

What we think
The political strike

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This is the second defeat in 12 months for an important section of workers fighting against productivity deals in the oil refinery construction industry.

The first was at Grangemouth in 1969, when boilermakers were isolated and then defeated as a result of an acceptance of a flexibility and mobility agreement by other unions on the refinery site.

Having started out with a demand for 15s-an-hour minimum, without strings, and an ending of the blacklist, the strikers, on the advice of their convenor and the union officials, have now agreed to go back on the terms of the employers.

These are 13s-an-hour basic with additional 2s 10d an-hour for 'co-operation' and 'normal working' which includes acceptance of the blacklist and rejection of the principle of union control over employment of labour.

Despite the great militancy of the 2,000 strikers on the two sites — 45 of them including their convenor Bob McKenzie were arrested, fined and bound over to keep the peace — the strike was defeated.

This is an exceedingly severe blow to construction workers throughout Britain and a severe criticism of the unions involved.

As the GKN and Pilkington's strikes have shown, the employers are in no mood for concessions, but will fight determinedly against every wage demand.

In this they have the full support of the Tory government.

Every major industrial dispute today is therefore a political struggle against the strategy of the capitalist class and its government to push through productivity deals and to increase unemployment and exploitation.

Every retreat in the struggle against productivity strengthens the employers' offensive and facilitates the anti-union plans of the Tories.

There can be no confusion on this issue.

The set-back at Ellesmere Port and Carrington must induce all militant trade unionists in the construction industry to support the October 3 conference of the All Trades Unions Alliance which will lay the basis for a successful struggle against the monopolies and their government.

Ruthless expulsion

THE GERMAN student leader Rudi Dutschke has been prevented from studying at Cambridge University and has been ordered out of the country by the Home Office.

Though he has not actively engaged in politics in Britain since his arrival in 1968 and had undertaken not to take part in revolutionary politics while studying, Tory Home Secretary Reginald Maudling clearly fears that Dutschke would become at Cambridge a symbol of the struggles of German youth and workers against capitalism.

The expulsion can be seen as a further continuation of the ruthless Tory campaign to stamp out militancy in British universities—a campaign opened in August when eight Cambridge students were sentenced to Borstal and jail after an anti-Greek junta demonstration.

Despite the intervention of Michael Foot MP and Professor A. V. Pippard of Cambridge, the Home Office refused to extend his stay. It has been decided that it was not 'in the public interest for him to stay any longer'.

Beware of official backing GKN workers face Tory crunch

BY DAVID MAUDE

UNION LEADERS' talk of 'an offensive wages strategy' will be tested against government-steered opposition this week in at least four sectors of industry.

T&GWU retreat on Sankey claim

A SURPRISE turn in the strike situation in GKN-Sankey's Shropshire car components plant came yesterday when a move to drop the 4s 3d-an-hour, 'no strings' demand pressed so far supported by a meeting of Transport and General Workers' Union members.

The union's stewards will now attempt to persuade tomorrow's joint stewards' meeting to abandon this definite demand and revert to a call for 'a substantial increase' with which they started the strike.

Announcing this decision, T&GWU district official George Wright said that while the company's offer was still unacceptable as it stood his members were hoping to get a more satisfactory 'mixture of ingredients'.

'I would not say we have lowered our demand,' he said. 'We have suggested that a more flexible approach should be adopted.'

But negotiations on this basis—if agreed to by the other stewards—would leave the company's vicious productivity strings intact; with only money in dispute.

Local government workers, provincial busmen and miners—whose pay claims all reach a crucial stage in the next few days—have already been warned that they will face hard-line resistance.

In the private sector, however, the first response to last Thursday night's 'stand firm against wages' call from Tory Employment and Productivity Minister Robert Carr has come from the management of Shropshire's GKN-Sankey plant.

Shop stewards representing the sprawling car-component factory's 5,000 workers—who yesterday entered their sixth week on strike—meet tomorrow to discuss Friday's breakdown in negotiations on their courageous claim for a 4s 3d-an-hour, across-the-board pay increase without 'strings'.

Many of them will be hoping that when they report to the strikers' next mass meeting in three days' time they will have won support from at least some national executives of the five unions involved.

Letters

Managing director Tom Honess spoke for every employer in Britain last Friday night—and his message has now been repeated in individual letters to each striker—when he insisted that his productivity-based £2 to £7 6s offer is 'certainly as far as the company can go without destroying our chances in business'.

Many workers point out, however, that with standing time, such an offer would amount to 15s for some of them.

GKN-Sankey chairman H. S. Killick went one better than Honess in a letter to 'The Economist', reproduced in that prestigious ruling-class weekly's current issue.

Rebutting its previous suggestions that private industry has 'little stomach' for fighting unofficial wage struggles, Killick tells 'The Economist':



Kent and Acton engineers back glassworkers' conference

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A resolution from the Erith district committee of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundryworkers 'considers the attack against and sacking of the Pilkington workers to be one of the most vicious actions by a large reactionary employer in recent years.'

'Other employers and the Tory government are eagerly awaiting the defeat of these workers in order to further their offensive against working-class action. It is our responsibility to see that this defeat does not take place.'

'We call for the maximum support of the whole of the trade union movement to assist those workers and the call for a meeting, organized by the All Trades Unions Alliance (see advert this page), in Liverpool on October 3.'

'All factories and branches should send delegates to demonstrate how wide the support is for their struggle.'

The Acton branch of the AEF passed unanimously a resolution calling on its members to black all Pilkington goods and supporting the ATUA conference.

'This fight of the Pilkington workers,' the resolution says, 'is the fight to defend the whole labour movement from the attacks by the Pilkington employers and the Tory government on its most basic right.'

The branch also elected two delegates to attend the October 3 conference.

'Israelis massing on border'—claim

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Baghdad Radio broadcast a statement from the Central Committee of the Palestine resistance movement, the overall guerrilla leadership, claiming the troop build-up began soon after last week's hi-jacking of three airliners to Jordan.

Hunger strike against Zionist arrests

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Guards reported that they refused to eat their morning meal.

Altogether about 450 Arabs were arrested in the Meir government's series of 're-press' raids.

Many are related to the leaders of the commando group which carried out the recent series of hi-jackings—the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

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PILOTS

Popular Front leader Abu Maher stated yesterday that some of the 50 Amman hostages were suspected of being pilots 'trained' to fly US-supplied 'Phantom' jets for the Israeli air force.

The Palestinian Arabs, despite the Dayan terror, have the political initiative.

Attracted by the Arab ruling class to contain and discipline the left-wing of the guerrilla movement, spearheaded at the moment by Habbash's PFLP, are breaking down in the face of a growing mass movement against Zionism.

The greatest tensions of all are being created in the heart of the Zionist citadel. This is why Dayan wants peace with Nasser at almost any price.

BREAK

Palestinians are beginning to break from purely nationalist conceptions, and some, like the Popular Front, call for unity between Jewish and Arab workers and peasants for a joint fight against Zionism and imperialism in the Middle East.

The hunger strike reflects this defiance and growing political maturity of the Arab people.

They have passed through the experience of Nasser's leadership, from the overthrow of Farouk and the nationalization of the Suez Canal to the crushing defeat of the Arab armies in the June 1967 war.

Out of these experiences, the guerrilla movement was born, which soon came up hard against the treacherous policies of international Stalinism.

Since Nasser's acceptance of the US 'peace plan', the movement has moved onto a new level, one which creates all the conditions for the building of a genuine revolutionary leadership in the Middle East.

British labour must give its full solidarity to the Arab people in their struggle.

This means working for the release of Leila Khaled, still held by the Tories, and all other Arabs in the jails of the imperialists and their Zionist servants.

BY A WORKERS PRESS CORRESPONDENT

UNION LEADERS representing 770,000 municipal workers met officials of the Department of Employment and Productivity yesterday to explain their case for 20 to 30 per cent increases in basic pay rates. Employers have already met the DEP to put their case.

Outside the Department about 100 council workers lobbied the talks.

In an interview with the Workers Press a Bristol caretaker accused his local union leadership of backing down over strike action in support of the claim for the £2 15s increase.

'The council workers want to be united under a better leadership. At the mass meeting a week ago the union officials just played for time. They wouldn't endorse a previous call for strike action.'

'We formed a strike action committee, but we haven't heard anything from it yet. They just want us to sit like mice so they can put us off.'

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'If the Tories use troops it will be because of their fear of the working class.'

'This is why the Tories want to bring in anti-union laws, so they can dictate to the working class. But the union leaders will not bring politics into the meeting. They forget these issues; they are really as afraid of us as the Tories.'

He told us of the conditions under which municipal employees work in Bristol.

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'But my actual working time is about 60 hours and the overtime rate is still only 3s an hour. You get no double time.'

'Only strike action by every section of the corporation workers will win us this increase and there had better be no blacklegs in this city.'

Meeting

The Bristol branch of the All Trades Unions Alliance will hold a meeting on the council strike on September 24, where the preparation for the area for the national conference on the Pilkington's struggle in Liverpool on October 3 will also be discussed.

Corporation workers will hold a mass meeting tomorrow at Poplar Civic Theatre where stewards will tell the men of the progress on the claim.

Giant trade deficit

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But no one should be taken in by the Fleet St economic pundits who will no doubt take pains—as the Board of Trade has already done—to argue that the figures reveal little about the 'real position'.

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Without the dock strike, July would almost certainly have shown a deficit as has every month this year except one.

The deficit figures for the three months leading up to July were £10 million, £32 million and £47 million. So the August plunge far outweighing the July surplus is completely in line with the deteriorating trade balance.

Heath's offensive against the working class inevitably involves major, long-lasting strikes.

The Tories are prepared to pay the price of this, which is that the export drive takes a back seat.

Where will the exports come from in the autumn if the car bosses, for example—backed up to the hilt by Heath—are battling it out with the working class at GKN-Sankey and elsewhere?

The so-called distortion of the trade figures is now a continuing feature and indicates that the Tories' first concern, above all else, is their offensive against the working class.

Busmen are ready for pay strike

From our industrial correspondent

PROVINCIAL busmen are now locked in a major fight with the Tory government for their £4 3s wage claim, which will raise their basic rate to £20.

Although yesterday was the first day of the official campaign, busmen—both company and municipal—in many areas have already taken action in support of the claim for 162,000 workers.

Wigan busmen held a one-day strike at the start of the weekend while 1,700 colleagues employed by the Potteries Motor Traction have begun a work to rule and are to impose the transport union's sanctions.

The union is recommending an overtime ban, a ban on standing passengers and no co-operation on the introduction of one-man buses.

Areas which were due to be operating the overtime ban yesterday included York, parts of E Anglia, S Cheshire, N Staffordshire, Stirlingshire and Lanarkshire.

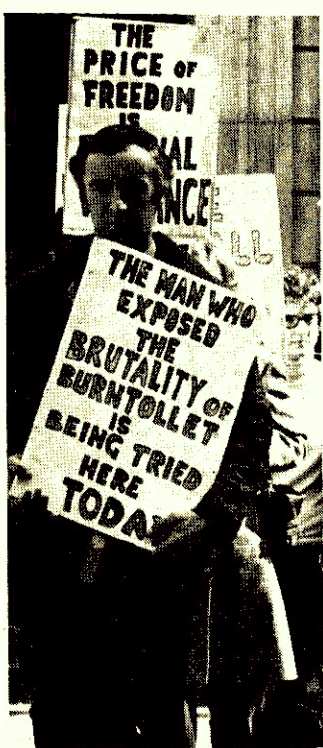
Sceptical

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Wage and fuel bills were



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'Trotsky's fight against revisionism'

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TROTSKY'S LAST WORDS I AM CONFIDENT OF THE VICTORY OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL GO FORWARD...

1965 THAT MEANS FORWARD TO THE FIRST DAILY TROTSKYIST PAPER 1970 THAT MEANS BUILD THE WORKERS PRESS

Lecture given by G. HEALY (SLL national secretary)

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Council workers lobby talks on pay

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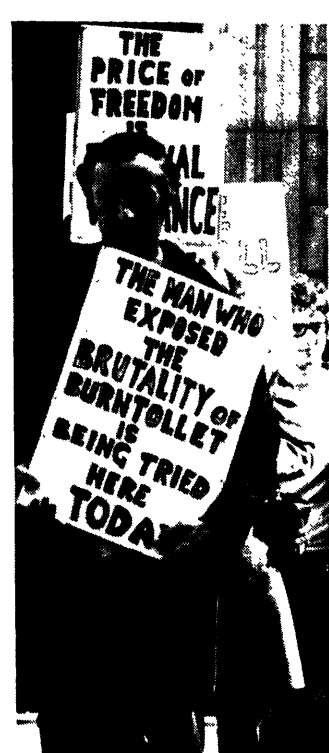
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Lecture given by G. HEALY (SLL national secretary)



Strikes by dustmen at the end of last year sparked off a strike which was joined by all sections of council workers.

Thousands of local council workers plan to strike in direct opposition to Tory plans to make them scapegoats for a wage-freeze policy. Bernard Franks looks at some of the background issues which have led to this situation.

Why council workers are

planning to strike

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHY ARE local authority workers proposing to take strike action against their employers?

THERE is more than simply a question of increased pay involved here — it is a political matter.

Massive government-backed productivity schemes have been set in motion recently to increase the work-load on individual workers, to reduce the number of jobs and to hold down wages in all of Britain's 1,510 local authorities.

Councils have aimed to introduce work-studied incentive bonus schemes, but government agencies have made it clear that these must eventually lead to Measured-Day Work systems.

Workers are sick of attacks on jobs and wage freezing when unemployment is rising and prices are soaring.

The Tories threaten to enforce their wage freeze policy by moving in troops when the strike takes place.



One-man hydraulic platform.

WHAT KIND of work is done by council employees? Isn't it true that they have fallen behind on wages because the work is thought to be relatively unimportant?

ALL VITAL town and country services are operated by the local authorities.

Manual workers in the current dispute run and operate ambulances, crematoria, refuse collection, street cleansing and lighting, road and pavement maintenance, sewage disposal, gravedigging, parks and gardens, public baths, schools maintenance, school meals, council house maintenance and many other jobs.

On separate council agreements are firemen, town hall staffs, direct works building departments, and teachers.

The Greater London Council alone has over 100,000 full-time and part-time employees.

Of the 700,000 workers affected by the present claim, about 55 per cent are women.

A mass walk-out by these workers would soon show their importance to the running of the basic services.

It is not a question of them having fallen behind on wages; they were never in the race in the first place.

A 1966 Prices and Incomes Board survey revealed £12 13s basic pay for men in England and Wales. With overtime, shift allowances and incentive payments, total weekly earnings averaged £15 18s 10d. In many cases overtime is not available.

Full-time women workers averaged £7 19s 7d for a 34½-hour week, while part-time women workers received about 4s 6d an hour.

The current £16 10s claim shows how little the wages have moved since 1966.

BUT SURELY many of these jobs are a bit of a backwater and a lot less exacting than production industries?

MÉCHANIZATION and new working methods have changed this out-dated concept:

SCHOOL KITCHENS

For example, the development of large comprehensive schools as well as increased numbers of pupils in existing buildings have led to the installation of high-speed, mechanized kitchens.

Giant electric boilers, dishwashers and friers are now in use.

This has meant more work for kitchen staff. Food preparation—

of fish, meat, vegetables and pastries — is done at high speed on production-line principles.

After dinners there is a massive clean-up of all equipment. Although ventilation systems have improved, the heat and steam remain — as does the danger of accidents with machinery, knives and slippery floors.

Often part-time workers who have not seen the modern kitchens, start work in the morning, find the pace too hot, and by mid-day decide to leave.

PUBLIC GARDENS

Council gardening is not simply a matter of planting a few seeds and sitting back.

In most public gardens flower beds have to be cleared, dug up and set out several times throughout the spring and summer.

Potting and re-potting takes place at nurseries on production-line principles, shrubs and trees are pruned and lawns mown, children's playgrounds supervised and cleaned and refuse and leaves removed in a constant process.

In the larger parks, attendants have mopeds to help them carry out their patrol duties.

DRAINAGE AND REFUSE DISPOSAL

In 1967 the Greater London Council initiated a giant £250 million scheme to modernize London's drainage and refuse disposal systems. This included the £10 million incinerator at Edmonton and the expansion and development of Beckton and Crossness sewage outfalls.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

The development of huge two-man road-makers and surfaces has changed the whole concept of road repairs in many areas.

REFUSE COLLECTION

Standardization of paper sacks and plastic dustbins, along with the development of mechanized bin-emptying lorries, has led to speeding-up refuse collection combined with a cut in manning levels.

SURELY the councils have a powerful weapon in their claim that they are making savings on the rates?

THE TORIES are preparing to slash every service.

Every attempt to increase Health Service charges, close direct works departments and hand over the work to 'private enterprise' will be made in the name of 'cutting costs'.

Rents and rates will rise and services deteriorate. Already many departments are heavily undermanned, but the council's main pre-occupation is with

making even greater cuts, while they allow outside contractors to make sizeable profits on many jobs.

As long as council rents and rates continue to soar and investors can find interest rates of 8, 9 and 10 per cent offered by local authorities all claims of concern for ratepayers' money are worthless.

Within a short time both Labour and Tory councils were forecasting all manner of savings and labour cuts.

The Greater London Council estimated that 200 County Hall workers could be discharged or re-deployed.

£750,000 would be 'saved' by using mobile work squads for

gaining, running courses on work-study 'appreciation' for shop stewards.

Transport and General Workers' Union leaders support MDW as an alternative to fighting for straight wage increases without strings — they have produced a booklet on how to negotiate deals.



In October, 1969, striking council workers demonstrate through the streets of London demanding a £5 increase.

COUNCILS have been trying out time-and-motion schemes for some time. When did this become a political policy for use everywhere?

THE Prices and Incomes Board produced a report in 1967 covering the pay and conditions of 680,000 manual council workers.

It recommended a short-term policy of work-studied incentive bonus schemes.

Although this meant paying extra wages, the continual cut-back in the labour force would reduce the wages bill.

The report considered up to 100 per cent increased output possible while 'savings' were put at between £50,000 and £100,000 on a 500 man labour force.

These schemes were to lead to the longer-term aim of shift-working, removal of inter-group or inter-craft demarcations, reduction of overtime, 'abolition' of mates, job evaluation and the introduction of the Measured-Day Work system.

The document explained that MDW was a system 'whereby a fixed addition to the weekly or hourly rate is paid in return for the achievement of a given performance'.

Some pilot schemes had operated before the PIB reached its conclusions, and the Board made them basic government policy ruling for all local authorities.

council house maintenance, increasing work output by up to 200 per cent.

In January 1969, the National Joint Council for England and Wales (a body which included union representatives) set out to make changes which would save £25 million a year.

Every local council was given until February 1969 to produce its productivity plans. As 'The Times' Business News declared:

'It is the biggest exercise of its size ever attempted and has its beginnings in the PIB report published in 1967.'

It is certainly vital to direct the fight against the Tories who now propose to extend the schemes, making council workers the scapegoats in their bid to hold down wages.

No one must be allowed to forget that these schemes were instigated and introduced as a political measure by a Labour government.

YOU MENTION that the unions were part of the NJC, does this mean the union leaders have helped to implement these schemes?

WITHOUT union backing these productivity schemes could never have been introduced.

The General and Municipal Workers' Union leadership, for example, is one of the main exponents of productivity bar-

One of the keenest supporters of productivity bargaining has been the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE).

In 1966 its journal 'Public Employees', under a headline 'Union have big stake in work-study plans', outlined a code of principles for introducing work-study schemes which union officials had helped the employers to prepare.

In May 1967, the same journal congratulated itself on the support it had given to the PIB in preparing its report. The general secretary, (then Sidney Hill) commented:

'On my initial reading of it I was impressed by the fact that it appears to be the first real attempt, in my 32 years with the union, to consider the needs of the local government and health services and the workers they employ.'

In the same issue Alan Fisher (then assistant general secretary) enthused over the report.

He explained that the Board's proposed first two stages would lead to a 10 per cent increase in basic rates in return for a 10 per cent saving in total labour costs.

This would give us time to launch the third stage under which we would establish a much closer relationship between pay and productivity bargaining and Measured-Day Work as well as the incentive bonus schemes already used in local government,' he commented.

'The total effect of this three-stage operation would be to bring the earnings of local government and health employees into a close relationship with the earnings of their counterparts in industry

generally — the kind of thing NUPE has always advocated.'

Fisher, now NUPE general secretary, talks about action which will make the sewage rise in the lavatories.

However, he makes no call to force the Tories to resign or to throw out the productivity swindle.

HOW DOES 'productivity' working operate on local councils?

USUALLY the management, with hired consultants in tow, set out to 'buy' a reduction in the labour force.

Camden Council offered 220 dustmen a £5 3s minimum bonus on top of their basic wage — provided they agreed to the labour force being cut by half.

In other cases the operation is not so direct. Workers involved are simply told that recruitment will cease under the new scheme and the work force will be reduced by 'natural wastage'.

speed workers might be doing 200 per cent more for a 30 per cent bonus payment.

Work-studied incentive bonus is an interim system rationalizing jobs in preparation for the more intensive MDW system.

In council offices and town halls Organization and Methods (O&M) techniques are being introduced to prepare the way for computers to take over the work.

Islington Town Hall NALGO members recently threatened strike action against filed information on every worker.

These dossiers that managements are continually on the lookout for show ways to extend 'productivity' methods amongst all sections.

HOW DO these systems hold down wages? Surely with initial payments to get the productivity agreements accepted and with the bonuses this means there is some improvement in pay?

SOME WAGES increase, but all manner of reasons are given why workers have failed to earn full bonus.

Once pay is tied to productivity the managements — and unions — fight to keep it that way.

When the cost of living rises the worker certainly needs more pay to keep up, but what has he left to sell? Does he agree to another job cut or double output yet again.

Many workers who went onto these schemes between 1966 and 1969 are in exactly this position. Their 'rise' has been overtaken by galloping price increases.

It does not take long to realize that all talk of pay tied to productivity is just a means to speed up work, cut back jobs and hold down wages.

HOW CAN the council manual worker win this struggle?

THE TORIES are determined to make an example of all workers in public and nationalized industries as a lesson for all the working class.

It is significant that gas, water supply and national health workers all got the same treatment from the 1967 PIB report on local authorities.

The Tories say the employers' £1 14s offer is reasonable. In other words £15 9s a week is a good wage.

A determined battle is needed to throw out the Tories, their schemes and productivity bargaining and to win the £16 10s.

Selective strikes will not muster the combined strength of the council workers and will make it easier for managements to creep in a few strike-breaking private contractors.

An all-out struggle is necessary.

Dustmen, maintenance craftsmen, sewage workers, firemen, ambulance workers and grave diggers have all shown there is no lack of fight.

All council workers must fight for socialist principles of extending all direct works and public services.

They must be placed under workers' control to ensure an end to sackings and to misuse of technical developments.

Any illusions in the union leaders' militancy must be dispelled.

Only by joining the All Trades Unions Alliance and taking up the struggle for an alternative socialist leadership in the trade unions can the policies outlined be put into action.

The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the 4th International. A Socialist Labour League Pamphlet.

IMPORTANT READING

MARXISM and the TRADE UNIONS

Two articles by LEON TROTSKY

Trade unions in the epoch of imperialist decay: Communism and syndicalism.

Price: 3s. 6d.

Available from New Park Publications, 186A Clapham High St, SW4.

I would like information about THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE. Fill in the form below and send to NATIONAL SECRETARY, SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE, 186A CLAPHAM HIGH ST, LONDON, SW4. Name: Address:

