

The Week

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• DOCKS DEMOCRACY

• PAPERS, DISCUSSIONS, RESOLUTION

REPORT ON THE THIRD VOICE SCHOOL ON WORKERS CONTROL

Manchester June 1965

THE WEEK - A NEWS ANALYSIS FOR SOCIALISTS

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With this third Week pamphlet on Workers' Control, we feel that we are moving into a new phase of the campaign for industrial democracy. Two previous gatherings in Nottingham and London have involved dozens of key trade union activists, academics, and socialist journalists in initiating what has now become a widespread concern. But the third seminar, held in Manchester last month, marked out a new level in more ways than one. First, it was overwhelmingly made up of trade union representatives. Miners, dockers, steelmen, engineers, firemen, aircraft stewards: these were the majority of the participants. Secondly, it was concerned above all with practical action. Everyone was impatient to go beyond the talk stage, to start work. Thirdly, it had reached the point where many eyes were focussed upon its results: both the eyes of labour leaders like the MPs, Frank Allaun and Stan Orme, who kindly joined in, and the less welcome eyes of the strange character who stole the address list. For the next few months, the task is to take our findings out into the wide labour movement: to the TUC and the Labour Party Conference, to the unions at large and the columns of the Labour press. Reports of activities should be sent to Tony Topham, at 1, Plantation Drive, Anlaby Park, Hull.

WHAT THE PRESS SAID ABOUT THE MANCHESTER CONFERENCE.

Reports of the seminar will appear in a number of socialist and radical journals. Here we reprint two that were featured in Peace News and Tribune respectively.

Incomes policy Rejected

A long resolution setting out objections to the government's incomes policy was passed at the conclusion of a conference on "Workers' Control in a Changing Situation", held last week in Manchester.

The conference was the third in a series organised by Labour's Voice. As well as incomes policy, it concentrated on the steel, docks and aircraft industries, breaking up into seminars to consider plans and possibilities for workers' control in those industries. Unlike the last conference, which devoted some time to plenary sessions and a brains trust, this one gave the bulk of its time to the seminars.

The docks seminar, which included groups of dockworkers from Hull and London, came up with a plan for nationalising the docks and replacing the National Dock Labour Board with a structure of workers' councils, organised through trade union branches. There would be complete workers' self-management in all matters of work organisation, and the councils would have the power to examine the accounts of the proposed National Port Authority. The convener of the group was confident that problems of efficiency, wages structure and trade union rivalry could be overcome; even the experience of meeting dockers from other ports at this conference had made the problems seem less formidable.

Steel and aircraft were combined in one seminar. The Sheffield steelworkers' group, who had prepared a working document for the conference, felt that it was unrealistic to expect 100% workers' self-management in the nationalised steel industry, and said they would settle for a reasonable amount of participation. However, the seminar suggested modifications to their proposals for election of board members, in the direction of giving greater power to the workers' councils. It seemed to be felt that the group had gone as far as it could in working out plans for workers' control in an industry which was not yet nationalised; the next step was to make sure that the industry was nationalised.

On aircraft, the seminar recommended the nationalisation of airframes and aero engines, and suggested that the Amalgamated Engineering Union should be pushed into making funds available to train aircraft workers for workers' control management functions, so as to strengthen the demand for nationalisation.

The incomes policy seminar was concerned with the movement for workers' control in a general political context, with particular

What the Press said - continued/

attention given to the position of shop stewards under the incomes policy. The thesis was put forward by Ken Coates, an editor of The Week, that the present incomes policy of the government was unacceptable because it froze present inequalities, it did not control prices or property incomes, it did not relate to a national plan for publicly owned and democratically controlled industry, and it undermined the power of the trade unions, especially shop stewards.

Control of day-to-day workshop organisation, conditions of work and wages was already to some extent in the hands of workers, through their shop stewards; well over half the strikes held in Britain were about some sort of workers' control situation. The moral revulsion of people denied the right to contribute to the making of decisions about their work led to this succession of short and small strikes, aimed at humanising a corner of the working week.

This fragmented shop stewards' movement at best enabled workers to hold their own. It was now under attack, as part of a campaign to gain trade union support for planning within capitalism; but it needed to be strengthened as the basis for an extension of this kind to control towards more complete forms of workers' self-management.

This thesis gained general acceptance in the seminar, and several people pointed out that the rejection of the present incomes policy put the issue of public ownership back into the centre of political debate - among them Stanley Orme, one of the two MPs (the other being Frank Allaun) who sat in on the seminar. Mr. Orme also suggested that the incomes policy had already been torn to shreds by trade union opposition.

The seminar's conclusions, which found their way into the final resolution, were that opposition should be encouraged to the present incomes policy, and further discussion should be opened up about the proper objectives of an incomes policy. One of the demands which the resolution contained, as a necessary condition of a socialist incomes policy, was the right for workers to have access to employers' account books - a demand which several people recognised would be strongly resisted, this again raising the issue of public ownership.

The conference also passed a resolution strongly attacking the recent remarks of Ray Gunter, Minister of Labour, about the need for more "discipline" in the trade unions. As a measure of its support for unofficial strikers, it raised a collection of £4 for the Courtaulds strike fund, after hearing statements by some of the Preston strikers about their struggle.

Peace News.

What the Press said - continued/

Workers' Control Conference Gets Down to Details

The third conference in the series on Workers' Control (begun last year in Nottingham, and continued in London last month) took place last week end at the Amalgamated Engineering Union's offices in Manchester. It was organised by Labour's Voice, the monthly Socialist journal produced in Manchester which has several local editions in the North and Midlands. Sixty people took part in the conference, which was visited by Stan Orme, MP, and Frank Allaun, MP.

The importance of the conference lay both in its composition and its programme. Dockers from Hull and London, steel workers from the Sheffield workers' control groups, delegates from aircraft workers' shop stewards, Derbyshire miners, busmen, railwaymen, firemen, draughtsmen, engineering workers and others, gave the conference an even more firmly working-class rank-and-file basis than either of the previous ones.

The topics selected for discussion were precise and specific: the problems of workers' control in docks, steel and aviation, and the issues which surround a Socialist alternative to the present Incomes Policy.

After introductory statements outlining the historical and political context in which the conference was set, and on the development of a Socialist strategy centred around the demand for workers' control, the conference heard short summaries of the issues involved in the four chosen subjects. Then through Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, the conference divided into groups around these topics.

After receiving reports back from the groups, the whole conference adopted a number of resolutions. First, conference approved a firm and detailed resolution explaining why the present Incomes Policy should be opposed, and laying down the terms which were needed before discussion of the subject could be entertained by the unions.

A resolution calling for the nationalisation of the dock industry, with full workers' control over the Public Board, which would operate the industry, was approved.

Detailed reports of the conference's work and the resolutions will be issued shortly in the Voice papers and The Week. Last weekend's proceedings marked an important step forward in the campaign, and the follow-up work which is planned will carry the issues still deeper into the Labour and trade union movements.

Tribune.

By now it has become clear to almost everybody on the left that the so-called 'Incomes Policy' of messieurs George Brown and Aubrey Jones is totally unacceptable. Even though their understandable loyalty to the Government impelled the Conference of union executives convened by the TUC at the end of April to approve the Report of the General Council by 6,600,000 votes to 1,800,000 against, the doubts and hesitations expressed by the T & GWU, the draughtsmen, the sheet metal workers and ASSET have begun to take root in far wider fields. As the implications of the policy become clear, union after union turns it down. Within six weeks successively the woodworkers, the furniture workers, the Association of Scientific Workers and the firemen have recorded firm, even overwhelming majorities against it.

This is entirely proper. None of the pledges made to sweeten the pill of wage-control have been honoured. Far from containing all incomes, the policy's acceptance has been accompanied by record dividend declarations: indeed, on June 4th the Financial Times reported that profits were 17.7% up on the previous year, while dividends had risen by 11.8%. Top people's incomes are scarcely affected by the Government's new fiscal measures: Peter Shore's bill to control and compel disclosure of higher management incomes was marooned because a bare half-hundred Labour MPs stayed to vote for it, and Government spokesmen in any case declared it to be an undesirable measure, since compulsion must not be applied until persuasion had failed. The trouble is that by the time persuasion has been tried, the Government is highly likely to have been defeated, so that the possibility of taking compulsory action against the top men will have evaporated. Far from being eased into existence by a controlled growth of welfare amenities, the new policy is being launched in the midst of a crisis stoppage on all such expenditure. The pension increases, too little and too late, have nothing like cushioned their recipients from the ill-effects of the past 13 years, leave alone shot them into the front of the queue of social priorities. Labour's basic pledges in the field of welfare of housing and education are all, for the duration of the crisis, on ice. At the same time, the morale of our supporters, which is quite capable of bearing heavy sacrifices in a context of radical advance towards a more just society, is shattered by the way in which George Brown and Jim Callaghan feel compelled to deliver almost daily reassurances to capital, about the necessity of rewards for initiative or enterprise; about the sanctity of profit, and so on. In the background, the menacing utterances of Ray Gunter, perhaps the most aggressively reactionary Minister of Labour since the war, add their quota to the anxieties of all trade unionists.

The promise of the incomes policy in the field of wage control is bleak in the extreme. As Harry Nicholas rightly pointed out, the control of wages is to take place before agreements are concluded, because bargaining goes on in the open, often accompanied by fierce publicity in the business

press: but the control of prices, if such it can be called, is to move lamely after the accomplished fact. Underpaid and underprivileged groups, who were supposed to be specially protected and advanced by the policy, are in fact compelled to howl in the wilderness as before. Significantly, the farmworkers, who are among Britain's most badly treated workers, were among the first to feel the squeeze of Mr. Aubrey Jones: their claim for a shorter working week was rejected because the independent members of the Agricultural Wages Board, whose vote is almost always decisive, were against a reduction in hours "at this time". Farmworkers work a 51 hour average week; their minimum basic wage for 45 hours is all of £10.2s. Everywhere one looks, underpaid workers stay underpaid. Women workers, grossly exploited, and notoriously difficult to organise, are a classic case in point. Any incomes policy that was even marginally concerned with equity, redistribution, and social justice would have to begin with the principle of equal pay for equal work. Mr. Brown has nothing whatever to say about this matter. But this produces a vicious circle. Badly organised workers are underpaid. Underpaid workers remain demoralised, and so apathetic or difficult to organise. In the interests of trade union expansion, go-ahead unions must press for sharp improvements in wages and working conditions. There is no doubt that the scandalous position in which less than 10 million British workers are organised is responsible for most of Labour's political problems over the last decade. The worst organised sections are women and many groups of white collar workers: and their conditions require militant action if either redress or any growth of organised power is to be won. If Mr. Brown's freeze works, it will send its icy breath into the opinion polls at the same time as it marks out standstill in the field of trade union growth.

The fastest growing white collar unions are ASSET and DATA. The biggest and most successful union of all is the T & GWU. All are opposed to Mr. Brown's policy. The most moribund union among the big battalions is surely the NUGMW. This stagnates in terms of membership, even though it organises workers in expanding areas of the economy. It is all for the incomes policy. Apparently this is because its leaders think that Mr. Brown will do their work for them. He won't. Clive Jenkins, the enterprising and active leader of ASSET, shrewdly pointed out at the 'Voice of the Unions' London seminar on Workers' Control, this May, that he could only recruit technicians and supervisors if he could work for them. Given that many of them receive totally inadequate salaries, often well under £20 a week, it was very unlikely that they could be inspired by Mr. Brown's guiding light. ASSET would need to press for 20%, rather than 3% increases, said Mr. Jenkins, if it were to do its duty by its members and thus prove worthy of support. Of course, the old argument for an incomes policy has always stressed that money-wage militancy is apt to leave wide sections of workers behind, so that millions of people are depressed to the level of £10 a week, or even less. But to hold back the militants won't put a halfpenny into the pockets of the underpaid. The only way to help these people in an incomes policy would be by planning

the redistribution of wealth, taking from rentier incomes and adding to wage and salary income. No steps at all are at present being taken in this direction.

It is therefore quite impossible to support both Mr. Brown's variety of incomes policy and the power and vitality of free trade unions.

But true as this is, it is equally clear that this unpleasant choice must cause real heartsearching in the unions. Even though the Government is sadly in error to promote such a policy no sane trade unionist wants to challenge it, or to threaten its chances of survival. We have so few Labour Governments, and those that we do have are usually so delicately balanced, that every trade union activist must think extremely carefully before prejudicing this one.

Yet to accept this policy is to abort the prospects for a renewed Labour victory. As happened during the wage freeze in the post-war Labour Governments of 1945-51, this wage slow-down can only demoralize the unions and create dissensions within them to the extent that it is effective. Indeed, because this Labour Government has more resources for the promotion of welfare schemes, the ill-effects of Mr. Brown will be even sharper than those of his fore-runners. In 1951, in spite of the wage-freeze, the war in Korea and the Bevan split, Labour polled a record vote. This stemmed from the popular feeling that Labour had promoted measures that needed to be defended. But in 1965 the municipal elections have already revealed a terrifying growth of abstention, and an over-all 10% swing which, if carried on, would certainly topple the Government at a new General Election. The scent of disappointment fills the air.

In this context, the unions have a crucial decision to take. They can't accept Mr. Aubrey Jones' decisions about wages. But neither can they simply ignore the Government's appeals. Above all, they need to develop a probing, aggressive response to the challenge of incomes policy which will allow Mr. Wilson to go on to the offensive, which will put the employers on the spot, and which will make it entirely plain to the public at large that it is not the unions, but business, which is the culprit and the cause of our economic difficulties.

It is for this reason that an increasing number of people are turning to the problem of details of the kind of plan upon which an incomes policy could be based. Clearly, there are at least two pre-conditions for such a policy. First, it must be part of an over-all strategy of advance towards social control of the economy as a whole. It must be phased onto a planned development of structural, anti-capitalist changes in the control, ownership and direction of production. Second, and just as important, it must be the creation of the workpeople themselves. The goals, priorities, and direction of the policy must not merely be acceptable to trade unionists; they must be determined by them. Any other approach to the problem can only undermine the democratic powers of the unions, and with these powers, the

Incomes policy continued/

entire fabric of the elements of political democracy which exist in Britain today. With the unions built into a state plan whose priorities were determined by technicians, top managers and representatives of business, not only would the creative initiative of the working people be blocked and thwarted, but the very foundation of political choice in Britain would be demolished.

In fact, these two basic pre-conditions for incomes policy were already spelt out by the TUC in the composite resolution which was approved in 1964. This speaks of planning "...by applying an extension of public ownership based on popular control in which unions participate on a democratic basis at all levels." These guiding principles have not up to now been taken at all seriously in the subsequent incomes policy discussion.

If we are to see a significant growth of public ownership and control of industry, and the beginning of serious planning, then incomes policy becomes necessary as one weapon to use against rentier incomes in the transition to the new order of things. But even then, such a policy must be used to develop and stimulate the power and awareness of the unions and their members at the expense of the prerogatives of capital in the factories. It is for this reason that as a crucial part of the transition, we need to take up the demand for the opening of the accounts of every firm to workers' inspection. Until all the basic industries have been socialised, the existence of secrecy in accounts will inevitably make it possible for the employers and the financial controllers to cheat and short-circuit any incomes policy that could be formulated.

This was perfectly clearly understood ten years ago by Baroness Wootton, in her celebrated study, 'The Social Foundations of Wage Policy'. "A rational wage policy", she said then, "cannot be either constructed or executed in the dark. Somehow the secrecy which invests the subject of personal earnings, and particularly the upper reaches of the pyramid, must be dispelled." (p.171) Three years ago this view was strongly reinforced by the publication of Professor Titmuss' authoritative work on 'Income distribution and Social Change', which showed how the myth that Britain was approaching closer and closer to income equality was completely unfounded, and documented some of the key ways in which top incomes can be protected from the visitations of the tax man. What is now most urgently needed is some similar survey of the extent to which corporate financial manoeuvres, self-financing devices, and similar modern trends in business administration, affect the picture.

Be that as it may, there can be no doubt whatever that the fact that wages are known, while rentier incomes are not, makes it absolutely impossible to even begin joint negotiations through incomes policy to bring about any change in the social distribution of income.

Incomes Policy continued/

Once again, at an abstract level, the TUC has already at times given thought to this problem. In 1960 it gave evidence to the Jenkins Committee on the reform of company law. Here the unions laid very heavy stress on the demand that "the importance of providing workpeople with adequate information should be explicitly recognized". Again, in 1962, the General Council, in minuting its welcome for some of the recommendations of the Jenkins Report, "regretted that the report did not give explicit recognition to the central assertion that workpeople had a right to receive information about the affairs of their company, and that the provision of this information should not merely be a by-product of obligations laid upon companies for other purposes." (TUC Report p.278.) There is, unfortunately, no evidence that this vital matter has been properly considered in its essential relevance to the discussion round incomes policy. If the incomes policy is not to constrain wages in order to allow employers to make hay, it is absolutely vital that more information about company accounts should be placed before the unions. Here: it is impossibly dangerous for the unions to play ball with Mr. Brown until, as a matter of right, they have access to all the books of the firms with which they negotiate. Then only can they begin to veto any moves to cheat. There can be no excuse for employers withholding such rights: they already police wages jointly with the Government in PAYE. A minimum beginning for any real control of rentier incomes is that workpeople should be able to have corresponding joint powers with the Inland Revenue against their employers. Until this right is won they will be operating blindfold in a situation pregnant with hazard.

Of course, if workers can invade the financial secrets of their employers, their power will be greatly augmented. At last they will begin to extend their control over really significant parts of the decision-taking process. Such moves will be all to the good. At present Mr. Brown's attacks on "restrictive practices" cut in the opposite direction. Linked with the disciplinarian fervour of Mr. Gunter and the constant probes of the employers, the present incomes policy is above all an assault on such elements of workers' control as already exist in industry. Attacks on 'wage drift' in learned papers are followed in the industrial world itself, by attempts to curtail stewards' freedom of movement, and to re-establish management's 'right to manage'.

The time is ripe to reverse this retrograde movement. Open the books! By extending workers' rights and trade union control, by curtailing management's prerogatives, and by deepening the political movement towards socialisation of industry, the present sorry sag of Labour's fortunes can be sharply overcome, and a new optimism and fervour can sweep through the movement.

INCOMES POLICY RESOLUTION FOR LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

The following resolution was adopted by West Nottingham C.L.P. for the 1965 Labour Party Conference. It is based on the incomes policy resolution of the Manchester Seminar.

"That we cannot effectively support the Government's present Incomes policy for the following reasons:-

1. It does not adequately provide for the badly underpaid sections of the community, and serves only to freeze the existing injustices. Before any beginning is made on the planning of incomes, certain basic principles must be applied, particularly those of equal pay for equal work by women and youths, and the establishment of a guaranteed minimum wage.
2. It does not provide for redistribution between social sectors of income. A pre-condition of any acceptable income policy must be that it takes away from the sector of frontier incomes, and adds to that of wages and salaries.
3. It is not underpinned by an adequate level of social welfare provisions. Pensions still need considerable augmentation, in spite of the recent increases.
4. It does not adequately control property incomes. Taxation is an inadequate weapon for preventing cheating by employers. Only the complete accountability of every firm to its work-people can provide the necessary checks and controls by which the unions can ensure that the policy is being applied to property incomes. Workpeople must, as of right, have access to all their employers' account books, and to such professional aid as is necessary to interpret the data. Wages are already publicly known and administered by employers and the Inland Revenue, and equity requires that profits be placed in a corresponding position.
5. It does not adequately control prices. We believe that machinery should be set up to determine prices, as opposed to the present Prices and Incomes Board policy of reviewing decisions already taken unilaterally by business. Such machinery must ensure effective workers' and consumers' participation in the determination of prices.
6. We are concerned that the incomes policy is not founded on a strategic national plan for the development of planned, publicly owned and democratically administered industry. It will thus tend to benefit private interests rather than thrust forward and defend public priorities.

In rejecting the Incomes Policy as it stands, we urge the Government to open immediate negotiations with the unions, so that a viable policy can be formulated to meet these objections. If this is done quickly, it may possibly save the Government from a costly and demoralising defeat, and contribute to the rallying of the Labour movement around the Socialist objectives outlined in Clause IV of the party Constitution."

WORKERS' CONTROL IN A NATIONALISED STEEL INDUSTRY

by the Sheffield Study Group.

The possibilities of introducing workers' control into a nationalised steel industry are determined by a number of specific factors - some specific to the steel industry, others specific to any nationalised industry operating within a mixed economy.

The factors specific to the steel industry are:-

1. that the industry requires early rationalisation, involving the closing down of many existing plants and developments of a few giant complexes;
2. that the industry is rapidly approaching a stage of automation where output can be expanded with a much reduced labour force - at least of process workers and labourers;
3. that some important parts of the industry seem likely to be excluded from nationalisation but will nonetheless require co-ordination with the nationalised sectors, in matters of investment, pricing and wages policies,

The factors specific to nationalised industries in a mixed economy are:-

1. that such nationalised industries are used by governments for the pursuit of general economic policies, e.g. price stabilisation, incomes policy, investment volume control, etc., which may run counter to the immediate direct interests of the workers in the industry itself;
2. that such nationalised industries are subject, therefore, to powerful central control through a hierarchical rather than delegate structure of command and ultimately subject to ministerial decision;
3. that such nationalised industries are at the same time operating within an economy where the price of capital and the prices of labour and materials remain largely determined by market forces;
4. that in such nationalised industries Trades Unions are likely to be caught between their desire to defend nationalisation on general principle and the desire to improve their own immediate living standards.

In the light of these factors, it might easily be argued that Trade Unions in nationalised industries should avoid participation of any sort in management at any level, so as to leave themselves entirely free to concentrate on defensive action to protect immediate interests - in wages and employment - of their members. Several of the factors mentioned above, however, strongly militate against even effective defensive action itself by Trade Unions, if they limit themselves to purely sectional economic activity:-

(a) Increasing automation is likely to reduce severely the bargaining power of process workers and of craftsmen too, at the point of production;

(b) Government decisions supported by Parliament, e.g. on rationalisation, investment, income and pricing policies, cannot easily be influenced by sectional Trade Union action, nor can any decisions involving redundancy and retraining, which requires action outside the steel industry itself for their solution;

(c) While the economic power of trade unions may have to be concentrated centrally in order to parallel centralisation of control in the industry, such power will be useless unless it is based upon economic information on costings combined with local knowledge of conditions at plant level.

From what has been said so far, it is evident that the Trade Unions in the steel industry must retain under nationalisation their present defensive role of collective bargaining on behalf of their members at plant and national level. They will have indeed to extend this role by ensuring that negotiations on wages and conditions of all workers including white collar staff be made only through the appropriate bona fide trade unions. It is no less evident that the Trade Unions will also have to extend their knowledge and influence both at central and local plant level to embrace the advanced planning by management of the industry, so as to overcome their increasing weakness in taking defensive action only after management has made its decisions without consultation.

Those who argue, as H.A.Clegg did in 'A New Approach to Industrial Democracy', that collective bargaining itself is the condition of industrial democracy, because it implies opposition and opposition is the essence of democracy, forget that the essence of opposition is that it is a potential government, not a permanent opposition. If trade unions are not to limit themselves to permanent opposition, then they must begin to prepare themselves to take part in government. So long as they retain their freedom of action to defend their members' interests and in the last resort to pull out from a framework of action in which all the cards are stacked against them, then there might seem to be no reason why they should not also actually begin to take part in government.

How far is it then realistic for trade unions in steel to believe that under nationalisation they will be operating within a framework which allows them real power to defend themselves in management from decisions and policies in the rest of the economy that go against the interests of their members? First, the addition of steel to the list of nationalised industries certainly increases the size and influence of the public sector in the economy, but still leaves at least two-thirds of the economy in private hands. Moreover, as Prof. Meade has recently pointed out, the National Debt, i.e. the money owed by the public to the private sector, greatly exceeds the total value of all the assets of the public sector. Secondly, the influence of the government over the private sector of the economy is much greater than it was and with increased economic planning, including some control over prices and incomes, amounts almost to paramountcy. But is this enough? The third factor is the political complexion of the government. Many

Workers Control in a Nationalised Steel Industry continued/

trade unionists might be prepared to risk participation in the management of a nationalised industry, so long as a labour government was in power, but would wish to pull out if the Conservatives were returned to office. The right to withdraw is not however a very satisfactory form of insurance policy,

It is the general conclusion of this paper that some form of workers' control that falls short of self-management, but involves powers of scrutiny and veto, is the most appropriate in the present situation. This should nevertheless be regarded as an extension of workers' influence on management beyond the limitations of collective bargaining.

Experience in the existing nationalised industries can be drawn on to decide how best the knowledge and influence of trade unions on management in a nationalised industry may be brought to bear:

(a) by introducing consultative machinery at each level of management in addition to the conciliation machinery; this is what was done in the Nationalised Coal Industry;

(b) by combining consultative and conciliation functions in the machinery at each level as in the Electric Power industry;

(c) by developing a new system of actual participation by workers in management at every level in addition to the conciliation machinery.

One of the first lessons, not only of nationalised industries but of joint consultation in private industry is that, at least in the present situation of a mixed economy, Trade Unions cannot be expected to tolerate a rival system of representation of workers to their own. In the Coal Industry the NUM insisted on consultative committees being made up from NUM nominees. Where Works Councils have been set up in the Steel industry as rivals to trade unions for workers' loyalty, they have tended to be boycotted or their powers greatly circumscribed, unless the trade unions could in effect capture de facto control over nominations.

Objections to a rival system of representation of workers to the Trade Unions does not imply objection to the Unions themselves choosing two sets of representatives - one to negotiate wages and conditions and the other to participate in management. In the fully developed examples of workers' self-management in Yugoslavia elections under managements, i.e. trade unionists fulfilling their traditional function, have been found to lead to fruitful, rather than barren contradiction. This implies that one part, and perhaps the major part, of the role of Trade Unions lies in effect, in Clegg's terms, in permanent opposition. This is not to exclude the important political role of unions in the transition of Socialism. What is impossible is that the same man should at one and the same time be both representative of the workers in management.

In the period of the transition to Socialism the Trade Unions however as the organisation of Labour are bound to play the central part in inaugurating workers' self-management.

Workers Control in a Nationalised Steel Industry continues/

The second lesson of nationalised industries is that there must be some real power in management at each level to be shared with workers representatives. The reason why consultation in the coal industry is regarded as an abortion has been that, except on purely technical matters, pit managers have to refer almost everything to Area Officials. This leads to the third lesson, which is that there must be official procedure for referring differences up and down the line of consultation between management and men, with the right of lower representatives of both sides to be represented at higher level meetings.

The question for Workers in the Steel Industry to answer remains whether the dual functions of collective bargaining and participation in management can be combined by trade unions in a necessarily centralised steel industry? The alternative suggested here is to establish a measure of workers' control in the industry i.e. of scrutiny and veto without prejudicing the present rights of trade unions in collective bargaining over wages and conditions.

PROPOSALS.

1) At national board level, the trade unions and the steel industry should meet together to draw up a panel of names from which the Minister should choose one half of the ordinary Board members (including the vice-Chairman but not the Chairman). This would give to the Minister the ultimate authority he must have to answer to Parliament for the general policies of the industry, but follows the TUC 1944 Interim Report Para. 104, which proposed 'nomination by workers' organisations of candidates from whom the Minister shall select a number of Board members'. Members should retire in rota after a maximum term of five years but be eligible for reappointment if they are endorsed on the Trade Union panel of names.

2) At combine or Group level, the Chairman or Managing Director, whichever he may be called, of the operating board should be appointed by the central board, subject to ratification by a Workers' Council elected as is shown below. If control is to be extended to self-management then the Workers' Council could also appoint half the members of the operating board, excluding the Chairman or Managing Director. This would allow for a centralised policy control and yet give considerable local power to the Chairman, subject to his being able to carry his Workers' Council with him; but it would inevitably involve the Unions in responsibility for management decisions.

The Workers' Council would have power in either case to receive reports on all policies and to ask for detailed costings of all departments. One half of its members would be elected directly by the trade unions in accordance with their strength in the combine or group, the other half indirectly from shop, mill, or office committees or from Departmental or Plant Committees depending on the size of the combine.

This mixed system of representation would allow the larger unions to have considerable power without giving them overwhelming power, such as would embarrass them in their collective bargaining function and exclude minority shop and union representation.

3) At the level of all shops, mills and offices, committees should be elected by secret ballot organised by the trade unions (covering all white collar as well as manual workers) with all members eligible to vote and stand as candidates. Appointment of shop managers etc., deployment of labour, promotion, hiring and firing, safety, welfare and disciplinary matters to be subject to ratification by these committees, with appeal to higher committees in the event of disagreement.

Where appropriate, Department or Plant committees, elected from shop committees etc. should be provided for with appropriate higher powers to the shop committees etc. and with special responsibilities also for training and education and other responsibilities delegated from the combine or Group Workers' Council.

4) In order to co-ordinate and control the activities of companies not covered by nationalisation, the Minister should be advised by a National Iron and Steel Development Council (a little NEDDY, replacing the present Iron and Steel Board) composed of representatives of the Government, State Corporation Board, private employers and Trade Unions to review investment and pricing policies, review the licences issued for steel-making outside the nationalised sector, and publish the results of reviews and other reports and statistics.

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MANCHESTER WORKERS' CONTROL CONFERENCE : DOCKWORKERS' GROUP.

The following resolution was adopted by the conference, having been submitted by the dock seminar after their detailed discussions.

"Bearing in mind the unsatisfactory working of the present Dock Labour Board Scheme, and the inefficiency of private enterprise in the operation and employment of port labour, we propose:

1. that the port industry be brought under the ownership of a single National Port Authority. This N.P.A. should have the power to maintain, operate, and develop port installations.
2. the elimination of private port employers which follows from this act of nationalisation would mean that the 50% of the seats at present occupied by private employers on the National Dock Labour Board would disappear.
3. that therefore the functions and power of the NDLB should be taken over by a structure of Workers' Councils, which would be elected by the Trade Unions in the industry.
4. that the N.P.A. and the Trade Unions be responsible for negotiating basic wages and conditions in the industry.
5. that the Workers' Councils, in addition to their direct and complete self-management powers in the area previously occupied by the NDLB, should be given complete access to all deliberations, decisions, and accounts of the N.P.A., with powers and duties to report back to the port-workers, and with the power of appeal to Parliament against decisions of the N.P.A.

This resolution amends quite considerably the original draft Plan, which was submitted to the conference by Dockworkers' Voice, and which was printed in The Week, vol 3, no.21, of May 27th. In that plan, it was envisaged that a nationalised dock industry should be operated by a National Port Authority, (with Boards at national, regional and port levels) which would contain 50% workers' representatives and 50% representation of the 'public interest'. The National Dock Labour Board would continue to exercise its present functions, with a similar fifty-fifty distribution of seats between public and workers' representatives. The workers' representatives would - in the case of both N.P.A. and NDLB, - be elected from and by Workers' Councils set up in each port. The function of these workers' councils therefore, would be simply that of an electoral college.

The discussion in the Docks group at Manchester centred round the issue of joint-control - i.e. the claim for 50% representation. The NDLB is at present controlled on a 50/50 basis, and the general feeling was that this had not worked satisfactorily; that in practice many of the functions which should be under NDLB control had slipped back into the hands of the employers. If the industry were nationalised, the representation on the NDLB now allotted to

private employers would automatically disappear, and the key question arose as to how this was to be replaced. It was finally agreed that the only satisfactory demand that the workers could make was for complete 100% workers' self-management, over all the functions at present exercised by the NDLEB. This radical demand poses a real alternative socialist solution to the problems of casualisation and labour efficiency which is exercising the Devlin Commission, the Government, and the employers, at the present time. The employers have said that the problems of labour distribution, discipline etc., would be solved if they could curtail the authority of the NDLEB, and take over the direct employment of the majority of dock workers, who would then be subject to the "normal" discipline of the private factory, with no "interference" from the joint control of the NDLEB. An earlier Devlin report had rejected this solution; and the knowledge of the dock employers' unfitness for power over workers is not confined to dock workers! But if the stumbling block to de-casualisation and labour control is the compromise structure of the present NDLEB, then the only other solution must be full workers' self-management.

Therefore the resolution calls for the replacement of the NDLEB by "a structure" of Workers' Councils. This structure would consist of port, regional, and national Workers' Councils. It was envisaged in discussion that the Councils would be elected by the trade unions which organise members in each port, and that ancillary workers, such as clerks, crane drivers, etc., would be eligible for election as well as dockers. It was also stressed that with nationalisation, union membership could be made obligatory, thus qualifying all workers in the industry for nomination to the workers' councils. The details of voting procedures were not elaborated in the group's discussions.

Turning to the N.P.A., which would handle the operation, maintenance, and capital expansion programme of the industry, it was felt that the demand for 50% workers' representation on its Boards was also likely to prove unsatisfactory and dangerous. Workers would be involved in, and held responsible for decisions about the rationalisation of the industry, whilst they were not in a position of real authority. Yet, if the self-management powers on the labour side were to mean anything, workers should clearly have some form of power over the decisions of the N.P.A. The solution proposed - that the Workers' Councils should have full powers of supervision of the proceedings, accounts, and decisions of the N.P.A. (at all three levels) with powers of publicity and appeal, (and of course the unimpaired right to strike in the last resort) - is designed to avoid the snares of co-determination, and of saddling workers with the impossible task of running a completely socialised industry by themselves,

Manchester Workers' Control Conference: Dockworkers' Group

continued/

whilst the surrounding economy remains largely in private ownership. But the exploitation of the nationalised dock industry by private interests would be checked and challenged by workers' supervision.

Wider questions of the transport industry were also raised by the group. The hub around which the co-ordination of road, rail and sea transport revolves, is the dockside. Dockers are in a better position than most to observe the appalling wastes and inefficiencies which follow from the separation of the different sectors of transport from each other. The germs of wider claim for workers' control, bringing together workers in railways, road transport, and docks, were present in this discussion. The difficult problem of inter-union relations was of course discussed. It was felt that the proposing of blue-print solutions, - such as a loose confederation of unions catering for dock workers, - was premature, and that dockers in different unions would in fact come closer together, and eventually force the abandonment of mutual prejudices and suspicions, by first working out, and then campaigning for, a Programme: a Solution to the Docks Problem, of the kind which we have described here.

Comments, criticisms, and requests for further information, should be sent to: Ken Britton, 7 Dudley Gardens, Hatfield Hill, Romford, Essex.

- Deutscher
- Karol
- Vincent
- Magdoff
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A survey of movements and ideas, edited by
 Miliband and Saville
 THE SOCIALIST REGISTER, 1965
 Fifteen shillings from: Merlin Press,
 112, Whitfield St.,
 London W. 1.

REPORT ON THE DOCKS by Ken Britton

How and where does one start a report on the docks: yesterday, today or tomorrow? I am not sure myself, but what I am sure of is that you must begin with inefficiency and injustice. The injustice of the port employers' inefficiency being blamed on the dockworker. The injustice of the terrible working conditions of the dockworker in this so-called modern age, and the injustice of dockworkers being excluded from the provisions of certain acts of Parliament which have been brought in recently to improve the status of the working class.

Over the last nine months, in fact since the introduction of the 40-hour week, the whole of the press, television and radio and every means known for spreading propaganda, has been used to attack the dockworker. Blaming the chaos in the docks on the dockers' refusal to work overtime at weekends.

I would like to say now that before the ban practically all week-end working was manufactured and therefore unnecessary, that there existed a hold-up of shipping before the ban, caused by the inefficiency and selfishness of the port employers, and that before the ban the chaos was just as bad as it has been since, and will remain so as long as our docks are run by private enterprise.

In December, 1964, it was reported that a dozen ships were held up in the Thames, the reason given being the ban on overtime weekend working, yet nine of them were timber ships awaiting barges, "of which there was a great shortage," and the remaining three could have been accommodated in the Royal Group of Docks where at that time there were several ships berthed which were being used as store ships, one of which was closed down for a whole week.

Here we have a vital industry served by three main avenues of transportation, water, rail and road. Whilst water and rail remain practically unused, the roads cope with 95 per cent of all dock traffic. What is wrong with the inland network of canals and navigable rivers which link London with the Severn, the Mersey, the Humber and most important of all with the industrial Midlands centred on Birmingham? Why are not these means of transportation used to their fullest extent?

British Railways operating in the docks have a wonderful service crying out to be used. The latest indiesel electric locomotives equipped with radio receivers, the docks own marshalling facilities - all berths are fitted out for rail traffic to run alongside the ships so that cargo can go direct from rail to ship and vice versa; the same applies to warehouses, and yet this showpiece of organised transportation is left to rot whilst the inadequate road system become increasingly overburdened.

In many instances ships docking in London discharge a large amount of cargo for the North; in some instances up to 75% of a ship's cargo may be transported to the North by road transport, when it would be much quicker, and save road congestion if the cargo was discharged in a northern port, or sent by rail or water.

Report on the Docks continued/

On many occasions ships are held waiting for road transport whilst rail transport lies idle.

Contrary to popular belief, the N.D.L.B. does not control the whole labour force, and because of this men are often sent home because a certain firm does not require them, whilst other companies may be deperperately short of men. On other occasions companies will have a ship or ships berthed, but not working whilst they wait for other ships to finish. This is done to enable firms to utilise their own labour force, quite often hundreds of men will be out of work whilst this is happening. Often ships have gangs standing by, waiting for two or three days for customs and P.L.A. clearance of the cargo that in some cases has been waiting in the warehouse for several days longer.

A fair proportion of shippers send their cargo down after the closing date, hoping to get top stowage.

The timber ships in the Surrey Docks may have up to eight or nine different merchants' cargo down one hold. Each merchant using a different clerk to tally his own particular batch, which will be tallied by the shipping company's hatch clerk in any case.

Many companies hold tally clerks surplus to requirements whilst other companies are undermanned.

The conditions that the workers work under are worse than any other industry in the country. The docker is never supplied with protective clothing unless he demands it, and this usually means a stoppage of work on extremely filthy cargoes such as cement, lampblack etc. When working in refrigerated ships the only protection afforded the docker is sacking to wrap around his boots, and this is to keep the meat clean. Bats, wash-basins and showers are conspicuous by their absence. Toilets are unattended and in the cold weather become frozen and unusable. Tea breaks have to be taken in the open surrounded by filth..

There are no places where one can change and canteen facilities are so bad that it is enough to say that when Frank Cousins visited the docks in the autumn of 1964, he said that he wouldn't take his dog into them. Yet the biggest disgrace of all are the medical facilities. In an industry which annually has one man in every eight seriously injured, and one man in every 1,500 killed, there are no co-ordinated medical services. The N.D.L.B. runs the medical centres and the P.L.A. runs the ambulance services.

There is no liaison between the two. In an industry that works two hours overtime every day the medical services close down at 5 o'clock, so that at the time when accidents are most likely to occur i.e. between 5 pm and 7 pm in the evening, and on Saturdays and Sundays, there are no medical facilities within the docks. There is no liaison between level crossings and swing bridges and the ambulance service - as a result ambulances are often held up on the way to accidents and on returning, sometimes with seriously injured men, these hold-ups can last up to 45 minutes.

Report on the Docks continued/

Where does the dockworker stand when it comes to industrial reform? The answer is clear to see! The dockworkers were excluded from The Contracts of Employment Act of 1963, and from the so-called "brass hand-shake".

Decasualisation? How can you decasualise something that is not casual? The registered dock worker has to present himself for work twice a day; if there is no work he cannot seek work elsewhere, because the Dock Labour Board retains his cards at all times. He cannot go on the dole, nor can he seek National Assistance when he is out of work. He may be getting less money than he would get on the dole, and yet he pays all his social security contributions at such times - National Health, Tax etc. The only terms in which he can be classed as casual, is the casual way in which he is treated by those that employ him.

All so-called de-casualisation schemes so far put forward by the employers have been aimed at attaining a higher degree of control over a percentage of the labour force. Whilst still leaving the F.D.L.B. with a reserve pool for emergencies. Not at any time have they put forward a comprehensive scheme to embrace all registered dock workers.

I don't think that one can present a report on the docks without some mention of the trades unions. As readers will know there are five unions throughout the country concerned with dockers. I shall speak about two of them.

The Blues, members of the N.A.S. & D.U. and the Whites, members of the T. & G. W.U. The Blues were expelled from the T.U.C. for so-called poaching ten years ago. The White officials have refused ever since to sit with them on the National Joint Council for the industry, thereby denying over 8,000 men the right of a voice on major affairs.

This^{is} against the wishes of the great majority of the White members who have repeatedly expressed their desire to have the Blues fully represented. Instances where the two unions have got together, as in the case of the forty-hour week, mobility of labour etc., the officials have completely ignored the opinions of the vast majority of their members, and have worked hand in glove with the port employers to force conditions upon the workers, without consulting the membership via the branches. The executives can no longer be regarded as representing the interests of the workers.

I have covered somewhat briefly some of the troubles within the docks. The only way to overcome these problems so that the docks and ports can fully serve the nation is to place them in the hands of the people through democratic workers' control within national planning and ownership.

A SOLUTION TO THE DOCK PROBLEM submitted by Dockworkers Voice

Whilst the following plan needs enlarging in detail we believe that a scheme for the National Docks, if we are to attain an efficient Port system throughout the United Kingdom, must be on the following basis:-

1. We endorse the findings of the Rochdale Report, stating that the problems of dock labour arise from the nature of employment. This arises from a complete lack of planning of:

- a) the distribution of work among the labour force,
- b) the allocation of shipping between the available labour force and
- c) the development and improvement of port facilities.

2. We propose that Britain's Port Industry be vested in and operated by a single National Authority or National Port Authority, hereinafter referred to as the N.P.A.

3. The N.P.A. will give 50% representation to the public interest, and 50% to port workers, through a system of elected lay representatives. The elections will be carried out by the Trade Unions.

4. There will be three levels of committee, all of which shall give equal representation to port workers and to the public interest.

- a) Port Committees.
- b) Area Committees (i.e. United Kingdom divided into 7 areas)
- c) National Committee.

4(a) Port Committees will consist equally of port workers elected from and by Workers Councils and representatives of other interested bodies.

4(b) Area Committees will be elected from and by Port Committees on the same basis of representation.

4(c) The National Committee will be elected from and by Area Committees on the same basis of representation.

5. The N.P.A. will be responsible for capital investment and the operation of the Port System throughout the United Kingdom.

6. All shipping entering British Territorial Waters shall come under the control of the Authority. If it appears likely that a ship will be seriously delayed at its port of preference, then the authority shall have power to direct it to the nearest suitable port. This pre-supposes an integrated transport system with a level of charges fixed in terms of ultimate destination - i.e.: the total charge for shipping goods from Rotterdam to London will be fixed whether the authority decides that the ship will dock at London or Dover.

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A solution to the dock problem continued/

It will also be the responsibility of the N.P.A. to ensure that all developments be viewed on a wide national scale, and not in piecemeal fashion as has been the practice in the past.

Whilst the Authority will be responsible for capital investment and the operation of the National Port System, the National Dock Labour Board (hereinafter referred to as the N.D.L.B.) will become the employer of all dock labour.

1. The N.D.L.B. will have complete control of all workers including supervisory grades, and will deal with all labour problems including discipline.

2. There will be three levels of Boards:-

- a) Port Boards
- b) Area Boards (I.E. United Kingdom divided into 7 areas)
- c) National Board

2(a) The Port Boards will consist equally of port workers elected from and by Workers' Councils and representatives of other interested bodies.

2(b) Area Boards will be elected from and by Port Boards and on the same basis of fifty-fifty representation.

2(c) The National Board will be elected from and by Area Boards and on the same basis of representation.

WORKERS' COUNCILS

1. Workers' Councils will be established on a local or sector basis, from lay representatives of dock workers engaged in the industry, and elected through their trades unions.

2. All workers' representatives on Boards or Committees must be members of the Workers Council, and must have been elected by same.

3. Workers' representatives will be elected for a term of three years, but can stand for re-election at the end of each term.

4. All workers' representatives will lose their position should they leave the industry.

TRADES UNIONS

Trades Unions will continue in their present capacity, and indeed will be invaluable in helping to ensure democratic operation of Workers Councils, to supervise the education and training of workers' representatives, to maintain panels of qualified persons to fill elected positions at all levels, to control the system of promotion and grading on the basis of a scale of qualifications mutually agreed between unions and management, and to operate schemes for health, welfare and industrial safety.

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