and look likely to continue doing so.

"Serious infringements have recently been allowed to occur in home and foreign trade," says the paper, "both in providing food for the population and in handing over agricultural produce. . . . In several districts, staple foods are missing from the shops. Those in the region of Sliven lack preserves, cheese, noodles, tartaric acid, paprika powder. The same in the region of Plevna. At Dolni-Dabnik it is vegetable oil, at Telich sugar and sugar products, at Tchernov-Briag also preserves and sugar. Throughout the region of Timovo, no preserves, sugar or salicylic acid to make preserves are to be found in the shops."

At Gorna Orhovitza, in this region, is the country's biggest sugar refinery—and the highest yield of fruit and vegetables.

"Sugar and confectionery are also scarce," continues the article, "in the region of Plovdiv (where there is another big refinery). The region of Stara-Zagora has recently been deprived of lemonade. In August, the shops of Rousse lacked preserves, rice, biscuits, chocolate, paprika powder, soap, glucose, cigarettes; the supply of milk was irregular. . . . Serious blunders have also been noted this year in the supply of vegetables and fruit. . . . It is a paradox, but true, that fruit and vegetables were lacking at Plovdiv, their most important centre of production. In August, there were no peppers, cabbages, carrots, potatoes, apples, peaches or plums. . . . vegetables were also scarce at Rousse, Gabrovo, Bourgas and in some holiday

after and in between the horse dealings, many, very many trade union officials are on jovial terms with their opposite numbers.

Recently the writer was invited to the biennial dinner of the T. & G.W. Union, Dairy Section, in London. Shop stewards and trade union officials were there—the previous time Frank Cousins was present—but as guests of honour, dairy managers were invited, as were the directors of United Dairies, Ovaltine and other big firms. By far the biggest cheer of the evening followed the speech of Mr. Walter Nell, of Express Dairy and Premier Supermarket fame. From his speech and that of an executive committee member of the T. & G.W.U., one might have thought he was an extra-popular shop steward.

Indeed, in that firm the trade union officials have built up a very brotherly personal relationship and the chief negotiator is invited to area managers' dinners and other important functions. He is very proud of it; possibly the boss is, too.

Now can anyone suppose that the trade union bureaucracy are suddenly going to throw all this away because their party lost the last Election? Or that the employers are going to destroy this, to them, very useful arrangement, because their party won it?

True, fierce speeches were made by trade union officials during the Election. "Off with their heads" at the hustings, but "For he's a jolly good fellow" after dinner.

There will be strikes, official and unofficial, under a Tory Government, but there were unofficial strikes under the Labour Government and there would have been official strikes too, had they not been illegal. The trade union bureaucracy will, however, seek to control them—to the point of suffocation.

The fierce language of trade union officials during and after the hustings may be likened to the indignant wrath of the lawyer, who on Tuesday defends his client against a police charge and on Wednesday acts as police prosecutor.

T. B.

resorts. Elsewhere, the vegetables on sale, such as cabbages and carrots, were of poor quality and even rotten. . . . The intolerable behaviour of collective farms in breaking their agreements must be stressed. Many chairmen of collective farms neglect State interests in favour of local needs; they try to sell their fruit and vegetables on the open market, before fulfilling contracts with State trade bodies. They are often helped in these infringements by some of the general co-operatives and by municipal councils, who give them illegal permits to sell fruit and vegetables."

All these facts are examples of sabotage of the régime's economic policy. . . . and they will continue. The régime also feared the same thing happening with the grape harvest.

"There exists," said the article, "a real danger that large quantities of grapes will be diverted before the State organisms receive their allotted share." The example is cited of the chairmen of collective farms at Parvenetz (Plovdiv) and Khissar (Plovdiv). "The former handed over only 1,150 kg. of the 40,000 kg. of grapes gathered on August 17. The rest were sold illegally and, naturally, at higher prices."

The situation is no better with foreign trade. "In many cases, export and import bodies do not fulfil their contracts with abroad. . . . During the first half of this year, tomato purée and pieces of machinery were among unfulfilled contracts."

On October 1, the Council of Ministers published a special communiqué, calling to order all members of the Party and of the different responsible bodies. To throw dust in people's eyes, it ordered the sacking of the managers in two industrial undertakings and warned two more.

That is the reality behind the continued hymns of praise to the undoubtedly great achievements of the U.S.S.R. with moon rockets. We should have preferred, with the peoples of the countries concerned, that the workers had some basic freedom and some more fruit and vegetables, instead of being fed on lunar exhibitions, behind which are concealed strategic and military aims.

G. ORLOFF

**FRANCE**—Civil servants and employees of nationalised services staged a 24-hour strike on December 1-2 as a demonstration of their dissatisfaction with recent wage increases granted by the Government. Customs officers, hospital staff, postal and telephone workers, and airport control staffs joined the strike, but Paris Metro and bus workers remained at work.



## BRITAIN

## The day-to-day struggle

WHILE THE Trades Union Congress began its inquiry into unofficial strikes and shop stewards' activities by sending its 186 affiliated unions complicated forms to fill in, and two unions—the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the National Union of General & Municipal Workers (whose general secretary is chairman of the T.U.C. strike inquiry committee)—forbade their members to attend an unofficial shop stewards' conference at Sheffield on December 6, heartening examples of militancy and solidarity came from many parts of the country.

Shipping on the Mersey was brought practically to a standstill in October by a total stoppage of Liverpool's 700 tugmen, caused by the suspension of two tug crews for taking an unauthorised meal break. While their union, the Transport & General Workers, wondered what, if anything, to do, the men came out in defence of their workmates.

In the same port, 280 joiners, members of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, walked off the Orient liner *Oronsay* on October 28 because a number of joiners who reported for work up to half an hour late were told they would lose half a day's pay. On Clydeside, 1,000 shipyard workers employed by Greenock Dockyard Company struck on November 16 when a 61-year-old sweeper, who took an unauthorised tea break, was sacked for loafing.

In pleasant contrast to the recent strike of 200 foundry workers at Milford, Derbyshire, because a coloured worker, a 25-year-old Punjabi, had been engaged, was the solidarity of the Birmingham warehouse workers who came out on strike because the management had dismissed a Pakistani. At nearby Tipton, Staffs, 40 loaders and warehousemen, members of the T. & G.W.U. employed by Vono Ltd., walked out on November 28 in defence of their branch secretary, John Watkins, and four others who were dismissed, allegedly for redundancy, but in reality as a deliberate attempt to break up the union organisation there.

Dissatisfaction with the lack of militancy of their union officials was vigorously expressed by more than 2,000 London postal workers and girl telephonists, who claimed that the executive council of their union, as well as the management, was responsible for delay in settling their claim for a shorter working week of 44 hours. They staged a demonstration march on their own headquarters.

In addition to the usual crop of self-destructive demarcation disputes, there has been one other recent strike notable for its poor tactics. This was the 24-hour unofficial strike of power station manual workers on November 30 in support of a claim for a 40-hour week, three weeks' holiday without the qualifying period negotiated by the unions, and a £10 a week minimum. The national committee of shop stewards, who called it, claimed that it was successful, although only 4,000 workers, mostly in London, joined in the strike, out of the 14,000 expected to support it, and no power cuts had to be made.

The power station men, like workers in all the nationalised industries, have every reason for being dissatisfied with the privilege of working for the dole provided by the "Welfare State", and for the lack of militancy of their union leaders, who tend to fancy themselves in the role of paternalistic employers. But that is no reason for throwing to the winds all the lessons in *The Big Book of Strikes*. The economics of the capitalist system, of the laws of profit and supply and demand, can be ignored by the workers only at the cost of hurting themselves more than the bosses. Token strikes seldom deal the sort of body-blow which really hurts, least of all after the managements of an electricity supply industry, operating through a national grid, have been given ample notice.

**EIRE**—A 10-day strike (November 14-24) of 1,500 oil and petrol distribution workers in the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union grounded Aer Lingus planes. The men, who had put in a claim for an extra 30s. a week, had rejected the 10s. rise recommended by the Labour Court and accepted by the Petrol Employers' Association. They finally settled for 15s. to be paid back to July 22.

**SOUTH AFRICA**—The General Council of the British Trades Union Congress accused the South African Government on November 18 of banishing Mrs. Elizabeth Mafekeng, president of the African Food and Canning Workers' Union and vice-president of the women's leagues of the Africa National Congress, because of her militant union activities. The banishment on November 9 to remote Vryburg, Northern Cape Province, known as "South Africa's Siberia", provoked riots of Africans and Coloureds in her hometown of Paarl, Western Cape Province, in which shots were fired by the police and white civilians. One person was killed, 12 injured and many arrests were made. Before the police could detain her, Mrs. Mafekeng escaped into the British Protectorate of Basutoland with the youngest of her 11 children.

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## The defeated...

TO ANYONE interested in the social problem, the typical figure of our day is the disappointed social reformer or revolutionary. Social movements pick up labels which mark, often without intention, stages of their development for history to record. Now the Labour Party has adopted the unblest word "inquest" to mark its third successive defeat at the poll, and one constantly meets Labourites who ascribe their defeat to the alleged fruits of prosperity and reform which the Tories have delivered to the workers. The cry "I'm all right, Jack", it is alleged, has become the slogan of the working class.

Strange how it recalls the warning of Daniel de Leon of the American SLP, when he denounced reformism and advocated only socialism through revolutionary industrial unionism. Replying to those who proposed getting socialism by first of all winning over the electorate by a programme of social reforms, de Leon said that, so far from bringing socialism, the reform programme would not even win the support of the workers, for the capitalist class would always outbid the pseudo-socialists by offering bigger reforms. This is just exactly what has happened to the Labour Party.

But the disappointed are not all Labourites. ILPer's and others, who while certainly not opportunists have yet been deceived by the reformist mirage, swell the gloomy throng. One meets, too, sincere and disillusioned ex-Trotskyists who now realise that what matters is not which big man controls the party, but what are the principles of the organisation.

We have also sincere Socialists, Anarchists and Syndicalists who are weary of a minority fight against capitalism, reformism and bloody dictatorship.

## ...the undefeated

Yet what is the weary rebel to do in this age of disappointment, which is also haunted by the future, a future of nuclear destruction? Give up the struggle? Collect stamps, open a pub or a grocer's shop? Take one last look at the market place, once the school of social revolt and now turned into a car park by a progressive town council, then homeward to television and *Wagon Train*?

Even if he did so, he could not escape the class nature of the society in which he lives. Probably on his doorstep, certainly at his place of work, he will be frustrated or assaulted by the nature of capitalism, in its laws and attributes, in the way of life of its overlords and petty overseers alike.

How does the rebel, or ex-rebel, react to this—to "the whips and scorns of time, the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely... the law's delay. The insolence of office"? He can act only one way, according to his social knowledge and his character, as a rebel and a man of self-respect. Yet let him not forget that this character which serves him well in such circumstances was not developed in a vacuum; it is the fruit of a long line of rebellion and, even if for a while he fights alone, he must know that most of our battles must be fought, our problems solved, by the group, the organisation, the class.

Once our resistance has passed from the individual to even three or four or a few hundreds, then we will find that, by intention or not, we shall be using Syndicalist principles and tactics. It is the task of our paper to develop this struggle, not to invent it, for Syndicalism was not invented, it developed out of social struggle; and Syndicalism is most suited to that struggle, be it by few or many, temporary or requiring a permanent association.

Our paper is here to put you in touch with your fellows—never do you fight alone; to act as a means of expression, a correspondence of struggle, a struggle against cynical reformism, pathological dictatorship, against the petty agents of capitalism and for a classless society, which alone can save the world from the threat of self-destruction.

## CANADA

## BID FOR UNION DEMOCRACY

TWO DRAMATIC revolts by Canadian workers against union tyranny and corruption were reported recently in the *Industrial Worker*. The first of these is that of West Coast seamen, who have abandoned the notorious Seafarers' International Union in droves to form a new seamen's branch, Local 400, of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway and General Transport Workers.

Under Canadian federal law, elections must be held under the supervision of the Canada Labor Relations Board, to establish a union's right to bargain with the employers. This iniquitous law (which also operates in the United States) strengthens the hold of an established union over its members by denying effective representation to dissident groups struggling for independence. In this instance, however, although it may well have delayed the revolt, it has at least had the virtue of demonstrating conclusively in the long run that the S.I.U.'s stranglehold on Canadian seamen has been broken. In one such election, seamen employed on the tugboat fleet operated by Young and Gore Ltd. voted more than four to one in favour of establishing the Brotherhood as their bargaining agent.

Unfortunately, this laborious legalistic pantomime has to be performed over and over again, as, acting with "paralytic slowness", the Labor Relations Board conducts elections ship by ship. The revolt has spread to the East Coast, and the Brotherhood scored easy victories over the S.I.U. among the operating and maintenance employees of the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority and workers on the famous fleet of deep-sea salvage and rescue tugs operated by Foundation Maritime Ltd.

Giving the background to the seamen's revolt, the *Industrial Worker* recalls the "wholesale scabbery in the recent strike at the Northland Navigation Co. in Vancouver" which "shocked the entire labor movement". In this case, members of the Marine Engineers Association who struck "were replaced by scab engineers supplied by the S.I.U. When the longshoremen refused to work the struck ships, S.I.U. officials attempted to force their members to cross the picket lines and load the vessels—thus compounding the offence by not only scabbing on the marine engineers, but the longshoremen as well." The S.I.U. bosses then expelled many of their members for refusing to blackleg.

This outrageous behaviour is but one instance of a whole series of vicious anti-labour practices which eventually led to the expulsion of the S.I.U. from the Canadian Congress of Labor.

"Operating in a stifling atmosphere of dictatorship, reminiscent of Krushchev's Russia, the S.I.U. bosses have lived high on the hog, with a lavish income supplied by exorbitant initiation fees and dues, and increasingly frequent assessments, levied by bureaucratic fiat.

"Control over the membership in the S.I.U. has been assured by a number of totalitarian devices, especially the system of dividing the membership into two separate categories—the 'full book' members, who enjoyed preference in shipping out, plus a few other advantages denied to the rest of the membership who were registered as lowly 'permit holders'. Members in this downtrodden category have no vote, and are permitted only the dubious privilege of paying their dues and assessments across the barrel-head and keeping quiet."

The "resemblance between S.I.U. methods and those commonly used in the communist police states of eastern Europe" is emphasised by the practice of having all members fingerprinted and photographed.

The S.I.U. is only a rather extreme example of the sort of organisations which flourish in all centralised, authoritarian societies. It is also a good example of the union as simply another form of big business. It is not a Communist-front organisation, but its spiritual resemblance to the Communist-controlled Mine, Mill & Smelter Workers' Union is striking.

This union, "long the major communist beach-head in the Canadian labor movement", has in recent times lost election after election to the rival United Steel Workers, all across the country. Now workers at the big Consolidated Dennison Mines Ltd. at Elliot Lake, Victoria, have voted more than two to one for establishing the United Steel Workers as their bargaining agent, thus ousting the Mine, Mill & Smelter Workers from the strategic Algoma-Blind River uranium field.

"A significant feature of the campaign that led to the selection of a bargaining agent was the frank and open preference shown by the company for the Mine, Mill & Smelter Workers. Organizers for the commie-led union were given free run of the mining camp, and the company placed every facility at their disposal to reach the workers with their pitch.

"At the same time, organizers for the rival Steel Workers' Union were barred from the site, and the company made every effort to

prevent them from presenting their case to the miners. Their campaign hamstrung by company guards, organizers for the United Steel Workers had to resort to all sorts of desperate stratagems, including air-dropped leaflets, to reach the miners with their message.

"The mining operators made it unmistakably clear that they preferred 'doing business' with the bosses of the communist-dominated Mine, Mill & Smelter Workers, rather than face the United Steel Workers across the bargaining table, who can be expected to be a more formidable opponent.

"This follows a familiar practice of big business generally, who have always found it more profitable to deal with unions under bureaucratic management, whether communist or racketeer, rather than bargain with unions subject to a greater degree of democratic control by the membership."

The actions of the seamen and the Ontario miners are encouraging moves in the right direction. There is still a long and hard road to travel before Canadian workers really control their own organisations, and not until then will they be able to forge them into effective tools for the abolition of exploitation. But if they journey in the spirit of the tugboat men who sent the declaration of principles from which we quote below with their applications for membership of the Brotherhood, they will surely in time arrive at their destination.

"... we wish it fully understood that we make this application, not as individuals who come hat in hand, looking for a refuge, but as dignified human beings who are repudiating another organization and certain individuals within that organization. Repudiating them for both general and specific acts contrary to our ideals of true democracy and working class solidarity. But while we repudiate this organization and its acts and particularly its most recent one of scabbing on our fellow workers the longshoremen, who have neither the desire nor the intention of trading one evil for another. We are not interested in subscribing to a lesser evil or to one of lesser degree.

"While in this action, we are opposing one particular bureaucracy, we are in principle, and propose to be in action, against the general concept of bureaucracy. We believe the purpose of a union to be that of enabling its members to receive an ever-expanding share of the fruits of our toil and assist them in the ever-constant struggle in which they find themselves engaged in our present form of society. We do not believe that a union should be a vehicle to be used by those who hunger or thirst for personal self-aggrandizement, wealth, or most particularly, power.

"Having chafed at the bit of undemocratic S.I.U. unionism for so long, we feel it both honest and expedient to lay our cards on the table from the start... having found the will and the energy to take the necessary step of leaving the S.I.U. we realize we have the strength to leave any organization once it no longer meets our requirements or lives up to our expected standards. In other words, we are of the firm conviction that any organization should exist solely for the sake of its membership and not that the membership should exist for that of the organization... our destiny, we now realize, lies in our own hands."

## IWMA world call

THE TENTH CONGRESS of the International Working Men's Association (Toulouse, September, 1958) agreed to support the formation of "Groups of Friends of the IWMA" in all countries where sections have not yet been set up, with the aim of gaining sympathy for our International and of spreading its principles and propaganda as widely as possible.

We hope that you will interest yourselves, in each country where there is still no section of the IWMA, in forming one or several groupings of "Friends of the IWMA" and of seeking to win over, if only through moral support, sympathisers in each locality.

A group can be formed by five, ten or more members. It will give you the chance to maintain regular contact with the IWMA and of being in touch with the affairs of the international movement.

We address ourselves especially to comrades and sympathisers in Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas, Uruguay and Argentina excepted.

It is desirable that "Groups of Friends of the IWMA" should keep close contact between themselves in each country and they will receive our Press, propaganda and news of other countries through the international secretariat.

All interested in this proposal should write to the IWMA Secretariat (AIT-CNT), 4 rue Belfort, Toulouse (H.G.), France.



## SPAIN

## The fight against Franco

THE CONTINUED integration of Franco Spain into the military plans of the Western bloc has brought no lessening of persecution for opponents of the Fascist régime in that country. Despite the Spanish dictator's claim that there are no political prisoners in Spain, his jails continue to be filled with working-class and student anti-fascists.

"Twenty-five young Spaniards went on trial before a military tribunal in Madrid yesterday on charges of Communist activities in the Valencia region. The prosecutor demanded sentences ranging from three to 20 years. The principal accused, Abelardo Jimenez Lara, said the police had tortured him."

*News Chronicle*, December 1, 1959

The term "Communist", used by the Fascist authorities as a justification for repressive action, is applied indiscriminately to all opposition forces, from the Syndicalists of the CNT—who form by far the most numerous section of the clandestine movement—to moderate liberal Catholics.

Abelardo Jimenez Lara, described as a Communist Party organiser, received a sentence of 23 years' imprisonment in the above-mentioned trial. His crime? Inciting a protest strike against the régime last June. Three of the others tried with him were jailed for 10 years, 19 for terms of one to four years. And there are many such cases which testify to the inherent rottenness of the Spanish police State.

On October 7, Franco rejected an appeal for clemency on behalf of Cristobal Vega Alvarez, a militant of the CNT and well known in Spain as a poet and writer.

Vega Alvarez has been in jail for the past 20 years. He was imprisoned from 1939 to 1944 as an opponent of the Fascist régime and in the latter year was further sentenced to terms of 30 and eight years for acts of resistance and protest against Franco's tyranny. Since then he has been in the penitentiary of Puerto de Santa Maria.

"Sentence of four years' imprisonment was imposed by a military tribunal in Madrid today on Senor Julio Ceron Ayuso, a young Foreign Ministry official alleged to have been involved in illegal acts . . . [including] distribution of leaflets last June calling for a '24-hour national peaceful strike'. . . . Of 16 others similarly accused . . . eight were given sentences ranging from six months to two years and eight were acquitted."

*The Times*, November 10, 1959

"Capt-General Miguel Rodrigo, the military chief of the Madrid region, has not confirmed the sentence of four years' imprisonment on Julio Ceron Ayuso. . . . The term appears to have been considered too light. . . . [He] has also overruled the military tribunal with respect to 16 others charged with 'military rebellion'. . . . It is understood that this decision will mean a new trial before a supreme court of military justice."

*The Times*, November 18, 1959

The "re-trial" took place during Christmas week, when all the sentences were doubled.

"The trial of 23 members of the Catalan left-wing party on charges of unlawful association, distributing illegal propaganda and conspiring against the security of the State in the years 1945 and 1946 was today postponed until December 1. Originally 29 people were accused, but since the time of the alleged offences six have died or disappeared."

*The Times*, November 18, 1959

"Reports from Bilbao state that signs of unrest among the Basques in the past few days have led to some arrests and that security measures have been tightened."

*The Times*, November 24, 1959

And, also in October, Juan Garcia Suarez, former guerrilla anti-Fascist fighter from the Canary Isles, was garrotted (slowly strangled) for killing in 1947 a municipal guard whom he found torturing his mother to extract information about his whereabouts.

While Western politicians continually proclaim their passionate adherence to the "eternal principles of freedom and justice", no criticism is made of Spanish Fascism, which is bolstered up by dollar aid and loans from the World Bank. And U.S. President Eisenhower included a dinner date with Franco on his December tour of the "Free World".

Aid for the underground anti-Fascist movement in Spain has been organised by exiled Spaniards, particularly those in France, who are the most numerous. Their position has been made increasingly difficult by the De Gaulle authorities. On July 19, the CNT of Spain in exile has organised each year since the war a huge meeting of anti-Fascist solidarity in Toulouse. This year, however, the meeting was banned—and almost simultaneously came news of joint Franco-Spanish military manoeuvres on the Basque frontier. Similarly, the

plenum of the exiled CNT, due to take place during September in Toulouse, was barred from that city.

In Britain, the Spanish CNT has held two public protests in London during recent months. The first was a march from Marble Arch to the Spanish Embassy and then to Downing Street on Sunday, August 30, when Franco's Foreign Minister, Castiella, was in London for talks with Eisenhower.

Members of practically every tendency among the Spanish exiles took part, together with British sympathisers, and an effective protest was made by means of banners, placards and the thousands of hand-bills that were handed to onlookers, stressing the Fascist nature of the Franco régime and opposing the admission of Spain to NATO, discussed by Castiella and Eisenhower.

On November 1, a public meeting "in defence of the rights of the Spanish people under the Franco régime" was held at the Cora Hotel, London. Speakers were veteran Spanish militant Federica Montseny, Labour M.P. Fenner Brockway, who has been a consistent ally of the anti-Franco resistance, and Ken Hawkes, of the SWF. The hall was packed, all sections of the Spanish emigration again being present, and an enthusiastic reception was given to the message of solidarity with the oppressed workers of Spain.

## NORWAY

## Union bosses say: Work harder

OSLO. Here we are at the beginning of 1960, with Labour Government, Welfare State and the 45-hour week in Norway. If we compare things with, for example, a hundred years ago, it could be said that the individual Norwegian wage worker is considerably better off, but there have also been other developments.

Technical advances have made exploitation more efficient, so that employers' profits are increased far more than the workers' wages. At the same time, the proletariat has grown considerably; that is to say, a far higher proportion of the people do not own the means of their livelihood, so that on the whole the ruling class has gained increasing power in society. Norway was once inhabited mainly by independent fishermen and smallholders; it is fast becoming a land of mighty lords of industry, bureaucrats and propertyless workers.

One of the greatest advances made by the Norwegian working class was the reduction of the working week from 55 to 48 hours in 1919. They did this by direct action at their workplaces: everyone went home early. After some months the Storting (Norwegian Parliament) set down the lawful hours of work in accordance with what was already a fact.

Since 1919, industrial productivity has risen many hundred per cent, but it is only in 1959, after 40 years, that there has been a further reduction in the working week. And now L.O. (the Trade Union Federation), the Norwegian Employers' Union and the Norwegian Institute of Productivity have joined in the astonishing cry: "Productivity must be raised by six per cent."

Remembering the thousands of poverty-stricken unemployed, who have only unemployment benefit or national assistance to live on, we hope that production will FALL just as many per cent as our hours of work. Norwegian workers must let the shorter working hours mean a real defeat for the employers and a real victory for themselves in more leisure and less unemployment, without an uncomfortable speed-up.

Members of the Norwegian Syndicalist Federation (section of the IWMA) are free to belong also to other organisations at their workplaces, where they themselves consider it to be in the interests of solidarity. For us it is very important that the workers should have as effective an organisation as possible (rather than none at all), even if it is inhibited by affiliation to L.O. In some cases it happens that Syndicalists have made such an organisation effective in the workers' interests, in which case it is the activity that is more important than the L.O. label.

It is also clear that in more and more cases it is necessary to openly break with L.O., as the men who built the Norwegian Busworkers' Federation have done. This organisation, comprising men who, dissatisfied, left the L.O.-affiliated Transport Workers' Federation, has gained considerable membership, mostly on the country and West Norwegian routes, since its formation a few years ago. The Busworkers recently had their first major struggle and, though they finally settled for the same terms as the L.O. union, they showed their ability to run a strike for several weeks, despite the united slander of the official "Labour" Press, which was more vicious than that of the avowedly middle-class parties.

G. P.

ADEN—Six hundred oil bunkering workers began a lengthy strike on November 7 in support of demands for a shorter working week and improvements in medical treatment and other conditions.

MALAYA—Train services were seriously disrupted in November by the suspension of engine drivers in dispute with the management.

## AUSTRALIA—MYTH AND REALITY

SYDNEY. I have chosen the above title for this brief report on the Australian union scene because it is necessary to dispel many of the old legends that surround the Australian workers before one can see the actual situation.

The picture of the rugged, militant Aussie worker is a hangover from the day when this was more or less accurate. It stems from the time of the big Maritime and Shearers' strikes of the tail-end of the last century, from the batties of the I.W.W. (who were indeed a mighty force in their time) during the first world war and in the early twenties. The turbulent political and industrial era during the depression period also lent some force to this picture, although much overstressed and sentimentalised by Australian leftists. Apathy and despair was much stronger in this country during the depression than aggressive militancy, and this, we in Australia must admit if we are not to delude ourselves completely.

There is, nevertheless, in pre-1930 Australia a strong element of truth in this picture of working-class independence and strength. Unfortunately, today no amount of sentiment makes this true, despite the wordy rhapsodising of the local Communist Party about the great traditions of the Australian workers. Today, like their brothers in Britain and the greater part (though by no means entirely) of the United States they have sold this independence for a mess of TV, pr. fit sharing, overtime (to hell with the 40-hour week!) and the family car. A world of such delights evidently amply compensated for the speed-up, automation, a permanent fringe of unemployment among the unskilled and increasing interference from the State, tax collector and the police.

On the purely union front, as compared with the U.K. or the U.S. the picture here in Australia is greatly complicated by the legalistic jungle which is slowly but surely throttling the trade unions.

There is in all the states of Australia a compulsory Arbitration Act on both a State and Federal basis. A system truly amazing in its complexity and frightening in its potential power to suppress the real function of the union movement. In order to function as an industrial union within this framework, e.g. in order to get the employer to accept the union as a "bona fide" organisation, representing the employees in a particular trade or industry, it is necessary for such an organisation to register itself with the Industrial Registrar as an "official" union. This puts it at the mercy of a whole system of arbitrators, conciliation commissioners, arbitration courts, etc. . . . in fact, a whole and complete legal industrial set-up which operates outside of and separate from the normal legal and judicial system of the Commonwealth and states.

This system of arbitration courts and judges, who decide on the validity of union claims, mediate in industrial disputes, determine the extent of wage rises and working conditions. They have the power to jail, fine and punish individuals and organisations without trial by jury and without the right of appeal. This system of legal arbitration (which incidentally operates on a very similar basis in New Zealand) has been rightly described many times by radical union men in this country as labour's leg-iron. An apt, though mild description.

This situation has led over the years to a gradual decline in worker activity in the union, as the union has turned slowly into a lawyer-hiring apparatus. Organisers have turned into court-room advocates, collectors of statistics and experts in the "go back to work, boys, or you'll prejudice our case in court".

This is not to say there have been no pockets of resistance among Australians to this tame unionism. The legacy of direct action dies slowly, but it dies hard and still today one finds militancy surviving amongst the Waterside Workers and the Australian Seamen's Union, though it is a militancy largely kept alive by the wily manoeuvrings of a veteran Communist leadership long experienced in industrial strategy and tactics.

The non-party militants in most industries generally feel despair and disgust towards the well-entrenched leaderships, mostly composed of politically ambitious members of the Australian Labour Party or at a very poor best, well-disciplined part-liners of the C.P. and at the very worst, under-cover men for the Catholic Action (yes, we have the Jesuits here, too).

All this has resulted in a union movement that lacks vitality, aggression and independence. The average toiler pays his union dues out of habit or compulsion and regards a dispute or direct action as something to be avoided at all costs.

The pressure of the finance company on home, television, automobile, the treachery of union leadership and the savagery of arbitration courts during disputes have all tended to reduce the industrial workers of Australia to very docile creatures.

On this last point the arbitration courts in this country have with monotonous regularity over the last few years fined any union displaying any signs of militancy amounts varying from £200 to £500 and have reimposed such fines whenever they felt inclined.

There has been no real resistance to such acts even from the left (so-called) union. The solution would be de-registration, a mass refusal on the part of the unions to register and deal with the courts of arbitration. This would be a legal way of defeating this whole machine of judicial labour repression. It would mean a return to direct negotiation between employer and employee, free from State interference and suppression.

But, and this represents a very real stumbling-block, arbitration has been a part of the industrial scene in Australia and New Zealand for so long that it has permeated with its legalistic complications so deeply into the consciousness of the working man that he has lost sight of the fact that it could be done without.

Also—and this probably is the real factor in retaining the system—it is defended by Labour's right wing, the union fakers and the political job-hunters, who see in arbitration a continuation of their own power, an unholy alliance between themselves and the State machine, in which they are protected from having to do a real job of union organising and in which they can brand the enemies of arbitration as disrupters and agitators, who scream in a chorus that to do away with arbitration would mean a return of economic chaos. Direct action for such people always means exposure of their real role in society as the henchmen and under-cover allies of capital and the State and the politician.

What of the future? I would make no predictions. The real strength of the Labour movement has scattered into small groups of intellectual working men, mostly without influence, mostly isolated. The Labour Party staggers along its tired, cynical path torn by internal dissension and the impotence that visits all political machines.

The Communist Party remains what it is elsewhere, aptly described by a daughter of Pandit Nehru as "parrots whose masters live abroad", defenders of the Soviet Union and basically little else. From the point of view of the Syndicalist, the overall picture is not inspiring. As in all the Anglo-Saxon countries, we see very few peaks of independence in a wide plain of mass indifference, and the practicality of trying to alter this I hope to be able to deal with in a later article.

D. F. W.

## W. GERMANY

## Anti-fascist victimised

LIFE is not always a bed of roses for the worker in Adenauer's economically-prosperous Western Germany, particularly if his ideas are out of sympathy with the ruling class. Typical of many such cases is that of Edwin Eisenpass, veteran Syndicalist militant from Bach-on-Danube, in Bavaria.

Eisenpass, employed by the Bavarian Lloyd company on Danube shipping, was thrown out of work during the summer when low water in the river, due to the prolonged drought, forced the firm drastically to reduce tonnage.

On registering at the local labour exchange, he was sent to a construction job which involved a daily 33-mile round journey. This he held so long as a friend was able to give him a lift, but when his shift changed this was no longer possible and, without alternative public or private transport, he had to leave the job. Next, on his own initiative, he found heavy labouring work laying foundations at a big building site in nearby Regensburg, but was sacked after a few days as physically unfit. The labour exchange next gave him a series of casual jobs, but these finally dried up and he was again left without work.

His application for unemployment benefit was refused, although he had fulfilled the requisite number of working weeks, on the ground that he had left the first job voluntarily. Despite the intervention on his behalf of Dr. Seidl, manager of the labour exchange at Regensburg, the bureaucrats turned a deaf ear to his claims and he was told he would be well advised to change his social ideas. These officials, Eisenpass tells us, were members in good standing of the old Nazi régime, so their attitude towards a veteran anti-fascist can well be imagined.

To show this is not one isolated case of persecution, he cites other instances, including one of a worker who was sacked when off ill—then refused sickness benefit, because he had been dismissed. The bosses, employment exchange officials and health insurance authorities work hand in glove, giving no opportunity of redress to the ordinary worker, who is strangled by the involved labour laws and the personal viciousness of ex-Nazi bureaucrats.

"The time has come," says Eisenpass, "when these gentlemen of the previous régime should be cleared out and a way made for a more humane administration."