



UNITY

**THE STORY OF
THE TRANSPORT & GENERAL
WORKERS UNION**

STRENGTH

PROGRESS

GEORGE GRAVELEY
MERCHANTS & CONTRACTORS





BIRTH

... This booklet tells you something about the birth and growth of the Transport and General Workers' Union. It is today a united, democratic organisation reaching into the far corners of the country. It has great industrial strength and influence. It is represented in Parliament, in local authorities throughout Great Britain and in consultative bodies throughout the world.

To this great strength and influence must be added the purpose that inspired many of the Union's founders. Not only to defend and improve our conditions of life, but to work for and to win a society in which people of all races, colours and religions will reap the fruits of their labours and live side by side in peace and harmony.

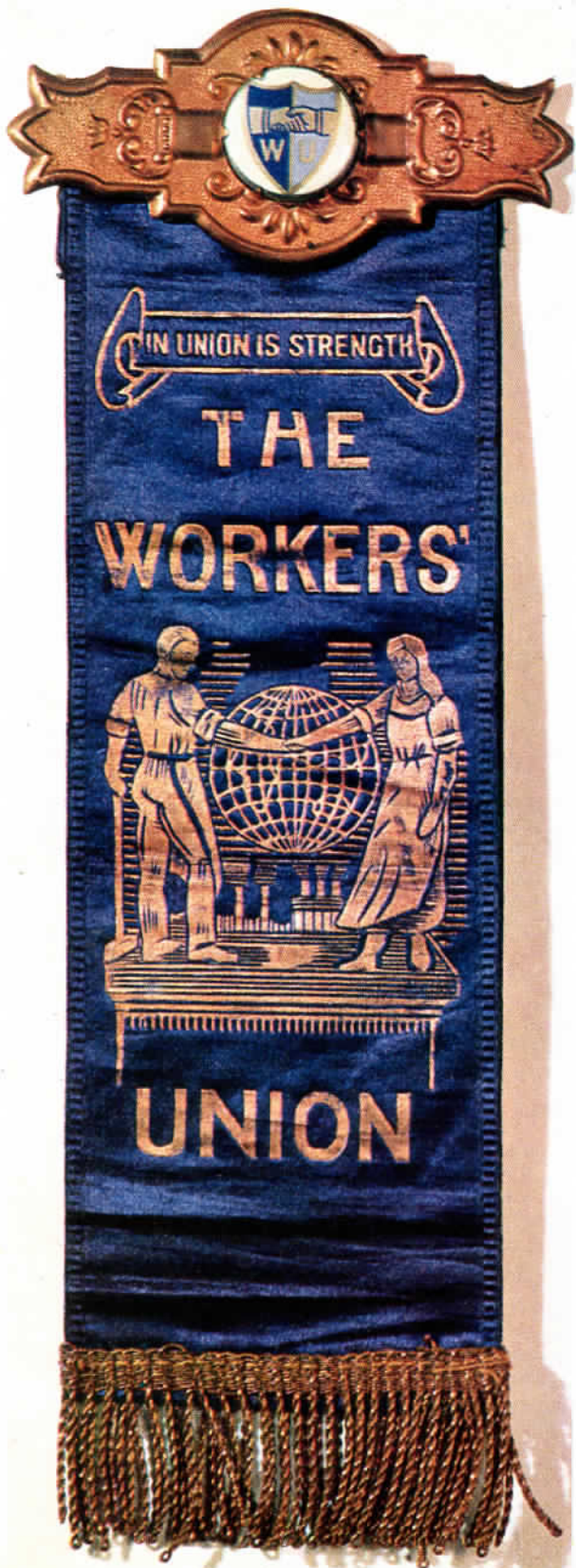
In the world of today this is no longer a dream. It is a practical possibility and a vital necessity.

Messrs. Burns, Mann and Tillet and their many hard-working colleagues have, by their splendid action, vindicated the dignity of labour, and, it may be, created a new industrial era. For this they are entitled to the gratitude of the country and to a niche in the temple of history. . . .

They have given millions of unskilled labourers a place of honour among the industries of the country that trade unionism in the older sense has always denied them. . . . Every movement that tends to increase the knowledge of the masses as to their own rights is a democratic agency that works upwards to the ideal. This great strike is one of those movements and the most important that has been seen in this generation.

Reynolds, 1889

Scene from the great Dock Strike of 1889.



"There is only one language the present governing class understand. It is only power they will yield to, and that is the power of organised labour in its economic capacity."
Ernest Bevin, 1917

GROWTH

With a million and a half members, the Transport and General Workers Union is Britain's greatest trade union, a power in the industrial and political life of the country, and inspiration to all who fight for social justice.

On January 1st, 1922, after years of preparation, the dreams of the pioneers were fulfilled. Representatives of fourteen trade unions came together—later to be joined by eight others—to form the Transport and General Workers Union.

This booklet shows, in documents and pictures, many of which have never before been reproduced, how this great amalgamation came about, and some of the historic organisations and people who made it possible. The aim was clear—to build unity in action as well as unity of purpose. Yet the realisation of this aim was only possible after lengthy negotiations, meetings, discussions, triumphing over doubts, hesitation and prejudice.

The separate unions, their branches and officers, had to be won over to cast aside their special interests and privileges, pooling them in a mighty new organisation of working people, which would use the special experience and ability of *each* to create new strength for *all*.

The new Union was unique in the annals of trade union history. It had a total of 300,000 members. Dockers, stevedores, lightermen, transport workers, clerks and labourers in various industries, creating a new industrial power, the mightiest trade union Britain had ever seen.

Early trade union badges, some worn in lapels for daily use, others for special ceremonial occasions.





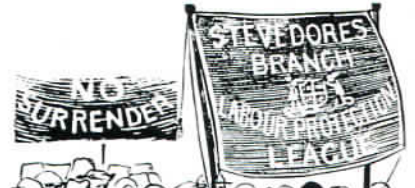
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"I do not want the working man to endure patiently the ills and wrong of this life. I want him, for his own sake, his wife's sake, his children's sake, and for the sake of right and progress, to demand justice and to help in the work of amending the conditions of life on this earth."

Robert Blatchford



ROOTS



The formation of the Transport and General Workers Union was no sudden brainwave of a single genius. Though many gifted individuals played heroic parts in its creation, it arose from the great need of the mass of general workers and labourers for unity and organisation.

Workers in skilled trades had for many years been organised. Towards the end of the nineteenth century huge strides were made in organising workers into great industrial unions embracing skilled and unskilled workers.

The harsh conditions of general workers, in docks, transport and other industries employing both men and women, constantly emphasised the need for closer unity.

To a limited extent this was achieved through the development of Federations, and in the early years of the century there existed the National Federation of General Workers, the National Transport Workers Federation, and the Triple Alliance of Miners, Railwaymen and Transport Workers.

5. *The Liverpool 1911 strike. A blackleg cart and drivers, surrounded by its heavy guard of police and soldiers. Note the glistening fixed bayonets.*

6. *A Liverpool docker stands and argues with young soldiers sent in to break the strike.*

7. *Striking women factory workers take home loaves of bread given by the Women's Political League.*

8. *A public soup kitchen feeds children during a strike.*





9. A street soup kitchen feeds the striking cabbies.
10. With Tower Bridge in the background, this mighty demonstration of dockers assembled on Tower Hill to show their support for the 1912 strike.



UNITY AND ACTION

The roots of the new Union were also to be found in the early organisations and actions to improve the workers' conditions. In the initiative which led to the formation of the Dockers' Union in 1887. In the giant dock strike of 1889. In the strike of Liverpool transport workers in 1911 and of the Southampton coal porters in the same year. The years that immediately followed saw many further actions. The Courtauld Silk workers'

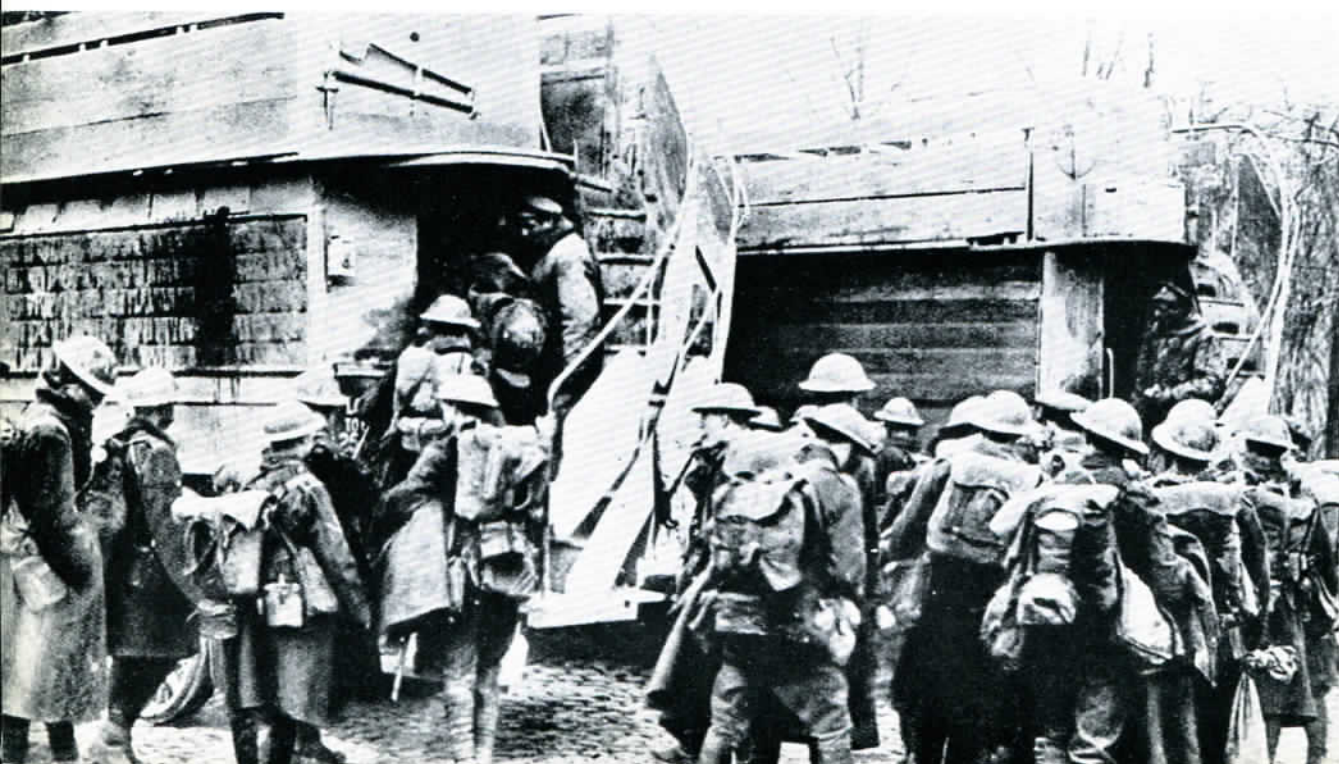
strike. The Bus, Tramway and Vehicle Workers, to mention a few.

It was clear to the leaders of the Dockers' Union that the time was ripe for the creation of wider organisational unity. In 1910, Ben Tillett, one of the Union's leaders, organised discussions with other unions which led to the creation of the National Transport Workers Federation; a landmark in the march towards amalgamation.





11



12

WORLD WAR 1

*"Good-morning; good-morning!" the General said
When we met him last week on our way to the Line,
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead,
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
"He's a cheery old card," grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack—
But he did for them both by his plan of attack."*

Siegfried Sassoon

The outbreak of World War in 1914-18 was a bitter blow to millions of socialists and trade unionists throughout Europe. It caused deep divisions in the movement between those who supported it and those who opposed it.

The Government was forced to negotiate with the trade unions to secure co-operation in the production and transport of arms and equipment. Many trade union leaders were involved in Government committees and advisory bodies. For the first time, the Government of the day was prepared to

negotiate on a national scale on matters of wages and conditions of work.

With the end of the war and the subsequent demobilisation, the trade union federations of general workers, transport workers and other trade union organisations took up the struggle on a mass scale. The mood of the workers, many of whom were returned ex-servicemen, demanded action and organisation.

The need for amalgamation was now greater than ever and the time was ripe.

11. The typical London bus, as it was when its driver and conductor first became organised in a trade union.

12. The same bus becomes a troop carrier. The famous "Old Bill" with boarded up windows takes husbands

and sons to the holocaust.

13. Worker fights worker. Trade unionist fights trade unionist. A terrible lesson with, for millions, a terrible end.



13

TRANSPORT & GENERAL WORKERS

AMALGAMATION

ONE BIG UNION

A MASS MEETING

WILL BE HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE

NATIONAL UNION OF VEHICLE WORKERS

AT THE

EUSTON THEATRE

ON SUNDAY EVENING, JAN. 30TH, 1921

AT 7 P.M. PROMPT.

Chairman : SAM MARCH, J.P., L.C.C.
GENERAL SECRETARY N.U.V.W.

SPEAKERS :

HARRY GOSLING, L.C.C.

WILL GODFREY C. COXSEGE A. HARVEY

R. W. STOCK SID PECK

SUPPORTED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL N.U.V.W.

All Vehicle Workers, Motor and Horse Drivers, Mates, Washers, Horsekeepers, Stablemen, Garage Workers, Tramway, Bus, Cab and other Passenger Vehicle Workers, Furniture Removal and Warehousing Workers, Dairy Workers, Van Travellers, Co-operative Employees, Municipal Workers, Coal Workers, Tumble Cart Drivers, and all other Grades of Vehicle Workers, Transport and General Workers attend this Meeting and show your determination for

ONE BIG UNION.

"Let us conduct ourselves in all matters with judgement, coolness and deliberation. Let everyone lay aside his own private interest and study the good of the whole. And lastly, let us study friendship and unanimity with one another: this will cement our structure and render it permanent." From the rules of the United Order of Cordwainers, 1792.

STRUGGLE FOR UNITY

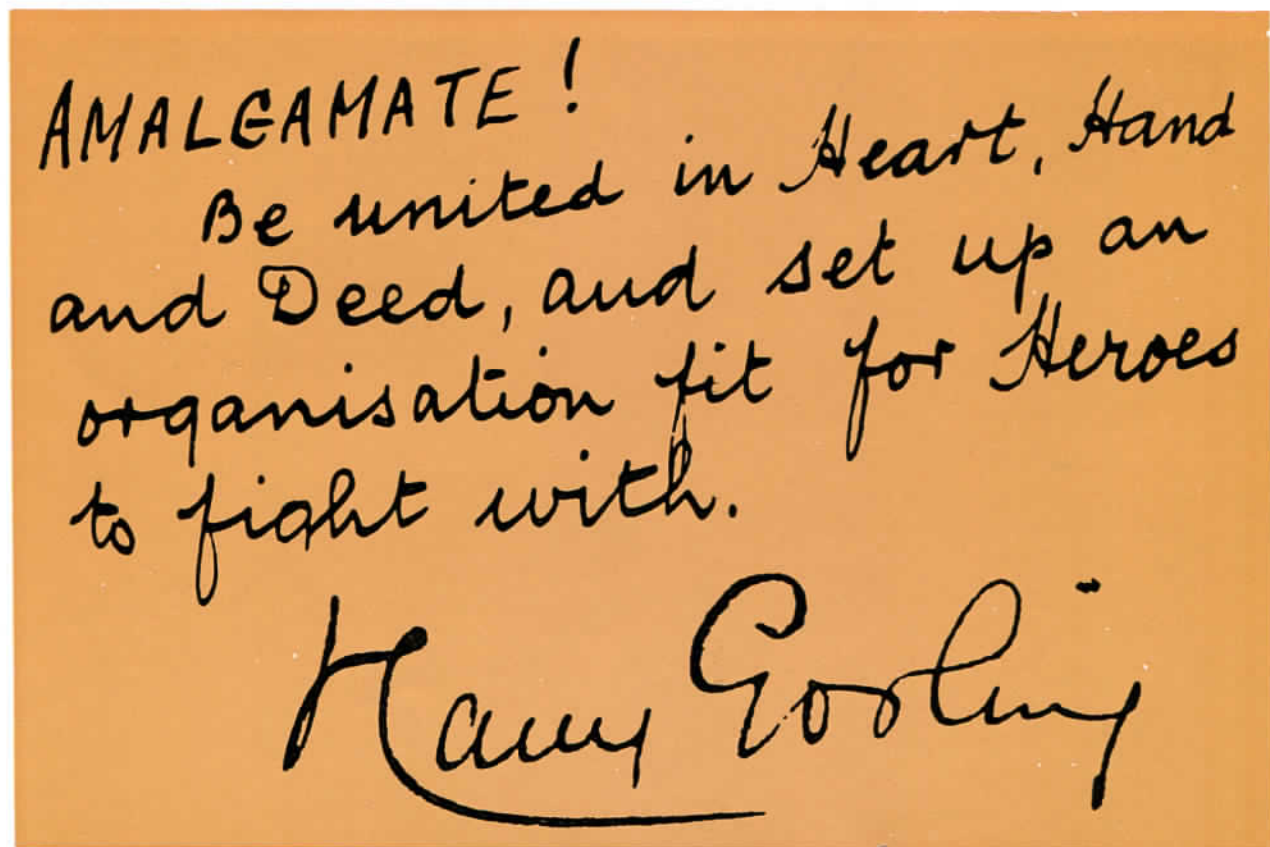
No major advance is ever achieved by simply passing resolutions. The idea of amalgamation, which was ever present in the minds of the most far sighted, had to be fought for. The detailed organisation had to be worked out and conviction won among those who were to be united. For many years before 1920 the National Federation of Transport Workers had passed resolutions calling for unity, but the years passed without much progress.

- 14. *Reproduction of one of the original posters calling meetings on amalgamation.*
- 15. *Harry Gosling gives his own version of "a land fit for heroes to live in." He came from a family of*

It was the Docks Inquiry of 1920 which revealed the bitter price workers were paying for their disunity. At this Inquiry, Ernest Bevin exposed the scandalous conditions in the docks in his brilliant advocacy of the dockers' cause. Immediately after the Inquiry the Dockers' Union authorised action to make organisational unity a reality.

The following twelve months were among the most fruitful in British Working class history.

Thames Watermen, and was Secretary of the London Society of Watermen, Lightermen and Bargemen. He became the first President of the Transport and General Workers Union.



Amalgamation - Transport & General Workers

A Mass Meeting

Of the members of the following Organisations, National Union of Dock Labourers,
(Dock, Wharf, Riverside & General Workers, late National Union of Millers)

Will be held in the **CARLTON PICTURE HOUSE**, on .

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6th, 1921, at 6-45 p.m., when
the Great AMALGAMATION SCHEME will be explained**

Speakers :

Jas. Sexton, M.P. **Hy. Gosling, L.C.C.**

National Union of Dock Labourers

President Transport Workers Federation.

Ernest Bevin, D.W. & R.G.W.

(THE DOCKERS K.C.)

Chairman : **Coun. T. Smith**, Candidate for County Council Bye-Election.



"The social problem of the future we considered to be, how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action, with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour."

J. S. Mill.

AMALGAMATION

In March, 1920, the Dockers' Union took the initiative and organised a discussion with the Shipping Staffs on the need for amalgamation. Unity of purpose was achieved, a joint meeting of both unions was held in May 1920 to work out organisational details.

Then came discussions with the National Union of Dock Labourers. The meeting, at Effingham House, Arundel Street, Strand, on July 14th, decided to call for the establishment of a big new union with a new name and organisation.

August 18th, 1920, saw a meeting of delegates at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street, London, which unanimously decided to call for amalgamation into 'one big union'. It set up a committee consisting of one from each union, plus the Chair-

man, Harry Gosling, and Secretary, Ernest Bevin. Enthusiasm grew as the pace grew faster. The committee met on the same day and took the first measure to draft rules for the new organisation. On September 14th a further meeting decided to invite all road transport unions to participate and on September 16th invitations were sent to seven more unions.

Final details were now being decided. A delegate conference was called for December 21st, 1920, open to all who desired amalgamation, and in preparation for this a name was to be proposed. At first it was to be the Inland Transport Union. Then the Inland Transport and General Workers Union. Finally the Transport and General Workers Union was decided.

16. A leaflet calling for support for Amalgamation.

17. The Amalgamation Conference, Leamington, 1921.



AMALGAMATION

Transport and General Workers

FELLOW WORKERS:—

The great scheme of Amalgamation will be submitted to you for ballot forthwith.

The scheme has received the considered judgement of the Executives of each Union that are parties to it, and at a great Delegate Conference in London it was endorsed unanimously. (See Resolution overleaf.)

We are convinced this is the right step to take to secure the necessary power and efficiency to deal with the problems that must be solved by the Movement.

Our Unions have, in their respective sections, played a wonderful part in the past, but PROGRESS DEMANDS that existing methods shall give way to new.

CAPITAL IS WELL ORGANISED—EVERY TRADE IS INTERWOVEN AND INTERLINKED.

The great industries on the employers' side stand together !!

Labour must do likewise. Whoever stands in the way of this great change in methods of organisation is doing a grave injustice not only to the present generations, but to the children yet unborn! The scheme allows for the creation of a GREAT and POWERFUL UNION.

It pools its financial resources.

It gives opportunity to create efficient methods of negotiations and handling disputes.

It gets rid of jealousy between Unions.

It allows for the rank and file to co-operate in port, waterway, road transport and factory.

It gives the officials greater scope; a greater opportunity of acquiring knowledge—placing them on an equal footing with employers in dealing with your problems.

It provides for each section to have its own National Committee.

It allows opportunity to shape its program and policy, at the same time bringing to the assistance of any one section both the moral and financial strength of the remainder.

It proposes to organise the whole of the workers engaged in the respective industries covered by the new Union—administrative, clerical and manual.

It is the creation of a NEW MACHINE.

It will ultimately not only talk of wages, but exercise greater power and control.

WE MOST EARNESTLY APPEAL TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE AMALGAMATING UNIONS TO SECURE THEIR BALLOT PAPER AND UTILISE THEIR VOTE IN ITS FAVOUR.

NOTHING CAN PREVENT IT—only two things can hinder it—namely—VESTED INTEREST and APATHY.

If vested interest stands in its way, then vested interest will be swept aside by force of events.

If, owing to apathy of the rank and file, the necessary power is not given to the Committee to go on immediately, then *the RANK AND FILE WILL BE GUILTY* of a crime against themselves, their wives and their children.

It is said it's the duty of Leaders to lead—We now give you the lead—Don't fail to respond !!

Signed on behalf of the Delegate Conference,

HARRY GOSLING,
Chairman.

ERNEST BEVIN,
Hon. Secretary.

“ . . . The time has now come for you to make a stand . . . your power, as regards the operation of society, is omnipotent . . . there is no moment in which you may not burst the strongest chain that tyrants ever forged to bind you. You are the great lever by which everything is effected.

“ . . . We propose to the workmen of the United Kingdom—a union of all trades . . . suffer no paltry jealousies to stop or divide you . . . do not, when all others are united against you, weaken or destroy your own force by disunion and division. . . .”

John Doherty.

THE BALLOT

The amalgamation proposals and draft ballot paper were agreed upon at Anderton's Hotel on December 1st, 1920.

Without delay the ballot papers were printed and issued with a leaflet calling for support. Meetings were held in many areas. Leaflets produced, posters widely displayed, discussion held in trade

union branches throughout the country. All this led to a tremendous controversy for and against. By March 16th, nine organisations reported a majority in favour.

The rest followed soon after. In an atmosphere of enthusiasm and hope, the new 'big union' was born.

18. The famous "Amalgamation Call" leaflet.

19. This letter, found in the archives of the Union,

is typical of large numbers received at the time. It is unexceptional and is selected for that reason.

19 JAN 1921

Thomas Knight
7 Marshfield Rd
Neath

Jan 18th 1921

Dear Sir & Brother

In reply to yours on the 18th Inst with reference to Ballot paper I received them all right and have distributed them amongst our members, and I am doing all I can for them to vote for Amalgamation because I think it is a fine scheme for us as trade Unionists, with regards to informing you whether

**DOCKS AREA
TRADE GROUP
COMMITTEE**

One Trade Group
Secretary

CLERICAL AREA

Sections { Shipping
Docks &
Harbour
General

TRADE GROUP COMMITTEE

One Trade Group
Secretary

EACH TRADE GROUP IN EACH
AREA WOULD APPOINT
REPRESENTATIVES ON
NUMBER TO BE FIXED LATER

**NATIONAL
TRADE GROUP
COMMITTEE
ONE NATIONAL
TRADE SECRETARY**

EACH TRADE GROUP COMMITTEE IN
EACH AREA WOULD APPOINT
REPRESENTATIVES ON
NUMBER TO BE FIXED LATER

EACH NATIONAL TRADE GROUP
COMMITTEE WOULD APPOINT
REPRESENTATIVES ON
NUMBER TO BE FIXED LATER

**GENERAL SECRETARY
FINANCIAL SECRETARY**

**GENERAL
EXECUTIVE**

EACH AREA TO ELECT BY BALLOT
VOTE REPRE: ON EXEC: COMM:
NUMBER TO BE FIXED LATER

**AREA
COMMITTEE
REPRESENTING ALL
TRADE GROUPS
WITHIN THE AREA
ONE AREA
CHIEF OFFICER**

**WATERWAYS
AREA
TRADE GROUP
COMMITTEE**

One Trade Group
Secretary

**ROAD
TRANSPORT AREA
TRADE GROUP COMMITTEE**

Sections — Passenger
and
Commercial

One Trade Group
Secretary

**GENERAL
WORKERS AREA
TRADE GROUP COMMITTEE**

Sections — Metal and Chemical
Food Production

One Trade Group
Secretary

ORGANISATION

"It found the workers . . . on their knees and strove to raise them to the erect position of manhood.

"It found them with all the vices of slavery in their souls and has striven to eradicate these vices and replace them with the virtues of free men. . . .

"It found them with no other weapons of defence than the arts of the liar, the lickspittle and the toady . . . and it combined them and taught them to abhor those arts and to rely proudly on the defensive power of combination."

James Connolly.

The main structure of the Union has remained as originally planned. A remarkable development in trade unionism, the first great successful co-ordination of different trades and industries into a giant unified working class organisation.

THIS DIAGRAM IS A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL, SLIGHTLY REARRANGED TO FIT THE PAGE, AND SHOWS THE PROPOSED RELATION OF AREA TRADE GROUP COMMITTEES AND AREA COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL EXECUTIVE. THE ORIGINAL DIAGRAM CONTAINED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

It is proposed to have five Trade Groups.

1. Docks
2. Waterways
3. Clerical
4. General Workers
5. Road Transport

Note: It should be understood these Groups may be augmented as the Executive may decide from time to time.

ELEVEN AREAS ARE SUGGESTED:

1. LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES
2. SOUTH OF ENGLAND—including Channel Islands
3. WEST OF ENGLAND
4. SOUTH WALES
5. MIDLANDS
6. NORTH WEST COAST—including Cumberland, N. Wales and Manchester
7. SCOTLAND
8. NORTH EAST COAST
9. NORTH MIDLANDS AND YORKSHIRE
10. EAST COAST
11. IRELAND

There would therefore be

- 11 Area Committees
- 11 Chief Area Officers
- 5 Area Trade Group Committees
- 5 Trade Group Secretaries

The number of Official Delegates for each area to be decided and duly allocated.

There would be:

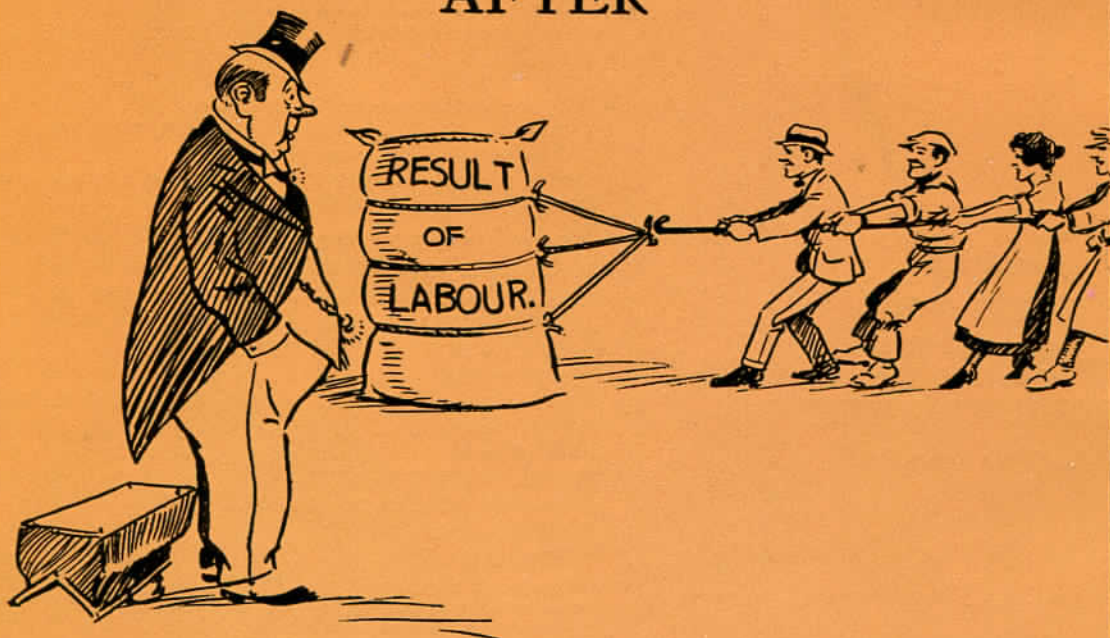
- 5 National Trade Group Committees
- 5 National Trade Group Secretaries.

The General Executive would be appointed from the National Trade Group Committees and from the Area.

BEFORE



AFTER



HOLLAND
1922

20

Four-and-Twenty Unions in the days of yore
Played a silly sort of game and all were very poor;
Amalgamation came along,
The men began to sing,
"We've been divided long enough,
Unity's the Thing!"

“ . . . Even so, our battle with the Dock Company seemed to my imagination to resemble the duel of David and Goliath. This comparison I made when I went to see, in his office in Leadenhall Street, the Chairman of the Directors of the Dock Company, Mr. Norwood. He was a man of Herculean proportions, six feet high and weighing twenty stone. He glowered with wrath at my Lilliputian presence. I was David to his Goliath. He fired at me in thunderous tones the question: ‘Do you think you can manage the Docks?’ My audacity was challenged and the opening having been given to me, I hurled back my answer like the pebble from David’s sling: ‘If I could not manage better than you muddlers, I would cut my throat. . . .’ ”

Ben Tillett.

THE PIONEERS

Habit dies hard and it takes courage, intelligence and determination to break it. Special tribute must therefore be paid to the pioneers. To those who first took the decision to sink their own vested interests for the good of all.

In each of the amalgamating unions there were men among the leaders and the rank and file who fought for unity. Though we mention the names of those who served on the first committee created by the delegate conference of thirteen unions, we

pay our respects and tribute to the thousands of un-named heroes without whose work amalgamation would not have been possible.

The first committee set up on August 18th, 1920, consisted of:

Harry Gosling, Provisional Chairman.

Ernest Bevin, Provisional Secretary, and

Brothers: Sexton, Houghton, Twomey, Brown, Short, Meggison, Clatworthy, King, Spicer, Bennett, and Ruark.

20. A pungent cartoon from the Union’s paper “The Record.”

21. Ben Tillett addressing a mass meeting of dockers.

22. Tom Mann seen in this picture at a Trafalgar Square rally in his later years. These two pioneers, with John Burns, Will Thorne and others played a tremendous part in the creation of the new unionism.



21



22

THE GRIP OF BROTHERHOOD THE WORLD OER



THE DOCK, WHARF, RIVERSIDE & GENERAL LABOURERS' UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.



OUR MOTTO
A NATION MADE FREE BY LOVE, A MIGHTY BROTHERHOOD LINKED BY A JEALOUS INTERCHANGE OF GOOD.



JUSTICE



HOPE



- DOCK WORKERS
- CORN PORTERS
- TEA WORKERS
- WOOL WORKERS
- TOBACCO WORKERS
- DOCK YARD LABOURERS
- CEMENT WORKERS
- MILLSTONE MAKERS
- MECHANICAL LABOURERS
- GENERAL LABOURERS
- COOPERS & WOODPEERS
- FISH PORTERS
- CARMEN
- AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

This is to Certify that *Ernest Brown*
was admitted a Member of the Bristol Branch of
The Dock, Wharf, Riverside & General Labourers' Union of Great Britain & Ireland,
on the 27th day of August 1910

GENERAL PRESIDENT: *James Green* BRANCH PRESIDENT
GENERAL SECRETARY: *James Green* BRANCH SECRETARY



- DEAL PORTERS
- WHARF WORKERS
- GRANARY WORKERS
- WAREHOUSE-MEN
- WINES & SPIRITS
- OIL MILLERS
- TIMBER RUNNERS
- COAL HEAVERS
- COAL TIPPERS
- FRUIT PORTERS
- FOUNDRY LABOURERS
- BRICK MAKERS
- LEATHER DRESSERS
- COPPER WORKERS

BE UNITED AND INDUSTRIOUS



ARCHITECT OF UNITY

"I have no confidence in the superman; the limitations of supposedly great men are obvious. I have spent my life among ordinary working people; I am one of them. I have seen them faced with the most difficult problems; place the truth before them—the facts whether they are good or bad—and they display an understanding, ability and courage that confound the wisdom of the so-called great." Ernest Bevin.

Ernest Bevin, chief architect and first General Secretary, won fame as the main spokesman of the dockers at the Lord Shaw Inquiry in 1920, when his speeches, his exposure of conditions, and his expression of the dockers' hopes for the future earned him the title of "The Dockers' K.C."

Bevin was eloquent, as the following quotation from his speeches shows:

"If your Court refuse our claim, I suggest you must adopt an alternative. You must go to the Prime Minister, you must go to the Minister of Education and tell him to close our schools, tell him that industry can only be run by artisan labour on the pure fodder or animal basis; teach us nothing, let

us learn nothing, because to create aspirations in our minds, to create the love of the beautiful and then at the same time to deny us the wherewithal to obtain it, is a false policy and a wrong method to adopt. Better keep us in dark ignorance, never to know anything, if you are going to refuse us the wherewithal to give expression to those aspirations which have thus been created."

But the Lord Shaw Inquiry was more than just a personal triumph for Ernest Bevin. It had forced the Transport Unions into a considerable measure of unity, and the victory that was subsequently won demonstrated to all the successful results of united action.

23. The membership certificate of Ernest Bevin. The many details tell the great story of the Union, its origins, and its aims.

24. Bevin prepares a meal, to prove his answer to the employers' "expert witness" who claimed that dockers could live on £3 12s. 6d. a week.



24



25



26

"Inasmuch as most good things are produced by labour, it follows that all such things of right belong to those whose labour has produced them. But it has so happened, in all ages of the world, that some have laboured and others have, without labour, enjoyed a large proportion of the fruits. This is wrong and should not continue. To secure to each labourer the whole product of his labour, or as nearly as possible, is a worthy object of any good government."
Abraham Lincoln.

GIANT FIRST STEPS

Within weeks the new Union was in action. Within a few years it had forced concessions on Tramway wages throughout the land. It had made advances in Flour Milling, Galvanising, Tinplate, Confectionery and other industries. Apart from dozens of smaller everyday actions it led the Canal Strike of 1923, the Great Dock Strike of 1924, the London Traffic Strike in the same year, winning important victories in each.

Within six years of its formation, the Union had 353,000 members involved in the great General Strike of 1926. By 1928 the young Union had seven M.P.s and over 600 members on local and county councils. The Transport and General Workers Union was showing the working people how to play their proper role in society through the proper use of its organization.

25. *The Union in action. The Canal Strike of 1923.*
26. *Bus and tram strikers receiving their first strike pay*

in 1924. £1 each and 2s. for each child.
27. *A meeting at Surrey Docks during the 1924 strike.*



27

“ SPIRIT WONDERFUL ”

Transport Workers' Branches Cheery Reports

“ All solid—spirit wonderful—conduct of the men leaves nothing to be desired,” is the purport of messages which continue to pour into the headquarters of the Transport and General Workers' Union from branches throughout the country.

The reports afford remarkable instances of the underhand means which are being adopted by the authorities in the hope of defeating the strike.

Pickets in the South of England report that many lorries labelled “ Food-stuffs ” have been found to contain blacklegs or material other than food, while at Hull the introduction of blackleg labour has led to safety men coming out on strike.

28

TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION.

*Message from the General Executive Council
to all Members.*

Reports have been received from every area in the country under our control that the members have responded solidly to the call of the General Council. The discipline is excellent. Keep quiet and stand firm so that the Council and the Officers may carry on their work, knowing they have your wholehearted support.

(Signed) HARRY GOSLING
ERNEST BEVIN

29



30

GENERAL STRIKE '26

"An increasing proportion of mankind believes that the world should be managed primarily for those who work, not for those who own."
R. H. Tawney.

The General Strike of 1926 saw the young Transport and General Workers Union in action, playing its part. Started in support of the Miners whose wages and conditions were being drastically attacked, it became an action in defence of all workers. For it was clear that the Government and employers were using this opportunity to attack the general living standards of the working people. The T. & G.W.U. immediately called out

the vast majority of its members, 353,000 in all, and in the first week £291,869 was paid out in dispute benefit.

In spite of growing support, the strike was called off, although there were 100,000 more on strike at the end than at the beginning, and the Union had to use all its ability to prevent victimisation and limit the attacks of the employers. Of the 353,000 who came out, all but 1,500 returned to their jobs.



28 & 29. Extracts from the British Worker organ of the Strike Leadership.

Docks, London, during the General Strike.

30. An armoured car leads a convoy from East India

leadership on May 1st, 1926.

31

(2399) Wt. 6197/2218		6/21 Harrow E.7698	
C or B	Charges to pay	 POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.	No. of Telegram 1253
Recd. from } CPD CRUTCH			Sent.....M. Office Stamp.
			To.....
By.....			By.....
Prefix	Handed in at.....M.	Office of Origin and Service Instructions LONDON Z	Words 46
			Received here atM.
			
J T BARRETT 18 XXEWX ARCHIBALD RD TUFNELL PARK N			
TRADE UNION CONGRESS DECIDE TO SUPPORT MINERS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL DIRECT ALL TRAM AND BUS MEMBERS NOT TO COMMENCE WORK TUESDAY MORNING NEXT MAKE ARRANGEMENTS ACCORDINGLY			
LETTER FOLLOWS ALL INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE ISSUED OVER MY NAME			
BEVIN TRANSUNION			



32

32. A stone tribute at Transport House.

33. Some of the workers who built Transport House. But thousands more, by their efforts for the Labour and Trade Union movement, made it possible.

34. Part of the crowd at the opening ceremony at Transport House, performed by Rt. Hon. Ramsay Macdonald, leader of the Labour Party and first Labour Prime Minister. The picture includes many members of the first Labour Cabinet.



33

TRANSPORT HOUSE

"All oppressed of every kind should look with distrust upon the measures of change which originate with their oppressors, and if the work of reform is to be done well for them, must do it themselves."

Bronterre O'Brien

Within six years of its foundation, the great new Union had outgrown its headquarters and a decision was taken to create a new centre of trade unionism—new headquarters for the *Transport and General Workers Union*.

The opening of Transport House was rightly regarded as an event of major importance.

Officially opened by the leader of the Labour Party, this imposing building also provided headquarters for the Labour Party itself.

Situated in Smith Square, Westminster, within a short distance of the Houses of Parliament, it soon became world famous, not only as the centre of the world's greatest trade union, but as the headquarters of Britain's Labour Movement.

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36

*"He owns me who owns the means whereby I live."
William Shakespeare.*

*"If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free;
if our wealth commands us, we are poor indeed."
Edmund Burke.*

THE HUNGRY YEARS

The years that followed, showed the Union in action on all fronts and continuously growing. The deep economic crisis and unemployment of the early 30s created tremendous upheavals. Factories closed and grinding poverty grew. Attacks on wage standards following the election of the 'National' Government, showed the need for trade union organisations as never before. Though millions were unemployed, and tens of thousands organised to demand work or maintenance, the T. & G.W.U. fought to protect the standards of those still at work and to get the Government to adopt schemes that would keep the whole of industry going.

Then followed the terrible years when the threat of fascism brought the issues of war and peace uppermost in the minds of millions. The coming to power of Hitler in Germany, the growth of Fascist activity at home, the attack on democracy in Spain, found many British trade unionists determined to do all in their power to resist what appeared then to be the relentless onward march of fascism.

Hundreds fought and gave their lives in the International Brigade, formed from volunteers from many lands. But the defeat of democracy in Spain was to be a prelude to the onslaught of fascism upon the rest of Europe.

35. A "stay down" miner, greeted by his wife, child and friends, after a heroic two weeks "stay down" strike.

36. Hunger marchers, including many women, drew national attention to the plight of the unemployed.

This picture shows them being greeted by the Labour Mayor of Islington.

37. This scene in Hyde Park shows part of the huge crowd demonstrating against fascists attempting to win support in London.



37



38



39

"Fascism if persisted in, will lead to war and disaster, for it does not offer any solution to the economic problems of the people. Starvation and unemployment increase under it. Its principle weapons are tyranny, corruption, depression of the standards of life, regimentation of the people, destruction of freedom." Ernest Bevin

WAR

With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the Union threw all it had into the struggle to defeat fascism. On land, sea and in the air, our members worked, fought, sacrificed, and died. Everything was secondary to the need for victory. London, Coventry, Liverpool, Plymouth, and many other industrial areas were badly 'blitzed' and the T. & G.W.U. did everything possible to help rebuild, and to strengthen the industrial base for the fight against fascism.

Throughout this period of sacrifice, the hope grew that with the defeat of fascism it would be possible to create a new, democratic world of peace and lasting prosperity. The call up, the bombing and disruption of industry and transport all had their

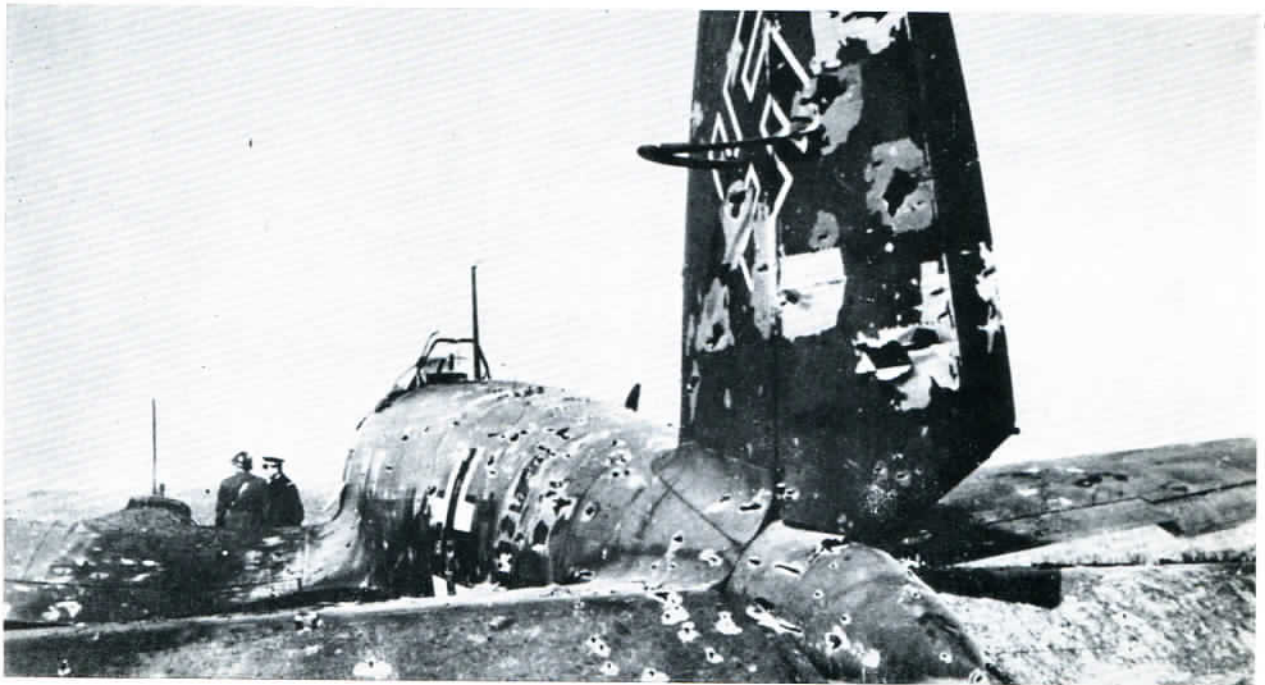
effect on the Union's organisation and life. It was the greatest testing time of all. But it had its positive effect too. Tens of thousands of people, particularly women, who had never known work in industry and factories, now flocked into the productive effort. Vast numbers joined the T. & G.W.U. and learned not only how the Union works, but also how to fill the leading positions in branches, areas and national leaderships of the Union.

The explosion of the Atomic Bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki followed by the development of much more powerful nuclear weapons brought a new dimension into the terror of war and new dangers to the precarious peace that was to follow.

38. Millions of women enter the factories to help the war effort.

39. The raiders pass. The rescue and restoration begins.

40. Another Nazi raider is brought down and Hitler's attempt to terrorize Britain fails.



40



...AND PEACE

"When people say the unions should stay out of politics what they really mean is that we should not be on the side of the Socialists. But how could we be on any other side? The Socialist party was created as the political expression of the organized workers—and still is."
Frank Cousins.

The end of the war and the election of a Labour Government, brought another new stage in the Union's national position. Ernest Bevin, who had done so much to create the Union, and who held high office in the war time Coalition Government, became Labour's first Foreign Secretary, giving up his Union post of General Secretary, which was taken up by Arthur Deakin.

Brother Deakin steered the Union in the difficult early post war years when wage restraint and the vast changeover from war to peace-time production imposed great strains upon the working people and the Union.

The post war period brought problems not only to Britain but to almost every country in the world. The old ways of life could never be rebuilt. Countries, rulers, markets, materials, methods and

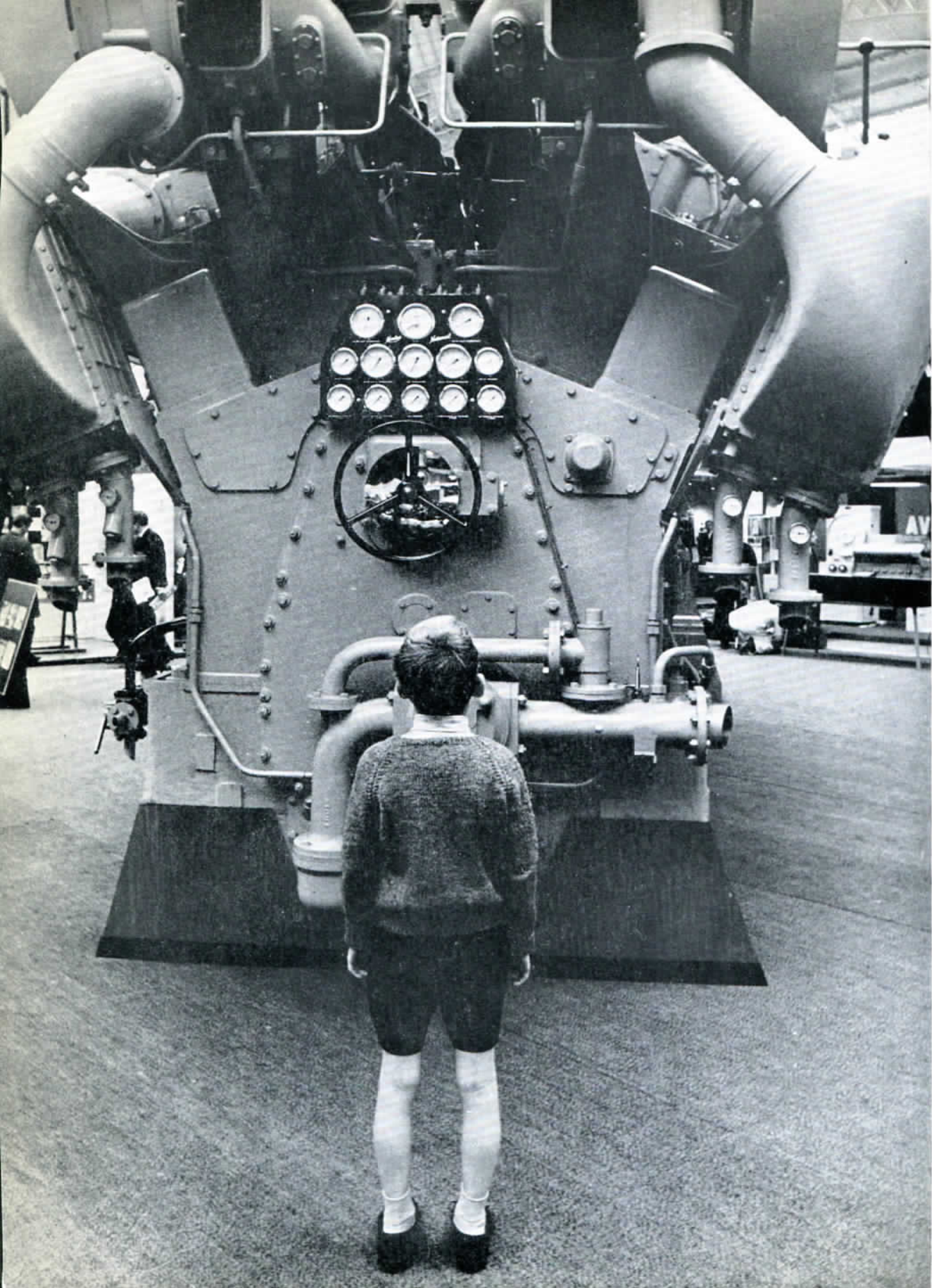
ideas had changed drastically. Devastated countries, rebuilding with unparalleled intensity and speed, using new materials and methods, caught up with and overtook others which relied on old ideas and techniques and which failed to replace outdated machinery.

In the midst of the rebuilding, came the cold war and the threat of a new, more terrible war. Recognising that the struggle for peace transcends even the elementary struggle for wages and conditions, the T. & G.W.U. made its famous call for the countries of the world to take the road to peace by outlawing nuclear weapons, led by the new General Secretary, Frank Cousins. His election in 1956 followed the death of "Jock" Tiffin who had been General Secretary for two years.

41. *The atomic bomb brought a new dimension into the terror of war and new dangers to peace.*

42. *Arthur Deakin addressing a great post war trade union rally in Trafalgar Square.*







43. *Master or servant? The child looks with wonder at the world of tomorrow.*

44. *Frank Cousins, General Secretary speaks at a Transport and General Workers Union Conference.*

"It is not this or that tangible steel and brass machine which we want to get rid of, but the great intangible machine of commercial tyranny which oppresses the lives of all of us."
William Morris.

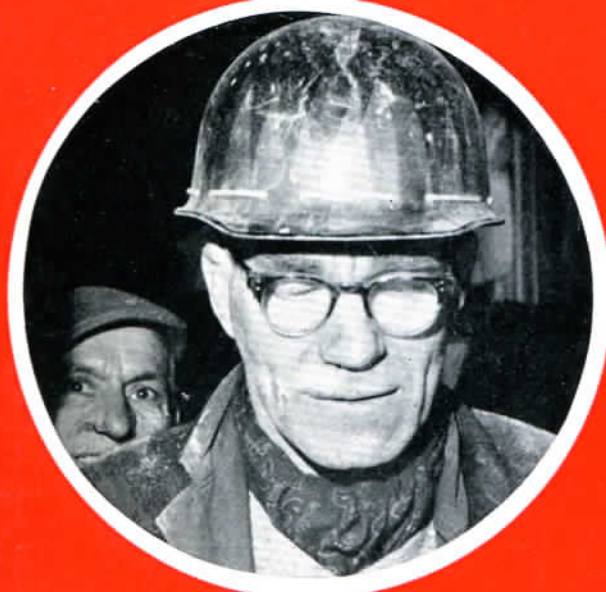
TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

By the 1950's a new technological revolution was upon us. Under the leadership of Frank Cousins, the Union demanded that Britain use its skill and its still vast resources to develop this technology, to use it to advance Britain's productive power for the benefit of people at home and abroad. As Britain's first Minister of Technology, Frank Cousins, released from his main Union responsibilities, gave Britain's industry a new perspective.

The way this technological revolution is to be conducted is still being decided. Whether the great advances in technology are to be for the benefit of the people, or merely to increase the

profits of a section. To the engineer, automation is control of a machine by a computer or some other machine. To the worker, automation is a machine that takes over, or threatens to take over his job. To the transport worker, containerisation, larger and faster vehicles and modern transport techniques generally pose the same kind of problem.

The task of our Union as we move further into the technological age is to learn to live with these changes and ensure that the benefits that accrue from them are distributed among the vast majority of the people whose efforts have made them possible.





BRITAIN'S GREATEST UNION



There is no industry that is unaffected by the work of the T&GWU. There is no worker whose wages and conditions do not owe something to the work of this Union, both in industry and in the political field, just as the advances of workers in other unions have a positive effect on our own. The Union today, organised with the same structure as when it was first created, in Regions and Trade Groups, is almost one and a half million strong. It has offices and local organisers in every major town and city in the country. It has its members in Transport and Distribution, Engineering, Chemicals, Local Government, Clerical, Agricultural and other important industries and professions.

It recognises that great changes are taking place throughout the national economy. The advance of automation, the growth of giant industrial monopolies, the increasing application of science to industry, and the rapid alteration in the proportion of office to factory workers, all call for changes in the demands and organisation of the Union. But whatever changes take place in the organisation of industry and the commercial life of Britain, this fact remains constant. Nothing can be created without workers of one kind or another. And wherever there are workers they need organisation and unity to give them strength to enable them to determine their standards of life. Today, as in the past, the Transport and General Workers' Union proudly fulfils that role.

*"Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree and a' that,
For a' that, and a' that,
When man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brithers be for a' that."*

Robert Burns.

UNITY
STRENGTH
PROGRESS

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