The Woodall-Duckham Agreement
and the C.E.U.

Vauxhall Follow-up

Sociologists in Crisis
On Wednesday May 1st some 2000 people marched through the streets of London, from Tower Hill to Smith Square. They were answering the call of the May Day Committee, an 'unofficial' body of rank-and-file print-workers, engineers, building workers, dockers and representatives of a number of libertarian and revolutionary groups.

A year ago the call of the May Day Committee had been followed by some 200 workers (see SOLIDARITY, vol.IV, No.7). The demonstration had been a modest success, showing that the stranglehold of the traditional organizations (Labour Party, Communist Party, and union machines) could be dented provided militants were prepared to take the initiative.

The vastly increased numbers attending this year's demonstration was most heartening. The call is beginning to evoke an echo. May Day could become, once again, a day of struggle, instead of a meaningless Sunday parade.

Some new problems have arisen. The intended themes of the march were solidly working class: opposition to the wage freeze and to deliberately created unemployment (and to the Labour government cynically imposing them), defence of job organization, support for the engineers' pay claim (through mobilization for real instead of token action), opposition to any attempt to legislate against shop stewards, and defence of the GLC tenants threatened with massive rent increases in the Autumn. Leaflets were directed at special industries and at the tenants. Smith Square was chosen as the target because the leaders of the Confederation would be meeting there to decide what to do following the refusal of the Engineering employers to make any real concessions.

Then came the Powell speech, the Press bally-hoo, the pro-Powell demonstrations. The whole scene changed overnight. With shattering clarity it became obvious that years of socialist propaganda had only scratched the surface of the working class. Militant dockers - many of them doubtless involved in the recent struggles to maintain the 'continuity rule' - marched on Parliament (singing 'Bye, Bye, Blackbird' and 'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas')... to mob Nabarro. False consciousness reigned supreme. There was a serious danger that, in disgust, anti-racist radicals would be driven to seek shortcuts and to by-pass the working class movement altogether - and that coloured workers would get lost in similar blind alleys. A counter-demonstration became urgent, in which socialists - black and white - would stand up and be counted.

Support for the May Day Committee began to flow in from many different quarters. It had to be accepted. But its very acceptance inevitably influenced the character of the demonstration. On the Wednesday morning some 1500 students joined the few hundred workers who, giving up a day's pay, had assembled on Tower Hill.
The Times correctly described the march as an 'uneasy alliance'. Both terms are correct. The students were aware of how few workers were present. Some saw their own presence as a substitute for working class action. They forgot - or were unaware of - the elementary truth that only class action, however bleak its immediate prospect, could uproot racialism, by destroying the society that spewed it. Some workers on the other hand were suspicious of the students. In a few years' time nearly all the students would have dropped out of revolutionary politics, most of them would be settled in comfortable niches and some would in fact be giving orders in industry. As for the proletarian condition, it usually sticks to a man's skin for a lifetime.

What is important for socialists to remember is that the objective interests of the workers are opposed to those of Powell and his class, however apathetic, confused or even hostile (on the racial issue) the mass of these workers may seem. On the other hand the long-term social interests of the students are less clearly defined, however praiseworthy and encouraging their present militancy may be.

Some students on the demonstration sensed this quite clearly. They identified themselves with the initial objectives of the May Day Committee. Joint work with these comrades could prove most fruitful. Other students only joined in on the basis of the Powell issue. Their spokesman demanded that the Labour government prosecute Powell - a demand that was well dealt with by John Lawrence, a printworker, speaking from a precarious perch on the railings in front of Transport House. Other demonstrators had yet other concerns and some began to drift from Smith Square (some to Parliament, some to the Spanish and Belgian Embassies - and some just home). The meeting began to disintegrate. Few seemed prepared to wait until the outcome of Scanlon's deliberations. The important point however is that workers and students had marched together, through the streets of London, on May Day, however 'uneasy' the alliance.

The events of the last few weeks have shown that the 'moderate' left is collapsing under our eyes. They organized nothing and few would have rallied to their call. The Communist Party played its usual shabby role. It refused to publicise the demonstration or even to mention it, despite repeated requests and despite the fact that the call had been endorsed by the South London District Committee of the AEU. The S.L.L. was also conspicuous by its absence. For how much longer will these tendencies continue the reformist tradition of celebrating May Day on the first Sunday of the month? The revolutionaries, on the other hand, are beginning to feel solid ground under their feet. With systematic work over the next few months a real alternative to the consensus could emerge. The campaign to defeat Powellism must be fought on firm class lines. It is not a question of 'adult education', seeking (à la Peace News) to psychoanalyze the dockers. What is needed is a campaign aimed at helping them in their real struggles, seeking to understand their frustration and to direct their anger against real and not mythical targets. With patience and perseverance next year's May Day rally could be an important event.
THE WOODALL-DUCKHAM AGREEMENT AND THE C.E.U.

by KEN WELLER

INTRODUCTION

This article is about the Agreement signed between Woodall-Duckham Ltd. and the Constructional Engineering Union (C.E.U.) and its consequences. Although the Agreement affected only a small section of a relatively small industry, it is important to workers far beyond those directly affected. The way it was introduced, its content, the resistance it gave rise to and the way that resistance was smashed clearly show up the function of trade union leaderships today and the direction in which modern capitalism is moving. It is important that the experience of the Woodall-Duckham men (which is not even widely known amongst constructional engineering workers) should be brought to a much wider circle of industrial militants.

Inside the mechanical construction industry the Agreement is being used as a blueprint for agreements with other firms. It is essential that workers throughout the industry be given clear and reliable information as to what is involved. They will then be able to deal with the syrupy platitudes, half-truths and lies of both the trade union officials and the employers as they try to impose their decisions on the workers.

The article also seeks to show how even a union where the 'left' has been in control for many years nevertheless behaves - on the industrial front - very much like unions with 'right wing' leaderships. For years the C.E.U. has supported all the best 'left' resolutions at various Conferences. The waste paper baskets at Transport House and at the T.U.C. are full of them. The full-time officials and Executive Councilmen of the C.E.U. are overwhelmingly men of the 'left', the Communist Party being well represented. Yet this leadership not only signed the infamous Woodall-Duckham Agreement without consulting the men on the job, but also used every dirty method available to smash the men's resistance to an agreement concerning which they had not been consulted.
THE UNION AND THE INDUSTRY

The 32,000 strong C.E.U. was formed in 1924 from the construction branches of B.I.S.A.K.T.A. It has for many years been on the extreme left of the British trade union movement. Its current General Secretary, Ernie Patterson, was once a member of the now defunct Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Party which was active in the late forties. Many other full-time officials have similar 'left wing' backgrounds.

C.E.U. members erect the mechanical parts of power stations, gas works, purification plants, oil refineries, chemical works and steel work generally. The union recruits amongst all workers in the industry from skilled men to labourers. It even has 10 women members. Much of the work done is extremely dangerous. In the 19 years ending in May 1967, 537 C.E.U. members were killed and nearly 12,000 seriously injured. These figures do not include workers in the industry killed or injured who were not members of the C.E.U. If one extrapolates these figures, the average spiderman can look forward to the virtual certainty of death at work or serious injury in his normal working life of 40 years.

Although several other unions (notably the Boilermakers, Plumbers, Heating and Domestic Engineers, and the AEF) have some members in mechanical construction the industry is overwhelmingly dominated by the C.E.U. The C.E.U. normally signs agreements on its own, the other unions accepting the accomplished fact. The C.E.U. steward on a site is also, by tradition, accepted as the senior steward by the other unions.

The present tendency in the industry is for more and more of the components to be prefabricated. This not only reduces the amount of work on a given site but also changes its character. The proportion of steel erectors is tending to decrease while fitters and welders are becoming more important. This has meant an influx into the industry of men from other types of work. The proportion of workers in the industry who are not C.E.U. members is increasing.

This tendency is being used by the employers to weaken job organization. Some employers make a point of employing a majority of men new to the industry and who are not used to the customs and practices of the job. One of the reasons for the signing of the Woodall-Duckham agreement was an attempt by the C.E.U. leadership to protect its dominant position, even at the cost of destroying site organization.

The vast majority of workers in the industry work on a temporary basis. They often travel long distances to work. Because of this they have tended to resist large-scale excessive overtime. The dangerous,

(1) Figures given by W. Simms, President of the CEU during his opening address at the 12th National Biennial Conference of the CEU.
temporary character of the work has attracted a particular sort of individual: self-reliant and capable of looking after himself. Site negotiations tend to be rugged and strikes frequent. While the nationally-agreed rate for skilled men is very low (under 7/- an hour) site negotiations on 'bonus schemes' frequently double or treble this rate. There are wide regional differences in actual take-home pay and the CEU leadership was able to exploit these variations in the Woodall-Duckham agreement. It is because of the tradition of struggle on the job, often in the teeth of opposition by the union officials, that the industry has a reputation for relatively high wages as well as a very high degree of job control.

A high proportion of work is done directly for the government or for nationalized industries. This has made the industry very vulnerable to political decisions to restrict capital expenditure. Construction is facing a severe, although temporary, cutback just now. The employers are seeking to take advantage of this to establish a permanent position of supremacy on the job. Under these circumstances the enthusiastic participation of the CEU leaders in 'productivity' schemes which still further reduce the work force can hardly be called helpful.

THE AGREEMENT

The Agreement signed on April 24, 1967, between the CEU and Woodall-Duckham is closely modelled on the famous Fawley productivity agreements of 1960. It was negotiated by Ernie Patterson and his Assistant General Secretary Charlie Johnson. Even the Executive was kept in the dark until the last moment. When the text had been finalised, it was presented one day to the Negotiating Committee for endorsement and then, on the same day, to a full meeting of the Executive. The so-called 'lefts' in the leadership (Hughie Barr and Eddie Marsden, both members of the Communist Party) did not vote against the Agreement. They merely abstained.

What did the Agreement do?

a) it ended the afternoon tea-break in this particular section of constructional engineering (thus creating a longer working week).

b) it abolished many kinds of abnormal condition money.

c) it left it solely to the management to determine what were 'inclement conditions' (on outside steel work, rain and high wind are not just a matter of human discomfort but often of life and death).

d) it gave management the right to instruct men to do any other available work in the event of 'inclement conditions'.

e) it contained 'production and flexibility' clauses which conceded to management the sole right to decide 'who did what' and 'what
constituted a day's work' (all these matters had previously been determined by joint negotiations and by mutual agreement).

f) Without doubt the most diabolical parts of the Agreement were those limiting the rights of stewards - and thereby the possibility of good site organization. The Agreement only recognises stewards as 'card stewards', in other words it restricts their function to a mere collecting of dues. It abolishes many previous established customs in the industry, for instance the custom whereby a steward could, in the course of his duties, leave his place of work without the permission of the supervisor. Even the recognition of stewards by the Company is now dependent on a written notification by the 'responsible full-time official'. All site meetings were banned, except with prior permission of the management. There were several other clauses signing away or reducing hard-won rights to organize jobs.

What did the men get in return? They got an increase from a basic rate of about 6/10 (there were certain minor regional differences) to a consolidated rate of 10/6. But even this is not as good as it looks. The 6/10 rate was a minimum, always exceeded, whereas the 10/6 rate was to be a maximum.

Perhaps for some men, employed by Woodall-Duckham in the darkest provinces, this did amount to a wage increase. But in London and other areas where men had negotiated site 'bonus' agreements it meant a vicious cutback in earnings. In the case of the men working at the Romford Gasification Plant the loss was in the region of £8 to £10 a week, for doing the same amount of work. (2)

However, looking on the bright side of things, Woodall-Duckham did all right. In 1966, before the Agreement was signed, they had declared a net loss of £728,846. Their figures for 1967 showed a profit of £675,403 (The Times, April 19, 1968: Report of the AGM of the Woodall-Duckham Group). While it would probably be wrong to claim that the Agreement was solely responsible for this happy change in their fortunes, it certainly played a major part.

The Agreement was signed on April 24, 1967. None of the men on the job knew its full contents until 3 days before it was due to become operative, on May 8, 1967! There was no prior consultation with the Branches. Even the Divisional Committees weren't properly informed. The men were simply presented with an accomplished fact.

But while the men were caught with their trousers down, Woodall-Duckham had had plenty of time to get organized. They knew they would have a difficult job in getting the men on the main London sites to accept what had been signed 'on their behalf' but without their consent. Some time in advance the firm had moved large numbers of foremen onto

(2) Even John Baldwin, Organizer of the London Division of the CEU, when arguing for the agreement, admitted that the London men would lose between £5 and £6 a week (see Report of 12th National Biennial Conference, May 22-26, 1967, p.70).
the Romford site (where about 120 CEU operatives were involved in the £6,000,000 contract for a high pressure oil gasification plant). The employers wanted to make an example of the Romford men and establish a precedent. The job of the foremen would be to enforce compliance with the Agreement. The firm eventually had more than 30 foremen on this particular site. In addition there were 6 engineers and a number of chargehands: a ratio of one supervisor to every 3 working men!

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE AGREEMENT

The Romford men started operating a series of effective sectional strikes: first the fitters, then the welders, then the mechanical fitters and finally the erectors would stay at home for one day. As each category of workers was dependent on all the others to get anything done, the amount of production achieved was minimal. After a few days the management brought matters to a head. A foreman instructed a CEU member who had been employed as a forklift driver to drive a tractor and trailer - as he was now entitled to under the terms of the Agreement. The man who had only once before driven a tractor (and had been involved in an accident on that occasion) refused, on the grounds that he would be a danger to others. The site engineer refused to overrule his foreman, and the worker was sacked. The other men then stopped work in protest. The issue was clear. It concerned a simple matter: the arbitrary rights of management to take decisions of this kind on the sites. The men were challenging one of the basic clauses of the Agreement.

The first reaction to the Agreement of the men employed on various other London sites was outrage. Many of the militants unfortunately placed their hopes in getting the National Biennial Conference of the union to repudiate the Agreement. The Conference in fact was due to meet only 14 days after the Agreement became operational.

The men's confidence in the ability (or even inclination) of the National Conference to help them was soon to be shattered. Although a London Divisional Conference had overwhelmingly rejected the Agreement one week before the National Conference, at the Conference itself the resolution calling for the reference back of the Agreement was defeated by 33 votes to 21. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly the provincial men (in a great majority at the Conference) voted for the Agreement. They tended to gain something from it financially (and possibly lost less from it, in terms of conditions, than the London men, on the whole better organized). But the readiness of the provincial delegates (even after having heard the case of the London men at the Conference) to stab their brothers in the back speaks volumes for the success of the officials in destroying national solidarity. Secondly, the full-time officials pulled out every stop to bulldoze their point of view through. The Conference, as well as accepting a wage cut of up to £10 per week for the London men, endorsed a wage increase of £3 a week for the full-time officials! These two decisions alone make further comment as to the composition of the Conference unnecessary! In the CEU, it seems, the wages of sin are sixty shillings -
double the price that Judas got! Someone ought to get in touch with the Prices and Incomes Board! Those interested in the statistical aspects of the CEU's present brand of democracy - as reported in the union's own full report of the Conference Proceedings - will find that of 15 speakers in the debate on the Woodall-Duckham Agreement, no less than 8 were full-time officers. All of these men (surprise! surprise!) supported the agreement. And together they were given exactly twice as long to put their case as the rank-and-file speakers who opposed it. Another aspect of the Conference was the deafening 'tactical' silence of such hopeful 'left' aspirants for full-time office as Hughie Barr.

Meanwhile, back on the sites, the struggle continued. New issues were now involved. The ruling on the tea break was challenged. The Romford men who had at one stage been locked out succeeded in spreading the strike to other Woodall-Duckham sites (to East Greenwich, Slough and later to Bromley) until over 400 men were affected. The dispute lasted seven weeks.

Although a considerable amount of money was raised, the men in London remained isolated as they had no way of getting in touch with men on sites in the provinces who remained at work. The need for unofficial channels of communication was shown up in a big way. At the same time the officials started a vicious campaign of intimidation, slander and coercion. Ernie Patterson notified all the CEU stewards involved in the strike that they were 'breaking the Agreement'. He also personally wrote to the District Secretary of the AEU and tried to persuade him to 'discipline' the AEU steward (Brother Ricky Massam) on the Romford site. He also got in touch with officials of other unions.

Stewards and representatives from the various sites were summoned to Union Headquarters and threatened with 'disciplinary action' if they remained on strike. At a meeting in Romford John Baldwin, District Organizer, said that according to Ernie Patterson this could 'mean anything up to expulsion from the union'. He also told one of the strikers, a Communist Party member, that he was 'jeopardising his chances of election to union office' if he continued to support the strike.

In spite of this, at the end of seven weeks, a small majority of the men still voted to continue the struggle. But it was felt that the majority was not sufficient to carry on and the men returned to work. Most of the stewards and many of the men still refused to work under the new agreement and got work with other firms in the industry. Those who went back were told that 3 of the men (2 erectors and 1 labourer) weren't wanted because their presence would create an 'unbalanced labour force' (a typical employers' device for weeding out militants). A further short strike resulted. The men who eventually returned began to operate systematic non-cooperation. At times it was a question of 'who would decide whether it was raining'. Again the officials stepped in. They withdrew the credentials of the CEU steward, Bro. Jack Kettle, but the men re-elected him. John Baldwin, Essex District Organizer, held a stormy site meeting to compel the election of a new shop steward. On five separate
occasions the men refused to vote for anyone but their own nominee. Finally the District official appointed Danny Mitchell as steward (the men voted him out a few weeks later).

The non-cooperation continued. Woodall-Duckham responded by giving more and more work to 'labour only' contractors. In some cases these contractors had to pay considerably more than the new 10/6 rate to the men they recruited. These contractors proved a bad investment for the Company. Two of them had their contracts terminated because of their inefficiency. They recruited many of their workers from very far afield. Many came from Scotland and the general attitude of these men to their work was the very healthy one that it was in the nature of a holiday. They did even less than the men operating the work-to-rule. But even the work-to-rule was bound to fail if it was not waged on a national scale. After a long period, the job was finally completed. The men were defeated.

SOME LESSONS AND PROPOSALS

The lessons of the Woodall-Duckham struggle must be carefully studied by militants in the industry. Illusions in the full-time officials must finally be shed. We must abandon all double-think on this matter and bluntly say what we think, instead of one thing in public and another in private, as so many do on the left. We must make it clear that if hard-won wages and conditions and the right to site negotiations are to be defended or extended, it is obviously going to be by those who achieved them in the first place, namely the men on the job.

To carry out effective struggle in industry in general (and in the construction industry in particular) strong national links which bypass the official machine are now becoming an urgent necessity. Right now is the time to start building them. Time and effort which has in the past been spent by militants in getting pious resolutions passed in the branches, or in campaigning to get 'better' men elected to full-time office (where they behave in exactly the same way as their predecessors), should now be devoted to strengthening job organization and to linking up with other militants up and down the country. There are only 2½ hours a day, even for activists, and it is a question of where to concentrate our efforts. The time is more than ripe for the calling of a meeting of CEU and other militants to discuss this immediate objective. We are prepared to assist in this, to the limits of our resources.

The Woodall-Duckham Agreement was a try on. The bosses have, for the time being, pulled it off. It is on the cards that they and the union officials will try it on again, in other sectors of the industry. There is not much time left if their further attacks on us are to be resisted.
WOODALL-DUCKHAM: SOME LESSONS

Ever since the introduction of the Woodall-Duckham/C.E.U. Consolidated Rate Agreement in May 1967, the W-D contract at Romford Gas Works has been plagued with problems which directly or indirectly affect every rank and file trade unionist in Britain today.

As a result of this agreement the members employed on the job suffered a loss in earning of £8-£10 per week. This was brought about by the abolition of the Woodall-Duckham's 'bonus scheme' and the introduction of a consolidated rate of 10/6 per hour. To achieve this magnificent rate the C.E.U. leadership have signed away some of the most vital principles of trade unionism. Opposition to this agreement was met with threats of expulsion from the union.

We have seen at Romford the spectacle of a union official coming to shop floor meetings and persuading men to work excessive overtime, even to the extent of squads of men working until late at night (even over the Christmas holidays) in order to facilitate 'commissioning'. We were told that if we didn't grant the management what they required, they would bring in 'labour-only' sub-contractors to do the work.

There are two main lessons to be learnt from the rank and file struggles at Romford:

1) Any agreement signed must have the full support of the men actually involved on the job. Where an agreement is signed without the men's consent, the men must refuse to operate it until the 'agreement' is declared null and void. The tactics used at Romford (namely to return to work and seek to put pressure on the firm by holding back production) have proved unsuccessful.

2) At no time and under no circumstances should sub-contractors be allowed to take over any part of the job. At the first sign of trouble at Romford over two-thirds of the W-D contract was sub-contracted. This was done with the full knowledge of the C.E.U. hierarchy who, despite a resolution at National Conference condemning this practice, seemed quite happy to sit back and allow it to happen. In fact they had endorsed the principle when they signed the new Woodall-Duckham Agreement. Whenever a sub-contractor is brought in, the stewards of the main contractors have no right even to check if the men involved are members of a trade union. As anyone can see this makes it almost impossible to set up and maintain an organized site.

At Romford, the interests of the men concerned have been completely disregarded by the C.E.U. leadership. In their efforts to make their so-called Productivity Agreement work, they have taken control of the site out of our hands and bolstered up the Company. In true capitalist fashion they have done so by cutting our real wages. They can obviously no longer even defend our basic rights. It is time we started to organize ourselves for this purpose.

MAC.
One of the many recent changes in the production areas at Vauxhall (Luton) is the increasing number of both rather young workers and of much older types. Gone are the 'backbone of the plant', men in their late twenties or early thirties who had swarmed into the factory in the boom days of a few years ago. The present youngsters are the 'hopefuls', recruited by the firm 'from the caves of Wales, bogs of Ireland or the mountains of Scotland'. Like those who came a decade ago from the new towns, many are now to be seen with their suitcases returning home, often after a fruitless search for accommodation in Luton, and having realised that there is no overtime to be earned to sustain their two homes and families. The turn-over is quite fantastic, particularly when one remembers that Luton is in a 'rural' belt.

A new scene greets the eye when one walks into the production areas. A growing number of women have been taken on under a 'loophole' provided by the Charter of Slavery signed last November (see SOLIDARITY, vol. IV, No. 11). The shape of things to come is now clear. A delighted management is talking in terms of hundreds, if not thousands, of women workers. Many anticipate that up to 30% of the labour force at Luton will eventually be women. The sad aspect of this is that no one appears to be bothered whether these women become organized or not. Some stewards are beginning to sample some of the problems that crop up when women (employed at lower rates) emerge in their areas. There is perhaps a poetic justice in this. Earlier some of these stewards had refused to believe what we shit-stirrers had been saying, but it is rapidly becoming a reality.

The events of the past four months were recently highlighted by the 'grand scoop' of a Fleet Street snooper who exposed 'a Trot cell inside the plant'. (See Sunday Telegraph, March 17 and March 24, 1968.) This character (Joe McGarvey) had in fact infiltrated the plant, possibly with managerial connivance, and succeeded in fingering a militant. His departing comments make interesting reading. 'It may sound a gratuitous insult', he wrote, 'to men I liked working with and who showed me nothing but kindness, but I must confess that I walked out of Gate 5 thanking Heaven that I was really a journalist'. Working class life was obviously too hard for him.

While Press snoopers can walk out of the factory, thinking their dirty little deeds are the greatest scoop yet, those of us who are there to earn our living have to face the problems of further cut-downs of labour on specific operations and of further speed-up. Only this time everything is cloaked with the phrase 'estimated times: we're doing a re-check'. There is also a stricter level of discipline with regard to absenteeism. Tempers are beginning to flare as management wades in 'to set an example'. In one area noted for its appalling conditions there
has been a fight a week. Most could be attributed to environmental circumstances as well as to the 'mixture of nationalities'. The incidence of fighting appears to be steadily increasing with the approach of the 'long hot summer' and additional environmental stress on night work. With the productivity deal coming to absolutely nothing, relations with management are further soured. Hordes of methods engineers descend on the tracks to do-nobody-quite-knows-what, except that they are seen to ask operators why they missed this or that component a hundred yards down the line.

Management has been trying to negotiate with the senior union officers of the three trade unions for a National Agreement run on Confederation lines, or for one like at Fords, with a Joint Council which would encroach on specific questions of job organization and the conduct of stewards. It has transpired that the AEF Executive were down at Vauxhall on various occasions for exploratory talks. One thing Vauxhall is rumoured to have got from them is an order for a fleet of staff cars.

February saw the announcement that Vauxhall's profits were down to a low level (or so they said). They announced with regret that they must curtail the profit-sharing for this year. Yet all in all the company seems to have fared better than most of its competitors, one of whom is about to throw off 20% of its labour force after a spate of rationalization and mergers. At this moment the Luton plant is absorbing labour on its major production operations.

M.A.C. men will soon be no more if the unions and management get together and talk. The idea now is for a shop stewards committee to be set up (performing, one presumes, much the same functions as the M.A.C.). In the draft proposals the convenors have made a few points with regard to democratisation. (Example: if a shop steward who is elected to the new body ceases to hold office, he will remain on the Committee until his electoral term expires. One can draw one's own conclusions as to the substance of this kind of clause, if it is allowed.) The M.A.C. boys are visibly shaking in their shoes now, as they see themselves becoming an extinct breed. But will we see any real change at Vauxhall? Or are we going to see the same old tendencies creeping back - with the shop stewards jumping on the new body? The subject of safeguards and the proper functioning of any new body is being kept vague. The discussion so far has centred on whether the new body should be consultative or advisory and on what functions the Welfare Department of the firm should now take over. There is some talk about the new shop stewards body having more frequent consultations with the management, no doubt to keep the wheels of the already bureaucratic set-up even better oiled. No one seems to care much about the defence of extension of job organization. The 'elected' reps seem to be following the appointed ones in becoming a lower echelon of management.

The sell out (Charter of Slavery '67), the sacking (and later reinstatement) of NUVB bureaucrat Arthur Leary, the work-to-rule (with only 1/3 of the shops properly organized), the resultant lock-out (ending in the intervention of millionaire publisher Robert Maxwell 'on
behalf of my constituents in North Bucks') and the final return to work are now all history. What is important for us at Vauxhall is that we learn the lesson of our mistakes.

What of the future? Where do we go from here? True, there are signs that a new militant layer is emerging, but we must not be content with just letting things happen as we did last time. The more militant areas should not be asked to show the kind of leadership that ends in defeat through isolation, itself related to the lack of mass participation. But neither can we afford to remain in a daze after our recent demoralising experiences.

Our job (the workers, not the convenors or officials) is complex in the extreme. It extends from repairing a shattered job organization to the development of a high level of consciousness among our mates. Primarily we must initiate discussion at floor level to spark the sense of awareness. We have to encourage the shop floor to think and do things for themselves, rather than just talking about their problems, and then leaving their solution to others. We must discuss new concepts of counter-action. We must build an organization of our own in the plant, in order to put some of our attitudes and ideas into practice. The organization must be capable of activity in every department, of enhancing the confidence of the workers in themselves, of expanding their militancy, of providing help to those who feel isolated and of disseminating accurate information quickly, linking workers inside and outside.

We are fighting a modern management which is constantly changing its character and techniques with the development of modern capitalism. Only with a constant class and socialist orientation, and a constant testing of our ideas in practice, will we forge the weapons which will enable us to run our own destiny.

'Spartacus'.

SOLIDARITY

(A paper for rank-and-file militants)

WHY NOT TAKE OUT A SUB? Send 10/- to Heather Russell, 53A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent, and we will send you the next 12 issues (or pamphlets).
SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE REPORT


On the Saturday afternoon K.W. introduced a discussion on what 'Solidarity' had done in the past, was doing now and should be doing in the future. Much of the session was used to discuss the relation between 'Solidarity' and other tendencies, such as the Anarchists and Pacifists. A document was submitted by J.S. and T.H. (copies available on request) which analysed the evolution and decay of the Peace movement and argued that continued association with the anarcho-pacifist milieu was becoming increasingly compromising for revolutionaries. It was pointed out in discussion that a distinction existed between those who were interested in some of 'Solidarity's ideas, and those who felt deeply committed to developing them, through action, as a coherent whole.

The first session on the Sunday, introduced by T.H., was devoted to an account of 'Solidarity's industrial work. The discussion was fruitful and concrete proposals were made. The most important one was to set up an Industrial Committee whose major function would be to coordinate the work in industry (particularly in the motor and construction industries). The Committee would establish contacts, produce leaflets and possibly bulletins and report back regularly, both in the paper and to group meetings. Meetings of militants in these two industries should be aimed at within the next few months.

At the second session it was proposed and agreed that 'Solidarity' should henceforth be a national membership organization. From now on we should seek to recruit from amongst our supporters in order to develop the work of the group in new areas, put it on a firmer financial basis and ensure a more democratic framework for decision-taking.

A certain number of our supporters were already members, namely those who decided to join following the public meeting of March 19, 1967 (see SOLIDARITY, vol.IV, No.7).* Several other comrades joined at the Birmingham meeting.

The meeting decided that the same should be demanded of new members as had been demanded of those forming the original nucleus, namely:

1. Shall be considered members all those who
   a) are in general agreement with the ideas outlined in our previous publications, with the statement 'As We See It', and with such further ideas as the group may collectively develop in the future.

* In that issue, the article 'Structure and Function' seeks to explain our turn to a more structured organization. Copies of the issue are still available and will be sent to prospective members on request.
b) are prepared to engage in practical activity aimed at disseminating these ideas.

c) pay a minimum subscription of 5/- per month.

2. New members will be accepted by simple majority.

Members would be encouraged to join the 'Solidarity' (Scotland) or 'Solidarity' (London) groups until such time as they felt they were numerically strong enough to form viable autonomous groups in their own areas. This remained our long-term objective.

A session was then devoted to a discussion of SOLIDARITY as a paper. A list of material published in the first four volumes of the journal was circulated.* Many areas of interest to us had not been dealt with but this was due to lack of informed writers in these fields, not to philistinism. It was suggested that anybody with a particular interest should cover that area regularly for SOLIDARITY and should send in any interesting material or, better still, write it up himself. A number of proposals were then made. SOLIDARITY subscribers should be approached to find out where they worked with a view to putting them in contact with others working in the same industry. A list of regional contacts should be published in each issue. A statement of aims should, if possible, be included in each issue. And attempts should be made at having a brighter cover.

The final session dealt again with the relationship between 'Solidarity' and other groups. A proposal to seek a closer relationship with the International Socialism group was overwhelmingly defeated. It was decided to maintain the relationship as it has been, i.e. to work with comrades from I.S. (and other groups) in those areas where there might be a congruence of interests.

The Conference, which closed after a decision to hold periodic meetings on a regional basis, must be seen as the beginning of an attempt to reorganize 'Solidarity' in order to increase its coherence and effectiveness.

F. P.

* Available on request. Please send stamped addressed envelope.

just reprinted

SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM

A re-definition of socialist objectives in the light of the events of the last 50 years. Solidarity Pamphlet No. 11. 9d., post free, from H. Russell, 53A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.
SOCIOLIGISTS IN CRISIS

There is uproar in the Sociology Department at London's Regent Street Polytechnic. Communications have broken down between the management and the lecturers. Students are making critical remarks. A team of rank and file militants, sent by 'Solidarity' to investigate, reports as follows:

1. The Management. This consists of a tightly knit complex of bankers, lawyers and politicians, bound together by Christian beliefs, conservative ideology, geriatric ineptitude and a lust (consummated) for power. The Director is Sir Eric Richardson, CBE, Ph.D., B.Eng., C.Eng., FIEE, AMI.Mech.E., said to be interested in engineering.

2. The Labour Force. This consists of semi-skilled assembly line operatives (known as 'lecturers'). They come in two sizes: the 'gold watch' boys, who have been with the firm for years and are deeply integrated — and the 'casuals', whose status is somewhat inconsistent and whose relationship with the management is ill-defined. Politically most of them are frustrated liberals and radicals, whose critique of society is purely academic, when not enmeshed in methodism, existentialism and sundry other diversions.

3. The Product (also known as 'students'): The intake is bisexual. Quality inspection is poor and there is said to be much built-in obsolescence. The output is systematically processed — at a rate of 30 per annum — into traditional middle-class patterns of thought.

4. The Problem: The Sociology Department is a thorn in the Director's flesh (he recently called them 'all bolsheviks and atheists'). Eric has been toying with the idea of abolishing the problem by abolishing the Department.

5. The Conflict: A deputation of sociologists recently called on the Director asking for 'better conditions and facilities for staff and students'. They were met with a blank refusal, threats of redundancy, hints that the site would be closed and warnings that no more labour would be recruited.

6. The Investigation: At first the operatives were hostile to our team of investigators and threatened to stop work if their output was timed. The difficulties were overcome when we infiltrated class rooms disguised as ventilation engineers.
7. **Recommendations:**

a) that the walls of all lecture theatres be painted green, as it was found that the delivery rate of 'lecturers' then increased by 30 w.p.m.

b) that a Welfare Officer be appointed to listen to the operatives' complaints, thereby improving morale.

c) that opportunities for social interaction among operatives be extended, provided it did not interfere with output.

d) that the Ministry of Labour set up an office in the building to help those threatened with redundancy. Attention should be drawn to the fact that alternative work was available in Aberdeen.

e) that operatives be directed to local government retraining centres, with a view to acquiring new skills, such as lecturing in veterinary science, classical Greek or Civil Engineering.

8. **Conclusions:** Although those made redundant might at first be resentful, the team was optimistic that they would eventually come to realize that mobility of skilled labour was in the national interest.

Edward Ludd.

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**EXPORT DRIVE**

SOLIDARITY ideas are beginning to have an echo beyond the shores of Britain. We are pleased to inform readers that a Japanese edition of Andy Anderson's 'HUNGARY '56' was produced some time ago for the 10th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution; that Cardan's 'MODERN CAPITALISM AND REVOLUTION' has recently been translated into Italian (by Circolo Rosa Luxemburg, via Buranello 34. 6, Genova - Sampierdarena, Italy); that a Swedish edition of 'FROM BOLSHEVISM TO THE BUREAUCRACY' (Solidarity Pamphlet No.24) has just been published (by Libertad, Allmanna Vägen 6, Göteborg V, Sweden) and was reviewed at length on the cultural page of one of the biggest evening papers (Göteborgs-Tidningen, April 3, 1968); that a Japanese edition of this pamphlet will be appearing shortly and that the Swedish comrades are undertaking a translation of Ida Mett's 'THE KRONSTADT COMMUNE'.
NOT A PENNY ON THE RENTS by Ian Macdonald and Kon Lowe. Published by Tenants' Action Committee, c/o 66 Longland Court, Avondale Square, London S E 1. pp. 8. 2d.

This excellent short pamphlet documents the Greater London Council's plan to drastically increase council house rents. It demonstrates that far from being a privileged minority, council tenants are subsidising the moneylenders who have made fantastic profits out of property speculation and loans to local authorities. The pamphlet warns against reliance on the Labour Party, which (now that it is in opposition) is making a show of opposition to the increases, and calls on the tenants to rely "on their own resolution, action and organisation". The pamphlet calls for a propaganda campaign to defeat the G L C, but realistically sees that only a rent strike can achieve this. It has a commendably realistic attitude to some of the difficulties this may entail.

RANK AND FILE ENGINEER, No. 1. from D. Langley, 80 Garthland Road, Hazel Grove, Cheshire. 4d.

If the working class is to defeat the combination of direct government interference in wage negotiations and incorporation of the trade unions into the state apparatus, it will have to forge new weapons, of which rank-and-file industrial papers could be among the most valuable. We hope that Rank and File Engineer succeeds in becoming a focus of resistance to the government incomes freeze.

This first issue is disappointing however. One of the main articles is devoted to the Rules Revision Conference of the A E F. We don't think that this issue is unimportant, but surely a rank-and-file journal should concentrate on reporting and linking up shop floor struggles.

This over concentration on internal union matters seems to indicate a very incomplete understanding of how far the incorporation of the union apparatus into the system has gone. Together with this, there is a certain ambiguity about the role of the "left" officials. ("Scanlon will bring the Executive Council on to a course for democracy". I think he will use his influence "to guide the delegates to safeguard the democracy which exists in our union", etc.)

Apart from anything else, this makes for rather dull reading. It seems aimed at branch secretaries rather than at ordinary workers. Let's hope it will improve.
THE ORIGINS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN SPAIN by M. Dashar.
Coptic Press, 7 Coptic Street, London W C 1. 2/6d.

A collection of anecdotes, first published in 1934. The particular features of the Spanish revolutionary movement are explained by reference to the distinctive Spanish character, which in turn seems to be the result of the ethnic composition of Spain. Some criticism of the Socialist Party, but—mostly in terms of the dishonesty of their leadership.

J.S.


This is a very short account of life with the R A O C at the Valdolievre camp and workshop at Calais, during World War I. The author was among 1,000 specially enlisted tradesmen (gunsmiths, tinsmiths, carpenters, saddlers, and shoemakers) who were employed there. The struggle against speed up, Sunday morning work and Sunday morning service is well described (at one stage men systematically refused to sing "God save the King" in church). The author tells of the general war weariness, of the impact of news from Clydeside, and of the big circulation built up, in the Forces, for the Weekly Herald and later the Daily Herald, and this despite the reluctance of the papers' editors.

The Calais mutiny itself followed the arrest by the military police of "one of the Valdolievre boys making a visit to a neighbouring camp to do a spot of propaganda" in favour of repatriation. By the next morning all units in the Calais area were on strike.

The "Calais Area Soldiers' and Sailors' Association" was built on the basis of hut delegates to camp committees, the various camp committees in turn electing delegates to a central area committee. The whole thing seems to have been both centralised and extremely democratic. Mass demonstrations, complete with bands, were held in the streets of Calais. The authorities seem to have been caught unawares by the extent and militancy of the movement. They decided to compromise and expedite repatriation. "Membership of the Committee was a certain rapid passport to home". Shit-stirring paid off.

There is a lot more information to be dug up about these mutinies and we hope to return to the subject in a forthcoming issue. Despite the title only three pages of this sixteen page pamphlet are in fact devoted to the Mutiny itself. There is a four page introduction of the "all-that-was-lacking-in-order-to-sweep-away-capitalism-and-establish-a-workers-democracy-was-a-political-vanguard!!" typo.

M.B.
This excellent little pamphlet briefly describes the structure of the paper industry in the Aberdeen area. This is followed by a most realistic account of working conditions at Donside, Stoneywood, Mugiemoss and Culter Mills by workers who had worked there. The immediate problems of the mill workers are discussed and linked with the case for workers' management of production. The pamphlet has been widely sold at the mills.

I.M. writes:
The response to the Aberdeen Paperworker pamphlet has been very encouraging, especially since paperworkers in the North-East had previously been regarded as ill-organised and backward. Although we still feel the first to be true, our ideas on the second have received a welcome jolt.

In Culter Mill, which is isolated geographically and has a large percentage of country workers, our reception was enthusiastic; initially only among workers from the town, but on our second visit also from the country workers. This Mill had previously been virgin soil for any kind of socialist ideas or activity. At Mugiemoss, which is a large Mill, with many of the workers ex-servicemen, our reception was less favourable. However, a minority greeted it enthusiastically. Stoneywood Mill is the largest and most "advanced" (both in management attitudes and technologically) in Aberdeen and here we sold a large number of pamphlets which were received favourably. A small minority expressed hostility. However, it was at Donside that we met with the best response. A large number of pamphlets were sold. In addition to this, we know that each pamphlet circulated widely from hand to hand inside the Mills, and even between workers in different Mills. Some workers contacted us for more copies and it was discussed at Union branch meetings in the city.

**SOLIDARITY MEETINGS**

The following meetings have been arranged:

- **Friday, May 17, 1968** - 'Racialism'
- **Friday, June 14, 1968** - 'Socialism or Barbarism'

The meetings will be held at 7.45 pm at the **Golden Lion**, Kings Cross Road (5 minutes' walk from Kings Cross Tube Station). All welcome.
Uncle Sam wants you

You are a member of the world's highest paid black mercenary army! Support White Power — travel to Viet Nam, you might get a medal!

Fight for Freedom ... (in Viet Nam) Receive valuable training in the skills of killing off other oppressed people!

You cause too much trouble in your ghetto. Uncle sam wants you to die in Viet Nam.
JUST OUT:
TWO NEW SOLIDARITY PAMPHLETS

No.28. THE DEATH OF CND as performed by the GROSVENOR SQUARE DEMONSTRATORS under the direction of THEMSELVES ALONE.

The CND March: ritual or challenge? The demonstrations of March 17 and March 24 compared and contrasted.
15,000 people in Grosvenor Square despite the Establishment, despite the Police, despite the Communist Party and S.L.L. - and despite the Pacifists.
A full discussion of demonstration tactics.
Vietnam and your wages: why this is your problem.
Siné cartoons on 'non-violence'. 9d. (post free)

No.29. GREEK TRAGEDY (The failure of the Left) by Bob Potter.

Why no collective resistance to the new regime? The demoralisation and destruction of a whole generation of the Greek 'left' as a result of stalinism. The full story of the role of the K.K.E. (Greek Communist Party) during the inter-war years, the Resistance, the British Occupation and the Civil War. The need for a new kind of organization with new methods and new objectives.
1/6, post free, from H. Russell, 53A Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

SOLIDARITY regional addresses

ABERDEEN            Mike Dey, 142 Walker Road, Aberdeen.
CLYDESDIDE          Dan Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Dunbarton
LEEDS               Tony Woodiwiss, 2 O'Linda St., Leeds 2
LONDON              H. Russell, 53A Westmoreland Rd., Bromley, Kent
MIDLANDS            Graham Childs, 29 Pickerell Rd, Coseley, Bilston, Staffs.
OXFORD              John King, 19 Osberton Road, Oxford
WALES               Ken Weller, T'yr Felin, Harlech, Merioneth

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