

# THE NEWSLETTER

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## THE BUSMEN'S FIGHT IS YOUR FIGHT, TOO

By **PAT MULLEN**, driver at Stockwell Garage

**T**HE busmen mean business. They are going into action to protect and maintain their standard of living—and that means fighting the Government and their representatives, the London Transport Commission.

It is quite obvious that the Tory strategy, if they can get away with it, is to take on sections of the working class separately.

First the busmen; then the railwaymen and 'tube' men; then maybe the dockers and miners and so on. It would be a serious mistake if the working class permitted this to happen.

The busmen must not fight alone. We are going to fight all right, but we must rally the support of other workers.

Garages and branches of the Transport and General

Workers' Union should contact underground workers, railwaymen, dockers and tanker men and the electricians in the substations supplying juice to the tubes.

They should send garage and branch deputations to their place of work and their trade union branches.

If the busmen are to win, and if the railwaymen, dockers, engineers and electricians are to win wage increases, these latter will have to ensure that the busmen's strike is won—and this may well mean they will have to support us by coming out with us too.

### MOST CRUCIAL MAY DAY

(More on the bus strike overleaf and on back page)

**O**UR first thought on this most crucial May Day since 1926, when the miners faced rapacious bosses and their State machine, must be for the London busmen, now beginning a struggle against no less rapacious bosses and a State machine no less determined to divide and defeat the working class.

Both sides know that the stakes for which they are fighting are higher than the immediate issue suggests. Behind Elliot stands Macmillan, who is determined to give the busmen a thrashing, thereby restoring Tory morale, discouraging other sections from pressing their claims and weakening the power of trade unionism. Macmillan will fight this strike tooth and nail as a *political* struggle, and the busmen must meet this challenge. Alone they might well be defeated; they must not stand alone. The active support of tube men, tanker drivers, portworkers and railwaymen is essential. If the busmen go down the rest will go down too, and the Tory offensive will sweep on relentlessly. Strong links must be forged in the shape of joint rank-and-file committees that can organize the necessary solidarity action. From the very first moment the busmen must wage an aggressive and energetic struggle against any form of scabbing and any sign of faltering or betrayal on the part of their leaders.



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. Especially is it vital, by reducing to a minimum the flow of petrol into London, to thwart the Government's plans for mobilizing private cars and military vehicles to break the strike.

**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.**

Macmillan is not only aiming at starving the workers. He and his class are actively engaged in poisoning the workers and their children with radio-active strontium. We accuse the British Government of withholding from the people the results of secret tests being carried out on the contamination of drinking water and of children's bones. The whole of humanity faces extermination, let alone disease and genetic hazards, at the hands of these modern barbarians who insist on manufacturing and testing nuclear weapons. The Aldermaston march shows the profound anxiety of millions of ordinary people; but the need now is to rouse the workers and their organizations behind the demand that British Labour launch an international working-class campaign to 'black' all work on missile sites and H-bombs.

**We salute the workers in Britain and Germany who have called for industrial action against nuclear weapons, and demand that the leaders of the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress implement this call, so setting an example to the international working-class movement in the fight against war.**

(Continued overleaf)

#### BIRTHDAY GREETINGS FROM MICHAEL FOOT AND HOWARD FAST

The Newsletter is one year old on May 10. Among those who have sent messages of greetings are Michael Foot, editor of Tribune, and Howard Fast, the American novelist. Their messages will be found on page 133.

**WORKERS OF ALL LANDS, UNITE!**



**MAY DAY (Continued from front page)**

All the problems now facing the British workers—the wages struggle, the struggle against higher rents and evictions, the struggle against the H-bomb—show the bankruptcy and rottenness of the capitalist system and the urgent need for the socialist reconstruction of society. Colossal productive forces are in the hands of evil and greedy men, who are using them to spread disease and to threaten the world with holocaust. For the few: untold riches and lives of insensate luxury. For the many: poverty, despite their toil, and sorrow and suffering rained out of the sky from the rich men's weapons. This is the picture that capitalist society presents on May Day 1958. Yet these same productive forces that provide profits for a few, and have put the future of the human race in jeopardy, could if released from the fetters of obsolete property relations make the earth a paradise for all mankind. The only solution to the mess that capitalist 'civilization' has got the world into is the socialist revolution, which will establish the political power of the working class, take the means of production and destruction out of the hands of the present rulers, and substitute for their anarchic productive system an economy based on common ownership and planned on scientific lines to fulfil the needs of all.

The next step in the advance to socialism in Britain is the removal of the Tory Government, which has earned the hatred of millions, and its replacement by a Labour government pledged to a genuine socialist policy. Without such a policy a Labour government would end in defeat and demoralization. The moment it regains office Labour must undo all the bad the Tories have done, by emergency measures where necessary, and make sweeping inroads into the power and privileges of the financiers and monopolists. A new Labour government must be an instrument of vigorous and determined class struggle.

**We salute the fighters for socialism all over the world, and call on the British workers to redouble their efforts to smash the Tory Government.**

The workers of other countries and the colonial peoples struggling against imperialism are our allies. The German workers, whom during the second world war we were led to identify with German fascism, are on the march. Our allies the American workers are experiencing the most severe economic crisis since 1929, a crisis which while ending the myth of American immunity from slump is bound to reawaken the splendid traditions of the American working-class movement. The people of Algeria are fighting with great gallantry against the French imperialist torturers, for the right of self-determination. In Cyprus and Malta and other parts of the British Empire the common people are defying terror, imprisonment or death in the battle.

**We salute all who are fighting imperialism and assure them of our solidarity in the joint effort to destroy the system that enslaves nation to nation.**

The peoples of Russia, China and eastern Europe are our allies too. Having overthrown capitalism, these peoples are in transition from capitalism to socialism. We stand for the unconditional defence against imperialism of their economic achievements; but we do not defend the bureaucracy that has fastened its grip on these workers' States and that will be shaken off and replaced by socialist democracy.

**We salute the peoples of Russia, China and eastern Europe and pledge our support in their struggle against imperialism and against Stalinism. Above all we salute the glorious workers of Hungary, who have been slandered as 'counter-revolutionaries' without a shred of evidence, and whose best sons, tried in secret courts, have paid with their lives for their devotion to socialist principles.**

More than ever before the keynote of this May Day is internationalism, in deeds as well as words. An enormous responsibility rests on the British workers, whose example could galvanize the international Labour movement. On this day of struggle and hope Marxists declare their unremitting opposition to the representatives, institutions and ideas of a dying social order, and to the misleaders in the Labour movement who hold back the fight against it.

### **A BUSMAN APPEALS TO ALL TRANSPORT USERS AND TRADE UNIONISTS**

**By GEORGE FARENDEN, driver at Hendon Garage**

**W**ALKING to work? Browned off? We know how you feel, mate—but before you blame the busmen examine their case for a minute or two. Then you'll see that the responsibility for this dispute rests one hundred per cent. on the shoulders of the London Transport Executive.

If they had been fair and reasonable, there need have been no stoppage. So don't blame your fellow-workers!

Look at it this way. The London busmen's pay claim has been in negotiation ever since last August—nine months of talkee-talkee. You know yourself how prices have risen during those nine months, not to mention the Rent Act.

We've taken it through every possible channel of negotiation. We've sat round the table till we felt like falling under the table with exhaustion.

And while all this is going on, what does the LTE do to cover up its failure (through bad wages and bad conditions) to recruit enough staff to man London buses?

#### **Public must wait longer**

It uses the staff shortage to make 'economies'—new schedules that will cause you, the public, to wait longer in the peak periods, and will throw extra burdens on us, the existing staff.

Along comes the Industrial Court's award. We had asked for 25s. to regain parity with pre-war conditions. What did we get?

**An offer of 8s. 6d. a week for central London crews. And inside staffs, country service workers and others—nothing. Not a sausage. Not a farthing.**

This was clearly an attempt to play off one section against another, and to split our ranks. Could we stand for that? What would you have done?

We told the Industrial Court what it could do with its offer—bearing in mind, as any trade unionist knows, that these supposedly 'impartial' tribunals are really under the influence of the Tory Government.

Don't let anyone fool you into thinking that the London busmen want to cause difficulties and discomfort to the travelling public. But we know damned well that if we don't make a stand at this point—then YOUR living standards as well as ours will be slashed.

Of course we'll co-operate to give the public a decent service; but our fellow trade unionists know as well as we do that a man who is worried about making ends meet on

(Continued on back page)



# 47 YEARS ON THE RAILWAY: £8 6s. 6d. A WEEK

We have received the following article from a railwayman. It has been left exactly as he wrote it, including the signature.

In my family there have been three generations of railwaymen, just on 100 years, my father, brother, myself and my son. So I can speak of the railway system from true life.

My father did his best to do his duty to his family of six on £1 1s. per week. Two of the family had to go to an industrial school to get fed for three years; also we went in our bare feet.

And since 1926 up to 1958 it has not changed. The system has been bad for me since I got married, when I was receiving £2 4s. less stoppages, which left me £2 1s. 4d. to keep a family of six.

During that time I was forced to apply for assistance from the Public Assistance Committee, and after going through a rotten means test they allowed me 17s. 6d.—10s. for rent and 7s. 6d. in food tickets, bringing my money up to £2 18s. 10d.

So if I was out of work thirty years ago I would receive £2 18s. 10d. If I worked all week on the railway I received the rotten wage of £2 1s. 4d.

## Not much better off

Me and plenty more railwaymen were in the same plight: no holidays, no cigarettes, walk to work on an empty belly.

So after thirty-two years we are not much better off. Today, after forty-seven years' service, I get £8 6s. 6d. less stoppages, which leaves me £7 11s. 6d.

There are three items I would like to mention: rent, £1 5d.; coal, 16s; and 10s. for light. They are weekly items out of £7 11s. 6d. That leaves me with £5 0s. 6d. to live a full week.

So in 1958 there are no holidays, no television, no enjoyment. So here we are in the age of modernization still suffering and scraping week by week, trying to find the best way to keep our families on rotten wages paid by the railway.

So here are a few things which would help to give a decent wage to railwaymen, who make the millions for the shareholders:

**I WOULD** cut the shares by 50 per cent.

**I WOULD** reduce the wages of everybody connected with British Railways if they are getting over £30 per week.

**I WOULD** cut all the bonus out for everybody from the Chairman of the British Railways down to the porter on the station.

**I WOULD** like to see each station working on its own and a profit share given to the men of each station over an agreed tonnage passing through the station.

That would be instead of bonus and would be a great incentive for the men.

The greatest thing of all I would do, I would give the railwaymen some of the £250 million the railway is going to spend.

If they are going to modernize the railway let them modernize the railwayman by giving him a decent wage, so he will be contented and well fed, so he can have a holiday and do his duty to his family.

So from 1926 to 1958 we are still trying for better wages.

## ONE WHO HAS SUFFERED

## BARBARA CAN'T SELL LEEDS THE BOMB

LAST week-end's Labour Party H-bomb 'conferences' ran true to pattern. In London, Aneurin Bevan was shouted down, and all the questions put to him were hostile to the official policy of keeping the bomb.

In Leeds Mrs Barbara Castle was the main attraction. Delegates protested at the old drill: a good hour (and three microphones) for the platform, a bare-half hour for questions, mostly wasted by the speakers' long-winded replies, no discussion—and the speakers must be off to catch the only train back to London.

What did we need the bomb for? To lead other nations out of the 'nuclear weapons club', said Mrs Castle. So she is going to be party to a Labour government dropping the bomb first? What an unkind question!

Then, asked a delegate, if they were not going to use the bomb, and made that clear to the world, what was the good of squandering money on it?

**FOOTNOTE:** Leeds Communist Party has been trying to stop trade union branches and the party-controlled Committee for the Suspension of Nuclear Weapon Tests from supporting Leeds Trades Council's poster parade today, on the ground that it might frighten away middle-class sympathy.

## The Newsletter Is One Year Old

### 'DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE'

**G**OOD wishes to one-year-old Newsletter from the 21-year-old Tribune. One of the needs of the Labour movement at this time is that there should be a great increase in debate about the right strategy for attaining socialism.

The Newsletter makes a distinctive contribution to this debate and I hope it will secure an even larger circulation.

Yours sincerely,  
**MICHAEL FOOT**

### 'MY BEST AND WARMEST GREETINGS'

**Y**OU have my best and warmest greetings on this year of publication. The question is not whether I see eye to eye with you on everything; I support many things if there is a minimum basis of agreement; your importance lies in the fact that you deny the

Communist Party the right to pre-empt the struggle for peace and all other areas of human decency.

That is precisely what we need so desperately now; and in my own country the greatest tragedy is that with the dissolution of the CPUSA—less than 2,000 have re-registered and paid dues—there is nothing in the way of a Left-wing organization to fire the soul and imagination of youth.

Many of us today speak of 20-20 hindsight, when reflecting on what the party was and what it did—yet not the least of its bitter fruit was the twenty-year-long chorus of hatred and invective delivered against almost all men of goodwill who would not praise Russia above all else.

I thank all the gods and fates and forces of this universe for any voice for peace. Let us only remember that, and think and speak so that perhaps we can rescue something valid and meaningful from the wreckage of our own lives.

So good luck to you—and a tomorrow of peace and understanding.

Warmly,  
**HOWARD FAST**



**LABOUR****IT'S MAY DAY, SO URSULA VERITY WRITES  
AN OPEN LETTER**

DEAR HUGH GAITSKELL

In all my post-war membership of the Labour Party, I have never felt so sick as I do now.

We of the rank and file have accepted the policy and constitution of the Labour Party through all sorts of twistings and turnings from the leadership.

**WE** stood by puzzled during the exile of Seretse Khama.

**WE** took the medicine of austerity that Stafford Cripps handed to us, though we wondered what had happened to Fair Shares.

**WE** suffered Korea.

**WE** even let you push German rearmament down our throats, though some of us were expelled for spitting it out.

At Brighton you persuaded Bevan to coat the H-bomb pill with the sugar of treachery, and somehow you got away with it.

You have got away with a lot, but you won't escape the consequences of your latest treachery.

**They marched, you talked**

At the time when old men and women, children and young people, workers and intellectuals, were marching grimly and gaily to Aldermaston, through rain and cold, in discomfort and glory, you were discussing privately in France with the agents of a rotten system, to keep your foul bomb.

You are, of course, astute enough to recognize that the workers of Britain, on whom your living depends, are awakening to the horror of Tory foreign policy.

**But you do not say:** 'Black work on the rocket bases.'

**You do not say:** 'We will lead you to peace by the overthrow of capitalism.'

**You do not say:** 'We will expropriate the financiers, and take industry for the nation.'

**You do not say:** We will take back the workers' rent increases from the pockets of the landlords.'

**Above all, you do not say:** 'A Labour government will stop work on rocket bases and cease to manufacture H-bombs.'

Although the workers of this country are listening for such a lead, you mouth clichés and platitudes which mean nothing but that you intend to hang on to the bomb, the rocket bases and—for your own prestige and prosperity—capitalism.

**Just another cheap politician**

In the eyes of the people you are not a leader, but just another cheap politician.

Torrington was not a Liberal revival. It was the death knell of one phase of the stale old political rat race, and the pity is that the electors of Torrington were so desperately fed up with you and your like that many of them actually thought they had something better in Bonham Carter.

If you go on with your double-talk and your hypocritical posturings at mock 'peace rallies' there can be only one end for you. You will be swept away with the debris of history, and you will be very small loss indeed.

We of the Left wing shall continue to provide the militant leadership you have failed to give.

We shall not allow your betrayals to lead us into war and misery. With the German workers, and with our colonial comrades, we choose socialism.

URSULA VERITY

**BUSMEN'S STRIKE BULLETIN OUT TODAY**

The articles by busmen in this issue of The Newsletter are being reprinted immediately as a strike bulletin, which will be on sale this week-end. All profits will go to the busmen's strike fund.

**RENTS****A 'NON-POLITICAL' TENANTS' MOVEMENT  
WON'T WIN EVICTION STRUGGLE**By Brian Green (of Islington Council Tenants'  
Central Committee)

LAST Sunday's conference of the National Association of Tenants and Residents, attended by 430 delegates, showed how little militant lead can be expected from the Association in the fight against evictions.

The four motions presented by the platform were on 'Prospects for the New Towns', 'The 1957 Rent Act', 'The New Attack on the Council Tenant' and 'The People's Housing Charter'.

They contained not a single reference either to combating the Tory Government or to mobilizing the Labour and trade union movement.

**Overwhelmingly for industrial action**

The mood of the delegates was seen in their support for the amendment I moved on the Rent Act. Carried overwhelmingly, this amendment asked supporters of the Association, through their local trade union branches and Labour Parties, to consider using industrial action to stop evictions.

It asked them also to persuade local trades councils and Labour Parties to establish tenants' organizations to resist and prevent evictions, and to press the London and Middlesex County Councils to requisition property without Government authority should permission not be granted.

It was evident that the amendment had caught the platform unprepared. From then on they opposed any anti-Tory amendment directed towards the Labour and trade union movement.

Thus the executive's motion on council rents asked for 'a firm alliance of the people and their elected representatives in a common struggle against hostile elements'.

A delegate from the Merseyside area committee of the Electrical Trades Union moved an amendment to make it read 'a firm alliance of the people and their elected Labour and trade union representatives against the Tory Government'.

**Building: public ownership call**

This was opposed by the platform and defeated by about two to one.

An amendment to the draft 'People's Housing Charter', calling for the public ownership of the building and building supply industries and the land was described as 'sectarian' by Coun. Tom Vernon, president of the Association.

The Charter and the amendments were not put to the vote. (The Daily Worker of April 28 said the Charter 'was enthusiastically accepted'. This is not true.)

My impression of the conference was that the struggles against rent evictions and increases must be led by the organized working-class movement.

Although the Association is strongly influenced by the Communist Party, its leaders argue that it is non-party and non-political. But can tenants who support the Tory Party be won to the Labour movement by our pretending not to be anti-Tory?

(What Is Poplarism?—page 137)

**SCIENCE****WAS THERE A SOVIET H-BOMB ACCIDENT?**

By Our Scientific Correspondent, J. H. Bradley

THE available evidence does not indicate that the heavy fall-out all over the world is due to any error in a Soviet weather forecast.

A strong explosive ground shock was observed all over the world on March 25, originating in the USSR. Since then



very heavy fall-out has occurred everywhere, as though from a low-level explosion.

It looks as though a large bomb exploded near the surface of the earth. In this case it would suck up millions of tons of pulverized rock and soil, just as in the American 1954 test which killed the Japanese fishermen.

It should be very easy to settle this question by analysing the chemical nature of the fall-out particles. Those which fell on the 'Fortunate Dragon' were white, being coral coated with radio-active material. Only such particles are known to fall so fast from such a large explosion.

As far as I know no evidence has yet been published on this point.

If I should turn out to be right, it will dispose of the myth that accidental atomic explosions cannot happen.

## POLAND

### GOMULKA BOWS TO RUSSIAN PRESSURE IN HIS ATTACK ON WORKERS' COUNCILS

By Tony Guthrie

THE most recent speech of Wladyslaw Gomulka, made at the Fourth Congress of Polish trade unions, should give rise to the most serious doubts among all real socialists.

Gomulka does not declare strikes illegal as the western Press would have us believe, but he is already paving the way towards it. Remember Poznan? He said then:

'Agents and provocateurs can operate at all times in all places. But never and nowhere can they determine the attitude of the working class . . . Agents, provocateurs or reactionaries never have been, are not, and never will be the inspiration of the working class.'

Now he talks of wild strikes 'contrary to the idea of order and socialist legality . . . Such strikes occurring here and there are either symptoms of anarchy appearing in the conditions of socialist democratic freedom or the signs of activity of class enemies'.

Studied vagueness, confusion in terms, the art of making opposites sound like the same thing. All these have been prominent enough in Polish leaders' speeches at least since the Ninth Plenum of the Polish United Workers Party.

#### Without offending the Russians?

At first, this studied confusion seemed to be a subtle means of pursuing the 'Polish road to socialism' without offending Russian leaders.

References to revisionism echoed the Soviet party line but with an apparent difference. For with Gomulka the careful reader could not really know whether revisionism meant what the orthodox Soviet communists thought it meant, or whether he was hinting that the Stalinists were the real revisionists in refusing to follow the new PUWP line.

Unfortunately, Russian pressure and vacillation in the PUWP leadership have pulled the Polish party very much into line with the worst form of Soviet dogmatism in recent months.

The retreat on workers' councils indicated in the trade union congress speech is most serious.

Gomulka said that in a year and a half the workers' councils had achieved positive results, that the institution was good and had passed its initial test, yet he followed this with a proposal to fuse the workers' councils with the management and PUWP committees in each factory.

Workers' self-government restricted to workers' councils alone was bound to go lame, he claimed, and made it difficult for the works councils (organs of party authority) to implement the leading role of the party.

In other words, the Polish leadership are drawing the teeth of the only respected organs of workers' power in Poland.

What did the the Polish workers hope to achieve from

workers councils? J. Waclawek, writing in the Polish Trade Union Review, stated that 'the workers' council is, as it were, a works Sejm (Parliament), establishing recommendations on the most important matters and controlling the activity of the management'.

Exactly. This is the real cause of the PUWP's attack on their independence. Instead of the PUWP backing workers' councils as the only safeguard of socialist democracy, they want to dominate them from the outside, through the management and party organizations.

Gomulka made things clearer still when he said: 'It should be noted that the principle of workers' participation in the management of the enterprises leads to frequent misunderstandings. Some understand it as delegating the management to the workers. This is wrong.'

Thus the dominant section of the Polish leadership, after vacillating in a central position between the wishes of the Polish rank and file on the one hand and the Stalinists on the other, have at last given way to intensive pressure from the Soviet Union.

The Polish workers expected something very different. To them the workers' councils were 'to be the iron fist aimed against bureaucracy by drawing all the workers into the battle against it'. Such was Waclawek's view.

The recent refusals of the PUWP to send delegates to the Congress of the Yugoslav League of Communists is another indication that there are dangerous pressures being exerted by the Soviet leaders.

## LETTERS

### WHY I OPPOSED APPEAL TO ARMS WORKERS

MY friend Laurence Brown was accurate when he said in his letter that 'the pacifist and religious people thought that a direct appeal should be made' to the workers at the Aldermaston plant.

He was also correct in stating that 'our political friends (including some who write in The Newsletter) insisted as the price of their participation that NO direct appeal should be made to the workers'.

I plead guilty myself. I maintained inside the committee that the object of the Aldermaston march was to press the Government to stop the H-bomb race.

It should not be diverted from that object to directing our attention to the arms workers. That would be side-tracking the movement.

There are roughly 700,000 workers plus their families involved in the arms programme. It isn't their fault. It's the Government's.

I maintain that to have put the pressure on them rather than on the Prime Minister would have been a profound mistake, useless, ineffective and indeed likely to have antagonized large numbers of trade unionists whom we want to win to our side in the campaign for nuclear disarmament.

As Laurence knows I urged the committee to drop that line. If we had persisted in it Aldermaston would not have been the glorious triumph that I believe it was.

London, S.W.1

Frank Allam, M.P.

### WHAT WAS 'MISUNDERSTOOD', MR BROWN?

READER Laurence Brown agrees that in the campaign against the H-bomb it is 'essential that a direct appeal must be made to the workers and trade unions'.

His support is encouraging as it illustrates the attractiveness of your slogan 'Black the H-bomb and the rocket bases', even to those who approach these serious problems from a religious and moral standpoint.

It is a pity however that Mr Brown should state of your leaflet ('Aldermaston—What next?') that it contains statements indicating 'a complete misunderstanding' without specifying



what he considers is being misunderstood.

To my mind, the whole sense of the Newsletter participation was precisely to convey the need for an appeal to workers.

Swansea

George Atkins

### WHY DO THE MINERS' LEADERS HESITATE?

LAWRENCE DALY says [April 19, p. 121] we should tell the National Coal Board to get rid of its surplus coal by cutting the price. In fact it could get rid of it even at present prices by making it more easily available to householders.

Latest figures show surplus coal stocks of 25 million to 28 million tons. Yet the NCB does not reduce the price or make any real effort to get rid of the surplus. Why is this?

As a young miner, the answer seems obvious to me. They are holding it in reserve, ready for a battle with the miners.

British miners produce about 210 million tons of coal per year. The NCB has enough on hand to last a six-weeks strike of all British coal-miners.

It has this behind it in its economy drive, its disciplinary measures and its resistance to claims for higher pay and shorter hours.

(Incidentally, a seven-hour day was worked in the pits from 1914 to 1927. After the defeat of 1926, it went up to seven and a half hours, which it still is today.)

### Important to stick together

This is why it is important for all workers in all trades to stick together. We must not let the bosses split us and take us on one by one.

All workers must give their full support now to the busmen and railwaymen. A victory for these workers will be a victory for the whole working class. A defeat for them would be a defeat for us all—a defeat from which we in the mines would suffer in our turn.

I fully support the call made in The Newsletter for a national conference of all unions with wage claims, to work out a united strategy. This way we would be invincible.

Miners have had a taste of hesitant leadership. We learnt one lesson from 1926—the workers can win, provided there is adequate preparation for a real fight.

Why are the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers hesitating? They are trying everything to avoid a fight, instead of recognizing that a fight is inevitable and making real preparations to win it.

Leeds, 14.

D. Thomas

### NOW PRICE JONES ANSWERS HIS CRITICS

SHOULD open-cast mining be stopped or not? Lawrence Daly and Jim Johnson take me to task for what they consider to be my support of the National Union of Mineworkers proposals about open-cast coal.

I can assure them that what they take as my 'support' was not conscious in what I wrote in my article. The opening paragraph in that article was:

'Should a nationalized industry's main concern be making profit? The National Coal Board's answer is apparently "Yes".'

I intended to draw attention to the purely commercial basis of this supposedly 'socialized' industry.

I also wrote: 'Miners feel that this temporary measure should be the first to go when stocks are high (this sentiment will be echoed by everyone affected or likely to be affected by this frantic search for inferior coal).'

I still feel that this is a correct interpretation of the feeling of miners and the population in general, at least in this area.

Miners were very reluctant to accept the idea of open-cast mining when it was first proposed, because it could be seen to be a potential threat to the livelihood of underground miners.

It was only when agreement was reached between the NCB and the NUM that in the event of a lessening in the demand for coal open-cast would be stopped, that the policy was finally agreed.

Now that coal is in less demand (by whose fault most people have not asked themselves) it is expected that the NUM should demand the honouring of the agreement.

Comrade Daly says 'the NCB could choose to use these workers against the miners whenever it wanted'. The miners' answer to that is that open-cast is being used as a threat now. 'Profitable' open-cast must be kept going while 'non-profitable' pits must be closed.

Open-cast mining and private contractors in pits have never been 'accepted' and have always been looked on as a threat to employment; they have been tolerated because of the feeling of continued security of employment fostered by nationalization.

But with the growing realization of insecurity in the mines will grow the demand for the discontinuation of such temporary agreements as open-cast mining.

That is the level of consciousness of most mineworkers, and it cannot be jumped over or ignored.

Atherton (Lancs.)

Price Jones

## CINEMA

### 'ORDERS TO KILL' IS REPULSIVELY NEUTRAL

**Orders to Kill.** Directed by Anthony Asquith. Script by Paul Dehn.

I CANNOT agree with those critics who see this film as a tremendous indictment of war.

The story concerns the troubled conscience of an American soldier in the second world war, when he is given orders to kill a suspected French collaborator whose guilt he increasingly doubts.

Leonie, the French woman Resistance worker, urges him to carry out his orders and attacks him for having such doubts.

'When you were a bomber pilot, you didn't stop to think when you pressed the button that your bombs might fall on innocent children as well as your target. That is one of the risks of war.'

Not a single line in the script indicated that the characters questioned the cause of wars, or would attempt to do anything to prevent a recurrence of such horrors.

A well acted film, well directed, but a tremendous waste of an opportunity which a few lines of pointed dialogue would have corrected. As it is, I found the moral repulsive and the political and social content completely neutral.

In the present state of world tension, neutrality in such a powerfully public opinion-forming influence as the film can only mean condonation of war. We want 'committed' films, Mr Dehn, not polite comments. **MERCIA EMMERSON**

## BOOKS

### A DAMNING INDICTMENT OF CAPITALISM

**The Question.** By Henri Alleg (John Calder, 10s. 6d.).

HERE is the translation of a book which was confiscated by the French authorities only a few days after its publication; already more than 60,000 copies had been sold.

In it Henri Alleg, a member of the Communist Party and previously editor of a newspaper in Algiers, simply describes days of brutal torture at the hands of the now notorious French paratroops.

There was no steady preparation for the worst tortures. As soon as he was arrested, Alleg was strapped to a wooden



board and subjected to violent electric shocks.

This was done in the crudest possible manner, by fixing a clasp from a magneto to different parts of the body.

No mercy was shown. 'Suddenly, I felt as if a savage beast had torn the flesh from my body. Still smiling above me, Ja—— had attached the pincer to my penis. The shocks going through me were so strong that the straps holding me to the board came loose. They stopped to tie them again and we continued.'

This kind of thing went on for three days, apart from the standard police brutalities of blows and kicks. In the periods of relief prisoners could hear the terrible screams of others being tortured, some of them women.

### HIS FRIEND WAS SHOT

For a long time the tortures were known about without becoming a public scandal. Alleg's friend, the university lecturer Audin, was shot after refusing to talk under torture, and Alleg would have met the same fate but for the growing body of public opinion against the Algerian war and the death sentence on Djamila Bouhired.

Incidentally, the winning of a reprieve for this girl must be seen as only a very limited victory, though a worthy one. Others like Djamila will be tortured, raped, executed, unless the fight against colonialism is fought harder.

Alleg is now in the civil prison at Algiers: because of the surge of public opinion roused by the publication of his smuggled petition to the magistrate last July, he is still alive.

But his plea is still 'under investigation', more than six months after his first appearance in court.

In the court dossier are doctors' reports testifying to the scars and burns left by his tortures. He names officers who appear by name in the testimony of other tortured prisoners. But still the case is at a halt.

Once fully brought into the open, it will shake France and

bring its people face to face with the character of their ruling class.

Ordinary soldiers, of course, and not only members of the upper class and officer caste, were guilty of torture. Does this mean that it is not a class issue, but only yet another proof of 'man's inhumanity to man?' Sartre's introduction gives the lie to this legend of despair.

Once torture gets under way it breeds the torturers, and those of us who do not protest against it are on the first rung of the ladder; we enter the school of brutalization. But the question is: what sort of a régime requires a school of torture?

Because imperialism so ruthlessly sweats and exploits the colonial peoples, it must find self-justification. The victims must be represented as subhuman, not worthy of human treatment.

Not only this, suggests Sartre, but the torturer, inverting his cowardice, has to test his manhood against the victim's. If the tortured will not talk, he is the stronger man, and the torturer is driven to more furious beatings.

### DIVINE RIGHT MYTH

This rapid accumulation of bestiality is a consequence of the ideas with which the exploiters justify themselves. As Sartre says:

'For most Europeans in Algeria, there are two complementary and inseparable truths. That they have the divine right, and that the natives are subhuman. This is a mythical interpretation of a reality, since the riches of the one are built on the poverty of the other.'

This is a book which at 10s. 6d. should be bought and passed around groups of workers. It is not 'just another horror story', but a damning indictment of a social system which must debase its own people in order to preserve itself intact against even the most elementary demands for human rights.

CLIFF SLAUGHTER

## Constant Reader

## What is Poplarism?

'MUNICIPAL issues are more important today than at any time since the days of Poplarism,' said somebody in a recent discussion in my ward on the forthcoming local elections. I wonder how many of the under-forties in the movement know what 'Poplarism' was?

The mass unemployment that followed the short boom after the first world war hit London's East End hard. In those days the relief of the unemployed after they had exhausted their insurance rights fell wholly on the borough where they lived.

Poplar, a poor borough, had so many unemployed that the burden on the rates was unbearable.

So in March 1921 the Labour borough council, led by George Lansbury, resolved to withhold the moneys they were supposed to hand over for maintenance of the Metropolitan Police and other all-London purposes.

The London County Council sued Poplar. During the hearing the council held town's meetings to explain the position to the people, and organized marches to the court, headed by the borough mace-bearer, with band playing and banners flying.

### Thirty councillors arrested

In September thirty councillors were arrested, the men being sent to Brixton and the women to Holloway. Large-scale marches to both prisons were organized to demonstrate solidarity.

On one occasion 15,000 people, including many women and children, went to Holloway. In violation of prison rules, Lansbury addressed the crowds from his Brixton cell window.

Back in Poplar a Tenants' Defence League 10,000 strong pledged refusal to pay rent if their councillors were not released by a certain date.

October saw the release of the Poplar councillors. They marched out singing the 'Red Flag'. The Ministry of Health and the LCC conferred, and relief burdens were equalized throughout London.

John Wheatley described this as 'a real and substantial surrender to the principles for which Poplar was contending', and Lansbury himself said: 'We are very proud of the crime by which we forced rich London to share the burdens of poor London.'

That was not the end of 'Poplarism'. In 1922 the Poplar Council were warned by the (Liberal) Minister of Health to desist from paying relief at a scale higher than the miserable officially-approved one, and he actually issued an Order making this illegal.

### A laughing-stock

Such was the mood of the workers, however, that this Order remained a dead letter, and a laughing-stock, and in 1924 Wheatley, as Minister of Health in the first Labour Government rescinded it.

J. H. Thomas, the Right-wing trade union leader, called the Poplar councillors 'wastrels' for the activities that had made their borough a byword for militancy.

Lansbury replied that, while Thomas only talked about the official Labour programme of 'Work or Maintenance', he and his colleagues had acted to enforce it.

Opportunities of reviving the traditions of 'Poplarism' will doubtless present themselves to many Labour councillors in the course of the fight against the Rent Act, among other issues that will arise in the coming months.

BRIAN PEARCE



## LONDON RAILMEN WILL STRIKE ON MAY 13 IF NO PROGRESS IS MADE

If no satisfactory progress is made in settling the railwaymen's claim, London members of the National Union of Railwaymen will take strike action from May 13.

This decision was taken by the London district council of the NUR on Tuesday, in a resolution which said:

'This delegate meeting is disturbed by the long and protracted nature of the talks between the unions, the Government and the British Transport Commission.

'Conscious that already six months have elapsed in the negotiations, we declare that the national executive committee should now ask the BTC and the Government for a clear declaration of their intention in regard to our claim for a substantial increase in wages.

'On refusal or failure to meet our application by the opposite side, we demand that our NEC should immediately call a national strike.

'In the event of the London district council being of the view that no satisfactory progress is being made, we will call on our members in London to take action following the London district council meeting of May 13.'

## Strike Notebook

Fleet Street is giving publicity to the handful of busmen who are opposing strike action because they will receive such little strike pay.

The vast majority of men and women on the buses have little sympathy with those who are letting their tears fall. After all, how can they expect to receive a fortune when they are paying 1s. 1d. per week contribution?

It was up to them to attend their branch meetings regularly in order to keep themselves up to date, instead of merely grousing in the canteens and on pay day about their flat week rate.

### Who's preventing solidarity?

How do rank-and-file busmen view the attitude of the leaders of the rail unions?

Not very favourably. They are accusing Greene and Co. of betrayal—of crawling to the Tories in order to prevent their members' giving support to the busmen.

It's as plain as a pikestaff that the future of trade union unity depends on unity down below—the building of a really strong and effective rank-and-file movement.

### Elliot's dirty game

The refusal by London Transport Executive to share out among all busmen the £1 million it would have had to pay in an 8s. 6d. a week rise for the central London men shows just what Sir John Elliot's game is.

It is to set the central London men against their fellow-workers on the country services. As long as Elliot and his pals use these tactics, they can never hope for industrial peace.

### Driver Shore speaks out

Eve-of-strike comment by Driver T. Shore, of Athol Street garage, Poplar: 'The Government is using this dispute for political purposes. It wants to crush the trade union movement and clamp down on the working class.

'These people will use any means they can to turn the general public against trade unionism, in order to introduce worse conditions.

'But this will only convince the trade unionists to fight harder in order to remove the Tories from office.'

### On Route 13

Already on route 13 last week City passengers were being held up through staff shortages. Yet LTE refuse the decent wage that would enable them to recruit the staff to man these buses.

## A BUSMAN APPEALS (Continued from page 132)

his meagre pay is not a man who ought to have the lives of a bus-load of passengers in his hands.

Should our drivers be forced to do overtime, and spend additional tiring hours at the wheel, a danger to other road-users, in order to add something to their basic wage of £9 13s.?

I think you'll agree that we have a good case and that justice is on our side—especially when I add that for the productive workers in London Transport there is this mean and stubborn wage freeze, while non-productive executives at LTE headquarters have just had a pay rise to the tune of £2,000!

But we strikers don't only ask for the understanding and sympathy of the travelling public. We also ask for the active support and solidarity of brother trade unionists.

What does this mean? It means financial support, certainly. But it means something more.

The lads in the garages are now in the front line. If we take a thrashing, there'll be a lot of others who will be made to suffer, too.

We mustn't let that happen.

We say to the London tube men—give us a hand! Don't run a single extra train. Better still, come out in support.

We say to the dockers, of both unions—you have a fine reputation for militancy, and for not letting fellow-workers down. Today more than ever before we need your help.

We say to the electricians in the sub-stations providing juice to the tubes—can you stand by and see fellow-workers in a fight without remembering all the traditions of working-class unity?

We say to the taxi-drivers—we might curse each other now and again in the London traffic, but now we're in a real jam! Help us out by refusing to scab.

We say to the tanker men—if you 'black' oil and petrol for the London area our strike is as good as won. What about it, brothers?

'United we stand, divided we fall.' 'An injury to one is an injury to all.' 'Our fight is your fight.' These are old sayings. But they mean a great deal. And they have never meant more than they do in London this May 5.

## 'STAND FIRM' IS COUSINS'S MESSAGE

This is an extract from a letter sent this week by Frank Cousins, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, to all TGWU members employed by London Transport.

The union has made every effort to arrive at a just settlement and has acted with tolerance and restraint, without any satisfactory result. We are now left with no alternative but to take the extreme course of withdrawing labour.

You will know also, that in every step taken at executive level we have acted in full consultation and agreement with your elected representatives, with a report back to special branch meetings.

**CASE IS UNANSWERABLE.** The case which we have advanced on your behalf is unanswerable, quite apart from the fundamental principle which is involved in the proposal of the Industrial Court to divide the section by widening the differential as between central London and the outer London services.

It is, therefore, in this spirit that I address this short message to you, with the assurance that the executive and the union generally are standing four-square with you in the fight for your just rights.

Whilst there may be isolated criticism, the public generally recognizes the justification of your claim.

If the opportunity arises, either before the stoppage or after it has commenced, to reach a settlement which can be regarded as just and equitable we shall act immediately.

It may be a short-term stoppage or a long and bitter struggle. One cannot say, but in any event my call to you is to stand firm until the end of the road.