

50p

THE GENERAL

1926

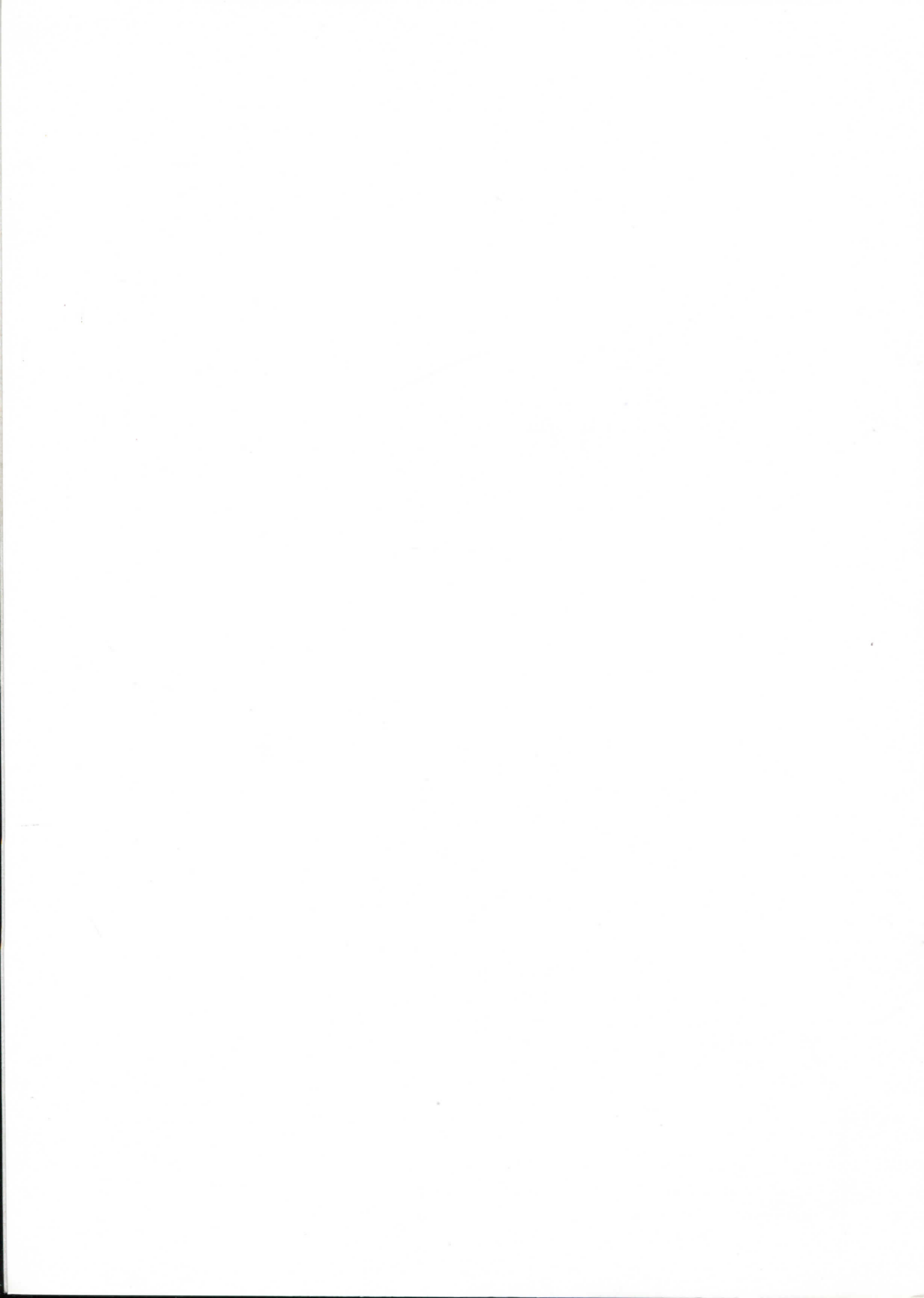
STRIKE

1976

50TH

ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR





THE GENERAL STRIKE



Executive Editor:
Pat Hornsey
Editor: Rick Hosburn
Assistant Art Editor:
Stephen Knowlden
Designer: Mark Holt
Production: Jerry Gatrell
Typesetting: Yale Set Ltd
Printed in Great Britain
by Seven Valley Press
Compiled in conjunction
with Peter Haining

1926



1976

NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY
TIMES MIRROR

Published by New English Library Ltd, Barnard's Inn,
Holborn, London EC1N 2JR. Telephone 01-242 0767

It is fifty years now since the turmoil of events surrounding the General Strike of 1926 invaded the everyday lives of almost every man, woman and child in the country. At no time during this century have the internal divisions in our society been more clearly exposed, and far-reaching effects of the bitterness generated by both sides are still evident in industry today.

For many it was a time to put their ideals to a severe test of endurance and the atmosphere produced by this brought out the best in some and the worst in others. Amongst working people there was great tension between those, unemployed for some time, who were eager to volunteer for strike-breaking work, and those on strike who were determined to weather the storm in order to preserve their positions in industry.

Above all else, however, the General Strike was a social phenomenon which left a deep impression on the everyday working lives of all who experienced it. To the younger generation of today, scenes such as the military occupation of Hyde Park, armoured cars and tanks guarding food convoys and Oxford dons working in the docks are difficult to visualise. This is what makes this souvenir edition an invaluable record of the mood of the nation during this critical period in our history.

The political drama, the unity of the workers and the loyalty of the patriots are all brought vividly to life in this splendid collection of newspapers published at the time, photographs taken at the time, and a host of other documents and personal records. Travel with us into the past and re-live the strike that shook a nation.

©New English Library Ltd, 1976

Reproduction of any written material or illustration in this publication in any form or for any purpose, other than short extracts for the purpose of review, is expressly forbidden unless the prior consent of the publisher has been given in writing. Neither New English Library nor its agents accept liability for loss or damage to any material submitted to the magazine.

THE DAYS WHEN BRITAIN STOPPED WORK

In this brief synopsis of the factors relating to the General Strike, we explode some of the more popular myths surrounding the events of the time, and take a more sober look at the reasons behind the actions. The strike has been branded by many historians as a failure on the part of the trades unionists to fulfil their commitments: by others as a failure by the government to contain a revolt of the working classes. Here we examine the evidence as a social event in the cold light of history

Fifty years ago, in May 1926, the TUC called the most famous strike in British History. A strike which, according to historian A J P Taylor, 'stands high in the mythology of the Labour movement.' It was this unprecedented action—described as a 'revolution' by the government of the day—in which, says Professor Taylor, 'the British working class showed an unparalleled solidarity. Reports from all over the country struck the same note: everything stopped'.

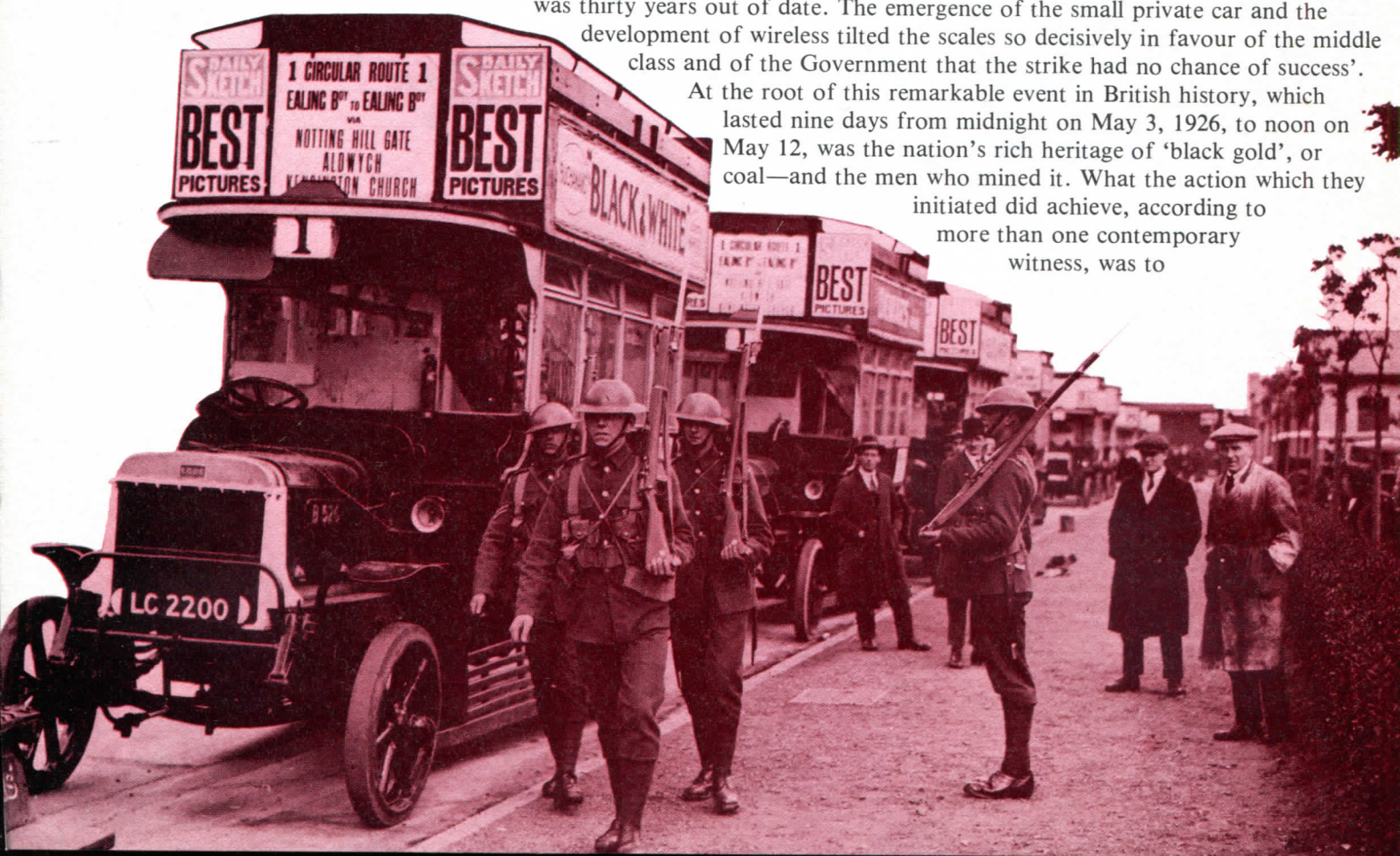
Certainly the mythology of the strike is still alive and potent today. Only a year ago another historian, businessman and commentator, Woodrow Wyatt, wrote: 'the mythology of the General Strike has the middle classes valiantly running the essential services and acting as police auxiliaries in the face of violent attempts to overthrow the Constitution. In fact, the activities of the middle class were almost valueless. Despite undergraduates and suburban volunteers the railway system was paralysed. What kept things going in a broken-backed way was the recruitment of large numbers of unemployed, happy at last to have some work. The General Strike could and should have succeeded if only the TUC had not been frightened of its evident ability to make it successful'.

What went wrong, according to Leopold Amery, was that 'the General Strike was thirty years out of date. The emergence of the small private car and the development of wireless tilted the scales so decisively in favour of the middle class and of the Government that the strike had no chance of success'.

At the root of this remarkable event in British history, which lasted nine days from midnight on May 3, 1926, to noon on May 12, was the nation's rich heritage of 'black gold', or coal—and the men who mined it. What the action which they initiated did achieve, according to more than one contemporary witness, was to

Changing guard at a London omnibus depot.

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY



divide the people into two groups, to threaten the survival of parliamentary government and to bring the country nearer to revolution than it had ever been. For a great many years the coalfields had been a scene of continuing struggle between men and management. There was little love between the two sides, brought about undoubtedly by the exploitation of the miners by the owners. Pay varied enormously from one pit to another—depending on their prosperity or otherwise—but at best the wages (no more than sixty shillings a week) were scandalously inadequate. The owners treated the miners as little better than peasants and the miners, in turn, responded with repeated rebellion.

THE GENERAL STRIKE

In the years immediately after the First World War, a situation of virtual chaos had been reached, and in perhaps no other industry was the growing struggle

Getting a lift to the office in London.

POPPERFOTO



between capital and labour better exemplified than in the enmity between the miners and their employers. However, since the end of hostilities, the Miners Federation had emerged as by far the strongest trade union in the country, and aided by publicity being given to the nature of their work, the men below ground had at last earned themselves some sympathy and respect from the general public. They had also allied themselves with the railwaymen and transport workers to form a powerful, respected team which no one could afford to ignore.

The owners treated the miners as little better than peasants and the miners, in turn, responded with repeated rebellion

When they threatened a strike over conditions in 1919, their hand was strong enough for the Coalition Government to concede that a Royal Commission should be set up to examine the matter.

The Commission, under a Judge of the King's Bench Division, Sir John Sankey, reported almost wholly in favour of the miners, recommending wage increases of two shillings per shift, an hour shorter day and a system of public ownership of the coal industry. Although patently unhappy with the judgement, the Government agreed to the first two recommendations, but turned the third down flat.

In April 1921, Parliament, which had taken direct control of the mines during the war, announced that it was handing this control back to the owners. These



THE GENERAL STRIKE

men responded almost immediately by announcing sweeping wage reductions and longer hours. The amazed miners' leaders drew their breath—and again proposed a strike, calling on both the railway and transport workers to support them.

Lloyd George, then the Prime Minister, responded to the situation by setting up talks between the two sides—but also by declaring a State of Emergency, posting machine-guns at the pitheads and sending troops into working class areas. The miners and their associates were, however, ill-prepared for battle with owners and the Government, and this combined with some internal bungling caused them to give up their threatened action on the promise that the state would provide aid to ease the burden of the wage cuts. In Labour history, this capitulation to pressure on April 15, 1921, is appositely remembered as 'Black Friday'.

This failure of three unions working in concert to achieve anything worthwhile did, however, have one positive result: it led to the formation of a body that would speak for the mass of trade unionists, the General Council of the Trades Union Congress. This formation, though, was still taking place when another mining crisis developed in July 1925.

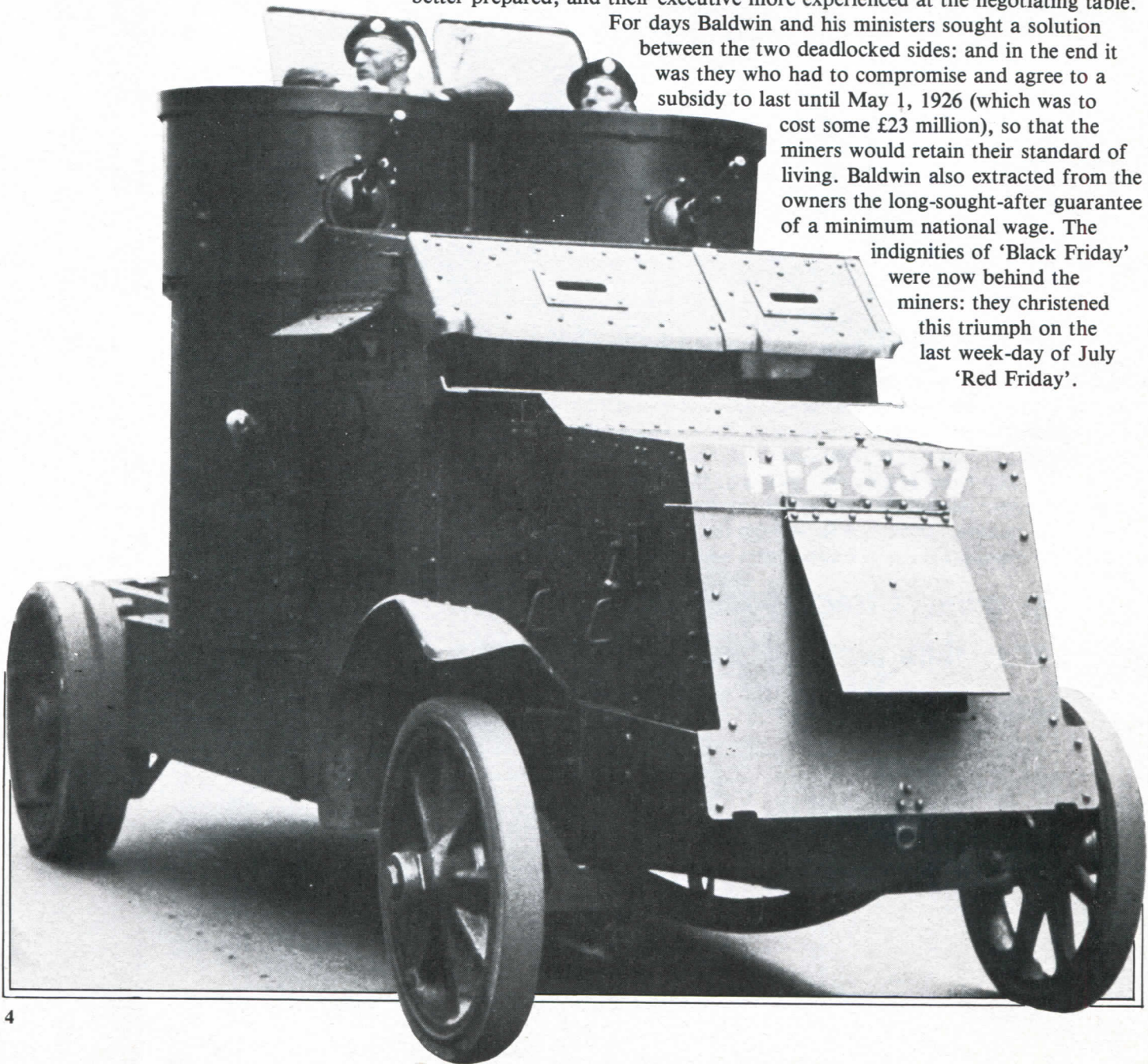
Stanley Baldwin and the Conservative Party were by now in power and had decided to return to the Gold Standard forcing up the value of sterling. Along with this, the export market for British coal had fallen steeply and the owners were again suggesting a return to the pre-1921 wage and hours structure. To the miners, the situation demanded the strike call once more. 'Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day' they declared adamantly. This time, they were better prepared, and their executive more experienced at the negotiating table.

For days Baldwin and his ministers sought a solution between the two deadlocked sides: and in the end it was they who had to compromise and agree to a subsidy to last until May 1, 1926 (which was to cost some £23 million), so that the miners would retain their standard of living. Baldwin also extracted from the owners the long-sought-after guarantee of a minimum national wage. The indignities of 'Black Friday' were now behind the miners: they christened this triumph on the last week-day of July 'Red Friday'.

Below: *An armoured car in London.*
RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

Facing page: *Volunteers, escorted by a policeman, drive a London bus.*

THE MANSELL COLLECTION

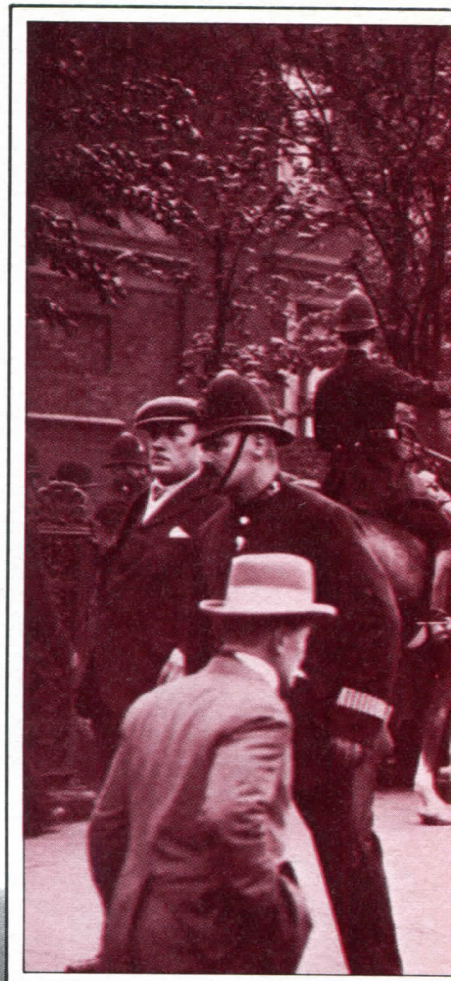




But the miners had predictably unleashed strong forces of resentment against themselves: Baldwin and the hardliners in his government, not to mention the mine owners, regarded this concession as a defeat. They wanted to get even with the miners and, consciously or unconsciously, set out on the path to confrontation. As Patrick Renshaw has written in his recent book, *The General Strike* (1975), 'The outlook of governments from Lloyd George to Baldwin was that the owners were right and must be given full backing; the miners were wrong and little better than Bolsheviks who wanted to take over the country; a show-down would probably have to come, but the Government must wait until public opinion was firmly on its side and then hit hard'.

In the light of Baldwin's actions, the lack of action on the part of the miners to prepare for confrontation is all the more surprising

So Baldwin set out to manipulate the country into believing that the miners were threatening the Constitution. He set up the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies because, he told the press, it was obvious a movement was being organised to take advantage of difficulties in the coal industry. 'Numerous suggestions have been made from various quarters for organising those citizens who would be prepared to volunteer to maintain supplies and services in the event of a general strike,' the Prime Minister said. 'It seems, therefore, that the moment has come to announce publicly that such an





THE GENERAL STRIKE

Left: Streets in London being cleared by the police at the end of the strike.
 RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

Far left: A scene on the Victoria Embankment, London.
 CENTRAL PRESS PHOTOS

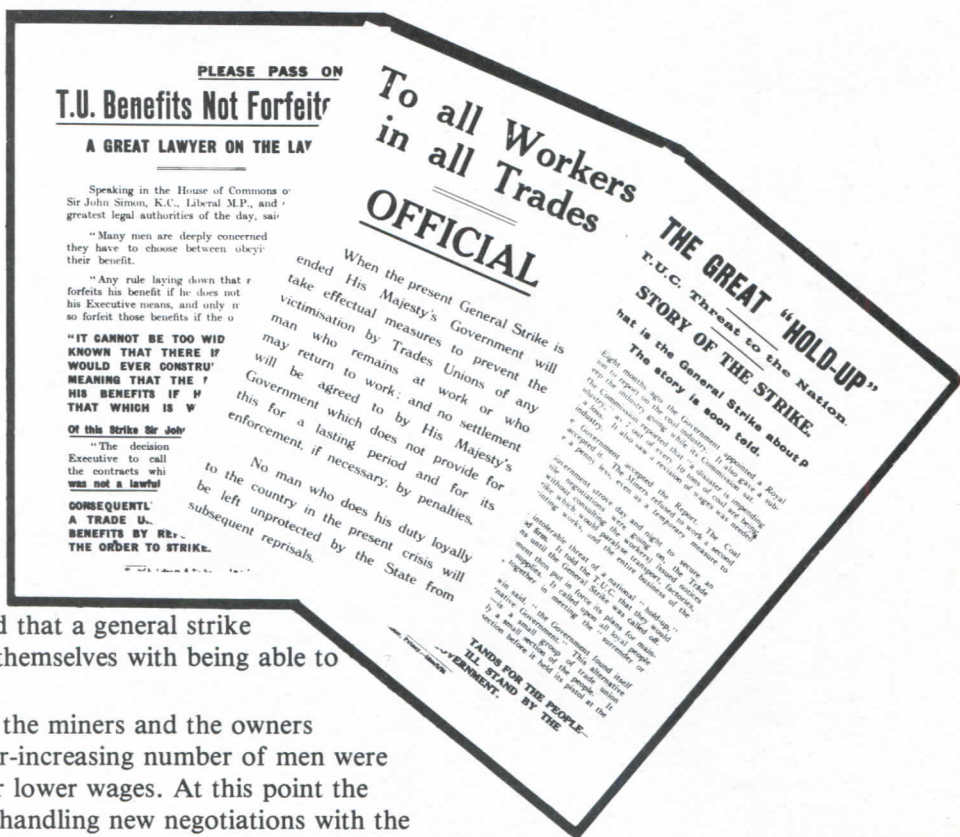
Below: Some of the many leaflets issued during the strike.

organisation has already been constituted and is at work in many metropolitan boroughs, while steps are being taken to create corresponding organisations in the principal centres of the Kingdom'. To allay trade union suspicions it was said that the OMS was strictly non-political and non-party in character.

In the light of Baldwin's actions, the lack of action on the part of the miners and the TUC to prepare for confrontation is all the more surprising. Having beaten the owners and the government once, it has been suggested the reason lay in a general complacency amongst officials that victory could always be achieved again, and the fact that there was a power struggle then going on in the TUC General Council. Undoubtedly, the leaders of the trade unions never envisaged that a general strike would actually be called: by now they prided themselves with being able to negotiate and win.

In the Spring of 1926 the situation between the miners and the owners continued to deteriorate at a pace, and an ever-increasing number of men were locked out of the pits for refusing to work for lower wages. At this point the TUC got the miners' leaders to agree to their handling new negotiations with the Government; promising them, if necessary, a general strike. But, as Ernest Bevin, who only joined the General Council a few days before the strike, was to record later, the image of the trade unions had by now been set in the public mind by Baldwin and his associates. 'They cast the trade unions for the role of enemies of the State,' he said bitterly.

So the die was cast—and although fruitful talks were taking place between the



THE GENERAL STRIKE

Facing page: *Women demonstrate against the strike.*

CENTRAL PRESS PHOTOS

Below: *Students unloading bacon at a London Wharf.*

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

Bottom: *Hyde Park closed to the public before the strike.*

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prime Minister and the TUC, hardline forces were also busy working towards confrontation.

Professor A J P Taylor takes up the story. 'At the last minute the miners offered to consider wage reductions, once re-organisation of the industry had been initiated by the Government. The Cabinet answered that they would initiate re-organisation only after the miners had accepted the principle of wage reductions. The Cabinet, in fact, wanted a strike.'

'Their spirit appeared to be broken, but it was not — as their descendants have recently been reminding us'

And so the inevitable happened—and just as inevitably it failed. Professor Taylor goes on: 'it is often said that the TUC leaders called off the strike because either it was failing or they feared arrest. Neither story was true. The strike was succeeding. "Everything stopped" was the refrain until the last moment. What the TUC leaders feared was that the strike would succeed. Besides they believed that they could reach a compromise with the Government. And so they did. As soon as they called off the strike they secured an agreement with the Government that a re-organisation of the industry would go along with wage reductions. The miners repudiated the agreement and fought on until they were overwhelmed by complete disaster.'

Walter Citrine, now Lord Citrine, who was the acting General Secretary of the TUC in 1926, has thrown further light on this parting





LANCASHIRE'S
GLENMIA
FOR PEACE

LANCASHIRE

LANCASHIRE
FOR PEACE

LANCASHIRE

W THE STRIKE
IS A
TWO-EDGED SWORD

W C
LIVERPOOL

KEEP TO THE LEFT

101540

17 3253

XV 4648



THE GENERAL STRIKE

of the ways of the miners and the TUC. 'We had all struck for justice for the miners,' he recalled, 'but it became apparent that Arthur Cook, their leader, had made up his mind to fight to the finish, and wouldn't settle for any terms within reasonable sight. The miners felt that the other workers didn't know what a real strike was—they were used to being out twelve weeks at a time. We had brought out in their support hundreds of thousands who had never been out on strike in their lives. How long could we hold these men out? When I saw the miners' attitude I felt it best to avoid useless sacrifice. The strike had to end, even though we could have gone on for at least another week. It was not a defeat for the Trade Unions. Instead, it revealed so nakedly the possibilities of social and economic disaster that responsible people felt we must achieve a better relationship than in the past. And this was done.'

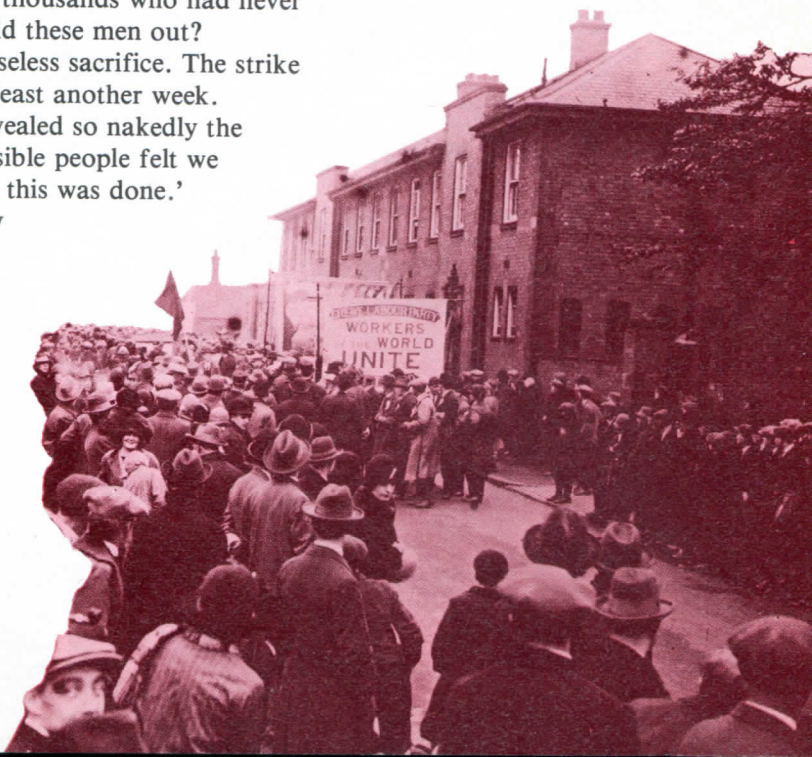
Woodrow Wyatt records the final chapter in the story and its consequences: 'Deserted by their comrades, the gallant and near starving miners fought on for seven months. In the end they had to capitulate to lower wages and a longer working week, which the Government by wise action could have prevented. Their spirit appeared to be broken, but it was not—as their descendants have recently been reminding us. The failure of the General Strike and the miners' action seemed to have established peace and order in industrial relations, but it had not. The triumph of disproportionate rule by owners and employees spawned the current clamour for the equally damaging disproportionate rule by employees.'

Above: Sailors stoking boilers at Neasden Power Station.

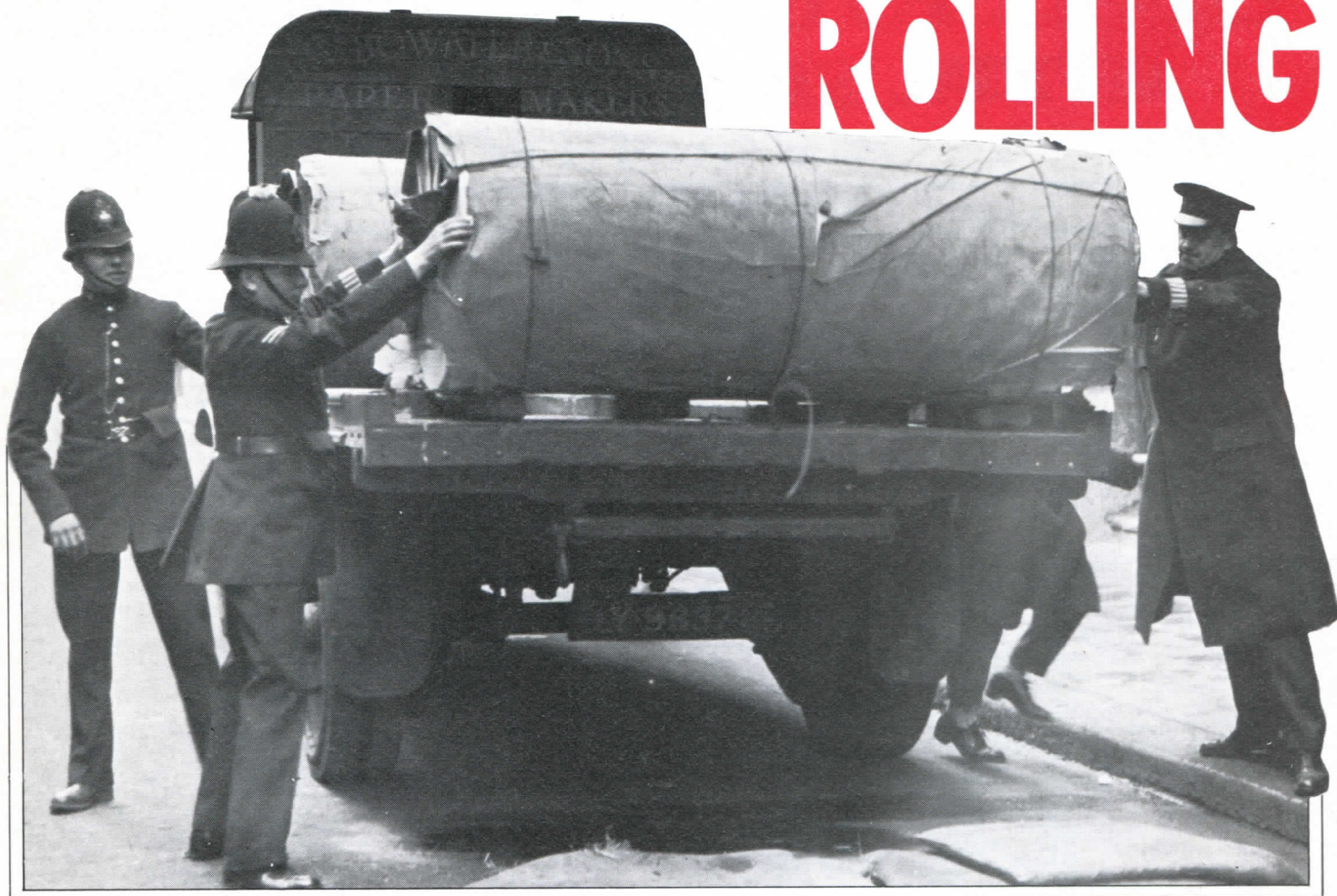
RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

Below: A pro-strike demonstration at Crewe.

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY



KEEPING THE PRESSES ROLLING



Above: Police unload newsprint for the official newspaper 'The British Gazette.'

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

Below: The TUC's Bulletin 'The British Worker.'



Immediately the General Strike began, great efforts were made by politicians, trades unionists and newspaper proprietors alike to maintain publication in some form or other of news and opinion. This resulted in the appearance of a unique set of news-sheets and national newspapers, some of which were improvised versions of familiar titles, whilst others were launched and run solely during the period of the strike. The massive breakdown in industry swung the communications media into a position of supreme importance, and in the pages of these publications today's reader can see a wide cross-section of the news and views of the times

'The sensation of a General Strike, which stops the press, as witnessed from a cottage in the country, centres round the headphones of the wireless set.' So wrote Beatrice Webb the wife of the Fabian Society founder and author of several important works on trade unionism, in her diary for May 1926. Certainly, like a great many other people in the British Isles, Mrs Webb got much of her information about the progress of the strike through the excellent reporting of the BBC, but there were still several newspapers which did manage to produce editions of varying size and format, as this collection demonstrates.

Most of the morning newspapers appeared as usual on the first day of the strike, but following the rapid withdrawal of their men after midnight, publication thereafter was erratic and depended on each paper's ability to find managerial staff able to carry out the complicated business of printing and

THE BRITISH WORKER

OFFICIAL STRIKE NEWS BULLETIN

Published by The General Council of the Trades Union Congress

No. 7.

TUESDAY EVENING, MAY 11, 1926.

PRICE ONE PENNY

ENGINEERS TO STOP TO-DAY

Shipyards Also: Orders
Welcomed

STRIKE SPREADS

So far from "dribbling back," as Mr. Churchill pretends, the men on strike are standing like a rock, and more are coming out.

To-morrow another section of the Movement will be called into action, the order having gone forth that the engineering shops and shipyards are to stop to-night.

The order applies to all unions in the engineering and shipbuilding trades affiliated to the Trades Union Congress.

It does not apply to men engaged at the Government dockyards, Admiralty establishments, or Government engineering works.

The men have awaited the instructions impatiently, and all over the country they received their marching orders with enthusiasm and a sense of relief.

In addition to the men obeying this call to reinforce the gallant "first line," others are out, either because of

MORE UNIONS OUT

The Amalgamated Moulders, Shipyard workers, and members of the Amalgamated Engineering Unions as well as General Engineering Unions will not start work to-morrow.

refusal to work with blacklegs, or because the pressure of the strike is closing down the factories.

Some of the very small percentage of N.U.R. members who hesitated at first have now joined up.

"Not a single area has weakened," is Mr. Cramp's report.

At Bradford 7,000 operative dyers ceased work yesterday because of the introduction of blackleg transport.

Twenty-five thousand operative dyers are now out in Lancashire and Yorkshire.

The general position in Preston is unchanged, the men remaining confident of winning the fight.

NO SLACKENING

Cabinet's New Tactics Defeated by Indisputable Facts

The Cabinet and its supporters have dropped Mr. Churchill's "Revolution" stunt.

The "Times" says to-day in a leading article: "No one suggests for a moment that any considerable number of men on strike are animated by revolutionary motives."

That marks the end of Mr. Churchill's foolish and dangerous gamble. Now the Cabinet's tactics are changed. Now the official gramophones are grinding out the statement that strikers are going back to work.

This is as much a fabrication as the other. The number of strikers has not diminished: it is increasing. There are more workers out to-day than there have been at any moment since the strike began.

They will stay out until they are instructed by Headquarters to return to work.

THE REAL TRUTH OF THE COAL NEGOTIATIONS

Chairman of General Council Replies to Sir Douglas Hogg

In the Government publication, the *British Gazette*, of this morning, appears an article by the Attorney-General, Sir Douglas Hogg, which purports to state the truth of the coal negotiations. As one who has been directly associated with those negotiations, I claim the right to speak with a degree of authority on this matter which neither the Attorney-General nor anyone else with second-hand information can possibly possess.

The initial cause of the deadlock was the mineowners' arbitrary attitude in refusing to conduct national negotiations as recommended in the Commission's Report, and their action in giving notices to enforce a general reduction in wages.

From the moment the mineowners issued lock-out notices to their workpeople, the question at issue, so far as the General Council was concerned, was the withdrawal of those notices as a condition preliminary to the conduct of negotiations. From that we have never receded.

The Government representatives insisted that the mineworkers must first declare themselves definitely as willing to accept a reduction in wages.

In these circumstances, and in view of the inevitability that there would be a stoppage throughout the coalfields on May 1 if the notices and demands of the mineowners were pressed, the General Council decided to call a conference of the responsible Executives of the unions

CONTINUED ON PAGE FOUR

FIVE RAILWAY CRASHES

Sequel to Blackleg and
"Voluntary" Labour

FOUR DEAD

The attempt to work the intricate mechanism of the British railway system by "volunteer" and blackleg labour has already had a tragic sequel.

No fewer than five serious passenger train accidents occurred yesterday and this morning—two of them resulting in loss of life.

The worst occurred yesterday afternoon on the L.N.E.R. at St. Margaret's, Edinburgh.

While a number of wagons were being shifted from the up to the down main line a passenger train from Berwick, manned by a volunteer crew, crashed into them.

Three people were killed, 16 injured. About the same time the "express" train from Edinburgh to King's Cross jumped the line between Annitsford and Oramlington. The engine and five coaches overturned and caught fire. No one was killed.

At Bishop's Stortford a goods train from Cambridge crashed into a passenger train standing in the station. The goods engine and two passenger coaches were derailed and the station partially wrecked. One body has been recovered from the wreckage.

This morning an electric train from Selhurst, running into Victoria Station, failed to stop in time and collided with a stationary coach.

At Hull on Monday night a "volunteer" ran his engine into some stationary wagons. He himself was severely injured.

These accidents—all within the space of 24 hours—are a grim commentary on the claim of the companies and the Government that something like a "normal" train service is being restored.

"Accidental death" was the verdict returned to-day at the inquest on C. A. Moon, a young engineer's draughtsman, living at Guildford. He volunteered to act as a passenger guard on an electric railway, stepped on a live rail, and was instantly killed.

Published for the General Council of the Trades Union Congress by Victoria House Printing Company, 2, Carmelite-street, London, E.C.4. Telephone (8 lines): 8219 City.

PASS THIS, ON OR POST IT UP

For the first day or two these papers often consisted of a single sheet in facsimile typewriting, sometimes with the headings written in

THE GENERAL STRIKE

production. In his book, *The General Strike* (1957), Julian Symons gives a brief sketch of how the Fleet Street presses turned during these first few strike-bound days:

'Almost every London newspaper produced some kind of edition, with the help of volunteer labour. For the first day or two these papers often of a single sheet in facsimile typewriting, sometimes with the headings written in, but by the fifth day of the strike, at the weekend, they had settled into regular forms. *The Daily Graphic* and *Daily Mirror* were presenting a four-page sheet with two picture pages on front and back; *The Daily Telegraph* was a neat quarto size four-page

Facing page: *Another issue of 'The British Worker.'*

Inset: *How the 'Daily Mirror' coped.*

Below: *A crowd outside the offices of London's 'Evening News.'*
POPPERFOTO



THE GENERAL STRIKE

sheet packed with news (and rumours) in rather small type; the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *Evening News* all produced some kind of paper every day. There were also many news sheets, which generally gave only news contained in the wireless bulletins, and a number of local papers which produced issues of quite respectable sizes.' (It is an interesting sidelight on the strike to learn that newsagents in many towns across the country provided a useful information service for their customers when they were unable to get copies of those newspapers which did appear. Instead they posted up bulletins in their windows relaying the latest news given out on the radio.)

The newspaper proprietors' troubles were not at an end when they had produced the papers. however. There was still the problem of getting them to the customers. Some had fleets of their own vans which tried to dodge the pickets (not always successfully), while others utilised the rail and transport systems that still operated in the hands of volunteer workers. The third element was the newsagents and their associates who actually came into London themselves to collect their papers and take them back to their customers. G L Waring, a former editor of the *Essex Weekly News*, and a young reporter in 1926, reports amusingly on his own experiences as a newspaper 'bootlegger' in 'The Bootleg Press' on page 28.

Some had fleets of their own vans which tried to dodge the pickets, though not always successfully

Facing page: *The 'Daily Graphic' manages to live up to its name.*

Below: *'The Times' appears in its familiar style.*

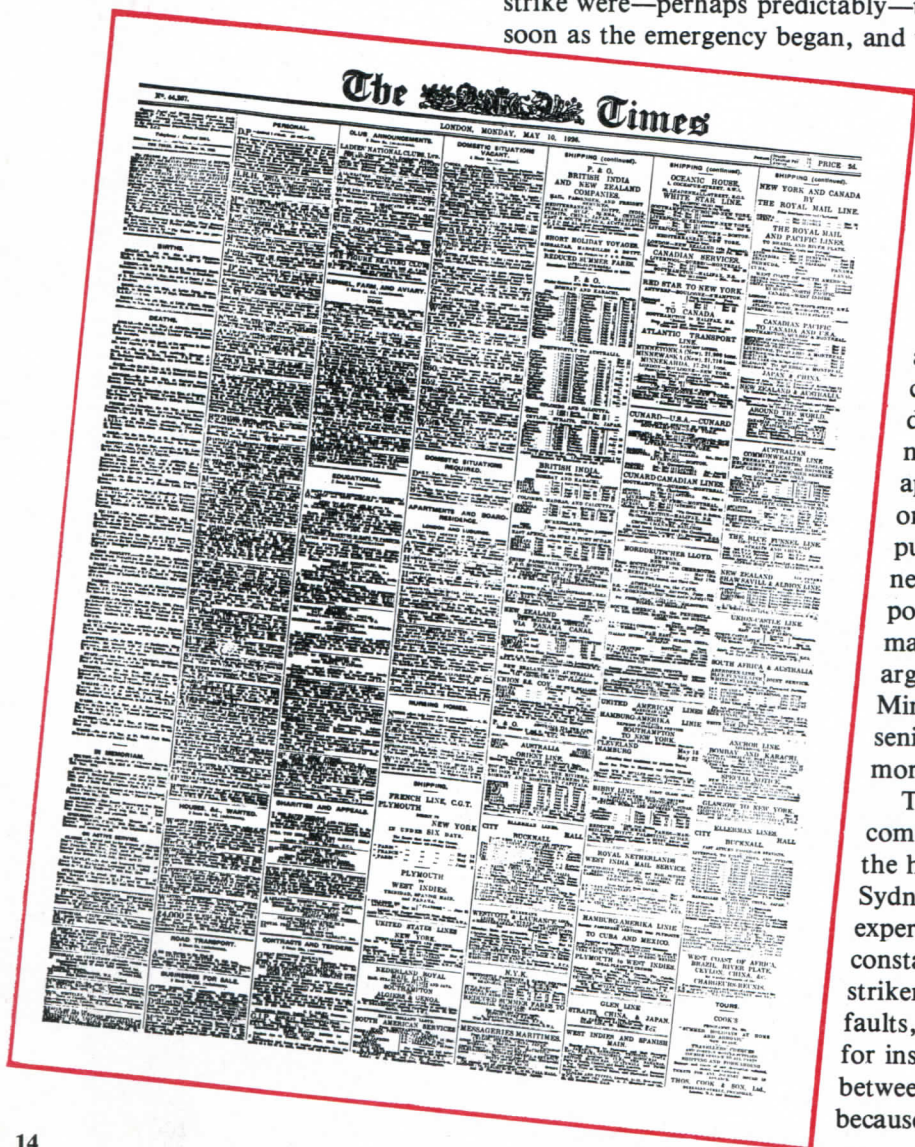
The two most important and influential newspapers during the period of the strike were—perhaps predictably—the two which had been specially launched as soon as the emergency began, and which represented the opposing viewpoints:

The British Gazette and *The British Worker*.

The British Gazette still enjoys a reputation and fame far beyond its achievements simply because of the man who filled its editorial chair, Winston Churchill, determined to see the Government crush the strikers.

The first issue of the paper appeared on May 5 and the last—numbered 8—on May 13; and by the end of the strike it had achieved a circulation of well over two million copies a day, certainly the fastest circulation increase in newspaper history. The paper, and Churchill's appointment as its editor, had been announced on the first day of the strike, and its avowed purpose was the presenting of 'authoritative news'. It was clearly to carry the Government's point of view, but the exuberant Winston soon made it a centre of fierce controversy and argument, and after the second issue Prime Minister Baldwin found it necessary to put in a senior minister to blue pencil some of the editor's more inflammatory remarks and comments.

The paper was actually produced on the commandeered presses of *The Morning Post* with the help of an army of amateur assistants led by Sydney Long, one of *The Daily Express's* most experienced men. The police also had to be constantly on duty outside the works to prevent strikers from trying to interfere. Despite its many faults, and the glaring bias of Churchill (he refused, for instance, to print the report of a football match between policemen and strikers at Plymouth, because the strikers had won), the large, four page



DAILY GRAPHIC

No. 11,346 . . .

Registered as a Newspaper.

TUESDAY, MAY 11, 1926

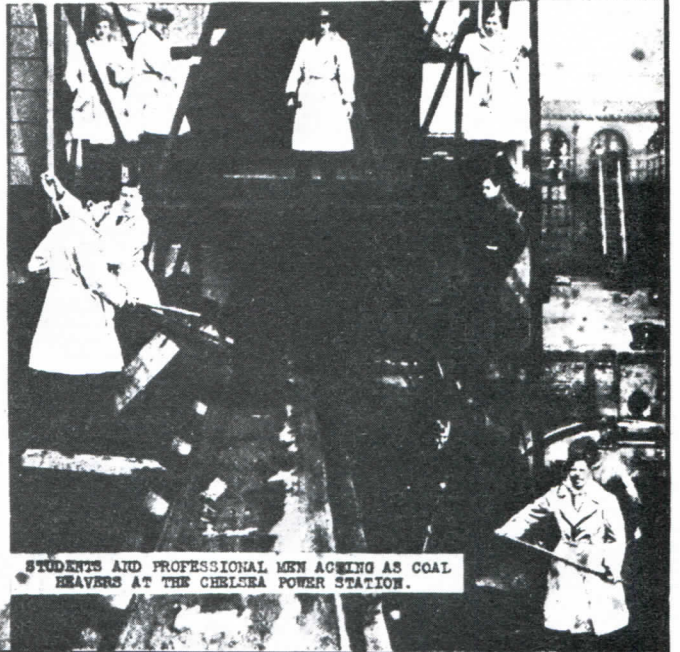
ONE PENNY

THE OLDEST PICTURE PAPER IN BRITAIN

ARMY v NAVY! STUDENT COAL HEAVERS.



SOLDIERS AND SAILORS ON DUTY AT LOT'S RD POWER STATION HOLD A SERVICES' MATCH



STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONAL MEN ACTING AS COAL HEAVERS AT THE CHELSEA POWER STATION.



THE NEW IMPORTANCE OF WHEELLESS: LIEBNERING-IN BY THE ROADSIDE.



A ROYAL MAIL VAN WHICH WAS OVERTURNED BY IRRESPONSIBLE YOUTHIN OFF THE OLD KENT ROAD



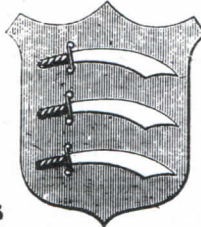
THE ARRIVAL OF A POLICE CAR IN THE NEW KENT ROAD CAUSES A BAND OF YOUNG ROUGHES TO DISPERSE.

The West Essex Gazette

Established 1901

CIRCULATING IN

Epping
Loughton
Theydon Bois



Ongar
Harlow
North Weald

AND THE NEIGHBOURING TOWNS

AND VILLAGES OF WEST ESSEX

Special Strike Edition.

TUESDAY, MAY 11th, 1926.

No. 7.

10 o'clock BULLETIN.

Eastern Division: All quiet at Ipswich and elsewhere. Men were fined from 10s. to £5 for various offences yesterday. Big flour mills running, most of the men being back at work. Plenty of unemployed labour at Yarmouth to discharge cargo.

No further disorder at Plymouth. Division quiet. In connection, however, with Saturday night's hooliganism two men were sentenced to six months' hard labour for inciting to disaffection, and one woman received one month with hard labour for assaulting the police. A man at Weymouth was fined £2 for spreading false reports re mutiny of two regiments, and the Magistrates warned the public that future cases would be severely dealt with.

Bristol: Five hundred girls in pottery works have had to cease work owing to shortage of material. Eighty printers resumed work. Trade Union officials pressing flour mill hands to come out. Those at Spillers & Baker balloted, however, and decided to remain in by 103-13.

South Wales: No serious disorder. A woman got one month for breaking a train window and a girl was sentenced for obscene language to a driver. A man at Newport who pulled down the Government poster re guarantee was fined.

Northampton Mayor has issued a message congratulating the Town on its behaviour. No Special Constables have been sworn in.

L.N.E.R. ran 1,000 passenger trains yesterday. G.W.R. ran about 1,000 trains and 100 goods trains.

Labour gained a seat from the Conservatives on the Chiswick District Council. Polling: Labour 1,041, Conservative 377, Liberal 133.

1 o'clock BULLETIN.

Total number of volunteers registered throughout the country, 323,608.

The King held a Privy Council today at Buckingham Palace.

Mr. A. J. Cook, the Miners' leader, speaking on Sunday said: "Let us show that we know how to maintain order. We have instructed our men to do their own police work and from John O' Groats to Land's End our men are organising themselves. A drunken man, a rowdy man, is your enemy and mine. If I had my way I would shut every public house down. We need clear heads in this struggle." Billingsgate reports fish is cheap and plentiful.

4 o'clock BULLETIN.

Mr. Justice Astbury granted an injunction to the S. and F. N. Union, and in giving judgment his Lordship said the general strike was illegal and did not come under the Strike Act of 1906, and those inciting others to strike were not protected by that Act.

The Manager of a leading London Bank is to be seen sweeping the east-side platform of Liverpool Street.

Of the 26 strikers who left Messrs. Kirbaldy's works at Burnt Mill on Saturday, 24 returned on Monday.

Members of the local N.U.R. play cricket every afternoon on Bell Common, and onlookers applaud the strikers—(of boundaries).

As briefly reported in the stop press column of our last night's final edition, a goods train from Cambridge yesterday afternoon crashed into the rear of a stationary passenger train at Bishop's Stortford Station on the L.N.E.R. The goods engine was derailed and two of the coaches of the passenger train were lifted off the line. The roofing of the platform was also brought down. One man who was leaving the passenger train had his leg broken. When the wreckage was cleared away, the body of a man named Burrell, living at Warwick Road, Bishop's Stortford, was found.

Local Strike Items.

Mr. Reginald Lemon, son of Mr. G. J. Lemon, of Coopersale; and Mr. L. Woodcock, the well-known member of the Epping C.O., are acting as driver and stoker respectively on a Continental train.

Mr. Frank Boulton, of Bower Hill, Epping, is acting as driver on the Underground railway.

Mr. F. L. Kane, the England and Essex cricketer, drove an express car from London to Manchester yesterday.

As a motor lorry, loaded with milk, was running down Goldings Hill, Loughton, last evening, the windscreen worked loose and a back wheel came off. The driver lost control of the vehicle, and it turned completely over. The driver was cut about the head and face and was taken to the surgery of Dr. Pendred, who treated him.

Chief Inspector Walston of the Loughton Specials, has been on duty at Poplar for the past few days and has taken part in several exciting incidents.

Special Constables Coombes and Pinner, seeing two youths on Sunday tampering with the battery of the signal box at Loughton Railway Station, promptly arrested them, but at Stratford Police Court yesterday both youths were discharged with a caution.

Thirty-seven Special Constables were enrolled at Loughton Police Station on Monday evening, bringing the total of the Force in Loughton to over 90. Members of the West Essex Command of the British Fascist, as private citizens, account for 49 of this number. Twelve of their members are also acting as drivers and guards on the local trains.

The young relief booking clerk of Theydon Bois, who is now in charge of Loughton Station Booking Office, has been approached by a picket and threatened. They, however, failed to frighten him from his duty.

Thirty Special Constables were sworn in by Messrs. R. C. Lyall and H. L. Ushborne at Harlow Police Station last night. The same Magistrates will sit again this evening, when it is expected 25 additional Specials will enrol.

When the engravers employed at the Star Process Engraving Company, Lower Moseley Street, Manchester, were called out, they replied that they could not obey "what we consider an illegal demand from the National Council." Told that they were defying the orders of the Council, the members of the Union retorted yesterday that "The legal ruling given by Sir John Simon and the assurance of the Government regarding the legitimacy of our claim to being in full benefit, is, we think, sufficient for the moment."

We have to-day received the following telegram from the Right Hon. Winston Churchill, the M.P. for the Division:—"My best congratulations to you and your staff on maintaining the publication of your paper."

An Appeal for Specials.

In the present emergency a large number of citizens have enrolled themselves in the Special Constabulary for this Division. The number in Epping itself is, however, insufficient to provide adequate guards for the various points and duties.

Supt. Slater will be glad to receive application from those desirous of assisting in these duties and two Magistrates will attend at the Epping Police Station this evening and tomorrow evening at 7 p.m.

These men are required under Category O (for the present emergency). An appeal is made to all who have the necessary time at their disposal to come forward and help in these very necessary duties, which will be arranged, wherever possible, so as not to interfere with any business ties.

The General Council of the T.U.C. has instructed its members to ignore wireless reports, as the B.B.C. is under the control of the Government.

"No Easy Hope."

No easy hope or lie
Shall bring us to our goal,
But iron sacrifice
Of body, will, and soul.
There is but one task for all—
One life for each to give,
What stands if Freedom fall?
Who dies if England live?

RUDYARD KIPLING.

There are 28,000 railwaymen still working on the L.N.E.R. system, and yesterday they were joined by more than 800 additional men.

There were improved train and bus services in practically all districts of London this morning.

The Edinburgh tramway service is back to normal, cars running on all routes.

"The strike has done me a real good turn," declared one man who has secured work with the Great Western Railway. "I have been out of work for a long time, with the exception of occasional odd jobs." He likes the work, immensely, and was doing all he could to make himself useful. The officials were "good fellows," and did all they could to put one on the right road, and the money was better than the "dole."

Tuesday, May 11th, 1926, and until further notice, except Saturdays.

	UP TRAINS.											
	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
Ongar
Epping	..	7 30	7 45	8 15	8 41	9 45	10 55	12 55	1 55	2 51	3 55	..
Loughton	..	7 31	7 41	7 55	8 21	9 1	10 1	11 1	1 11	2 11	3 11	4 11
Liverpool Street	..	8 19	8 30	8 45	9 15	9 45	10 45	11 55	1 55	2 55	3 55	4 55

	DOWN TRAINS.											
	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
Liverpool Street	..	8 30	8 50	9 35	10 10	11 15	12 35	3 35	4 35	5 5	5 35	6 35
Loughton	..	9 6	9 36	10 21	10 59	12 1	1 21	4 21	5 21	5 50	6 24	7 21
Epping	9 50	10 35	11 15	12 15	1 35	4 35	5 35	..	6 41	7 31
Ongar	11 32	6 48	7 38

sheet was no mean achievement under the circumstances.

The *British Worker*, the *Gazette's* rival, was also a notable production, and similarly dedicated to its respective point of view. Its inception had come about in the offices of the socialist *Daily Herald* where, naturally, the workforce had stopped production in sympathy with the strikers. It was felt that the trade union point of view should be represented in a daily paper, and so the permission of the General Council of the TUC was sought for enough men to be allowed to

THE GENERAL STRIKE



THE GOVERNMENT'S PLEDGE.

WORKERS WHO RETURN WILL NOT LOSE UNION BENEFITS OR PENSIONS.

Every man who does his duty by the country and remains at work or returns to work during the present crisis will be protected by the State from the loss of trade union benefits, superannuation allowances, or pensions. His Majesty's Government will take whatever steps are necessary, in Parliament or otherwise, for this purpose.

(Signed) STANLEY BALDWIN.

The above was issued by the British Broadcasting Company on Saturday night.

work to produce such a paper. When this had duly been given, the men set to on what was to be *The British Worker*. However, no sooner were they ready to begin printing than the premises were raided by plain-clothes men who ordered that all work should cease. Infuriated representatives of the paper were despatched to the TUC and Parliament to protest, and after

Left: 'The Workers' Record' No 2.

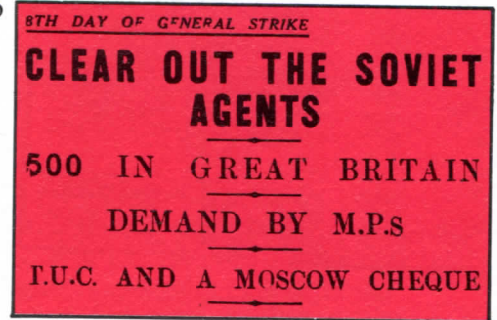
Centre and below: Two major items from an issue of the 'Daily Mail.'

Bottom: Part of the distributing force of the 'Daily Mail.'

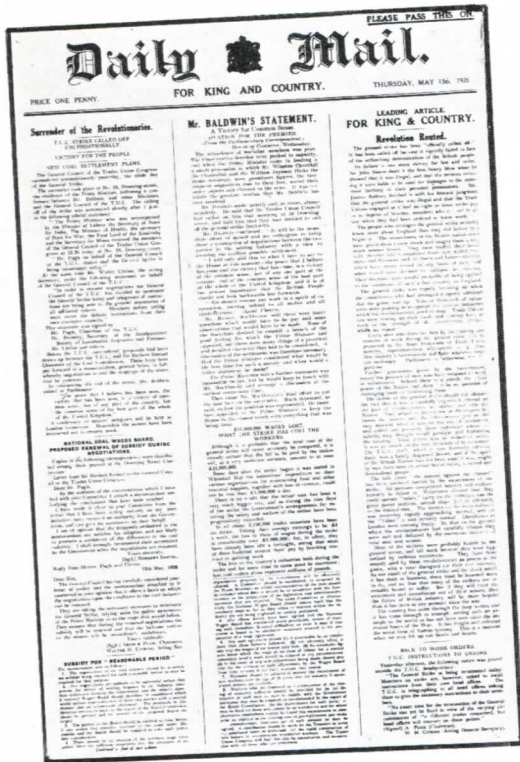
nearly two hours of wrangling, permission to carry on was granted.

The first issue of *The British Worker* on May 5 consisted of 320,000 copies, and this was to rise to 500,000 by the end of the strike. The paper began as an eight-page sheet, but the Government's sly move in commandeering paper forced a reduction to half this size after the first two issues. Because it was the handiwork of professionals, the appearance of *The British Worker* was in many respects superior to that of its 'official' rival, but it suffered because of bias—constantly reassuring trade unionists that all was going well and giving TUC pronouncements preference over actual news. Like its other rivals, and despite the fact that it was the newspaper of the strikers, distribution of the publication was patchy and beset by transportation troubles. In all it ran to eleven issues, the last on May 17.

In hindsight, the newspaper to emerge with most credit through all the tribulations of the strike was the grand old *Times*. As soon as the threatened stoppage emerged on the horizon, the proprietors set about recruiting specialists from other parts of the country and the old age pensioners who had once run the



THE GENERAL STRIKE



Above: *The 'Daily Mail' the day after the strike.*

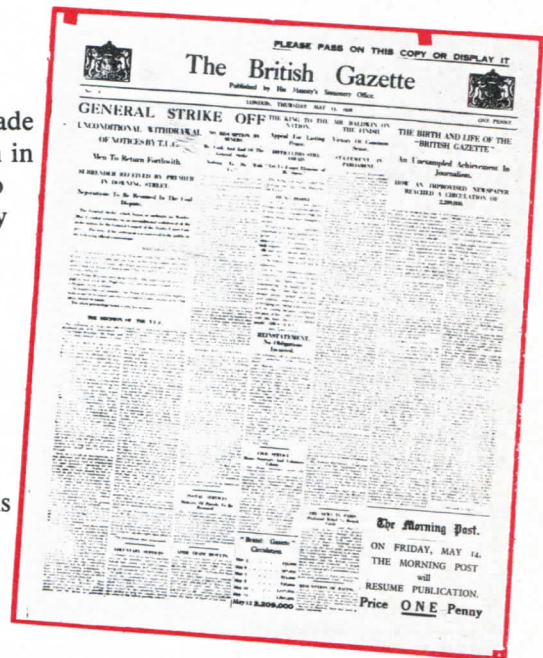
Right: *'The British Gazette' — the official newspaper edited by Winston Churchill.*

paper, so they could move in as the strikers moved out. The transition was not easy, and the first strike-bound edition of *The Times* on May 5 finally appeared as only a single sheet, laboriously printed on multigraph machines, and the second, though in more traditional style, could not go to bed until a fire, which had been deliberately started in the machine room, was put out and repairs effected. Nonetheless, the paper reported the strike day by day fairly and objectively, and still managed to carry the columns of advertisements which formed its traditional front page.

The matter of its distribution was solved in a quite unique way: the members of society who were its usual readers turned up at Printing House Square to serve as packers and lorry drivers, and their ranks for most of the time glittered with lords and ladies not to mention a whole galaxy of public figures and sportsmen. *The Times* also achieved a landmark in its own history by producing, on May 12, the first ever afternoon edition of the paper—announcing the end of the strike and carrying a leader so beset with printer's errors that one wonders whether the compositor was drunk with elation or something much stronger!

No remarks on the press during the General Strike could close without a mention of the *Daily Mail*, which in one or two quarters was actually blamed for having precipitated the strike. On Monday May 3 when the Government was still negotiating with the TUC, the editor of the *Mail* wrote an editorial attacking the idea of any strike. When the paper's NATSOPA members saw this, they refused to continue production, considering that the article encouraged strike breaking. News of this 'mini-strike' was quickly brought to the ears of the Government, and naturally provided a convenient excuse for them to lambast the TUC yet again for encouraging strike action by 'overt acts which have already taken place, including gross interference with the freedom of the press.' Needless to say, the trade unionists knew nothing of this storm in a teacup and had certainly played no part in their members' action. In any event, matters had gone beyond the point where any single action could either speed up or slow down the impending General Strike. That was inevitable, *Daily Mail* leader or no.

The one note of humour in connection with this trivial incident apparently occurred when the King, George V, was informed by his private secretary that the *Mail* had been stopped from printing. 'That's all right,' he is said to have replied, 'We don't take the *Daily Mail*.'



THE GENERAL STRIKE CANCELLED

"VICTORY FOR COMMON SENSE."
National Rejoicing Over the Dramatic Decision.
MINERS TO REFER IT TO DELEGATES.

At one o'clock yesterday the message was flashed over the wires:

"STRIKE CALLED OFF."

None who saw the three words flicked off on the tape machine will soon forget their thrill of joy. It was like a declaration of peace after war.

The happy news travelled over the country with amazing speed. Shortly afterwards the Government issued from Downing Street the following

TO OUR READERS.
The Authenticity OF THE "Daily Chronicle" Announcement.

The hopeful announcement which "The Daily Chronicle" made yesterday was right. The general strike is at an end. To-day the nation breathes with a sense of relief that it is allowed to take up again the tasks of normal life. Though it cannot be said that it is yet at ease after these nine days of unsettlement, turmoil, and distress, at least it is getting back to work, and preparing for a healthy resumption of everyday duties and pleasures. To those who read "The Daily Chronicle" yesterday the news of the calling off of the strike did not come as a surprise. We were the only paper in England which indicated that this

MINERS' REPLY.
"MUST REJECT PROPOSALS STOPPAGE MAY GO ON."

The executive of the Miners' Federation remained in session at their headquarters in Russell-square yesterday afternoon until they adjourned until this morning. The following official statement was made by Mr. A. J. Cook, Secretary of the Federation, and was described as the miners' reply to the proposals put before them by the T.U.C. on Tuesday night.

In view of the statement made by the T.U.C. of draft proposals received after they had met Sir Herbert Samuel, the miners discussed these draft proposals yesterday and passed the following resolution:—
The Miners' Executive have given careful and patient consideration to the draft proposals prepared by the T.U.C. negotiating committee and endorsed by the General Council as representing what they call "the best terms which can be obtained to settle the present crisis in the coal industry."
The Miners' Executive regret the fact that no opportunity for consideration was afforded the accredited representatives of the Miners' Federation on the negotiating committee in the preparation of the draft, or in the discussion on May 11 leading thereto. At best the proposals imply a reduction of the wage rates of a large number of mine workers, which is contrary to the repeated declaration of the Miners' Federation, and which

TEX
Subsidy
Re
NAT

The rumour activity of industrial tramping by the G
A PLI
Steps to St
Mit
The letter Samuel to the Trades Union led to the strike, was as
Dear Mr P
As the ot

Right: *The end is announced by the 'Daily Chronicle.'*

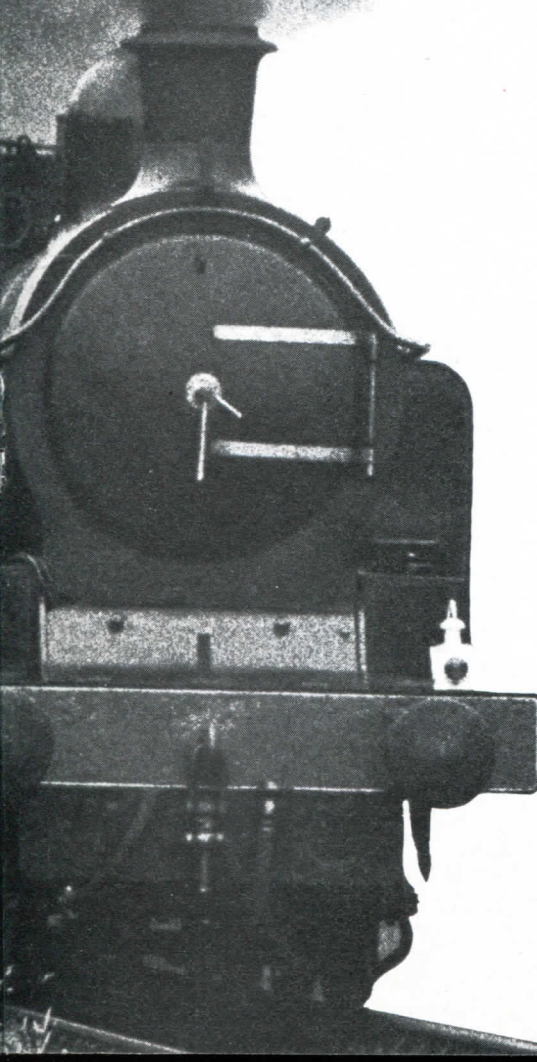
RAILWAYS AND THE GENERAL STRIKE

As the various branches of the railways expressed solidarity with the miners by coming out almost wholeheartedly on strike, trades union leaders felt confident of a complete stranglehold on transport systems. But by the mid-Twenties private motorised transport had become a strike-breaking force to be reckoned with, and this proved to be a relatively successful weapon for the Government. Attempts to run the railways with volunteer labour, however, proved virtually disastrous

ACCORDING TO THE first issue of the *British Worker*, the Trades Union Council newspaper issued during the General Strike of 1926, 'the strike early laid its paralysing hand on the great railway station at Carlisle, where seven important lines converge, forming a railway hub second in importance to none in the country. Within a few hours the usually animated platforms were deserted and desolate. Passengers arriving early in the morning could get no farther by train, but some were able to proceed in hired motorcars to Glasgow or Edinburgh, paying as much as £25 a time.' The stoppage of rail transport was complete.

The origins of the General Strike are complex and need not greatly concern us here. Suffice it to say that what had started out as an internal dispute within the sorely troubled coal industry had gradually snowballed into a full-scale confrontation between the TUC on one side and the government on the other. Neither party had intervened willingly but both found themselves obliged to do so by a variety of moral, legal and political pressures brought to bear upon them. But in one important respect their positions differed. The government had long prepared for a national labour stoppage. The TUC had not. Although the idea of a general strike had gained a certain currency among advanced and militant political left-wingers, it had never been taken seriously by the actual union leadership. When they found themselves in charge of one, therefore, they were almost paralysed by their own trepidation and hamstrung by their lack of foresight.

Government preparations had included arrangements for an emergency transport system organised by road commissioners and local haulage committees. The political and economic significance of maintaining communications had been grasped from the outset. The TUC also took the point but simply assumed that a railway stoppage would paralyse the country. The role of motorised transport had been completely underestimated. In the event it was to prove the government's most decisive weapon. Drivers were recruited by the thousand, largely from ex-officers and undergraduates and mostly through the offices of the officially inspired Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies. It was to become only gradually apparent, however, that their contribution would inevitably lead to the failure of the strike.



Initially, at least, the unions could congratulate themselves on a magnificent display of labour solidarity. On the London Midland & Scottish Railway, for instance, only 207 out of more than 15,000 engine drivers reported for work on the first day of the strike. The proportion of firemen was even smaller, 62 out of 14,000. More than forty per cent of the salaried staff came out as well. As a result, passenger services were a mere 3.8 per cent of normal on May 5. On the last full day of the strike, May 11, they were still only 22 per cent. Freight services were even worse hit, one per cent worked at the start of the strike and three per cent at the end. The Great Western and the Southern systems fared a little better, reaching nearly 20 per cent of normal on passenger services by the end of the strike. Nationally speaking, the railways were all but totally paralysed for the first four days of the strike. On the fifth day the *British Gazette*, the government counterpart of the *British Worker*, was proud to announce that nearly three thousand trains had run the previous day. It omitted to state that that was less than ten per cent of normal. The Underground fared rather better, achieving 71 out of a normal 315 trains.

**‘One had a small bucketful of the stuff
and a stick for smearing it on, but it
was like trying to smear on a piece
of indiarubber’**

In retrospect, the General Strike has attracted its fair share of myths. It was remarkably non-violent, considering the numbers involved and the depths of emotion stirred by the issue at stake, but there were nevertheless more than 5,000 arrests for violence and sedition, as well as serious rioting in many industrial towns in the north of England and Scotland. To suggest that the whole affair was entirely peaceful would be absurd, but the myth survives. So also does the legend of the volunteers who are supposed to have mastered the complexities of railway operation overnight. For weeks after the strike the newspapers printed pictures of eager young men, clad in gaudy sweaters and plus-four suits, loading mail-bags or manning signal boxes, while middle-aged businessmen fulfilled a life-time's ambition and lived out their fantasies as begrimed and sweaty footplatemen.

But driving an engine calls for greater skill than driving a car. It was one thing to allow medical students to career around in buses to the delight of their friends and the terror of their luckless passengers, it was quite another to turn them loose on the railways. Reading complex signals or threading one's way through a tangled mass of track and points called for a lifetime's experience and expertise and to maintain a head of steam on a gradient was a matter of fine judgment, as many of the volunteers were to learn the hard way. Just as the short-lived antics of burly university sportsmen at the docks had afforded free amusement for the dockers who watched them with genial contempt, so the fumbling and hesitancy of the volunteer railwaymen gave the strikers some occasion for mirth. The *Westminster Worker*, a strike-bulletin issued locally in the central London area, dryly announced to its readers that 'We understand that luncheon cars are to be put on trains running between Westminster and Blackfriars'.

Some of the volunteers' escapades seem to have been positively hair-raising. It was, apparently, not uncommon for drivers who had 'taken a wrong turning', simply to reverse up to where they thought they had gone wrong and start again. More often, however, it was a case of continuous stop-go. An American journalist reported the following incident to Hamilton Fyfe, editor of the *British Worker*:

He travelled from Warwick Avenue tube station to Baker street. The first hitch was a stop in the tunnel, which put all the lights out. When the alarm caused by that had subsided, the train crawled along until Baker Street was reached. There, the American, who was standing on the platform of the car next to the locomotive, heard an agonised voice calling to the conductor: 'I say, Bill, I can't

Elderly volunteers maintain the tracks.
CENTRAL PRESS PHOTOS





start the darned thing. Give me the instructions.' The conductor handed him a clip of leaflets; in a few minutes a buzzing sound from the locomotive began suddenly and as suddenly ended. Then the voice again: 'Bill, I've touched the wrong handle and the brake's gone fut. Send for the chief engineer . . .'

Baker Street is also immortalised in the recollections of a young girl drama student who wrote the following account of her journey home to her mother:

'There, everybody carried your luggage for you and is awfully nice. It is perfectly mad to hear, instead of "Arrer 'n' Uxbridge", a beautiful Oxford voice crying "Harrow and Uxbridge train". Ticket collectors say thank you very much; one guard of a train due to depart, an immaculate youth in plus-fours, waved a green flag. Nothing happened. He waved again and blew a whistle, then said to the driver in injured tones, "I say, you might go". It's all very jolly and such an improvement on the ordinary humdrum state of things.'

Maintenance, of course, was sadly neglected, it was unglamorous, attracted few volunteers and was poorly organised. As the strike lasted only nine days, however, the neglect never became a factor of major importance. If the experiences of one volunteer platelayer are anything to go by though, things might well have become serious had the stoppage lasted much longer. 'We spent one day in a dreary fen between March and Ely,' he recollected, 'shovelling granite chips between the metals. By the end of the day we were so blistered that there was no question of turning up again next day'. An undergraduate who later became headmaster of a well-known school had happier memories to record of maintenance work on the Underground:

'Our work was done by gangs of four under a non-striking officer. We used to leave a cache of beer at each station. When we reached the end we waited on the platform for the train that had brought us to go home and for the current to be turned off, and then we collected the tools from a little shed a few yards down the tunnel. To begin with we collected the tools without waiting for the current to be turned off, but after I had, on one occasion, slipped off the platform and landed astraddle of the live rail, we became more cautious. Current off, we proceeded, two down each tunnel, knocking in with a sledgehammer any of the wooden blocks which had fallen out or seemed likely to do so.

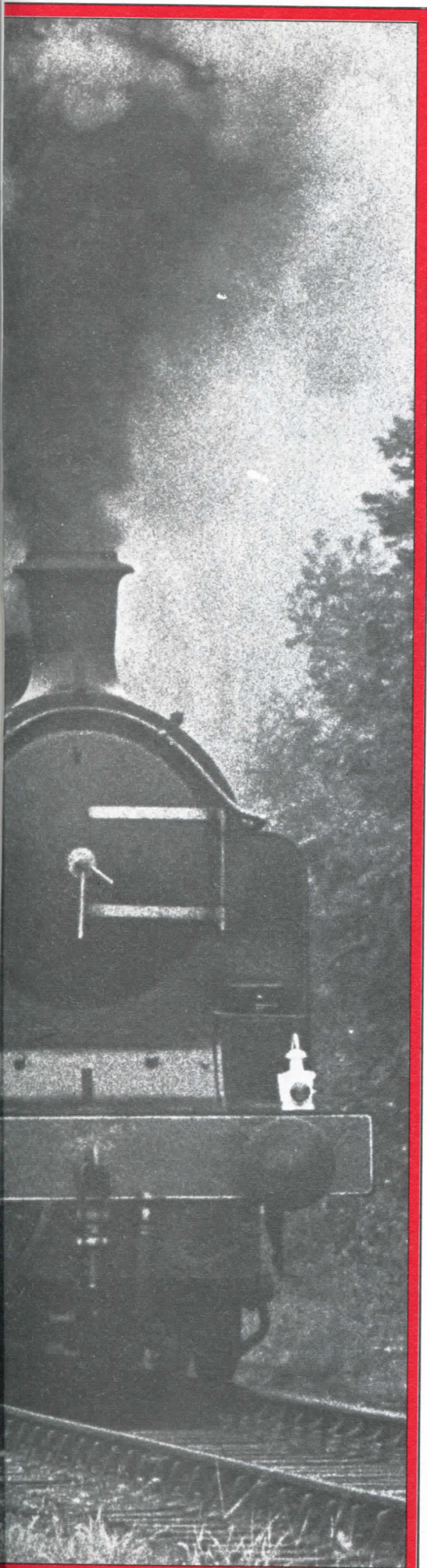
Even so, about 45,000 men, nearly a quarter of the membership of the NUR, had not been re-employed by October, nearly six months after the end of the strike

'This was easy enough—more unpleasant was greasing the check-rails, which involves use of the most appallingly stiff grease. One had a small bucketful of the stuff and a stick for smearing it on, but it was like trying to smear on a piece of indiarubber. However, every station was a resting-place, complete with beer. We finished about 3.30 or 4 o'clock in the morning and were taken to Earl's Court where a vast building was used by about 500 to 1,000 volunteers and where the canteen was run, to the best of my recollection, by glamorous debutantes.'

There were many minor accidents on the railways during the General Strike, but only one serious one and that the result of the single known instance of deliberate sabotage. Stone-throwing at trains was common enough and passengers learned to pass vulnerable stretches of line standing on the seats to avoid broken glass, but this could be accepted with relative good humour. Fortunately the single, and successful, case of sabotage, resulted in no fatalities. The lifting of a rail at Cramlington, near Newcastle, resulted in the derailment of the engine and one coach of the celebrated 'Flying Scotsman'. Several passengers were taken to hospital for treatment.

On May 12, the return to work was ordered by the unions and the railways faced a special crisis of their own. The railway unions, whose support of the whole general strike undertaking had been considered vital, had in fact only





decided to support it after much agonising hesitation. Union leaders realised that their men were in many cases more easily replaceable than the miners they were backing up and would, moreover, be obliged to bear in person the brunt of the public's displeasure. And the railway companies had made their attitude quite clear. The GWR, for instance, had warned its employees that their means of living and personal interests were involved and the LNER had issued a notice to the effect that striking railwaymen would be regarded as having acted in breach of contract. It was scarcely surprising, therefore, that the railway companies should have used the unions' surrender to the government as an opportunity for settling old scores by victimising activists.

The companies' attitude was, however, not without its ironic aspect, given the attitude of J H Thomas, leader of the National Union of Railwaymen. A dedicated social climber with the highest political ambitions, he had withdrawn the support of the railwaymen on a technicality when the miners had tried to force a showdown in 1921. In the last-minute negotiations before the outbreak of the General Strike he had played a leading part in the effort to find a face-saving formula for reconciliation. He was, by temperament, a man who shrank from conflict—he even gave his life-story the title of *A Life for Unity*. But it is hard to believe that he was not acting throughout with at least one eye to the future, determined to emerge with enhanced stature in the eyes of the establishment as a 'responsible' statesman of labour. As spokesman for the TUC negotiating team, he had addressed the union delegates assembled in the Memorial Hall to pledge their support for strike action if need be. 'I have never in my life,' he said, 'begged and pleaded for peace as I have begged and pleaded today.' It was probably true but not in the sense in which his audience understood it.

Thomas continued to press for a resumption of negotiations through the nine days and was, indeed, largely responsible for the unions' abject capitulation. All the more ironic, therefore, that it should be the railwaymen who faced the most ferocious anti-union backlash in the aftermath of the strike. The conditions on which they were to be re-employed were as follows:

1. Those employees of the railway companies who have gone out on strike to be taken back to work as soon as traffic officers and work can be found for them. The principle to be followed in reinstating to be seniority in each grade at each station, depot or office.
2. The trade unions admit that in calling a strike they committed a wrongful act against the companies, and agree that the companies do not by reinstatement surrender their legal right to claim damages arising out of the strike from strikers and others responsible.
3. The unions undertake (a) not again to instruct their members to strike without previous negotiation with the company; (b) to give no support of any kind to their members to take any unauthorised action; and (c) not to encourage supervisory employees in the special class to take part in any strike.
4. The companies intimate that, arising out of the strike it might be necessary to remove certain persons to other positions, but no such persons' salaries or wages will be reduced.

The last provision covered companies demoting signalmen to station porters and the unions had no choice but to accept. Among the many concessions they were obliged to make was the suspension of the 'guaranteed week' which assured their members of a basic wage. Even so, about 45,000 men, nearly a quarter of the membership of the NUR, had not been re-employed by October, nearly six months after the end of the strike.

Analysing the failure of the General Strike in the *Observer*, J L Garvin, the famous editor, asserted that the defeat of the TUC had been inevitable from the outset, 'Because its whole system of thought is stupid and out of date and years behind the progress of modern science and mechanism. Nearly twelve months ago, when the plan was threatened in earnest, we told Socialist Labour what would happen. We agreed with them that transport was the key, but we told them that in an age of motor traffic multiplying year by year on every road, they can never seize that key.'

A motor car manufacturer put it more simply in an interview with the *Daily Mail*, 'motoring has once and for all knocked the possibility of a serious transport strike on the head. With half a million capable motor drivers in the country it is an anachronism'.

PUBLIC FIGURES AND STRIKE DIARY

FRIDAY APRIL 30th

Government subsidy to the coal industry ceased. Meeting of Trades Union Executive at midnight at the Memorial Hall in Farringdon.

SATURDAY MAY 1st

Miners' delegates met and later the Miners' Executive had a meeting with the General Council of the TUC. Meanwhile a state of emergency was declared by Royal Proclamation. The General Council of the TUC decided to call a general strike at midnight the following Monday, unless agreement with the Government were to be reached before then.

SUNDAY MAY 2nd

While negotiations were taking place between the Government and the TUC General Council, the latter released a manifesto stating reasons behind the decision to call a general strike.

MONDAY MAY 3rd

It was announced that the talks between TUC General Council and the Government had broken down. The Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald and Lloyd George spoke in the House of Commons.

TUESDAY MAY 4th

House of Lords discussed the mounting problem.

WEDNESDAY MAY 5th

In the morning the British Gazette, and in the afternoon the British Worker, first appeared. The House of Commons discussed the Emergency Powers Act of 1920.

WEDNESDAY MAY 12th

Sir Herbert Samuel sent a memo on the coal industry to the General Council of the TUC, which then visited Downing Street and informed the Prime Minister of their decision to terminate the strike. The following day the British Gazette ceased publication, but it was not until the 17th of May that the British Worker was closed down.

This Page: Below: Trades Union General Council in session at Easter Lodge, February 1926

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

Facing Page: Top left: The 'North Mail' after the strike

Top right: Baldwin crosses the Horse Guards

ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS

Bottom: The Miners' Delegate Conference at the Kingsway Hall, November 1926

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY





MINERS

Above: A game of cards passes the time near Prestonpans colliery, Edinburgh.

CENTRAL PRESS PHOTOS

2 Pumpmen engaged in flood prevention in the Rhondda Valley during the strike.

THE MANSELL COLLECTION

Below: Miners go back to work at Newdigate colliery after the strike.

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

3 Students give the Royal Navy a hand at Neasden Power Station.

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

1. The arrival at a terminus of miners' children who have come to London to be cared for.

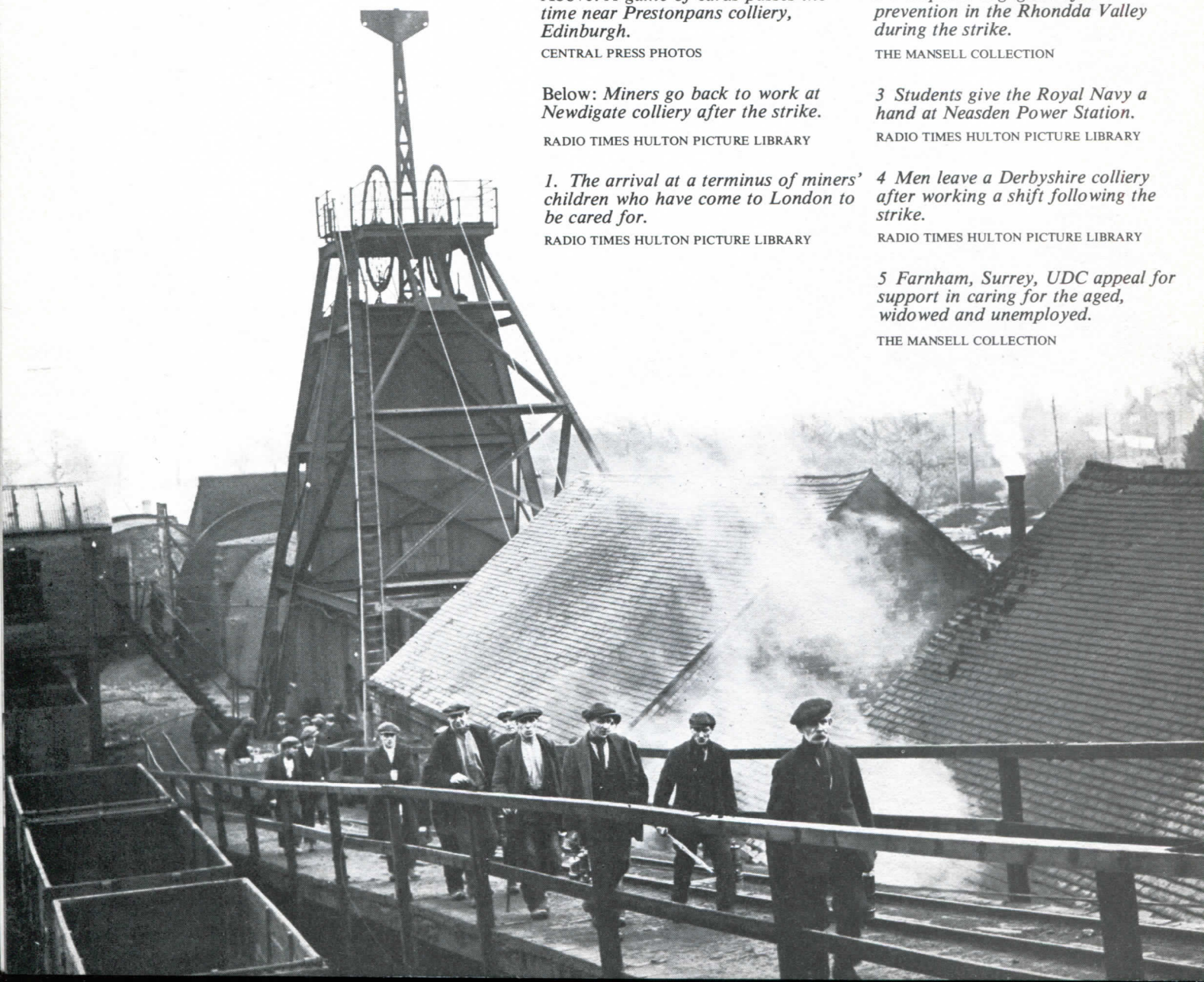
RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

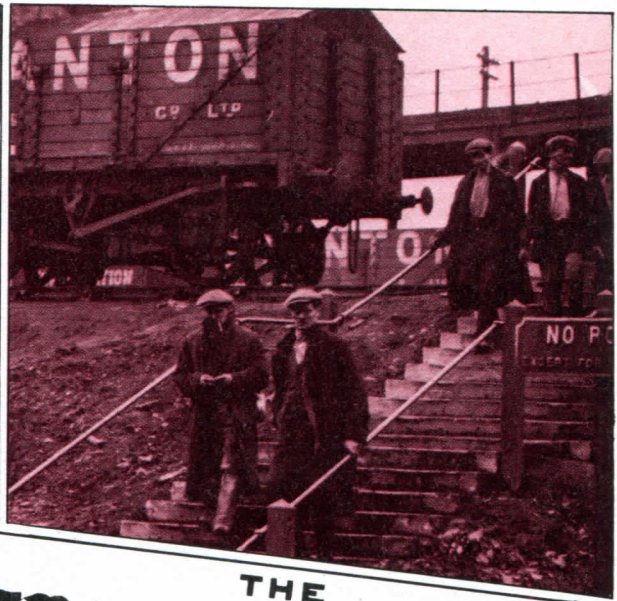
4 Men leave a Derbyshire colliery after working a shift following the strike.

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

5 Farnham, Surrey, UDC appeal for support in caring for the aged, widowed and unemployed.

THE MANSELL COLLECTION





5

THE GOAL STRIKE

THE Members of the Urban District Council have arranged to SUPPLY COALS to the Aged, Widows, and Unemployed. In order to supplement this effort, I am appealing to the public for subscriptions to enable us to REDUCE THE PRICE for the Coals so supplied, to those we wish to assist, to about the amount paid under normal conditions before the Strike.

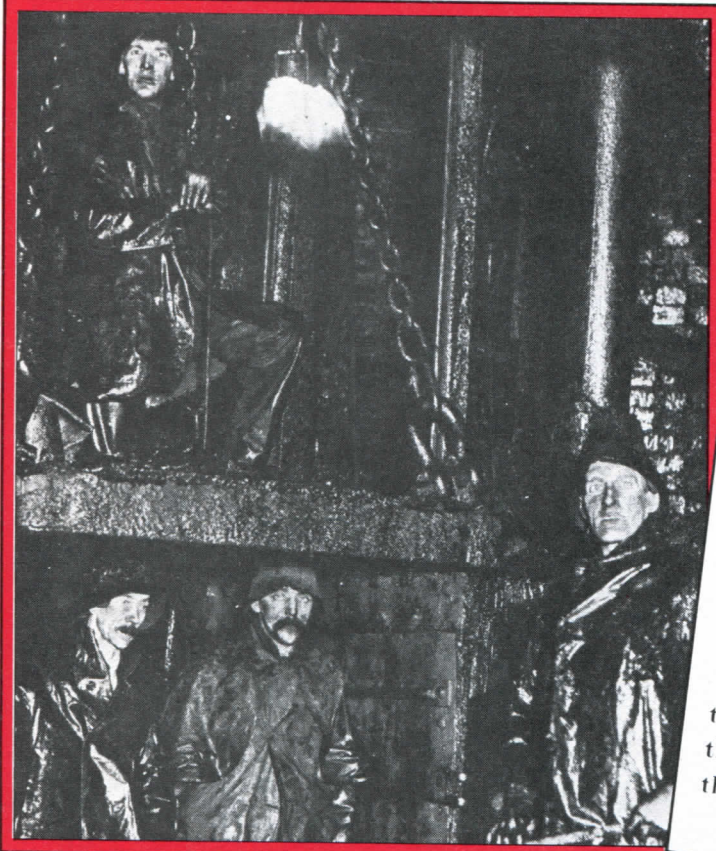
Subscriptions will be thankfully received by any Member of the Urban District Council.

I shall be pleased to give One Guinea to start the Fund.

Even if the Strike terminated within the next few days, or even a week, the price of Coals would not be reduced to anything like normal conditions for some considerable time.

I therefore hope that this appeal will be met by the public in a liberal spirit, to enable us to assist those who, through no fault of their own, have had their burden greatly increased.

GEO. FRED. JUMIEU.



**THE GENERAL
STRIKE**

THE BOOTLEG PRESS

By G L WARING.

This is the personal account of one newspaper worker's experiences during the General Strike. News about what was happening throughout the British Isles during the strike reached the general public in a variety of ways. By radio and telephone, by news services and, most often, by speculation, rumour and half-truths of the kind that spread like wildfire during such precarious times

Facing page: POPPERFOTO

Below: *Women get an uncomfortable lift to their offices.*

POPPERFOTO

I doubt, though, whether many groups of people were supplied with their news in a more unlikely manner than those in the western area of Essex where I was working during the General Strike. For here the gap in the supply of up-to-date





THE GENERAL STRIKE

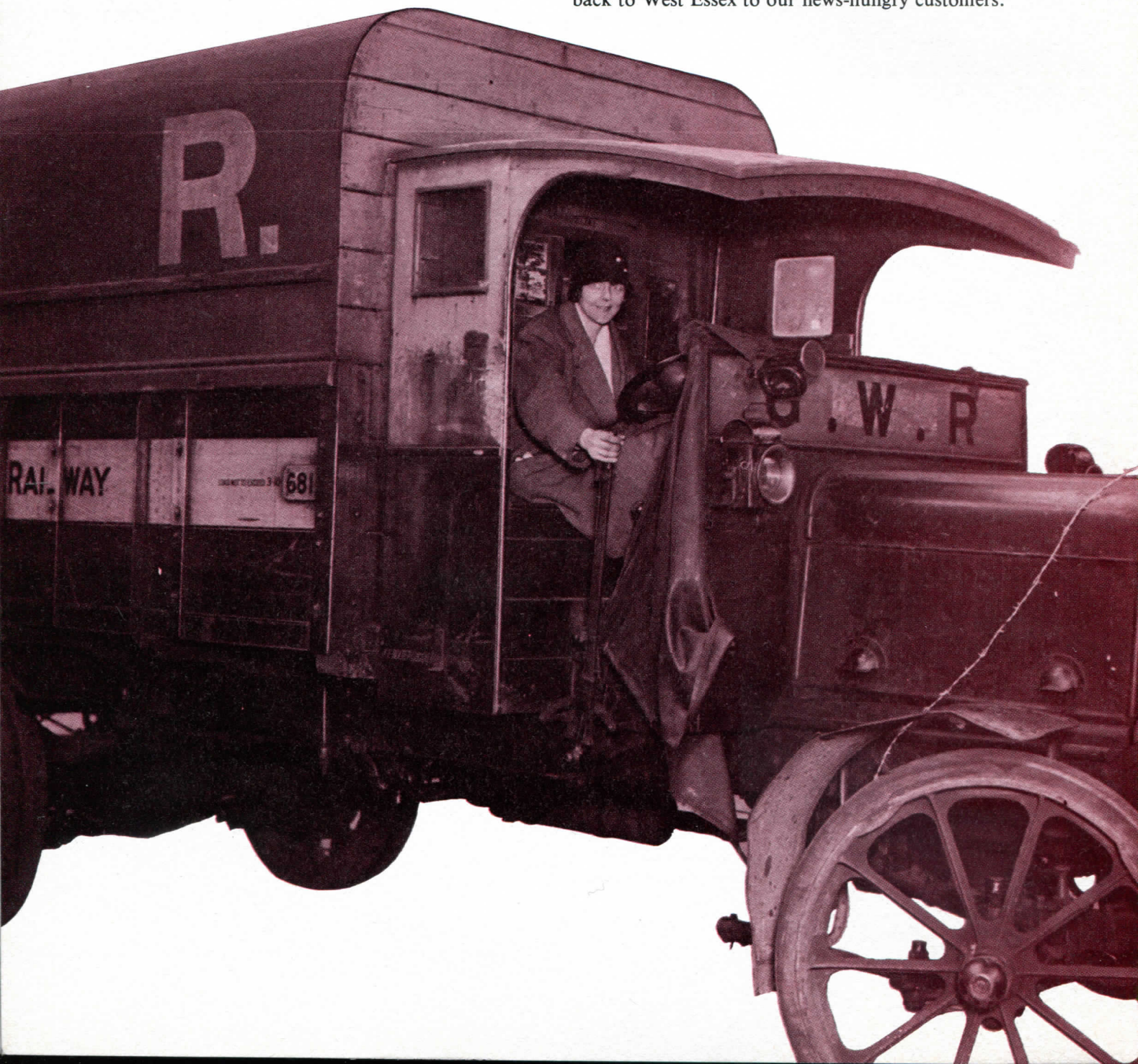
information caused by the virtual closure of the daily newspapers was bridged by a portly, sixty-year-old vicar with Churchillian determination, and a frail but ambitious cub reporter keen to make his mark—me. We were the incongruous partnership who undertook the collection and distribution of the single page news sheets produced during the period in place of the regular dailies. And it was not without a good deal of risk to ourselves that we managed to get a fresh supply of news about the state of the nation every twenty-four hours—without missing a single ‘deadline’ during the entire duration of the strike.

Our task ‘Mission—News’ all started when the General Strike became imminent and the Vicar of Epping, which is a delightful country town in the heart of West Essex, Canon Martin Olivier, together with the proprietor of the *West Essex Gazette*, Mr Alfred Davis, put their heads together and came up with the idea of running their own ‘newspaper train’ when information was cut off by the strikers.

The Vicar agreed to make his old, but sturdy, Armstrong Siddeley car available for transportation, and Mr Davis, who was my boss, volunteered my services to accompany Canon Olivier to and from London. There we were to pick up any newspapers which the newspaper proprietors had managed to publish, plus copies of the government daily, *The British Gazette*. Then we had to make all haste back to West Essex to our news-hungry customers.

Below: A lady volunteer lorry driver at Paddington station.

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY



As I remember clearly, even fifty years on, it was a daily journey which provided news in more senses than one.

The car rides from Epping to the London headquarters of W H Smith & Son at Strand House started each morning in semi-darkness at about five o'clock from the Parish Church with a fervent prayer—at least from the budding reporter, whose relish for the job became less certain with each mile of the Vicar's erratic driving!

The first part of the journey was always peaceful and pleasant enough as we passed through Epping Forest. But once into Stratford and approaching the Mile End Road, the atmosphere changed and the threat of danger was constant.

Groups of strikers were lolling about on street corners or crossing and re-crossing the road to examine all vehicles going to and from London. Most of them looked peaceful enough, but there was a grim determination on their faces which gave me a rough idea of how those stage-coach drivers in the Wild West must have felt when crossing Indian territory!



Above: A City-gent examines the damage.

CENTRAL PRESS PHOTOS

The Vicar agreed to make his old, but sturdy, Armstrong Siddeley car available as transportation

The Canon, however, looked completely unperturbed. I didn't at first realise his secret. Although protection against violence in the form of the law and others—including the Army—was apparent, no one looked for trouble. But the men were watching closely for anyone who might be regarded as a strike breaker.

To counter the threat of injury, or damage, from any aggressive elements, the Vicar had thought to make sure his insignia of office, his dog collar, could be clearly seen—and it proved its worth on more than one occasion.

As, for instance, when a group of strikers stopped us on a return journey to Epping. We were laden with news sheets and *British Gazettes* stacked on the back seat—on top of which I was nervously perched. One of the strikers demanded to see Canon Olivier's union ticket, but when he replied that he did not have one, the men began shouting that we had better get out as they were going to tip the vehicle over and destroy its contents.

I don't mind admitting I was shaking in my shoes as the men got hold of the car, and another of their colleagues came and thrust his face in at the driver's window. But immediately he spotted that white, starched ministerial collar his aggressiveness turned to docility. The others soon followed suit, and in a moment more, with a doff of their caps and a 'Sorry Sir', they allowed us to drive on. What might have happened but for that dog collar, I wouldn't like to think!

On other occasions we had to dodge bricks and pieces of lumber that were hurled at the car as we bounced and bumped over cobblestones.

Fortunately the throwers displayed a doubtful accuracy and this, combined with the erratic driving of the Canon, quite successfully spared us and our



THE GENERAL STRIKE

rusty vehicle from serious damage.

When we arrived back we invariably found a waiting crowd of people thirsting for the 'Stop Press' on the latest strike development. Not many folk had their own radios in those days, and in any case there was more news in the small papers we did bring back.

Publication of the 'West Essex Gazette' for whom I worked in between my 'bootlegging' to and from London, was also in the nature of an adventure. While the strike raged everywhere here was a group of printers, an editor and I determined to produce a local news sheet at any cost.

And in one case there was a cost—the brand new bowler hat of the editor, Charles Waller. When gathering news it was always his habit to wear this bowler; it was also his habit to take it off and lay it down while collecting any news item.

And that's just what he did when, ever determined to show that life was going on as usual during the strike, he attended a Women's Institute Rummage Sale, and put it down on a stall. When he turned round again it had gone—sold for ninepence! And he never got it back. Such was the price of getting a strike item at a rummage sale!

During the period of the strike, the 'Gazette' became a daily, national and local news sheet. For this the national news was obtained from a Press Agency over the telephone, including the latest about the strike, and this was extended by the use of local news, especially where it concerned local people whether on strike or working to carry on the emergency services.

To the editor and staff, including the printers, it was a case of adopting the 'Daily Mirror' motto of 'publish and be damned'. And we did. Every day while the strike lasted there was the 'local' on sale at breakfast time and every day the same rush of people to buy it up.

So it was that the people of West Essex got their national news and their local paper almost as soon as they would have got them in more normal times—but I doubt if anyone ever gave a thought as to how it had come about.

For the proprietor of the 'Gazette' it was a generous gesture, for there was no income from advertisements. Just the thought that he had provided a much appreciated service.

As for the Vicar, his trips to London were in a sense an errand of mercy for a news-starved district. And me? It certainly

meant a far too early start in the morning—but the feeling of achievement plus some very exciting incidents made it a truly unforgettable start to my fifty years in the world of newspapers.

Below: A London General Omnibus Company bus, with a policeman escort and a '3d any distance' fare.

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

