

BUSMEN'S SUPPLEMENT

Supplement to The Newsletter

September 1958

Twopence

*Lest we
Forget*

**SALFORD
INSIDE
STAFF
ENDORSE
NOV. 16
MEETING**

UNITY IN ACTION. These three words, we believe, sum up the role that must be played by the rank and file of the Labour movement in the struggles facing us on both the political and economic fronts.

That is why we fully endorse the Conference called by The Newsletter in London on November 16.

It will give the rank and file a chance to put forward their ideas on how to secure the kind of life which is our birthright: freedom from want and war, and the life of plenty that atomic energy, properly used, could give.

The Conference, we hope, will draw up a programme of *action* on which trade union militants can agree.

HOW TO FIGHT THE SERVICE SLASHES

By BOB POTTER (Battersea garage)

THE bus strike has ended in defeat for the London busmen. This is now obvious to all. After six weeks of solidarity which were an example to the whole working class, the London Transport Executive has pushed through the first set of service cuts.

By the end of January there will be 10 per cent. fewer buses on the London streets. For the travelling public this means more waiting and longer queues. For the busmen it means longer hours and harder work.

But the busmen will be no better off financially. The LTE expects that average earnings of crews will be the same in the coming winter as they were last winter, 'if not a few coppers less'.

This in spite of the 8s. 6d. award to central London drivers and conductors. The increase will be lost in the reduction of Sunday working and overtime. (The LTE hopes to do away with overtime altogether in the new year, as it is too expensive.)

ONLY ONE ANSWER

The 14,000 'forgotten men' have been forced to accept a miserable 5s. and redundancy has hit the inside staffs—so far, the LTE has stated that 600 of these men are no longer required.

How has it been possible for the LTE and the Tory Government to deliver such a powerful blow against the busmen? There is only one possible answer: bad trade union leadership.

On Sunday, May 4, the day before the strike began, Frank Cousins, speaking in Birmingham, argued that 'we are not taking on the Government'. Here was the



success.
By doing so we will be preparing for the coming struggles.

Yours fraternally,
G. Wilcock, president Salford branch, National Union of Vehicle Builders

T. Curly, shop steward, NUVB

A. Pope, shop steward, Electrical Trades Union

L. Fawcett, secretary joint shop stewards and president of Gorton 3rd branch, Amalgamated Engineering Union

J. Conway, shop steward, National Union of Sheet Metal Workers and Braziers

Remember how the leaders of the Trades Union Congress stabbed the busmen in the back in their hour of need?

Remember how ordinary rank-and-file workers, militants in other industries, did their best to awaken their workmates to the need for the utmost solidarity action with the busmen?

Remember how each week of the strike The Newsletter devoted half its space to the Strike Bulletin, written by and for rank-and-file busmen?

This Busmen's Special is also produced as a supplement to The Newsletter, which has called a national rank-and-file Conference at the Holborn Hall, London, on Sunday, November 16.

The Conference is open to all workers who want to discuss the building of a rank-and-file movement to resist the employers' attacks. Applications for delegates' credentials should be sent to: Conference, The Newsletter, 180 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.

Conference will help our struggle

Newsletter Industrial Correspondent

After almost seven weeks on strike the busmen returned to work to find cuts in schedules, the closing of garages and the threatened sacking of 600 maintenance men.

What is their opinion on these matters? What lessons have they learned from the strike? Do they consider the rank-and-file Conference called by The Newsletter can help their fight on the buses?

At the Norbiton garage, I interviewed the representative, **Bro. G. Morgan**—better known to the lads as 'Taffy'. Originally from the Rhondra Valley, he has been on the buses for ten years.

If the cuts are imposed, there will be even more work for the conductors than at present. More people will leave and so there will be another round of cuts next year, he told me.

The actions of the London Transport Executive during the strike, and now, are in my opinion directed from No. 10 Downing Street.

CAN HELP UNITY

He was enthusiastic about the rank-and-file Conference: 'If the working class don't stand together now, they will be defeated. I remember 1926 and often tell my mates what they are in for if they allow the employers to attack them without fighting back together.'

A conference of workers from different industries is a good thing. It can help to unite the movement.'

Trolley-bus conductor **John Loader** has been employed by the LTE for eleven years. Formerly chairman of the Colindale bus

against the real opponents of the working class, the results would have been very different.

Other sections of the Transport and General Workers' Union should have been involved immediately: an approach should have been made to the rank-and-file railwaymen; the offer of support from the Electrical Trades Union should have been accepted.

The Underground system would thus have been stopped.

In a word, only industrial and political extension of the strike could have ensured victory.

WERE NEVER FORTHCOMING

Is it correct to lay the blame for the failure to do this on the shoulders of the TGWU general secretary?

I think it is, for it was he who won the vital delegate conference against extension in the TGWU. He spoke before and after the debate, and he promised that he had other proposals to offer the delegates—proposals which were never forthcoming.

In this sense, the vote of the delegates against extension was largely a vote of confidence in Cousins. An extension to other sections in the first week would have had unanimous support, and would have brought speedy victory.

It is true that the Trades Union Congress General Council was not prepared to help. But did anybody with any knowledge of these knights of the Labour movement expect otherwise?

TORIES' FIFTH COLUMN

These people are entrenched in the capitalist system. They are the fifth column of the Tory Party and the bitter enemies of trade unionists. And Cousins, by opposing extension, was playing their game.

Indeed the reason why Cousins did not use the platform at the recent TUC to expose the General Council's reactionary role was that if he had done so he would have shed light on the part he himself played.

The lessons of the strike must be learned by all. We must not make the same mistakes again.

FIRST, we should realize that no section of the Labour movement can win its demands—even limited demands—in isolation.

ISOLATED FROM MEMBERS

The employers work together, and they work with the active support of the Tory Government. Only a counter-offensive by Labour can defeat this alliance.

SECONDLY, we must have no confidence in the officials who sit on the TUC General Council.

These people, with their fat pay packets, knightshoods and television appearances, are isolated from their members, and are

busmen fought on behalf of the whole working class?

Remember how the leaders of the Trades Union Congress stabbed the busmen in the back in their hour of need?

Remember how ordinary rank-and-file workers, militants in other industries, did their best to awaken their workmates to the need for the utmost solidarity action with the busmen?

Remember how each week of the strike The Newsletter devoted half its space to the Strike Bulletin, written by and for rank-and-file busmen?

This Busmen's Special is also produced as a supplement to The Newsletter, which has called a national rank-and-file Conference at the Holborn Hall, London, on Sunday, November 16.

struggle

branch, 1/269, he too welcomed the Conference.

Bro. Loader was of the opinion that buses should be a public service and if there was any saving to be done, then it should be at the expense of the former shareholders.

We should fight to make the bus services into a genuine socialized industry under the control of the workers,' he said.

ALTERNATIVE LEADERS

It was also the opinion of **Jack Hammond**, a Hounslow driver, that the buses are an essential service and not meant for profit.

A veteran in the Labour movement, back in 1922 he was secretary-organizer of the Hammersmith unemployed movement.

From 1946 to 1951 he was secretary of Staines and Egham Trades Council and at present is a delegate from his union branch to that body.

Your idea of a rank-and-file conference is a start to making the unions do their jobs,' he told me. 'If the leaders won't lead, then the rank and file must find an alternative.'

On the cuts he had this to say: 'To combat these cuts, we should work strictly to rule, with a policy of non-co-operation. Secretary of the Shepherds Bush branch is **Bro. Sears**, who considers that one of the reasons for the cuts is the low wages busmen receive.

One of the conductors in his garage showed us his wage packet, which, after stoppages, recorded the princely sum of

£9 3s. 2d.

'You see what I mean?' said Bro. Sears. 'they can't attract staff because they pay so badly, so they have to reduce services. The union must resist these cuts. Otherwise they will hit us even harder.'

Reg Moore is angry about the cuts, and especially at the news that 600 maintenance men are to be sacked. Employed at Fulwell, he represents the inside staff from four garages at the Delegate Conference.

I notice there are no cuts in the higher paid people or in their salaries. Sir John Elliot got a nice wage increase recently,' he remarked.

He wanted to see the Labour Party and the trades councils leading a campaign against the cuts. He went on: 'This is a Government sponsored decision, and the Labour Party must give a lead against it.'

Asked his views about the rank-and-file Conference, he said: 'From a busman's point of view, a rank-and-file conference is essential. During the strike we tried to spread it, to bring other sections in to support.'

LORDS AND KNIGHTS

'You know what happened and what the TUC did to us. What else can you expect from the lords and knights at the top? We must rely on the rank and file.'

A member of the National Union of Vehicle Builders, **Fred Walton** is employed as a coach-builder in the Hendon garage.

Bro. Walton feels there should be one industrial union for all transport workers. He cited the isolation of the busmen in the recent dispute.

'Wouldn't it have been better,' he asked, 'if they had been in the same union as the tube men and the railway workers—and of course the skilled men in those industries?'

LEADERS FAIL

We need a new policy and a busmen's paper

By ALF NORTH (Holloway garage)

IN the last fifteen months there have been two major bus strikes. The provincial men, like their London brothers, fought a most gallant and determined battle. Yet it must be said that both these disputes were fought as the Tories wanted them to be fought—with one section striking separately from the rest.

Everyone can see that the aim of the Government is to avoid a conflict with the largest sections of the working class—to try and isolate and defeat either the smaller unions, such as the health workers, or weaker groups such as the London busmen.

Unfortunately the union leaders have completely failed to develop a policy that can defeat this strategy.

Surely we in the passenger transport industry could multiply our strength tremendously if the London busmen, the provincial men and those working for the municipalities lodged their claims together.

This would bring all the strength of the bus workers to bear on the employers and their Government.

A start can be made now, in developing the essential unity among busmen all over the country. The present Busmen's Special can help to lay the basis for a national busmen's paper.

Such a paper could serve the aim of linking the activity of busmen in various localities and sections and help to work out a common policy—which to date our leaders have failed to provide.

MEMBERS ACCEPTED

By JIM SACRON (Manchester busman)

The London bus strike was just twelve hours old. The smallest bus branch in Manchester, one of a group of seven, took a decision to act.

have completely failed to develop a

APPEAL FOR MAN

WHO CUT JUICE

Holloway bus branch (1/377) of the Transport and General Workers' Union has launched an appeal on behalf of the man who cut off the juice on the tubes during the bus strike.

He is John Frederick Smith, of Clapham Road, S.W.9. He supports a wife and three young children.

A circular from Holloway to all branches involved in the strike says:

'We may not agree that this man's method of helping us was the best way, but we cannot deny that he acted from the finest motives.

'Would there were more possessed with such feeling of class solidarity!

'Fifty thousand bus workers need not feel proud of the fact that few of us have come to this man to inquire whether he was dead or alive, in poverty or sickness.

'It is reckoned that he is about £60 in debt as a result of his attempt to assist the bus workers, and twenty-one central bus delegates (including members of the CBC) have already signed to the Holloway branch

IT'S THE £U££ABY

OF 55 BROADWAY

Newsletter Industrial Correspondent

Whatever qualifications are demanded of the members of London Transport Executive experience of working on a bus is not high on the list.

Not one of the eight men on the LTE has ever worked in the industry.

Sydney Henry Leake, one of the part-time members, has had a varied career in his 60 years.

Besides having seen service with a military mission in Russia in 1917, he has been attached to the War Office, the Ministry of Munitions and the Colonial Office.

INVESTMENT TRUST

At present he is chairman and senior manager of the Lewis Investment Trust, among whose associated companies are Selfridge's and Bon Marché.

His services to the LTE are rewarded with £1,000 a year.

The chairman, Sir John ('My attitude is a tough one') Elliot, who recently received a small salary increase—a mere £500 a year—has had what might be considered an excellent training for understanding the needs of the travelling public and of the workers who run the industry.

Like all the really expert drivers and conductors he was educated at Marlborough and Sandhurst, is a member of the Cavalry Club (entrance fee 30 guineas, annual subscription 7 to 20 guineas) and his hobbies are gardening and shooting.

ACCEPTED A KNIGHTHOOD

L. C. Hawkins, whose salary has been increased from £3,500 a year to £5,000, spent his pre-retirement life as a civil servant, and was something of a specialist in educational finance.

Perhaps 61-year-old Sir Charles Geddes is closer to the workers? He at least has a trade union background.

However, for years now Sir Charles has been a full-time official, and his decision to accept a knighthood scarcely shows much of a desire to get closer to the workers.

How much do they cost altogether, this bevy at 55 Broadway? Only £30,500 a year in

6 WEEKS OF STRUGGLE

WHAT THE STRIKE BULLETIN SAID

Here are extracts from articles which appeared in The Newsletter, and in the Strike Bulletin published as a supplement to The Newsletter, during the London bus dispute:

Most crucial May Day

'The busmen's strike is the responsibility of the entire working-class movement, including the Labour Party. Every effort should be made to extend the strike to other transport workers in the London area . . .

'We salute the busmen, pledge the fullest backing of our paper and its supporters to their struggle, and call on the entire working class to rally round the strikers' (The Newsletter, May 3).

Bring down the 'show-down' government

'Support the busmen! This is the slogan of the hour. The employers are not standing still; they are mobilizing to smash the strike.

'Neither must the workers stand still. Strikes are won or lost in the first few days. The necessary solidarity action must come speedily. Any dragging of feet, any faith in pious formulas, could lead only to the defeat of the whole working class' (The Newsletter, May 10).

Don't leave the busmen to fight alone

'A major responsibility for the busmen's isolation must rest on Frank Cousins. The strike is almost a fortnight old and he has done nothing to call out other sections of his membership in support' (The Newsletter, May 17).

Solidarity action now!

'After three weeks the busmen stand as solid as a rock. But a note of warning needs to be sounded. For though the busmen are

BETTER CONDITIONS FOR

busmen would mean

a better service

By DOUG TILLEY (Brixton garage)

Public transport should be recognized as a public service in the same way as the fire brigades, police and public libraries.

A service should be provided to meet the public's needs. It should not be based on its ability to 'pay its way'.

The recent cuts in London bus services, and the intended cuts, are not being made because the public do not need the buses, but because the bureaucrats of the London Transport Executive must keep their books tidy.

One way of providing a decent public transport system would be by subsidies. Most of the public transport services in cities throughout the world, including most British cities, are subsidized.

But the LTE is opposed to this, on the ground that it would mean interference by the local council or whoever is paying the subsidy, and amateurs would be running the buses and not the "experts".

EIGHT ESSENTIAL POINTS

But if the buses were run so as to provide an adequate service, and not on their ability to 'pay their way', the busmen's working conditions could be considerably improved.

The following eight points are in my view essential to our conditions of employment, and should be incorporated in any future demands to the LTE:

- (1) Employment to be on a permanent basis.
- (2) Payment of full wages when sick, less national insurance benefit.
- (3) A non-contributory pension scheme (including women) so as to provide, with the statutory pension, a 50 per cent. pay on retirement.
- (4) Recognition that we are shift workers and that all work performed before 7 a.m. and after 7 p.m. should carry a penalty payment.
- (5) All work after 1 p.m. Saturday should be at time-and-a-half.
- (6) All Sunday work should be at double time.
- (7) All Bank Holiday work should be at double time.

Emergency for Labour

'The Tory Government is out to smash the busmen—and then smash other sections. The trade union movement cannot let it succeed.'

'The workers must use their full power to ensure a decisive victory for the busmen, and to bring down the employers' Government that is seeking to force them to their knees' (Strike Bulletin, May 31).

A stab in the face and a stab in the back

'The workers who pay trade union contributions have a right to know—who are the Tory stooges on the General Council who argued against helping the busmen?'

'If the decision not to lift a finger in their support means anything it means that men in high places in our movement, who take high salaries out of our contributions, are hand in glove with the employers they are supposed to be fighting' (Strike Bulletin, June 7).

Greatest fight since '26 strike

'If leaders who grovel in the muck and filth of knightshoods and honours lists are too scared to lead—let them get out and make room for men (Strike Bulletin, June 14).

Rank-and-file movement

'Leaders who will not fight, or who stab workers in the back while they are in a struggle, have got to be removed.'

'The best way to get them out, and to develop the fight against the bosses' offensive, is to build a strong rank-and-file movement, rooted in the garages and depots, on the docks and building sites, in the pits and workshops.'

'This is the most important lesson of the bus strike' (Strike Bulletin, June 21).

SERVICE CUTS

(Continued from front page)

more concerned with maintaining their positions and their 'respectability' than in leading the workers against the bosses.

THIRDLY, it is impossible to separate industrial battles from political battles. The Tories are determined to smash the trade unions and drive down the workers' living standards. Their Rent Act has taken a good £1 from the pay packets of many of us.

These are political attacks, and must be met with vigour by the entire Labour movement.

FOURTHLY, there is a need for a rank-and-file movement among all sections of

to that it could amount to proposals to assist the London men—proposals such as financial aid and token action.

As we were anxious to act with all possible speed, it was decided to send a telegram giving a synopsis of the resolution and explaining that the full text was following by letter.

The sender of the resolution, in his haste, used the word 'instruct' instead of 'request' to the secretary of the regional office.

ROCKET FROM REGION

Two days elapsed. Then came the rocket. A letter from the regional secretary arrived informing us:

'You do not instruct a regional secretary. After all the strike is only two days old... we will give the lead.'

The branch replied by withdrawing the word 'instruct' but adding that they were determined to carry on and help the London men.

The branch set out to raise money. The first week we collected about £50 and during the period of the strike raised about £300. The other six branches followed suit after the second week.

Never once did a full-time officer come to the garage to help or give advice and encouragement.

All we received was the usual receipt and thanks from the regional officer. Not one officer of any stature came to a branch meeting to explain what was happening in London.

The branch showed how rank-and-file determination and initiative can overrule the machine. This is a valuable lesson for the future struggles.

Extra pay for Extra duties

By KEN ROGAN (Bus driver at Garston depot)

A strong feeling exists among Liverpool busmen for extra pay for early and late duties, because these duties interfere with a normal social life.

We also want increased payment for time off between split shifts.

All busmen's wage claims should be lodged jointly. The submission of three different wage claims splits us and weakens our bargaining power. One wage claim would unite all bus workers.

I welcome the rank-and-file Conference called by The Newsletter.

It is a good idea to get workers from different industries to discuss their problems. An exchange of opinions is a good thing.