

The Newsletter

WEEKLY ORGAN OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

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Socialist Labour League

PUBLIC MEETING

Lecture Room,
Watford Public Library
Hempstead Road
(near Town Hall)

Tuesday, September 27, 8 p.m.

Speaker:

G. Healy, nat. secretary, SLL

Valley of dying jobs

A special report from the Rhondda - p. 4
by Robert James

BMC MEN BETRAYED

Unemployment will grow

BMC stewards meet

Anger at lack of action

BY SYLVIA PICK

MANY BRITISH MOTOR CORPORATION shop stewards left angry and furious at the end of a meeting in Coventry on Monday of their unofficial joint committee. This meeting was called as a crisis conference following last week's shock announcement by BMC of short-time for thousands of car workers, to be followed by sackings in a few weeks' time.

No lead

Ninety-four shop stewards present, representing 20 factories, had travelled from Birmingham, Oxford, Liverpool, Llanelli and Scotland to attend the meeting. Some felt that they had been given no real lead at all in the serious crisis threatening workers in the industry.

The meeting decided to 'resist redundancy to the full' and put forward an alternative of short-time working until the situation improved or workers were in alternative jobs. It was also decided to lobby the Labour Party conference to 'bring pressure to change the present squeeze policy'.

Dick Etheridge, convenor of shop stewards at the Austin works, Longbridge, and a prominent member of the Communist Party, presided over the meeting and pleaded with the stewards that any action taken should be devised not to embarrass the Labour government!

Either . . . or

Stewards were asking after the meeting how any effective action to defend the jobs of car workers could possibly be devised which would not prove embarrassing to the Labour government. Either the government must be embarrassed or the plans for widespread sackings would go forward.

It is understood that some stewards urged that industrial action should be taken. Among these was Mr. A. Harper of the Tractor and Transmissions factory, Birmingham.

While the stewards were meeting, BMC announced that a further 8,000 of their workers, at the Pressed Steel-Fisher factory in Birmingham, were going on short-time immediately.

BOOK NOW FOR

liege OCTOBER 15
AGAINST NATO AND THE
WAR
IN
VIETNAM

There is still time for our readers to sign up to go to Liege with the Young Socialists of Britain to meet socialist youth from Belgium and countries all over Europe.

They will be protesting against the war in Vietnam and against the capitalist alliance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which has its headquarters near to Liege.

The cost of the round trip to Dover-Ostend and Liege is £8 10s which includes a free meal at Liege and dancing on board ship there and back. All money must be paid in by September 30. Do not delay write now to Dany Sylvie, Liege Organiser, Young Socialists, 186a Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4, for further details or send a deposit of £2 with your name and address.

BY G. HEALY

THE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS in the motor car industry grow steadily worse. Taking all the big firms together it is not unfeasible that tens of thousands will be out of work during the next few weeks.

These conclusions are firmly based upon two all-important facts.

FIRSTLY, the lay-offs are taking place in what are known as the forward looking industries, (steel, motors, chemicals). These sectors are amongst the most modern and automated in Britain. Between them they account for a considerable volume of the export trade.

SECONDLY, their top managements do not hide the fact that there is now a serious slump in the sales of vehicles both on the home and foreign markets. Allowing for a decrease in hire purchase spending owing to the credit squeeze and high interest rates, the drop in exports is the most alarming.

And this is confirmed from another source, that is, Massey Ferguson's tractor manufacturers.

The bulk of their products are made for exports. Yet this week they have also announced short-time working on the grounds that their overseas sales have slumped.

Their factory in Coventry is

one of the most up to date in the world.

The story being peddled about by Cabinet Ministers (both of the so-called 'left' and right-wing variety) that unemployment is necessary as a sort of clearance scheme to redeploy workers to other industries is a barefaced lie.

Capitalist Britain depends on the export trade and the industries concerned with unemployment have the best export record.

In other words it is not so-called 'planning' which is responsible, but a world-wide depression in sales.

This state of affairs was also well known to the trade union leaders of the TUC when they voted for wage freezing. No doubt it was also known to one or two who voted against. The 'Morning Star', organ of the Communist Party, quoted a leaflet issued by its party members in Birmingham which said:

'The stewards expressed the view that collusion was entered into between the management and the Government, who, they are convinced, knew of the position—but kept quiet.'

If this is true, and we are convinced that it is, why does the Communist Party hesitate to denounce these trade union leaders who knew that unemployment was on the way immediately the TUC was over.

Illusion

It does not seem credible that a man like Cousins who heads the largest trade union in Britain did not know about it, especially since he was a Cabinet member up to a few weeks before.

The Communist Party carefully divides the trade union leaders from the Labour government because they want to convey the illusionary and lying impression that somehow or other these leaders are going to act on behalf of their members.

They will do nothing of the sort. This fact is proved to the hilt by Sidney Greene's opposition to struggle on the railwaymen's 3½ per cent. wage agreement. He capitulated completely to the government and sold the railwaymen down the line.

Already the National Union of Vehicle Builders has decided against strike action on the BMC dismissals.

The Communist Party knows all this, but it does not want to fight the Labour government because it believes in the 'peaceful road' to socialism, the same reactionary theory which the Labour leaders utilise in order to justify their present attacks on the working class.

Backbone

The trade union leaders are the backbone of the Labour government. Without their support, it could not rule.

So when the Communist Party keeps quiet about their role, they are simply covering up for the people who are in fact behind the government.

The idea that the government was 'in collusion' with the BMC employers over unemployment is not even half the story. The trade union leaders were in collusion with both the employers and the government over unemployment.

They are just as guilty, if not more so, than Wilson.

Now we come to the real traitors in this most critical period.

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London USDA hits at freeze

THE LONDON Divisional Conference of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers decided overwhelmingly last Sunday to fight the wage freeze.

Conference passed a motion condemning the wage freeze and congratulating the union's executive council in its opposition to the policy.

The motion called on the executive and those engaged in negotiations to immediately 'pursue vigorously' their wage claims. It further called for an

immediate campaign throughout the union, including a special conference, to rally the membership in support of the executive's stand against the freeze.

Conference earlier agreed to press a claim for a trade union closed shop agreement and a 30s a week increase at Tesco's. A meeting of workers in this chain of supermarkets voted unanimously two days later to press this claim and to take all steps necessary, including industrial action, to win.

Wide discussion on October 2nd lobby

NEWSLETTER REPORTER

UP AND DOWN THE COUNTRY in trade union branches, shop stewards' committees, trades councils and factories, the all-important demonstration outside the Labour Party conference, called for Sunday, October 2, by the Young Socialists, is being discussed.

In this present period of short-time working, unemployment and a grand-scale attack by the Wilson government on the working class generally, workers are deciding that the Young Socialists and their comrades in the Socialist Labour League have once again given a timely lead in the struggle for socialism against the betrayals of the Wilson government.

A RECENT MASS meeting of 400 workers from two shifts at the Lucas-CAV factories in Fazakerly, Liverpool, decided to back the demonstration, and to levy workers a shilling a week to send a contingent from the factory.

Last week shop stewards issued a statement repeating the decision of the meeting.

It declares: 'Since the meeting, everything that was said there has been justified.'

It warns workers: 'You should be clear as to how serious is the situation we are facing. Trade unions were built to fight for workers' wages and conditions. If we allow the control of wages and union, which the Labour government is trying to introduce, then we are left defenceless. . . .

'Mr. Wilson said at the TUC that we must have a wage freeze, otherwise we would have unemployment. He knows very well we are getting both. . . .

'Do we sit back and take it all? That would be a betrayal of all those who fought for trade union rights in the past. . . .

'The campaign to protest at Brighton can link together different union members and youth. It will find out where people stand, as it is already doing inside the factory. . . .

'It is a beginning to marshal forces in the unions and the factories.'

CAV convenor Dave Coventry, and his deputy Ted Gilbertson, made a joint statement to The Newsletter about the factory decision.

'We think that out of the decisions of the TUC and the actions of the Labour government that the time has come for stewards in factories to fight a different way.

'Stewards cannot fight the wage freeze except through actions which raise the political understanding of workers as to what is involved. We face no less than a fight against complete state control of the unions in the interests of big business.

'Trade union and Labour leaders are siding with finance capital against the working class. Involved is a struggle to replace them with a different type of leadership.'

These new leaders, they said, should not, when posed with questions of capitalist anarchy, seek to manage the working class for the employers.

'It needs leaders that will organise the working class to take the power off them. 'The fight for Brighton is part of the overall fight for such a leadership. We are calling on other factories in Liverpool for support.'

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AT THE MASSEY FERGUSON tractor plant, Coventry, several stewards have agreed to fight for a large contingent on the October 2 demonstration. On Monday, the management announced that 500 workers involved on finishing work would begin a 32-hour, four-day week, starting on October 3. It claims that there is a slackening market.

YOUNG SOCIALISTS CALL TO ALL TRADE UNIONISTS AND YOUNG WORKERS

All out against the threat of unemployment in the motor car industry

DEMONSTRATE AT THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

Brighton, Sunday, October 2nd

Assemble: 1.30 p.m., Palace Pier

Meeting: Ocean Restaurant, West Pier, 3 p.m.

Every factory and stewards committee should support this fight

All out on October 2nd!

Labour must nationalize the engineering and motor car industry at once

Massey Ferguson stewards sent a delegation to the January 26 lobby of parliament against anti-union laws, and sent two delegates to this year's Morecambe conference of the Young Socialists.

redundancies. These committees should 'keep in touch'.

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THE DEMONSTRATION was raised at a meeting of the Brent Trades Council in Willesden, north London, last Monday, called to discuss short-time working and mass sackings.

Bro. Taylor of the north London district committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union said the whole question was political.

His point was reinforced by Mike Cooley, Draughtmen's and Allied Technicians' Association district council member:

'What we are seeing in Brent,' he said, 'is a local reflection of the disastrous Tory policies that have been carried on by the Labour government.'

Calling for an alternative policy, Cooley received strong support when he said the ENV engineering factory—due for closure, according to the US management—should be nationalized.

ENV shop steward Geoff Carlsson criticised AEU officials and local MPs for their failure to help the ENV workers' struggle.

In discussion, local trade unionists from the clerical, furniture trade and engineering unions called for support for October 2, and one praised the backing from ENV shop stewards.

Stalinists and supporters of the 'state capitalist' group at the meeting were opposed to any such struggle.

Les Burt of the Communist Party attacked people who, he said, were 'trying to bring down the Labour government'. (He stood against the Labour candidate in West Willesden in the General Election!) Political issues which might confuse the 'ordinary worker' should be avoided, he added.

State capitalists argued for 'broad local committees' for fight

CLYDESIDESHOP STEWARDS' committee decided last Saturday (September 17) to lobby the Labour Party conference.

The meeting was attended by shop stewards and convenors from BMC (Bathgate), Singers (Clydebank), Rootes Pressings (Linwood), Rolls Royce (Hillington) and many shipyards and factories.

There is no doubt about the anger and real hatred with which the policies of Wilson have been received. But there is very real doubt about the intentions of the Communist Party members who control the committee.

It was set up and conducted a very belated campaign to take a tiny deputation to the June 22 lobby of parliament. Activities were then 'suspended' during the summer months, it was announced.

SLL and YS members continued to campaign against the government's policies, and, when the committee met again in August, demanded that preparations be made to warn the working class of the consequences of Wilson's measures.

The committee was not called again for a month—until, in fact, CP officials can no longer pretend that Wilson can be pushed to the left, or that 'left' MPs can do the job.

Last Monday's 'Morning Star' featured the Scottish Committee of the CP. It had issued a statement on the crisis which is empty of socialist programme and ignores the fight against 'left' fakery, which is responsible for much confusion.

Young Socialists welcome support from carworkers at Bathgate and Linwood and General and Municipal Workers' Union members at Singers, but they know that such support has not been won by the CP.

All other Clyde workers who want to lobby the Labour Party conference should travel with the Young Socialists to Brighton. Their bus leaves from the Suspension Bridge, Carlton Place, on Saturday, October 1, at 6 p.m.

