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ABOUT THIS BULLETIN

This bulletin is intended for trade union, labour and cooperative editors and education officers. It contains information about the new communities of Europe and the contribution and role which trade unionists and socialists on the Continent are making to them.

It is produced approximately six times a year by Britain in Europe. Its object is to provide authoritative material on European developments for use in the publications and educational activities of the Labour Movement.

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The Editors will be pleased to supply photographs for publication and to provide additional facts and special articles as required.

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The Editors would also be pleased to receive from readers news items illustrating British Labour's views on Europe for inclusion in future issues.

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Britain in Europe is an organisation of industry and commerce concerned with questions of European unity. The trade union members include: Alan Birch, Frank Cousins, Harry Douglass, Sidney Greene, Douglas Houghton M.P., Ernest Jones, Sir William Lawther, William A. Morrison, Ronald Smith, Sir Thomas Williamson, Tom Yates. All communications should be addressed to Britain in Europe Ltd. at 61, Catherine Place, London S.W.1.

THE TRADE UNION VOICE IN
EUROPEAN ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

by Charles Ford

Secretary of the Joint Trade Union
Advisory Committee to the Organisation
for European Economic Co-operation

Twenty-seven million trade unionists, nearly all of Europe's organised workers, members of non-Communist unions, are represented in the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) by the Joint Trade Union Advisory Committee (JTUAC). The TUC is represented by Mr. W. Webber, General Council Member and General Secretary of the Transport Salaried Staff Association.

Since the war the habit of international co-operation between European governments has grown enormously, and now embraces almost every field of industrial and economic policy. Nowadays most governments clearly recognise that the measures taken in domestic economic affairs often have major repercussions for other countries. It is therefore imperative to co-ordinate policies in the interests of all. OEEC is the chief instrument for bringing together all the countries of Western Europe.

JTUAC serves to ensure that the collective trade union viewpoint is always considered before decisions are reached. It protests against policies harmful to workers, and recommends international action when governments are slow to act jointly. Recent examples are provided by the depression from which Europe is now emerging and the continuing coal crisis.

Every year OEEC prepares a report on economic trends and makes general recommendations to governments. JTUAC has been highly critical of some of these, stressing the need to maintain full employment as a key objective. This year's report showed a considerable improvement, placing as it did emphasis on the need to achieve "an adequate rate of economic growth" and questioning the great dependence on monetary policy in some countries to the neglect of other measures of stabilisation following the last boom. While endorsing these aspects of the report, JTUAC has shown dissatisfaction over the lack of vigour shown by some governments in pursuing expansionist policies.

It pointed out that wage demands are not in normal circumstances inflationary and, indeed, have the effect of encouraging the installation of labour-saving devices and new techniques which stimulate

higher productivity. JTUAC has constantly urged OEEC to concentrate its efforts upon encouraging higher productivity rather than to be excessively occupied by inflation-fear which acts as a brake upon adequate rates of growth. It has also called attention to the fact that nowadays Western European economies have a much bigger influence on the fortunes of primary producing countries in Africa, Asia and elsewhere than the US economy has.

Of all industries, coal-mining has probably suffered most from the recent depression. An added problem has been the growing competition from oil and, on the continent, natural gas. JTUAC, basing its case on the resolutions of the International Miners Federations, which are affiliated to it, has strongly argued in favour of a comprehensive coal policy before the OEEC Energy and Coal Committees. The only possible solution, JTUAC representatives held, is to be found in the context of an ambitious economic expansion in Western Europe. Contrary to the all too widespread view that coal will have a sharply declining importance, JTUAC has insisted that it will remain the main source of energy in Europe for a long time to come. Therefore it is necessary to assure long-term coal supplies by various measures to tide the industry over the present period, notably through shorter working hours and conditions, so that there will not be an acute shortage of miners when demand for coal recovers. In short, the trade unions have demanded a policy exactly opposite to the one at present being pursued.

Besides advancing trade union interests on such outstanding issues as these, JTUAC performs a vital role - all too often overlooked - in the specialised industrial committees of OEEC, such as for machinery, maritime transport, pulp and paper, and manpower etc. Close relations have been established with the European Nuclear Energy Agency, a new organ of OEEC. JTUAC has a special concern to ensure that adequate safety standards are adopted in the development of nuclear energy industries.

One of the most valuable of OEEC's organs has been the European Productivity Agency, a body set up in 1953. Lately its future has been hanging in the balance because governments are committed to finance it only until July 1960. JTUAC is anxious to see it established on a firmer basis, with an expanded programme, provided that the Trade Union Division of the Agency is not weakened. JTUAC has warned that its support for the Agency cannot be counted upon irrespective of the importance given to trade union views.

The routine work of OEEC has been overshadowed by the negotiations for a European Economic Association (Free Trade Area) embracing all members of OEEC. This project, it will be recalled, was stimulated

by the creation of the European Economic Community (the Common Market).

Until the negotiations broke down in November 1958, JTUAC maintained close liaison at the highest level in order to obtain the latest information as to progress made. Regular meetings were also held at which the necessity was urged of incorporating full employment guarantees in any treaty and of establishing institutions with adequate powers in the fields of social policy and investment.

A severe setback to the cause of European economic co-operation was suffered when the negotiations failed, more especially since the Common Market has begun to take practical shape. The division between OEEC countries has become even more sharply defined with the project for a Little Free Trade Area comprising Britain, the Scandinavian countries, Austria, Switzerland and Portugal, and with the probable association of Greece and Turkey with the Common Market. What is the future of OEEC in these circumstances? What scope will there be for practical trade union intervention in the framing of economic policy for Western Europe as a whole?

JTUAC has from the first been alive to these problems. It has repeatedly called for a resumption of negotiations for a European Economic Association. At present the outlook is admittedly not bright. But, it is urgent that a satisfactory solution should be found.

To sum up: the past year has witnessed a marked increase in JTUAC's tasks and responsibilities in its relations with OEEC. The value of this work needs no underlining. Obviously, where the framing of policy by a number of countries is concerned, it is essential for trade unionists to make their influence felt from the very first and not wait until the effects are felt months - even years - later on the shop floor. This does not mean that JTUAC's advice always prevails at OEEC - far from it.

But after more than ten years' activity in cooperation with the Organisation, JTUAC's views are always listened to with respect and attention and not infrequently are acted upon.

ENGLAND MUST INTEGRATE WITH EUROPE

by Guy Mollet

Leader of the French Socialist Party, and French Prime Minister at the time of the negotiation of the Treaties of Rome for the European Economic Community (Common Market) and Euratom.

We reproduce this article by courtesy of the Editors of "Western World" as an interesting reflection of certain Continental attitudes to Britain's role in Europe.

Ten years ago, during the first meeting of the Assembly of the Council of Europe, in the midst of a heated discussion, members of continental Parliaments turned to their British colleagues and asked: "Is England prepared to become part of Europe?" If the British delegation, which ranged from Churchill to Morrison, did not entirely discourage them, the many refusals on the part of the London Government were to render the question superfluous.

Somewhat surprisingly, the tables have been turned. Today, it is for British public opinion, divided, and with much heart-searching, to raise the question anew. Meanwhile, the idea of Europe has become a reality. It is the Common Market of the "Six" which has, more than any other venture, aroused all parts of public opinion, trade unions and employers, both within and outside Europe, in Great Britain as in the United States.

Putting it clearly, we have the impression that, for our British friends, the trees of the Common Market sometimes hide the European wood. Talk of European Community, and they will reply customs discrimination. Speak about world repercussions on the United States of Europe, they will reply with the Free Trade Area. And even when the most European-minded among the British foresee Great Britain's inclusion in the Common Market, they do so in the expectation, if not the hope, that the federal content in the European treaties will diminish, or even disappear.

This is not a satisfactory way to put the problem. For ten years, Great Britain has been shying away from the one decisive move: integration with Europe or, in other words, the acceptance of common rules and the recognition of an independent European community to see that these rules are respected. This is the course which has voluntarily been taken by the "Six".

There exist also a few questions of a practical order, which the European Economic Community can pose to the economy and trade in Great Britain and neighboring countries. And even so, these have occupied an exaggerated amount of space in recent news in relation to their actual importance. Let us take a look at their nature and limitations.

The elimination of any hindrance to exchanges between the "Six", and the fusion of their territories into one customs territory, with a common exterior tariff, could have some repercussion on the movement of trade. This is particularly true of those countries which export mainly to the "Six": Austria, with 50% of its exports, Switzerland, with 40%, the Scandinavian countries, and others both within and outside Europe. All these cases should be given careful consideration, with particular understanding where political demands render the complete inclusion in the community clearly impossible. Partnership agreements can and should provide a guarantee that any damage will be averted, and that our neighbors in free Europe, far from suffering from the existence of the Community, will benefit from the economic and commercial expansion it promotes. Conversations with Greece and Turkey are already taking place with this aim in view.

Seen from this angle, Britain's association might seem easy, as it was for the Coal and Steel Community. Export to the "Six" represents hardly one seventh of British export, and everyone on the continent is prepared, in the friendliest of interests, to help in the solving of problems which might conceivably beset British economy. Why then this agitation, pressure, or even threat?

The reason is that the Free Trade Area project, inspired by the success of the Common Market, went much further than an association with the Common Market. This was a pale replica of the Common Market, a mere zone of commercial preference, with no economic unity in perspective and, more generally, no long-term political aim. The Common Market would have become submerged in it, and the problem would only have been transferred.

Three points illustrate the present situation of world economy: a return to Europe's economical and financial health due, in the main, to aid from the United States; a radical change in the United States balance of payments, which has for a long while been in excess, but is now showing an increasing deficit; and a widening gap caused by deterioration of the position of underdeveloped countries in relation to industrialized countries. It is no longer possible for European nations to treat the United States any differently, commercially speaking, than any other industrial nation. It is a question of justice, if not gratitude. It is no longer possible for European

nations to grant each other mutual preferential tariffs, selfishly plunging the vast mass of underdeveloped and underfed populations into incomprehension and despair.

On the other hand, if a European Federal State is created - and the European Economic Community is a decisive step towards such an outcome - how great the political and economic perspectives will be! The United States has fully recognized this, and underdeveloped populations are acknowledging it by degrees. A bloc is being created, of the size of the United States, which is capable of providing its full contribution to the solution of world problems. The "Six" should be aware - and they are increasingly so, as each day goes by - of the economic and political potential which they represent and of the responsibilities they are to shoulder as the result.

The Community should tackle its relations with Great Britain and the Commonwealth and the United States in the light of this universal meaning. If we can overcome the pettiness of minor commercial problems, the real association to be established is between three vast blocs - the United States, the Commonwealth and the European Community.

It is my hope that Great Britain, together with the United States, will rise to the challenge of the Communist world by seizing this opportunity for united and efficient action which the creation of a European Community gives to the free world.

The Common Market is not an isolated case. It is the result of ten years' patient effort by Europeans from all democratic parties, bent on achieving a lasting solution to inter-European problems - and, primarily, the German problem - and on providing their full contribution to world peace through the creation of a peaceable European force. We have experienced both success and failure. Today, the scope of our European Communities, and their vitality, are such that an irreversible momentum has been set. It can be slowed down, but it can no longer be stopped.

We can understand that this rapprochement of continental countries should surprise, even irritate our British friends, and that they should still experience the reactions of fifty or one hundred years ago, for we have been too involved in common adversity not to sympathize with this attitude or to acknowledge this elementary reaction. I am only too well aware of the wisdom and realism of Great Britain to think that this burst of bad temper could last, and that it could prevent them from seeing the real issue.

In the light of the transformation brought about by the war in the relations between world powers, what destiny awaits Great Britain,

and what future perspectives lie before it? Great Britain can no longer carve out its own destiny, or choose its own future, any more than other countries on the continent. Which course will it choose?

The Commonwealth? No responsible British statesman will consider this a satisfactory answer. Not that I minimize the importance of the Commonwealth as a factor in the rapprochement and understanding between peoples and continents. It is nevertheless a fact that after political links, economic links with the Commonwealth are becoming slack, and will become even more so should Great Britain become isolated. To fall back on the Commonwealth would be no more of a solution for Great Britain than, for France, to fall back on the Franco-African Community.

An Anglo-Saxon Community? Churchill has long nursed a dream of a close understanding between the English speaking nations. To put it more prosaically, an effort would be made to be the privileged allies of the United States, holding the undisputed second place in the great alliance. This is a possible solution, but it demands the ability to stand the pace. As much as I believe in the permanent nature of Anglo-American friendship, I would be surprised if the young and vigorous United States accepted such an exclusive link with ancient and over-cautious England. There is too much experience and disillusion with those who have been, whereas those on the way up have too much particularism and vitality.

And so we are left with the third course, that of integration with the continent and the formation of a politically and economically united Europe; the first steps of the "Six" have shown us just how vast and uplifting such a Europe could be. In my opinion, this is the only solution worthy of a nation which has so successfully led so many great projects. It does not preclude special links with the Commonwealth; all the Commonwealth countries are in agreement, with the exception, until now, of one... Great Britain. It does not exclude a close relationship with the United States; free Europe is the ally of free America, and will be called upon more and more to share with America's world responsibilities.

We, as members of the six Community countries, have started on this venture. We have had to overcome painful memories which, it was thought, could never have been forgotten. Those who had suffered the most did not hesitate to join, and our youth has enthusiastically welcomed this new relationship between our nations.

Yesterday, this European pledge seemed like Utopia. Today it has taken enough consistency to alarm or attack our English friends, although they still do not quite admit its reality and scope. It is a question of patience and perseverance on the part of Europeans. Tomorrow, the British people and the youth of Britain will acknowledge that Europe is also their Europe, and they will take up the same pledge, in full accord, with set determination and with no regrets.

THE FORTY HOUR WEEK IN EUROPEA PROGRESS REPORT

It is the declared aim of the international trade union movement to achieve a maximum working week of forty hours for all workers. In Britain, we still appear to be some way from attaining this general objective, and most of the continental countries of Western Europe are further away from it than Britain. This is a rather surprising state of affairs for a part of the world which is second only to the United States in industrial development.

Few people, not even employers or governments, deny that the forty hour week is a desirable thing, in principle. The only factor that prevents its widespread adoption is the fact that these same people tend to declare that any given moment is not the appropriate one for implementing it. But as far back as 1935 the International Labour Organisation - representing governments and employers as well as the workers - passed a Convention to the effect that workers, wherever possible, should share in the benefits of the rapid technical progress characteristic of modern industry, and that efforts should be made to reduce their hours of work. The 40 hour week was approved in principle, provided it was applied in such a manner that the standard of life was not reduced as a consequence.

Only four countries have ratified this Convention in the intervening 24 years, and not one of them is in Western Europe. Nevertheless there are several countries which do have a standard 40 hour week. The only Western European one is France, where it is a nominal 40 hours, as the actual hours worked are about 46, on average, the balance being paid for at overtime rates. The other major countries of the world with a standard 40 hours are the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and actual hours worked are not much higher.

It is a significant fact that all the countries which have this benefit have obtained it wholly or partly by means of statutory regulation, rather than through collective bargaining procedures exclusively. This despite the fact that the trade union movement in Britain, for instance, has been struggling to obtain it for a longer period than most through collective bargaining in individual industries.

The most notable struggle, recently, was in the printing industry, where the unions only succeeded in obtaining a 42½ hour week after several weeks' strike. The engineering unions are now trying their

negotiating strength on this issue. None of the major British unions seems inclined to obtain this benefit by pressing for it as a statutory obligation, for fear that it should be regarded as a precedent for state intervention in determining industrial conditions.

In Britain the State, and independent public bodies associated with it, have been careful not to show a leaning one way or the other on the forty hour week question; thus indicating that this is a matter which is better left to normal collective bargaining processes. The Industrial Disputes Tribunal, in the last weeks of its existence, declined to make an award on the engineering unions claim for a forty hour week on grounds of the far-reaching consequences it might have for the rest of industry; but it did express the hope that the parties would resume negotiations in due course.

The Cohen Council, which advises the Government on the state of the national economy, is disliked by the trade unions, which regard it as biased towards right-wing economic theory. But even the Cohen Council, in its third and latest report, did not take sides on the forty hour week question; it merely pointed out that:-

"...in the absence of higher productivity, a claim for shorter hours tends to raise costs as a straight pay claim would. But where higher productivity makes a higher standard of living possible, shorter hours and greater leisure are a natural way of realising part of the gain."

There can be little doubt that the climate of opinion in public bodies and employing circles in Britain is becoming less hostile to the idea of a shorter working week, having been influenced by developments along these lines in recent years in the rest of Europe, where Britain's main trade competitors are established. The bogey of foreign competition cannot be brandished so readily at trade union leaders when competitors have been able to shorten their hours without disastrous consequences.

The present position in Europe is as follows:-

WESTERN GERMANY Changes during the past three years have brought the working week down to 45 or 44 hours, generally, whereas 48 was common previously. Many agreements provide for shorter hours (e.g. 42 in a section of the steel industry, 40 in coal mining and the cigarette industry).

ITALY Since 1956, reductions have taken place in a number of important industries and leading firms - notably Fiat and Olivetti - in which hours are reduced from 48 to 45 or 44.

SWITZERLAND Hours in the machine and metalworking trades have been reduced from 48 to 46. Other sectors tend towards 44 hours.

BELGIUM The working week generally has been reduced from 48 to 45 hours.

AUSTRIA Hours have been reduced from 48 to 45 this year.

SWEDEN The reduction from 48 to 45 hours to be completed by 1960.

NORWAY A fairly similar programme to Sweden's but by different stages.

DENMARK A similar programme to Sweden's for the metal and machine industries.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, BULGARIA AND THE U.S.S.R. Reduced hours from 48 to 46 in 1956. The Soviet Union is to work a 42 hour week by 1960, and aims at 40 hours by 1962 and 35 hours by 1964-68.

A factor that should be borne in mind when comparing these figures is that the comparable totals of yearly hours worked gives a rather different pattern to the weekly hours. This is because annual and public holidays vary a good deal in different countries, and longer weekly hours are sometimes partly compensated for by more paid holidays. For example, although Britain generally has the shortest weekly hours in Western Europe, apart from France, she occupies a very low position in the table when it comes to paid holidays.

The Report on "Hours of Work" submitted to the ILO's 1958 session concluded that "there is clearly discernible in European countries a well defined and vigorous trend towards the reduction of normal hours of work". There can be little doubt that this trend will be accentuated in the near future by the trade unions of the Common Market countries using their new close alliance to co-ordinate efforts for a 40 hour week.

Whether or not they prove successful in this, there are likely to be other (if less spectacular) successes in those countries with a longer working week than the average. They will use that fact to bring themselves level with their competitive neighbours among the "Six" who are faring better. It seems possible that similar developments may take place among the "Outer Seven" countries (Britain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland and Portugal) when their own Free Trade Association comes into being.

CONTINENTAL TRADE UNIONISTS REAFFIRM SUPPORT
FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Luxemburg Congress points way forward

The continued support of continental trade unionists for European integration - and their determination to play a full part in its development - were stressed at the Second Annual Congress of free trade unions of the six member countries of the European Communities which met at Luxemburg on November 5-6.

The meeting, which brought together some 100 delegates from trade union federations and confederations affiliated to the ICFTU*, called for measures to reinforce the democratic basis of integration, to speed up the timetable of the Common Market and to associate trade unionists more closely with Community institutions at all stages of policy making.

The Congress underlined the fact that advantages of a larger market lay in the possibility of having an effective policy of full employment and economic expansion, of developing concerted policies to help less-favoured regions within the Community, and of making a positive contribution to the economic development of under-developed countries.

These objectives, the final resolution declared, could not be reached merely by having freer trade. It was essential to have a progressive integration of the economies and social structures of the six countries. This had to be planned. Better living and working conditions would not follow automatically: but integration was essential to economic and social progress.

Pointing to the danger of too much bureaucracy in the life of the European Economic Community, the Congress agreed that it was "an urgent necessity" to give the European executives more power, and to have direct universal elections to the Community's Parliament. The European Commissions, it added, should consult trade unionists more frequently and more directly - especially in discussions about the speeding up of the transition period.

The resolution regretted that other European countries had not found it possible to become part of the Common Market, and called on the Community to lay down, without further delay, the principles of its commercial policy with a view to increasing its trade with other European countries and the rest of the world.

It also noted the complete lack of a coordinated energy policy and underlined the need for a long-term, coherent policy which would take into account social implications as well as economic cost. The

* International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

Congress decided to organise a special conference in the spring of next year to examine progress made in this field.

The Congress considered a number of reports on various aspects of the Common Market, including a general survey drawn up by Harm G. Buiter, Secretary-General of the European Trade Union Secretariat. Recalling that the trade union movement in the six countries had consistently supported the cause of European unity, and would continue to do so, the report went on to say that the Rome Treaties had opened up the beginning of a decisive new phase for the peoples of the six countries. It was the responsibility of the trade union movement to keep a close eye on developments and point out defects and weaknesses.

It was time to draw up a balance sheet now that the Communities were coming to the end of their "running in" period. Pessimists could point to certain negative features: for example, a tendency among some governments to play down the supranational aspects of the Community institutions, a trend towards new cartels and so on - while the optimists could point to a number of positive features: for instance, the successful implementation of the first tariff cuts, the fact that events in France in 1958 had not put an end to integration and that, on the contrary, there was general talk of speeding up the Common Market.

Whatever one's point of view, it could not be denied that European unification was a step forward, even if it was being effected by people who were not themselves particularly progressive. Trade unionists knew that a social paradise would not suddenly come about at the end of the transition period: but it did offer new possibilities of social progress and it was up to trade unionists to seize the chance that was offered.

All of them deplored that the Rome Treaties were limited to six countries. It would have been a great advantage to the trade union movement of the Community countries to have united by its side the trade unions of Great Britain, Scandinavia, Austria and Switzerland in one single Community. While it was important not to under-estimate the willingness of other European countries to reduce trade barriers, this was not the same thing as willingness to move in the direction of a political union. They very much hoped for an early solution of the problem of the relations between the Six and the Seven, and would do all they could to favour this. In the meantime they would continue to seek with their colleagues in non-Community countries common solutions to problems of mutual concern.

The Secretary-general's report concluded with a warning addressed to the trade union members of the six countries. The solution they

had arrived at so far, it said, to the ~~problem~~ of their own relations one with another could not be considered the last word. A united Europe, with a European government and a European parliament, was inconceivable without a European trade union movement. And it was difficult to ask national states to hand over some of their prerogatives to European authorities while trade unions ~~continued to hang~~ on to national rights to such an extent that, while it was possible to talk of trade union collaboration, it was quite impossible to talk of trade union integration.

This problem had to be squarely faced. "We are faced with a choice. We can either lose on the European plane what we have ... or we can bring our movement to be one of the leading forces in the struggle for a free, peaceful and prosperous Europe".

TRADE UNIONS IN EUROPE3 - ITALY

by Antonio Landolfi

contributor on economic affairs to *Critica Sociale*, a leading Italian Socialist magazine.

The Italian trade union movement is going through a serious crisis. No one should be deceived by the optimistic claims made by some trade union leaders. Only 25-30 percent of workers in Italy are organised in trade unions, and the proportion is declining. In 1958 alone about 400,000 workers left the ranks of the CGIL on the frank admission of its General Secretariat. Nor was this slump in the fortunes of the CGIL, which unites Communist and Socialist workers, offset by increased strength in the other unions.

This does not mean that Italian workers are lacking in fighting spirit. Far from it: an impressive number of workers, ranging from metallurgists to bank employees and seamen, have of late been involved in wage disputes. But in each of these cases trade union machinery has been by-passed. The trade union leadership stands condemned by the workers for its inability to further their aims through collective bargaining.

The reason is not far to seek. It lies in the absurd splintering of the trade union structure on political lines. More than four organisations compete for the allegiance of the workers, while the employers are united in a single and compact body.

On the extreme left there is the CGIL, still the largest trade union group, though it no longer enjoys an absolute majority of votes in the elections for the Works Committees. (The Works Committees are the Italian equivalents of shop-stewards.) On the right-centre is to be found the CISL, the next largest group comprising Catholic workers. In between, politically, is the UIL, made up of a number of Republicans, Social Democrats and Socialists.

In addition, some manual and white collared workers belonging to neo-Fascist parties are organised in the struggling CISNAL. Amongst the several other small organisations, the Free Democratic Workers Union stands out. This is largely based at the big FIAT car factory is supported by the employers, and receives a majority of votes for the Works Committee elections at FIAT.

The present structure, which is the topic of much debate in union circles, dates back to the downfall of Fascism and the subsequent struggle with Communism in the cold-war. The Fascists had destroyed

the Socialist and Catholic trade union and cooperative movements, which flourished previously. In their place a single union was formed under official control. Membership was compulsory for all workers. Discussions and meetings in the unions were supervised, and negotiations with employers reduced to a formality.

Unity was for a while preserved when freedom was regained after the war. A single, democratic organisation was set up following a compromise agreement between all the anti-Fascist political parties. But, when the cold-war developed in 1947, the compromise broke down, and with it the cohesion of the trade union movement. The main political parties are equally to blame. The Catholics, acting through their Christian Democratic party, no less than the Communists, saw the trade unions as a weapon in the political struggle. Only the Socialists had no independent organisation after the split in 1947, and had no trade union influence to speak of until 1956. An attempt to give the democratic left a trade union expression was made in 1950 with the creation of the UIL, whose power remains even now very slight by comparison with that of the two large confederations.

The influence of political pressures weighs all too heavily on the trade unions, whose proper functions have been almost completely subordinated to party interests. Since 1948, for instance, the CGIL has spent most of its energies on strikes in support of the Communist Party's pro-Soviet policy. All the unions depend on the political parties for financial support, since their membership dues are inadequate. This serves only to heighten their dependence and gives rise to excessive centralism and bureaucracy. Democratic rights are over-ridden by the leaders, who are for the most part civil servant types and not of the working class. They even neglect to build up strike funds.

Conditions in Italy generally are, of course, unfavourable to the development of the trade union movement. The great economic differences, the very low standard of living of much of the population, the high levels of unemployment and of under-employment, the heavy concentration of capital in a few industries: all these factors weaken the power of the unions and undermine their unity, whereas the employers are not only united but sustained by state organs which are controlled by the interests of the conservative classes.

Until the Fascists intervened, the trade unions had succeeded in overcoming many of these obstacles. They had reached a stage where effective collective bargaining became possible. They enjoyed financial independence, relying entirely upon members' subscriptions. Through the organisation of mutual societies, workers were enabled to avoid extremes of hardship. Above all the unions were thoroughly democratic.

The situation to-day is very different. Lacking these features making for working class solidarity, the trade unions are deprived of

their chief negotiating strength and have lost touch with their members. They have thus proved easy game for political parties, splitting the working class movement, and making their relationships with employers even more ineffectual.

The consequences can be seen in the only new representative organizations to grow up since the war. These are the Works Committees, originally created without any powers of negotiation, but which have gradually acquired great importance owing to the shortcomings of the trade union movement proper. The Works Committees are at least directly elected by all the workers and are therefore able to represent their interests. By contrast, the sectional trade unions, quite apart from the defects already mentioned, negotiate highly rigid inter-industry agreements on the basis of traditional crafts, and without allowing for the effects of technical advances in industry. Since the unions have themselves become clumsy instruments for bargaining, their functions have been increasingly taken over by the Works Committees.

But these are not an adequate substitute. The agreements reached through them are inevitably related unduly to conditions in particular enterprises and factories. This only entrenches the monopoly status of some of the large corporations. The Works Committees, moreover, only highlight by their successes the splits in the trade union movement, and indeed there is a tendency to play off one union against another through deliberate discrimination, more usually against the Communist CGIL but occasionally against the UIL and CSIL too. The employers naturally take advantage of these rifts, and there are all too many signs of collaboration between them and the Works Committees.

These shortcomings, however, do not cancel out the value of the Works Committees. It is notable how elections to them have become trials of strength between the competing political unions. Debates on the interpretation of the results are endless. (*see overleaf)

The outstanding problem facing Italian trade unionists to-day is the re-creation of a single, united movement. It is not enough to bring the existing unions into a confederation. A new system must be found, providing for direct representation of all workers on an industry-by-industry basis. Only this way can the movement be democratized, freed from bureaucracy, and made capable of facing up to the rapid technological developments in industry. Collective bargaining can then be undertaken on the basis of the full representation of all trade unionists, a principle only recently conceded by the Italian Parliament.

Once all this is done, the Works Committees will fall into their proper place and cease to be instruments for fomenting strife amongst trade unionists. Relationships between individual Works Committees will also have to be clearly defined.

There are fortunately signs that these objectives are not unrealistic. As already mentioned, a spontaneous movement has been growing amongst workers themselves. Many strikes recently have been declared against the will of the trade union bodies. Through the formation of their own strike funds and mutual societies, workers have been forging a new solidarity. This could provide the framework for forms of association which would brush aside the deadweight of dependence on political and other external forces.

If nothing else, the crises of the past few years have paved the way for a revival of Italian trade unionism. The desire for a change has taken root in the unions themselves. The CISL has obtained a measure of autonomy from the Christian Democrats, who have formed the leading party in all governments since the war. Moreover, the Communist hold on the CGIL has been weakened in favour of the Socialists.

Socialists have a special responsibility for bringing about a revival of trade unionism. They are actively working to this end in the CSIL and UIL, but their numbers are few. Much better results could already have been achieved if Socialists in the CGIL had shown more courage in debate with the Communists. Instead Socialist leaders have marked time, lost the initiatives open to them, or squandered their energies in fruitless manoeuvres in preparation for the next union congress, instead of working amongst the rank and file.

Nevertheless, the pressure of events and of the workers' and peasants' interests are so strong that neither tactical compromises nor the incapacities of the leaders' in the trade unions are to-day going to hinder the process of a trade union revival, yet so urgently needed.

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*Editors' footnote

Objective assessment of the results of the elections to Works Committees is complicated by the fact that each of the three major trade union confederations issues its own set of figures based on different groups of factories. However, the remarkable feature emerges from the 1958 results at any rate, that any pair of the confederations are in broad agreement as to the strength of the third. Thus, both the CGIL and UIL put the strength of CISL (Catholic workers) at 30 percent of the votes cast, though CISL itself claimed 36 percent. Both the CGIL and the CISL allow just over 8 percent for the UIL (Social Democrats, Republicans etc.) against 18 percent claimed by the UIL from the smallest sample of firms. There is only slightly less agreement on the support for the CGIL (Communists and Socialists) put at over 48 percent by the CISL and 46 percent by the UIL, by comparison with nearly 55 percent claimed by CGIL itself. In addition, all three groups are agreed that minor unions take about 7 percent of the votes cast.

