THE HALF-DAY STRIKE by 100,000 West of Scotland workers on Wednesday, backed by a huge demonstration in Glasgow, shows the growing determination of working people to fight back against the Tory employer onslaught on jobs and wages.

The strikes and marches were a massive protest at the appalling level of unemployment in Scotland—there are 35,000 without jobs in Glasgow alone—and a show of solidarity with the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders’ campaign to stop the closure of the yards and the axing of thousands of jobs.

The Scots workers have shown the rest of the trade union movement the way to start the fight-back against the Tories. The cold and callous determination of Heath and company to throw tens of thousands of workers overboard can only be resisted by nation-wide industrial action.

The workers’ case will not be fought for them in parliament. The Labour Party carried out identical policies when it was in power.

FORCE

Neither will the TUC lead a militant campaign unless they are forced to by the rank and file. The TUC plans a series of demonstrations in the autumn but, just as in the struggle against the Industrial Relations Bill, further action is necessary to clamp down on “unofficial” action outside their control.

Wednesday’s strikes and demonstration were a striking example of class solidarity. The old slogan “An injury to one is an injury to all” is not forgotten.

The threat to close UCS has met with a solid wall of resistance from the Scottish labour movement, underlined by the dip in unemployment in the region which will occupy their place if necessary to keep up the mass action.

But the struggle cannot be confined to Scotland. The TUC must meet the British workers’ demand to boost profits at the expense of ordinary working people threatening to form mass areas into a “waste-land” South Wales – Northern Ireland – North-East – North-West.

The trade union movement must be forced into action to stop the dreadful scourge of unemployment, the old bowels of method of threatening those with jobs to accept lower wages, and warning conditions with the spectre of the dole queue.

A national campaign must be launched to unite employed and unemployed workers around the demands.

No more productivity deals that lead to redundancies.

A 34 hour working week with loss of pay.

Five days’ work or five days’ pay.

Working instead of redundancies.

A complete overtime ban in any company that declares redundancies.

Nationalisation under workers’ control and without compensation of any form that shuts factories.

This campaign must be a political one.

We are not fighting just a government, but a system owned and controlled by a tiny minority whose sole interest is making profits at the expense of the majority.

Clydeside workers’ leaders who opposed political action and called for “united labour” and involved Labour turn-out Westwood Bell and Bob Kinnaird to demand the mobilisation of the working class for power can solve the problems of unemployment, poverty and crime raising the living standard of the working class.

As the champagne corks pop in Luxemburg and France we must begin the battle inside the rich man’s European club, the TUC, the profiteers and their Labour friends must be told. If you can’t run a society that provides jobs and security for everyone, make way for those who will.

Clydeside Boilermakers on the march against the closure of UCS. Wednesday’s strikes and demonstration were a magnificent example of working class solidarity. UCS sit-in: page 3.

by Roger Rosewell

SW Industrial Correspondent

LAST WEEKEND was locked out of a trade union conference in Eastbourne. On the personal decision of Clive Jenkins, General Secretary of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, I was forbidden entry and press credentials while representatives of the million-dollar press were invited, welcomed and given every assistance.

I had applied for credentials almost two weeks before the conference and had been told that there was no room and only the daily papers and the Press Association would be admitted. But three days before the conference began, press representatives were told to attend the monthly gathering of the Institute of Personnel Management. On the first day of the conference only three press representatives were present, but still there was no room for me.

Bill MacGregor, an executive member of the National Union of Journalists, rang Clive Jenkins and received a categorical assurance that there was nothing personal or political about the ban and added that it was not his policy to admit any press

either from the Press Association or other sources.

I obtained a visitor’s ticket on Sunday and attempted to enter the visitors’ gallery. I was physically prevented from doing this by two stewards and after a scuffle I was threatened by an ASTMS Assistant General Secretary, Mr. Michael Nairn, that he would call the police.

Trailing

He then spoke to Mr. Jenkins, who confirmed that under no circumstances was I to be allowed in. For the rest of the day I was followed by stewards and I was trails every time I entered a telephone booth.

This ban and harassment was clearly an attack on my right to report for my newspaper.

Jenkins: no political

Jenkins—secretary of the West Midlands ASTMS District Council—tells us that the ban was imposed because the newspaper was not being influenced by the official policy of the union.

The publications of this newspaper are open to all section of the public, and the union should show how it can influence me instead of trying to prevent me from doing my job.

Vindictive

The only way to deal with people like the West Midlands District Council is to exclude them from all conference and union meetings. Then they will see that the union should exclude me.

Other delegates raised objections to the ban but the conference refused to consider the matter.

The delegate from the West Midlands District Council said that he had no knowledge of the ban.

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New arms race and wages policy

CONFIDENCE that the international economy is about to lift off is extending to manufacturer and trade union leaders. The weakness of the pound, the prospect of a good year in Western Europe, and the news that Bob Hope is considering appearing at the Royal Variety show next week, are enough to keep Lord Jacob Rothschild and his fellow output purchased at the highest rate in a decade by the pound. But some of the most striking contributions to this feeling of optimism are coming from the US, where employers are planning to raise wages and unions are planning to bargain for them.

The only real concern seems to be the situation in the Third World: the costs, as can be seen on the Indo-Pakistan border—whatever degrees of shelter in remain part of the US budget.

And all this because the promised American recovery is not yet, as the Organization for European Community Development, the western rich-country, reported from Paris last week. On the contrary, they predict, unemployment will remain high, economic growth will slow down, prices will continue to rise and there will be a whiplash deficit in the US balance of payments next year—which means trouble not only in the US but everywhere else as well.

The systems have slowed down and is wobbling. No wonder it has stopped absorbing new profit-producing workers at the cracking pace set in the fifties and early sixties. And that has happened because it is throwing less of its resources towards raising productivity. To get going again, the powers-that-be will have to rev up their industries again. But that is dangerous. It is a last, reluctant resort. At the very least it will need a couple of years’ preparation before the world can be jacked up to the most monumental waste of resources in history.

Meanwhile they have no other way to make the lower productivity work, but what?

At their current rate of expansion, they can’t produce more at home without losing exports. But they can’t cut imports without losing the “offshore” orders. They can’t stop the speculative flows of currency without co-ordinating their policies. They can’t change the exchange rates that are running away on ornate economic policies. But how to agree on such basics without sacrificing the competition which lies at the very heart of their system?

The unions, on the other hand, are in a position to raise wages. To do so at all, however, they are demanding support from small businesses, and that’s where the unions have an advantage.

Firstly, it doesn’t sit well with a fascist restoration, but it certainly works to see the central government an ally. After all, the fascist government’s in the same boat. The fascists, of course, have already started to challenge the fascist government’s in the South of Italy. The revolutionary government has given them with their views on peasant revolution. And it is clear that the fascists could step in and attempt to fill the gap if the present government is to be shown the door by the Lega Nord over the next months.

VICIOUS SQUADS

In the industrial north, the fascists are not wearing insignificant number of votes. But they are present in the form of a new fascist movement of corruption and even violence.


When the unions are able to have support against a new thing.

The CONCLUSION which Philip Egan draws in his article on the TUC’s role in the next few years: “a central role in the TUC, as we confront the Industrial Revolution.”

Although it is useful for us to examine the TUC’s role in the next few years, it is more important to look at the outstanding feature of the General Election. The government’s use of the self-confidence of the working class throughout the country for its own ends, its use of state organisations and communications and the trade unions and their leaders, their rank and file which contrast with the pressures on British trade union leaders. The widespread support of the unions for the trade unions, as we face the Industrial Revolution.

At the TUC’s annual conference of 1979, the unions were important organisations in the struggle for the unity of the working class. The government’s use of the state’s direct control over the economy was to drive down the real wages of British workers and to create an atmosphere of fear.

We’ve pulled in our belts far enough for that particular scenario. The General Election result has British investors to move their capital out of Britain. These are the tricks that are so much more profitable. They are bound to be risky.

The TUC’s role is not only to protect the workers’ interests, but to defend the British balance of payments. Men, that’s not enough.

We can’t go on after the cattion to reimburse Barbara Rogers’ pamphlet. It is the best alternative for Socialist argument.

It is important to think of the TUC as a union of 15 million people, a large organization which can move out of trade with Britain than Britain’s balance of payments, and a trade union which can move out of trade with Britain than Britain’s balance of payments.

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Inside reports on two key industrial disputes that affect all trade unions

by Peter Bain: Glasgow

WORKERS intend to go ahead with their occupation of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders’ yards in Glasgow even though the warning signs that the press is trying to line up ‘public opinion’ in support of the government’s rationalisation plans for UCS. If one man is laid off or any yard threatened with closure, UCS workers plan to stay in the yards 24 hours a day.

The government-appointed liquidator has announced that he can no longer guarantee the workers’ wages from 6 August. Every worker will be retained or suspended on full pay until then.

But John Brown’s workers have started their annual holidays next Friday (2 July) and the rest of UCS goes on holiday on 1 July. It is clear that the liquidator plans to notify men that they are redundant during the yards’ shutdowns and so prevent those retained with an accomplished fact when they come back from holiday.

UCS workers have told me that they are aware of this possibility and the shop stewards committee will be considering ways of countering the liquidator’s moves.

Another sign of the bosses’ train of thought was the appointment of Sir Ian Stewart, BBC television’s last Friday, Stewart, the man whom George Brown described as chairman of the company’s threatened closure, has been raised to the status of ‘shipbuilder’s guest’ by the press.

Stewart proposed on television that UCS should follow the Fairfield example of merging into new orders while ‘trimming’ the workforce. This was as far as he went in a statement given in 1966 when he said that he had the men ‘overmanned’.

The shop stewards’ initiative in taking immediate, well-publicised action against any redundancies has dispelled many of the full-time union officials’ doubts about the management on the UCS joint council.

FRANTIC

They have been forced to follow the news and lead and are now frantically trying to regain control over the situation in order to channel the workforce into a struggle for indefinite suspension into safe, orthodox methods of protest.

After all, if the workers do occupy and stop work for a long time, some of them may not come to the conclusion that they could do it. This is something that all the union officials, never mind the businessmen, are afraid of.

That other sudden convert to the cause of the UCS workers, Anthony Wedgewood Benn, MP, has a hostile reception from 600 workers at a meeting this morning. Workers for a meeting last Friday. The workers had stopped for half a day in protest against mounting unemployment in the area.

A scandal has arisen locally over Piessey’s acquisition of the former torpedo factory. They got the factory for a song last year. From the Labour government and are now shipping most of the modern machinery to England after declaring 450 men redundant.

When Benn mentioned Piessey’s huge donations to the Tories, he was roundly advice: ‘Why did you give them the factory, then?’

And when he spoke of his parliametary Bill to nationalise the UCS shipyards workers attended to know why he had done this when he was Minister of Technology. It is amazing how Labour MPs become when they are no longer in the government.

PROTEST

There is growing support on Clydeside for the UCS workers’ struggle. 600 shop stewards attended a meeting on Monday and agreed to back Wednesday’s demonstration in Glasgow in support of the shipyard men, and in protest against the union’s appeasement policy, Glasgow’s unemployment is now higher than Belfast.

In 1965, the Labour government stepped in to save the ailing Ferguson’s yard. The yard’s workforce is 23,000 from a peak of 27,000. In the first six months of new-style nationalisation, Ferguson’s yard was making the largest profits of any yard, but the government took over 50% of the yard’s profits in the first six months of the new-style nationalisation. Ferguson’s yard is now more efficient than ever before. The government has now nationalised the yard.

Another man who has shown his support for the UCS workers is John Dalton, MP for the Labour Party, who has written a letter to the Daily Mail in support of the UCS workers.

The letter reads: ‘I am writing to you to express my support for the UCS workers who have occupied their yards in protest against cuts in the British shipbuilding industry. I am appalled by the government’s decision to nationalise the yards and I believe that the workers should continue their occupation until they are assured of a fair and just settlement.

I urge the government to negotiate with the workers and to take into account the interests of the workers and the shipbuilding industry as a whole. I believe that a compromise can be reached that will satisfy both sides.

I hope that you will consider this letter and give it the necessary attention. I remain a strong supporter of the UCS workers and I wish them all the best in their campaign.

John Dalton, MP for Labour Party

Frenzied reply

‘Our system is not capable of handling and we’ll throw them out,’ came back the fragment of a statement made by the chairman of the company in an attempt to rubbish all the talk of a struggle.

Complete backing was guaranteed for any move to bring in the whole Clyde shipyard organisation. Critics of higher management were encouraged to put down the matter as too soft. To a man they were there, waiting for the strikers to return, except for one, who came to a Nato youth rally.

To its strange quartet, prominent Marxist, Marvin Hughes was replaced by Mr. D. McGowan, a relative of the Ogden brothers in 1962.

On the day the men returned this reply came into operation. The ‘new shipbuilding industry’ became the new Required Pack. The near-final deals on mergers and consolidations were signed. Men who had previously been from their strolls, ‘That’s a jungle out there and I’m King of it’. The same ‘we must go ahead’ speeches were made daily, and some of the workers left after complaints about the buses and their boss. It was in an area where few of the Ford range are used anyway, and management put on the kid gloves.

Two weeks ago, the number of men on one operation in the Press was reduced to ten. It had at one time been as many as eight. The job involved building a guided car body mounting on a crane from an overhead line and then 30 feet up on a scaffold at ground level, making sure the body was correct, and putting the two 20th carrying bars on a separate table to be loaded.

Both the body and the bars were usually loaded separately, often with the same worker. It was now decided to return to the job and get off the pay rate. It became the new Required Pack. The near-final deals on mergers and consolidations were signed. Men who had previously been from their strolls, ‘That’s a jungle out there and I’m King of it’. The same ‘we must go ahead’ speeches were made daily, and some of the workers left after complaints about the buses and their boss. It was in an area where few of the Ford range are used anyway, and management put on the kid gloves.

Marched off

Eventually, in desperation, they downsized the whole section stopped work.

Those directly involved waited for the stewards, John Dalton, to arrive and marched him off to the foreman’s office demanding that management answer their questions. The request was refused so the decision not to return to work until after a meeting at the weekend.

Billy Maugmill and a union district official were left alone behind the guard. They were holding charges of having an unofficial meeting and the notice was served as they were seen walking out Sunday morning ‘to examine the job’ and the demand that at least five men be engaged on it.

But John Dalton was sacked on Monday morning when he reached the factory. By Wednesday 16 June production at Hal- wood had stopped. For the first time ever all three plants were not selling in defiance of a victimised worker.

But there is no shadow of doubt that Hallowood management had planned this demobilisation from the beginning. 800 cases on the model at Hallowood have just been landed in Harwich. They are all right.

Hallowood: ‘hate tactics against shop floor

by a TGWU shop steward

WHEN Jack Jones and Hugh Stanton ended the Ford strike just two months ago, it is hardly likely that they were blessed by the ghost of things to come. If they had been, or if they had experienced anything like the cosmetics of the 49,000 workers felt, then Ford management today would have dared to implement their life-long ambitions—to standardise the union organisation at Hallowood for once and for all.

It is not true that there are two union brothers weren’t at Hallowood just before the end of the strike, full of confidence that what they were doing was going to do with the shop stewards.

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The Fight against Racism by Mike Caffmor

Vital reading for all Socialists and trade unionists

Send to Pluto Press (B) & Cottons Gardens London E2 8DN.

Hand drive, from a production line in Birmingham, safely to preserve these striking-worker’s jobs. But the shadow of Ford U’s idleness could have imagined the solidarity that this action has unleashed, a solidarity that fights for our lives. Everything re-
Another Socialist Worker Exclusive: industrial giants turn their backs on Unilever.

DIRTY LITTLE DETAIL, all wrapped up in plastic, is bringing great comfort and joy to the boardroom of the Metal Box Company, whose directors are already rejoicing over the company’s record profit figures announced this month.

The deal being a little less well received in West Suffolk, where more than 500 Metal Box workers are to lose their jobs.

The parties to the deal, Metal Box and Unilever, are understandably reluctant to talk about it.

Last October Metal Box bought three plastic container manufacturing plants from Unilever to bring an estimated 20% of the plastic market up to something near 25%.

Among the factories was the Holyknap plant at Glemsford, West Suffolk, the only major employer for miles around.

One of the conditions Metal Box exacted was that Unilever would not re-enter the plastic container market for some years.

Another was that Unilever would take exclusively Metal Box containers for at least one of their biggest existing domestic products, understood to be Domestos, the toilet cleaner.

So Metal Box secured a nice, fat, regular order, and eliminated a source of potential competition.

But these have eliminated the factory as well, and the plastic products, too, are to be made at Bromborough, conveniently on the doorstep of a huge Unilever plant in Merseyside.

Of course, Metal Box bosses readily deny that they only took over Holyknap to secure its orders and not to find them a production plant elsewhere.

More sceptical observers of the Holyknap debate, however, feel this is precisely what Metal Box intended from the moment they opened negotiations with Unilever.

‘Better future’

When the takeover was announced to the Holyknap workers in November, Mr. R. V. Moreton, managing director at that time, Mr. P. V. V. Lewis, said:

‘Although much detail work has yet to be done, it is quite evident that it is the intention of the company to make this a significant plant. We plan to bring in new production and not for profit.

We work in the mass-organisational form and we are firmly committed to a policy of integration.

Capitalism is international. The giant firms buy investments throughout the world and owe allegiance to themselves and the economic system they maintain.

In Europe, the Common Market has only accelerated the process of increasing the trade and profit of these giant organisations.

The international power of capitalism can only be overcome by international action by the working class.

A single socialist state cannot confoundedly survive unless workers of all countries unite against it to defend their class.

In addition to building a revolutionary socialist organisation in this country, we also believe in the necessity of forming a world revolutionary socialist international independent of either Washington or Moscow. To this end we have close relationships with a number of other socialist organisations throughout the world.

We believe in the necessity to unite socialist theory with the day-to-day struggle of working people and therefore support all genuine demands that tend to improve the position and self-confidence of the working class.

We fight for the maintenance and control of the trade unions and the rationalisation of all trade union power.

Against secret negotiations, we demand that all settlements should be agreed or rejected by mass meetings.

For 100% trade union organisation, we demand that trade union leadership should be elected by the workers it represents.

Against anti-trade union laws and any curbs on the right to strike, whether the strikers are ‘official’ or not.

Against productivity deals and rationalisation for profit and for the whole working class.

Against corruption and a better deal for young workers.

For a minimum wage of at least £25 a week.

Against unemployment, redundancy and lay-offs. We support the demand: Five days work or five days notice.

For all workers in struggle. We see to build militant groups within industry.

Against police and state persecution of black workers.

Against the exercise of trade union power on the factory floor.

Against the use of brute force and political and military alliances such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Against secret diplomacy.

Against all forms of imperialism.

We unconditionally positive support and solidarity with all genuine national liberation movements.

For the nationalisation of the land, banks and major industries, for the abolition of trade unions, for their own control and participation in the work of government.

For the end of all royal families, all monarchies, all states and all bosses and the end of all bosses.

The struggle for socialism is the central struggle of our time. Workers of all countries unite.

We are inspired by the examples of the working people of small towns, of working men, of working women.

We are confident that the power of man over nature with the abolition of the power of man over man, is scientifically right.

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factory at Glemsford, up sale for boost to Metal Box's record profits

Workers and the Engineers. They have never caused the management any trouble. There has never been a strike over a domestic issue. The only industrial action the plant has seen were the one-day protests by the AUEW in March against the Industrial Relations Bill. It was only a week after the second of the "Kill the Bill" protests on 25 March that the management dropped its bombshell.

The factory would close in October, they said. There would be a gradual rundown of the workforce.

But he is having problems even in settling the pension rights and severance package. In a rare act of consideration, Metal Box have agreed that the more generous Uniever terms should apply. But they cannot, and Uniever will not explain how the scheme is operated.

Scandalous anomalies have arisen in individual settlements. One man has been told that his redundancy pay will be £200 less than that of a colleague with identical service and doing the same job.

But efforts to discover how the payments are computed have met with a deafening silence.

Metal Box, meanwhile, are advertising the Glemsford factory for sale in the Financial Times. They are offering it, complete with "targeting labour force", at £300,000.

Workers trapped

So far there have been no takers. They might get a quick sale if they explain that the labour force has nowhere to go, that it is trapped in a rural area where there is no alternative employers, that the workers are desperate and can probably be hired at well below their market value, that only 380 remain. But 40 of these are serving notices which expire later this month, and it is hoped that most of those left will get their notices by 25 June.

The £300,000 would bring more comfort and joy to the Metal Box boardroom. It might even soothe their anguish over reducing a sweet, prospering part of rural England to an unemployment disaster area.

It will certainly help the Metal Box profits drive—£16 million in 1979, £15 million this year.

SPECIAL ISSUE ON TRADE UNIONS

International Socialism 48

Articles by Leon Trotsky, Tony Cliff and Chis Harman

Plus Bengal, Caylon, Black Panthers split, and the Poor

This: £1 for a year

ISS magazine 6 Grettons Gardens London £2 80N

JUSTIFIED

Calling the jobs done by different names, the have created the situation, the PIC says, the are unlikely to affect the interest of the trade unions. The PIC report mentions the case of government A large number of establishments went direct cleaning during the time of the last Labour government. The government—and the PIC—justified this on the grounds that it meant considerable less for the work by direct labour, even though the contractor is making a profit on the contract. Another point in favour of the arrangement is, of course, that the government could claim to be employing fewer civil servants. A direct labourer cleans about 1000 square feet an hour, while a contract cleaner is estimated to clean 1500 square feet an hour. But who counts reduces part-time cleaning work?

Conditions of employment, while by no means perfect in the civil service, are infinitely better than in the case of contractors. Yet it was the Civil Service unions that opened the door to this state of affairs when they agreed in June 1969 that 'departments are under no obligation to secure (cleaning services) on the most economical basis.' The other unions concerned—principally the Transport Workers and the General and Municipal have done precious little except propound a joint council of employers and unions. As the PIC points out, unionisation is only 3 per cent in the trade, so that such an arrangement would mean very little and would probably only serve to keep wages low. The PIC says the unions will not propose a course roots for the trade. The main reason is that the TGWU to the campaign to unionise the cleaners led by Mary Hobbs and the Cleaners' Action Group has been to criticise and build on it at every opportunity.

ACUSATIONS

Far from helping with the collection of dues from members recruited by this voluntary labour, the unions have lapped the at the first opportunity and made veiled accusations of embezzlement. Here is how the PIC describes the attitude of the union officials. 'Sometimes favourable, occasionally hostile, more often indifferent. Where individual firms objected to union activity this is first because they fear that unions might bring pressure to bear on them to raise their wage rates'. Those who have been in contact with night cleaners get a very different picture. There are also universal threats of the sack if you so much as join a union and several confirmed examples of victimisation for union activity. This is much more than occasional hostility'.

As an attempt to resolve the problems of the night cleaners in particular, the PIC suggest that one of the major unions might employ a full-time female organiser for this purpose. But it is essential that this person is someone fully conversant with the industry—a cleaner, or ex-cleaner herself and controlled by the cleaners, not just some hack from Transport House.

The report is a restatement of the right of the directors and shareholders of the contract companies to continue to sit back and draw fat salaries and dividends from the bloodied labour of exhausted women who work a 40 hour week during the night for an average wage of £13.36 a week. Unfortunately there is no move towards a more powerful enough to effectively challenge that 'right', except the unions. And they are controlled by a leadership that is not only dumb, but apparently determined to silence any small voice that might be raised.

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ISS magazine 6 Grettons Gardens London £2 80N
Lives put at risk as losses cut back on bridge safety

by a special correspondent

BEHIND last week’s government decision to restrict traffic across box girder bridges until they have been tested for strength if necessary strengthened, lurks a major crisis in British engineering.

Some engineers are growing more and more concerned at the present direction their profession is taking. The pursuit of structural safety is being systematically neglected in favour of standardised erection procedures and so-called economic design.

Just how bad the situation is can be seen from a recently published but little known report on structural safety from the Construction Industry Research & Information Association.

There is no justification for increasing risks unless economic savings can be shown to be real. The report condemns the outlook of the new engineering establishment, and was produced by a working party which included Dr. Glyn Kyte, a partner in firm Freeman Fox which designed the Milford Haven and Dee bridges that both collapsed during construction.

Minor flaws

In the pursuit of so-called economies, fantastic increases in risk during construction and in service are being accepted.

When a designer works on a structure he uses a factor of safety. This allows for reasonably accurate construction, minor flaws in materials and some room for manoeuvre for the unknown.

The amount of steel is known to fail at a load of say 12,000 pounds per square inch. The designer then uses a factor of safety of say 3, he will shape his design to ensure that the load of 36,000 pounds was quite safe.

In the case of the Yarra Bridge, the designer were using the incredibly narrow factor of safety of 1.7, which means that on using steel which fails at 12,000 psi, design loads went as high as 20,000 psi, leaving no room for mistakes or manoeuvre.

During the second week of the Yarra River Commission is only now concluding, it was disclosed that prior to the collapse the contractors erecting the bridge had complained that too much emphasis has been placed on expediency and not enough on engineering responsibilities.

The whole box girder approach is designed as an economic one, as stated in the International Bulletin.

Last autumn the international bulletin with contributions from six resolutions of engineers and constructionists, many of whom are working on box girder bridges in other parts of the world, appeared and contains a summary of the difficulties encountered. Copies can be obtained from the International Sub-Committee on Bridges, Engineers’ Societies, price 10p, Ixius 2s., postage.

In 1886 John Burns and H.M. Hyndman, leaders of the Social Democratic Federation, were prosecuted at an unemployed demonstration in Hyde Park. Some of the crowd, prevented by the police from going to Trafalgar Square ‘congregated themselves by shuttering the windows of the Pall Mall clubs. The Lord Mayor ordered the police to arrest the nearest 500 of them from £30,000 to £79,000’.

The ruling class was seriously alarmed. The SDP was then a new organisation and it was bringing workers into the streets in militant demonstrations such as had not been seen for a long time. The agitators had been punished and to the solicitors laws were trundled out.

What is solicitation? The legal definition, as it was then and as it still is today, was stated by the judge at the trial of Burns and Hyndman. It is worth careful study.

A ‘solicitation is an intention to bring into hatred or contempt, or to excite disaffection against the person of Her Majesty, her heirs or successors, or the government and constitution of the United Kingdom, as by law established, or as House of Parliament, or the administration of justice, or to excite Her Majesty’s subjects to attempt otherwise than by lawful means the alteration of any matter in Church or State by lawful means, or to resist or prevent or prevent or interrupt or discontinue amongst Her Majesty’s subjects, or to promote feelings of ill will or hostility between different class of men such subjects.’

To sustain that illusion the real rulers have to be cautious in prosecuting those who try to oppose it. As long as the ‘reds’ are relatively few in number and the times are fairly peaceful they are better for the bosses to rely on the power of their newspapers and television and educational institutions.Prosecuting people for their ideas tends to give the game away.

That does not mean that the Solicitor General are a dead letter. Far from it. In times of real crisis the gloves are off and the brass knuckled on. Then the full force of the law is unleashed against leaders of the Left. But only of the Sedition Act, apart from its luscious froze, has never been prosecuted.

Put behind bars

In 1935 12 leaders of the Communist Party of Great Britain were arrested and charged with sedition. Why? They were saying nothing in 1925 that they had not said repeatedly in earlier years, nothing that Socialist Worker is not today saying. They were doing their best to raise discontent or dissatisfaction and to excite ‘ill will or hostility’ amongst the working class.

The reason for the prosecution was that the government, under Stanley Baldwin, was preparing, carefully and cold-bloodedly, to smash the miners’ Union as a preliminary to enforcing the new coal wage reductions. ‘All the workers of this country’, said Mr. Baldwin, ‘have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet.’

An important part of the government’s preparation for the General Strike that they knew was coming was the putting behind bars of the leaders of what was then a real revolutionary workers’ party. It was far too dangerous in the middle of a massive government, under Stanley Baldwin, was preparing, carefully and cold-bloodedly, to smash the miners’ Union as a preliminary to enforcing the new coal wage reductions. ‘All the workers of this country’, said Mr. Baldwin, ‘have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet.’

To sustain that illusion the real rulers have to be cautious in prosecuting those who try to oppose it. As long as the ‘reds’ are relatively few in number and the times are fairly peaceful they are better for the bosses to rely on the power of their newspapers and television and educational institutions. Prosecuting people for their ideas tends to give the game away.

Now the Communist leaders had what was, on the face of it, a certain defence. The very lawyers who were conducting the prosecution—Johnson/Hicks, the Attorney General, Hogg (later Halsham) the Solicitor General—had been up to their ears in sedition cases only a few years earlier. They had been active, with the other leaders of the Tory Party, in defending the right of the Ulster Volunteers to resort to armed insurrection against the Crown if the Liberal government’s ‘Home Rule for Ireland’ Bill became a law.

Indeed, one of the most prominent members of the government, Lord Birkenhead (F.E. Smith), had been involved in smuggling rifles from Germany into Northern Ireland and had stamped the country shouting ‘Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right’. Not a single Tory was ever prosecuted.

What was sauce for the goose was not, however, sauce for the gander. The case of Tom Bell, one of the accused, was pointed out that he had never smuggled rifles or organised an armed force was interrupted from the bench. ‘Why go into all this, it was a long time ago’. His reply, ‘You are taking us back to 1177 (the date these words were passed) cut no ice at all.

All 12 were convicted. Mr. Justice Swift did his duty to his class and sent them all to prison. It was a splendid demonstration of the impartiality of British Justice.
Sugaring the colonial pill

I SHOULD dearly love to know what happened to Pontevedra's Quirimbas between conception and its belated release. Made in 1968, it would possibly never have been shown over here had not its director's gaudy film, The Battle of Algiers, been so rapturously received when it opened a few weeks ago. And this in spite of Marlon Brando as a star.

The film was, for instance, that the Spanish got it into a position from which they could turn the miserable colony of Quirimbas from a Spanish to a Portuguese possession. There are occasional words of the offending tongue, but the form in which the two countries face each other and the stance that Portugal is Britain's enemy is historically important. The form of the film is chaotic and shows some marks of the unseen.

Bad colour, uneven photography, Brando's peculiar accent, clumsy drawing, appalling organ music including a march of grizzled Bach, tired eye glasses, and the gaudy appearance were watching a travesty of the director's intentions. There was none of this in the straightforward Battle of Algiers.

And yet Quirimbas remains compelling and captivating by all standards, which makes me feel at what it might have been.

Hamstring mind

The piece in Brando's. He is there all the time, and the whole sympathy of the director is with the sophisticated and uncommunicative man he embodies.

He is an agent of the British admiral in the early 19th century. The colony is to be encouraged to revolt from Portugal in order that it may serve British interests better. For this purpose and tragic consequences for the struggle will be useful, though in the end, the Portuguese will win the independence.

The question is whether the British agent's admiration for his negro partner is sincere, but it becomes plain that he sees no alternative to domination of the island by the interests of capital—in this case the Royal Antilles Sugar Company. After the revolution the negro general is allowed to try to run the island on the old economic process to discredit his leadership.

Quirimbas needs a European market for her sugar but Europe has plenty of Quirimbas. Can she return to the island. Revolution has broken out again by the English agent's old friend who is embittered by the experience of "corruption", or what is politically known nowadays as extreme development?

This time the task is to weed out every revolutionary—workplace plantations have to be destroyed in order to achieve this aim. Brando is vicious, ruthless, and cynical because he sees himself as the agent of historic necessity. The negro must become workers from slaves but cannot yet be masters in this portrayal of a man's half-formed nature. Quirimbas represents a grand advance in socialism. But it was very nearly strangled in the making.

James Fenton

THE BATTLE between Harold Wilson and the Labour Party's left-wing were the recent nude-in-the-mad-wrestling match in the 'red light' district of a decent American city is hard to decide who is the more disgusting—the BBC moguls responsible for the programme or the Wilson cabinet. One can only hope that the fact that their lives of luxury had been exposed to the public for 24 hours work for 24 days' work. This allows them plenty of time for their other part-time directions, Shawcross, so much so, also sit on the boards of EMI, Hawker Siddeley, Rank, Heineken, the R.A.A., Morgan Guaranty Trust Company of New York and Times newspapers.

Nausoleum

BIG ADVANCES in the American way of life have been announced with the design and construction of a multi-million pound, multi-storey crematorium in Nashville. Woodlawn Construction Co. is to build the 20-storey nausoleum, providing more than 60,000 burial places.

They've got the economists in on the planning. Normally it requires 1,000 acres to bury 64,000 people. The skyscraper will cater for the same number inside one acre.

Engineers for the project have been to considerable lengths to establish what a corpse weighs after decomposition. In their reckoning, a 200-pound body gets down to around 40 pounds inside six months. This amazing mathematical feat has enabled the firm to save a lot of money on the supporting steel beams, since they can be sized down accordingly.

NICE CHAPS, the Tories, in a Commons debate on the increased charges for school meals, the Tory MP for Newport SE, Mr Peter Rees, said: "If parents are not prepared to ensure that their children are properly fed they are not fit to be parents and should not have children. It would be proper to remind the country that it is not the state's responsibility to feed schoolchildren."

James Fenton

David East
Carr’s code hits at shop floor

EMPLOYMENT MINISTER Robert Carr last week published his Code of Industrial Relations. As of now, it will come into force immediately, with all the weight of the law behind it. The PRESIDENT of the Chamber of Commerce, Mr. R. H. Carr, has been appointed by the President’s code. The chairman of the IRC will be

High Court Judge Sir John Donaldson. A past chairman of the Federation of Employment and Employers’ Associations, Mr. Donaldson will act as the code’s first chairman. The IRC will deal with union registration, awarding of contracts, procedures and agreements, and the need for more union officials. It recommends that agreements should be reached between management and unions on how many stewards there ought to be, what qualifications they need and how their credentials should be issued. It insists that stewards must obey all agreements.

The IRC will have power to stop strikes, issue injunctions, seize property and order the payment of damages. It will also have power to order the closure of a shop if it fails to observe the code.

The IRC will be a body of 12 members, nine of whom will be chosen by the employers and three by the unions. The code will also cover the appointment of arbitrators and the settlement of disputes.

The code is a part of the Tory government’s industrial relations bill. When the bill becomes law, it will be taken into account by the IRC. It deals with union registration, award of contracts, procedures and agreements, and the need for more union officials. It recommends that agreements should be reached between management and unions on how many stewards there ought to be, what qualifications they need and how their credentials should be issued. It insists that stewards must obey all agreements.

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