

INDUSTRIAL NEWS

Textile Machine Industry Workers Redundant

by BOB ALLEN

Platt's Workers Demand: "Open the Books"
Stewards Demand: "No Sackings"

The workers of Messrs. Platt Bros., Barton Works, Manchester, have issued an appeal for support in their opposition to redundancy, and their request for the Government to institute an inquiry into the restriction of production in this firm.

The workers demands are formulated as follows:—

1. The setting up of an Inquiry in which Trade Union and Shop Stewards would be represented, including representatives of the cotton workers, and which should have access to all relevant information and records of the cotton firms.
2. Compulsory plans and schemes for the Cotton industry to be introduced by the Government, on the basis of the Committee's recommendations.
3. No vested interests should stand in the way of production.
4. The full utilisation of ALL productive resources for textile machinery.

Platt's shop stewards called a public meeting for Sunday afternoon, April 4th, to give publicity to their demands, and to gain Labour and Trade Union support for the struggle of the textile machinery workers.

These demands have the full support of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, and the District Committees of the A.E.U. and it is expected that several Labour M.P.'s will be present. A statement issued in the name of the Shop Stewards' Committee puts their case:

What are the Facts?

The country is short of Textiles, both for our own clothing ration and exports, which is now Priority No. 1.

Our Cotton Industry is 50 years out of date, and as a result, productivity per man-hour in British mills is from 3 to 7 times lower than in modern, well-equipped United States Mills. The Industry desperately needs new machinery.

The 'Evershed Committee' set up by the Government to inquire into the Textile Industry, stated:

"The urgent need of the moment is production, and that the re-equipment of the Cotton Industry would provide £40 million of orders for the Textile Machine Industry over the next 5 years. In addition there was the Export Market." (Interim Report, paragraph 13, page 52). Referring to Barton Works, the Committee states: "We have already commented on the favourable impression made upon us by the developments taking place here. The site and buildings seem in every respect admirable, and well suited to the production of textile machinery." (Interim Report, paragraph 30.)

The directors of the monopoly Textile Machinery Makers themselves informed the Evershed Committee that their plan was to gradually increase production to £14.4 million per year, which would mean an increasing number of workers employed in their factories, from 11,500 to 17,000 by July, 1948.

What has happened to these Plans?

These plans have been abandoned. Redundancy has been declared at Barton Works. About 2,400 workers are employed, compared with an estimated maximum of between 4,000 to 5,000, and the number is going down. Only one shop in three is in full production on Carding Engines and no Ring Frames are to be produced.

When asked by the Shop Stewards and the Unions concerned for an explanation, the Management stated that expected orders for machinery from the cotton mills had not come through, and that they could give no undertaking that redundancy would be limited to the 112 workers already affected.

The workers of Barton Works and also the Shop Stewards, representing factories of Textile Machinery Makers, are alarmed at this waste of productive resources.

Automatic Looms

The Textile Industry is desperately short of other types of machinery.

American mills are equipped with 95 per cent. automatic looms. British mills are equipped with 5 per cent.

The Cotton Working Party Report states that, 200,000 old type looms need to be replaced by 120,000 automatic looms to bring the industry to 45 per cent. equipped.

The bulk of the looms are produced by the British Northrop Loom Co., Blackburn, and with their resources at maximum production it would take 40 years to achieve this target.

Why cannot the idle shops at Barton be used for the mass production of standardised parts of this loom?

The failure to carry out this programme will mean that in 5 years' time, Lancashire will become a distressed area."

What kind of an Inquiry will be successful?

At the Works Conference at Barton Works on redundancy, the representatives of T.M.M. pointed out that they were in constant consultation with the Ministry of Supply on production quotas, and that the Government was obviously satisfied. In reply to a letter from the Convenor, and as a result of representations from the General Secretary of the A.E.U., the Ministry of Supply stated that they were quite satisfied that T.M.M. had observed the Evershed T.M.M. and that the Ministry would take no action "the Ministry would take no action to intervene in the affairs of T.M.M. and its plans.

In relation to disputes in the industry, the Government has indicated its "neutrality" as between the Unions and the Employers. This policy has enabled the T.M.M. to have a virtual free hand in prosecuting its own interests. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the workers did not put in a Labour Government to be "neutral" in their struggles for existence against the financiers and the trusts.

The present situation in the industry is a direct result of the "neutrality" policy. The workers side in any inquiry of this nature must have the dominating position, and the results of the inquiry must be enforced by the Government.

Another inquiry of the Working Party type with equal representation of employers and union

leaders only, with a "neutral" chairman, will lead to the same results as the working parties we had before, and the Evershed Report itself. The demands of the shop stewards clearly reflect the growing feeling among the workers that the unions must move forward towards a dominating voice in production plans. This can only take place on the basis of workers' investigation of the production secrets which are at the moment under lock and key in the directors' offices.

The Fight Against Redundancy

The shop stewards at Barton have refused to recognise that any real case for redundancy can be made out, and refuse to agree to any worker being sacked.

The workers in Britain have had enough of unemployment, and should not be thrown on the scrap heap at the whim of employers and to safeguard their profits. But even more important, the profit motive must be rejected by the workers as the governing reason for starting or stopping production. "The textile industry needs machinery," say Platt's shop stewards, "therefore let it be produced and sweep away the capitalist vested interests which stand in the way!" Meanwhile we must fight to prevent any one being sacked. Only in this way can the workers safeguard themselves against unemployment and constant redundancy threats.

The hypocrisy of demanding greater and greater effort from the workers whose bosses are deliberately curtailing production is obvious. How can workers cooperate in Joint Production Committees and production drives when the main battle of those self-same workers is to prevent men and women being sacked as redundant? Platt's workers can hardly co-operate with demands for greater personal effort while this situation exists, and in this they should feel encouraged by the support given them by the official union movement.

"Reformism" — "gradualness" and kid glove policy towards the bosses are the hall-mark of the Government's conduct. The workers will only gain security by throwing out the Capitalist owners completely. Nationalisation of all industry without compensation and the institution of democratic workers' control remains the only Socialist solution. We believe that a good case has been made by the T.M.M. workers which can only be realised by the sacking, not of workers, but of the management and owners of the Textile Machinery Industry.

SIX UNION LEADERS PAID £30,000 A YEAR

LORD CITRINE (formerly £1,200 a year T.U.C. general secretary) is now £8,500 chairman, British Electrical Authority.

Sir Ben Smith (£850 organiser, Transport Workers) gets an estimated £3,500 as chairman, West Midland Coal Board.

Sir Frederick Burrows (unpaid Railwaymen's president) became £9,600 Governor of Bengal, is now £1,500 chairman, Agricultural Land Commission.

Mr. Ebby Edwards (£1,000 Miners' general secretary) is £5,000 member, Coal Board.

Mr. Jack Benstead (£1,200 Railwaymen's general secretary) is £5,000 member, Transport Commission.

Mr. Harold Clay (£1,000 assistant general secretary, Transport Workers), is £3,000 member, Road Transport Executive.

Mr. E. W. Bussey (£1,200 general secretary, Electrical Trades Union) is £3,500 member, British Electrical Authority.

Busmen Fight For Living Wage

BY J. DEANE

Mersey and Lancashire busmen are conducting a struggle for a decent minimum wage.

Cardiff transport workers have been on strike against the scandalously low wage rates and the insulting offer of the National Arbitration Council.

Every Transport Worker Must Join This Fight For A Living Wage

The wage rates of public transport workers are far below the national average wage for all workers. While the cost of living has increased, real-wages have been reduced. Last October, the Union officials were mandated to negotiate for an increase of 30%, or not less than 20%. For months nothing has been heard of this claim until the strike of the Cardiff men and the heightened discontent nationally, compelled the employers to offer a sop through the N.J.L.C. Even this shameful offer of 7/6, which has been accepted as "reasonable" by the officials, would not have been made without the strike action of the Cardiff men.

One Industry — One Union!

The organisation of transport workers into two different unions plays into the employers' hands. We have seen how an official meeting of the G. & M.W.U. refused admission to members of the T. & G.W.U. The bosses and their agents know that divided we fall, united we stand. The official Unifying Committee has not raised a whisper on behalf of the united interests of busmen and tram-men.

Rank and file committees representing ALL workers engaged in the public transport industry must be formed. End the disunity.

One Union for all transport workers!

Organise Thoroughly!

If the Union leaders and Labour Ministers were interested in aiding the workers and preventing a prolonged struggle, they would have intervened on the side of the workers. In one day they could compel the employers to grant an increase of 30%. Instead, they ask the workers to accept the offer of the N.J.L.C. and to remain at work!

The transport workers can only rely upon their own organised strength, by:

Unity and Solidarity.

The formation of Committees representing all Transport Workers in every garage and depot.

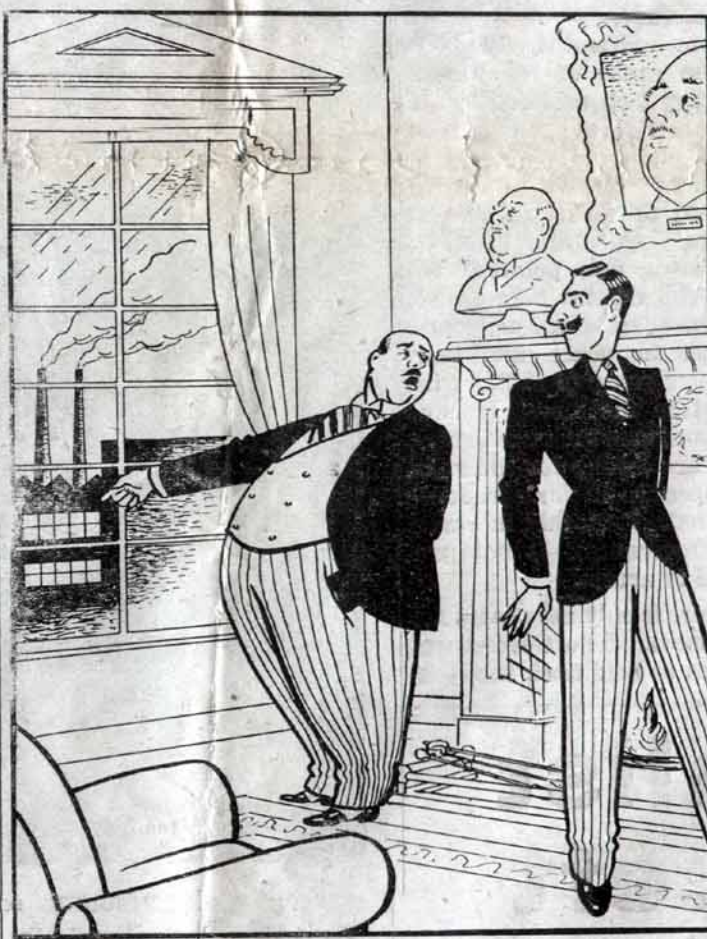
The formation of a Central Strike Committee and a National Rank and File Committee.

Organisation of Pickets against all attempted black-legging.

Appeal to the Public and all Working Class Organisations for support.

The Revolutionary Communist Party (Trotskyist) offers its complete support to the transport workers. We believe it is the duty of all working class parties worthy of the name, to assist every section of the working class struggling for better conditions.

"Pon my word, Ponsonby, I've watched that fellow for two solid hours and he hasn't done a stroke of work."



PARTY BUILDING

The Birmingham comrades did a splendid job in initiating the publication of a special supplement dealing with the Atom Bomb. 1,000 copies were printed for sale at the "Atomic Train" exhibition which is touring the country. Sales to date have been good.

A meeting organised for Ted Grant in Birmingham attracted a good audience, 22s. 9d. being collected. The subject was "The Menace of Fascism".

Glasgow. Two successful public meetings were organised on Feb. 29th and March 7th by the comrades at Glasgow and Motherwell. Jock Haston was the speaker on "Workers and the Crisis". Keen interest was reflected in the questions and discussion and in the sales of literature. Both meetings made sufficient profit to cover the costs involved.

Comrade Haston also spoke at the Workers' Open Forum on March 14th, the subject being, "The R.C.P. and the International

Crisis". An audience of over a hundred was present. On March 16th, Comrade Haston spoke to two A.E.U. branches, Dalmuir West and Bridgeton No. 3.

The Glasgow comrades have circulated the A.E.U. offering speakers on the current problems of the working class. Apart from the two which Comrade Haston addressed, Comrade Douglas Garbutt has spoken at two other A.E.U. Branches and to an A.S.W. Branch. Other branches are to be covered in the next few weeks.

The Wateswood miners, Yorkshire, were pleased with the report which appeared in "S.A." on their recent strike. Copies were bought from our local comrades for sale at the lodge meeting.

The slashing attack on workers wages by the Government's 'Wage Freeze' policy was met by a campaign to publicise the R.C.P.'s policy on this issue. Some hundreds of brightly designed posters putting forward our demands in relation to wages and

profits were posted up in prominent positions all over London and most parts of the provincial areas.

London: The L.D.C. organised a public meeting in London at the Conway Hall, at which Comrades Tearse and Bidwell spoke, with Comrade Sisley in the chair.

At a meeting in London called to support the workers on strike in the West Indies, one of our girl comrades sold 3 dozen "S.A.'s", which was all she had.

Roy Tearse and Bill Hunter have been drawing good crowds to our Sunday afternoon meetings in Hyde Park. It is hoped to hold these more regularly now that the Summer months are coming.

The new anti-fascist pamphlet has received a good reception wherever it has been sold. All anti-fascist meetings have been covered in the past few weeks and sales of the pamphlet have been good. Shopkeepers are taking the pamphlet to sell and our special posters, advertising it for sale, are an attractive advertisement.

SMALL TRADERS FACE EVICTION

BY D. GARBUTT

GLASGOW

Owners of large blocks of property throughout Glasgow have faced their tenants with the threat of eviction on May 28th of this year. Scores of small tradesmen have been given the ultimatum—Buy or Quit.

The object of this move is to cash in on the shortage of shops and office rooms and the inflated values of properties. It is alleged that many of the owners have only recently acquired the properties concerned, and the prices asked are calculated to give considerably greater overall prices than could be obtained if the property were sold as a whole.

Terms of buying vary from 27 (the actual terms offered to our Glasgow Branch for their premises) to as much as 60 times the yearly rental.

Some of the firms are, of course, well able to buy, but the extent to which "small men" have been affected is seen in the volume of protests that have been organised.

Tenants in certain blocks have taken common action (in our own premises, no tenant has made an offer to buy his office). Trade Associations have held meetings of their members involved; deputations have been organised.

In response to an appeal from Hector McNeil, the Lord Provost, who asked for concrete instances, one was quoted: A small firm set up by five ex-servicemen and their father. The Lord Provost had all the evidence he needed within a very short space of time. In the face of the demand for legislation to give security of tenure to occupants of business premises, McNeil has been forced to support the demand and Woodburn, the Secretary of State for Scotland, has promised that the legislation will be passed. But Woodburn has refused to give a clear guarantee that those now threatened will be protected.

Immediate Action

Unless this is done, the commendable stand of the traders will be shattered under the threat of losing their livelihood. There will be a mad scramble to buy. Rents will start soaring. And this will eventually be reflected in an increase in prices. Competition and the capitalistic tendencies of the traders will force them to capitulate to this profiteering move.

It is the duty of the Labour Government to immediately stop the operation of any eviction notices and to pass legislation giving security of tenure. All organised workers should support such a demand.

Tory Demagoguery

The Tories in the past period have made some headway in their anti-labour propaganda among the middle class. Whilst understanding the "halfway" position of the middle class between the workers and the capitalists and the contradictory tendencies among them, the workers must support them to the full when they clash with the interests of Capital. Only thus will the middle class come to understand that the only consistent and thoroughgoing opposition to the monopolies and the trusts is that of the working class, and that their place is by their side.

If the Labour Government act on this question, they will do much to offset the Tory propaganda aimed at exploiting the discontent of the middle class and directing it against the working class. That discontent should be aimed where it belongs—against Big Business and its party, the Tories.

HORNER On Stay-Down Strikes



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"MARXIST THEORY OF THE STATE"—I.

What is the State — Its Origin — Primitive Society — Growth of Productive Forces — Rise of Classes and of the State.

SUNDAY, April 11th, at 7 p.m.

"MARXIST THEORY OF THE STATE"—II.

Modern Capitalist State — Communist Manifesto and the State — Paris Commune — Dictatorship of the Proletariat — Withering Away of the State — October Revolution — Stalinist Revision of Marxist Theory of State — Social Democracy and the State — Dialectics and the State.

Lecturer - G. HANSON.

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What it is and how to fight it

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