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LABOUR RELATIONS IN LONDON TRANSPORT

Labour Relations in London Transport

BY

H. A. CLEGG

*Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford
1947 George Webb Medley Scholar*

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H. A. CLEGG

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Labour Relations in London Transport

INTRODUCTION

THE following chapters are an attempt to describe and evaluate the labour relations of a publicly-owned undertaking. Although the shortcomings of this study may well need excuses, the attempt itself does not, for labour relations are more and more coming to be regarded as an important subject, and labour relations in publicly-owned industry are of particular interest.

It has for long not been possible, if it ever was, to pretend that 'the only argument that counts with the worker is the pay packet', or that relations in industry are satisfactory so long as there are no strikes or lock-outs. Trade unions have successfully advanced from their early battles to secure recognition in order to discuss rates of pay and conditions of labour, to the achievement of a fairly general recognition of their right to consideration and consultation in all matters affecting industry. Employers are coming more and more to see that not only satisfactory incomes and congenial conditions, but anything that affects the health, spirits and morale of workers, and their relation to the job, their fellow-workers and their superiors or subordinates has some bearing on the efficiency and success of their undertakings. Personnel management, industrial psychology, 'human relations in industry' are raised to the dignity of independent studies. Admittedly some of the attention paid to-day to labour and to trade unions is due to the abnormal conditions of full employment, and would wither away if unemployment were permitted to return, but much is due to a long-period development in attitudes to industrial relations.

One of the reasons for this development is the growth in size of industrial undertakings. The increasing distance between the director and the operator makes it necessary to give attention to the channels of communication, and for those on top consciously to study the problems with which they are no longer directly familiar. The growth in numbers employed requires

the development of institutions and generalized procedures to supplement attenuated personal relationships. The growing complexity of managerial problems has led to functionalization and the fostering of specialized techniques for dealing with labour matters.

If this is true, we have already one reason for the peculiar importance of labour problems under public ownership, for the nationalization acts of recent years have created industrial undertakings far larger than this country has seen before. A second reason is the emphasis placed upon these problems in current political controversy. Labour difficulties in general are good news-value to-day. This is partly due to full employment, and partly to the special responsibility of a Labour Government in labour matters owing to its close connection with the unions and its claim to be the political representative of labour. This responsibility is nowhere greater than in the recently nationalized industries, in which, by law, the boards are appointed by ministers, and responsible to ministers in matters of policy. Moreover, with general acceptance of the social services, and a bi-partisan foreign policy, nationalization and the conduct of nationalized industry has become one of the main subjects of controversy between the parties. The press has assisted by giving a generous share of its restricted columns, most of all to reporting labour disputes in those industries. Nationalized industries have, of course, many problems besides labour problems, but the latter are the most readily comprehensible and the most colourful, and therefore receive the greatest publicity.

Another reason for interest in labour problems under public ownership is the claims that have been made by most supporters of public ownership that it would provide a solution to labour problems, or at least a framework congenial to their solution. The primary argument for public ownership has usually been economic: that the substitution of planning and co-operation for 'wasteful' competition would give greater production, or that the abolition of profits would lead to a better distribution of the proceeds of industry, or both. Now it is clear that either increased wealth or a redistribution of wealth makes possible increased expenditure on workers, either directly in increasing wages or reducing hours, or indirectly in improving the environment in

which they work, and it is easy to argue that this should be done and that, if it was done, it would sweeten labour relations. So it has been argued that the expected economic results of public ownership could be used to solve labour problems. Most socialists have, however, argued that, apart from direct economic benefits, public ownership would be, or would permit, a morally superior organization of industry, an organization which would give the worker a position more desirable in itself than the one he held before. And it is of interest to see how far these claims are justified in the event.

Evaluation is a matter of comparison. Labour relations under public ownership can be compared with labour relations in private industry or with the predictions made by socialists in the past. The use of this latter method requires that some account of those predictions be given, and, since different schools of socialists have held different views, a small excursion into the history of socialist thought is necessary before this can be done.

The early socialists certainly held that the introduction of their systems would lead to both economic *and* moral benefits, for all, and in particular for the producers. Owen and Fourier were mainly interested in the moral revolution that the economic changes they proposed would, as they believed, bring about; and the failure of his experiments led Owen towards the view that the economic change could only be brought about as the result of the moral revolution. For all the care that they gave to the economic success of their producers' co-operatives, the Christian Socialists preached the supreme moral value of the co-operative life, apart from its usefulness for combating the evils of low wages and sweated labour. But the teachings of the early socialists are not much to our purpose, for the type of organization which they looked forward to was, in the main, of small industrial units, whether co-operative communities or self-governing workshops, far removed from our nationalized industries of to-day.

Nationalization first became an essential element in British socialism with the rise of the socialist societies towards the end of the nineteenth century. These bodies were later accused of having argued only from the point of view of the consumer in emphasizing the cheapness and efficiency which their socialism would

bring to industry, and not from the point of view of the producer, since they entirely neglected the liberation of the worker from industrial servitude, from wage-slavery. Their moral argument for socialism was rather the value of service to the state than the value of industrial self-government. Their critics maintained that the form of industrial organization which they proposed would strengthen the bonds which held the worker down, by subjecting him to a vast bureaucracy. Some defence could be made against this charge. The Fabians, at least until the first world-war, placed as much emphasis on municipal as on national control of industry; and the Social Democrats repeated, at least in some of their propaganda, Marx's demand for the direct election of management in socialized industry and in 'industrial armies'.¹ It remains true, however, that their model of national organization for industry was the Post Office which was readily praised by both schools;² even the left-wing Social Democrats criticized the Post Office only on the grounds that the profits were used to reduce taxation on the rich rather than to improve the position of the worker.³ When, after its electoral success in 1905, the Labour Party began to introduce nationalization bills, they provided for control by a minister and his department, tempered by clauses permitting operation by local authorities, or leasing to the previous operators.⁴

The critics of this form of socialism were the syndicalists and the national guildsmen. The syndicalists, and the industrial unionists (for in Britain these two doctrines were rarely distinguished) thought that control by a parliament—and moreover

¹ See, for instance, H. M. Hyndman's *Socialism and Slavery—being an answer to Mr. Herbert Spencer's attack upon the Democratic Federation*, The Modern Press, 1884.

² See *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, ed. G. B. Shaw, Walter Scott, 1889, p. 185, and *Socialism and Slavery*.

³ The report of the Hyndman-Bradlaugh debate of April 17, 1884, Freethought Publishing Co., p. 10.

⁴ The Nationalization of Coal Mines and Minerals Bill (Bill 244 of 1913) provided for straight departmental control. The Nationalization of Mines, Canals, Railways and Tramways Bill (Bill 103 of 1906 and 135 of 1907) and the Nationalization of Canals and Railways Bill (Bill 326 of 1908, 92 of 1909, 93 of 1911, and 63 of 1912) provided for purchase by the Local Government Board or, in the later bills, the Board of Trade (with provision for leasing) but departmental powers of control might be delegated to a Board of Control of 50–100 persons. The 1914 Railway Nationalization Bill (Bill 212 of 1914) laid down that 'subject to the absolute control of the Minister' the undertaking was to be operated by a board of four members, appointed initially by the ministers concerned, but after five years by a council representing various bodies, including the T.U.C.

a capitalist parliament—would bring no benefit of any kind to the worker. If the worker was to enjoy the proceeds of industry, he must control industry. They therefore roundly condemned the method of the socialists (substituting industrial action and the general strike), nationalization, and, indeed, parliament itself. The guildsmen admitted that parliamentary socialism might improve the economic condition of the workers, but argued that they would then be no more than well-fed and well-clad wage-slaves; and, for the guildsmen, liberty was far more important than riches. The guildsmen accepted the need for parliamentary democracy to serve the needs of men as citizens and consumers, and accepted the need for national ownership of industry through parliament, but they proposed that parliament should supplement political democracy with industrial democracy by handing over the direction of industry to national guilds, democratic organizations which should include all workers by hand and brain throughout each industry.

The propaganda of both groups was greatly assisted by the first world war. The shop stewards' movement, whose leaders were frequently influenced by syndicalist or guild doctrines, spread their influence through the workers' organizations. The important part played by trade union representatives in the adaptation of industry to the conditions of modern war led to the widespread conviction that workers and their representatives should permanently hold a more responsible position in industry—as can be seen from the reports of the Whitley Committee. Finally, the experience of government direction of industry during the war caused a general distrust of the competence of a government department for industrial management.¹

The Labour Party responded to these developments by demanding a new status for the worker in industry. This was to be achieved in nationalized industry, as we may see from the bills that were introduced in the years following the war, by the device of joint control. Under the general direction of a minister responsible to parliament, the management of nationalized industries was to be entrusted to boards, half, or at least a third,

¹ This dislike of departmental control of industry was voiced time and again by witnesses of all political opinions before the Coal Commission, 1919. (See Reports and Evidence Cmd. 359 and 360 of 1919).

of whose members were to be representatives of the trade unions of the workers employed in those industries. The Conservative Acts constituting the Central Electricity Board and the B.B.C. were devised to make the boards as independent as possible of parliamentary and departmental interference. Under the Electricity Act the trade unions concerned were to be consulted before the Board was appointed.

The Second Labour Government attempted one piece of nationalization, the London Passenger Transport Bill. This bill started a great controversy in the labour movement, owing to the omission of any provision for the consultation of the unions in appointments to the proposed board. Herbert Morrison, the Minister of Transport, maintained that the boards of nationalized industries should be chosen solely on grounds of merit. Although the dispute began over this apparently narrow issue, it ranged widely over the field of socialism and syndicalism. Morrison attacked 'workers' control' on the lines laid down twenty years before by MacDonald and Snowden, and his opponents renewed many of the arguments, and much of the fervour, of the guildsmen. As it turned out, the bill was passed by a Conservative Government with entirely different provisions for the appointment of the Board, and the doctrinal difference was settled in an agreed programme issued by the T.U.C. and the Labour Party in 1934.¹ Representation was finally abandoned in a report of the T.U.C. in 1944,² which has been closely followed in the post-1945 Nationalization Acts. The opponents of Morrison won a technical victory in that the report upheld the principle of consultation with the unions before appointment, but it was agreed that the boards should be in no way representative, and that the trade unions should exercise their influence in the industry from an independent position, making their views known to the board through advisory and consultative machinery.

Thus every kind of socialist has thought that nationalization would increase economic efficiency, and all but the syndicalists have expected this improvement to be used, at least in part, for the benefit of the workers in the industry. And almost all socialists, again excepting the syndicalists, have believed that

¹ *For Socialism and Peace.*

² 'Interim Report on Post-War Reconstruction', *T.U.C. Annual Report 1944.*

nationalization would effect, or might effect, an improvement in the morale of the workers. Right-wing socialists have argued that, even if the position of the workers within industry remained unchanged, the knowledge that they would henceforward be working for the service of the nation, and not for the profit of private individuals, would accomplish that change. On the other extreme the industrial democrats asserted that it would only be brought about by giving the workers' representatives control, or, as an interim measure, a share in the control, of the industry, and by a decentralization of power to make this share in control a reality in the local units of the industry as well as on the national board. In between, most socialists have probably believed, at least since the first world war, that the motive of public service would have some effect on the attitude of the workers to their job, and that the status of the workers and their representatives would be enhanced by increasing their responsibility within the industry; although they may not have been quite clear on the changes which would be required to give this increase in responsibility.

Since the pattern of nationalization has now been established on the lines briefly described above, this enhancement of status must arise, if at all, not out of the institutional changes suggested by the guildsmen or the supporters of joint control, but from an increased awareness of labour's point of view on the part of the board and its officers, and an increased willingness to take counsel with the workers and their representatives. A socialist might expect that liberation from the need to consider private profits would permit this larger view to be taken in nationalized industries, and that the appointment of boards by the ministers, and of officers by the new boards, would staff the industry with men sympathetic to such a view.

Despite these sanguine anticipations of the effect of nationalization on industrial relations, it must be remembered that nationalized industries have to face special difficulties in these matters. Not only do the recently nationalized industries have to deal with the problems of a scale greater than any private enterprise, but, whereas large private undertakings have usually grown gradually by expansion and absorption, most of these undertakings have become vast over-night. Secondly, nationalized

industries cannot avoid greater publicity and, with it, greater responsibility than private undertakings. Even in matters which may not be questioned or debated in Parliament, they are held to account by the public and the press. Thirdly, where much has been expected, much must be achieved to avoid disappointment.

Political judgments must be made to order. If we have to vote either for a party which proposes to carry out further nationalization, or for a party which intends to return some of those industries already nationalized to private owners, we must make up our minds as best we can on the evidence available. But no one could sensibly maintain that it is yet possible to make a considered academic judgment on the success or failure of the industries nationalized since 1945, either in general, or in labour matters in particular. The organization of these undertakings has, however, been largely modelled on that of the earlier public corporations, which have been in existence over a period sufficient to allow at least more dependable judgments to be formed, and some account of their operation, and of the labour difficulties which they had to meet, and the manner in which they dealt with them, might indicate some of the results to be looked for in the new public corporations. Amongst these undertakings the London Passenger Transport Board (now the London Transport Executive) offers the most favourable field for investigation. The labour problems of the Port of London Authority have been merged with the larger problems of dock labour in general. The Central Electricity Board was the direct employer of only a small staff, and built the grid through private contractors. The story of the relations between the B.B.C. and its staff, though interesting, and, perhaps, intriguing, could not be taken as typical of an industrial enterprise. The L.P.T.B., however, was, even by the standards of to-day, a large-scale employer of industrial labour, controlling, admittedly, only a part of the transport industry, but a well enough defined part to allow its affairs to be studied separately.

The following chapters are, then, an attempt to describe and to appraise the labour relations of London Transport, in the belief that they have an importance of their own, and in the hope that such an attempt may help to throw light upon the larger subject of labour relations in nationalized industry.

CHAPTER I

LONDON TRANSPORT AND ITS INHERITANCE

I. LONDON TRANSPORT

THE London Passenger Transport Board was the outcome of many years of agitation for the unification of London passenger transport, and the successor of a great many schemes suggested, and of some put into effect, to secure that end. A full account of its origin is given by Herbert Morrison in *Socialisation and Transport*. Mr. Morrison, as Minister of Transport in the 1929-31 Labour Government, prepared a bill, which, with some alterations, was adopted by the subsequent National Government, and eventually became the 1933 London Passenger Transport Act. This Act provided for the appointment of a Board, who should acquire the various transport undertakings in the London Area under duly agreed terms of compensation, and whose duty it should be 'so to exercise their powers under this Act as to secure the provision of an adequate and properly co-ordinated system of passenger transport for the London Passenger Transport Area' and 'to conduct their undertaking in such manner, and to fix such fares and charges in accordance with the provisions of this Act, as to secure that their revenue shall be sufficient to defray all charges which are by this Act required to be defrayed out of the revenue of the Board'.¹ The Board was appointed, and took over most of the transferred undertakings on July 1st, 1933.

The constitution of the Board was fairly close to that which has been adopted for the post-war public corporations. The main differences were: the more stringent financial provisions of the Act; the relatively greater freedom of the Board from ministerial control; and the appointment of the members of the Board by a curious 'ad hoc' body of six Appointing Trustees.² The first two

¹ *London Passenger Transport Act*, 1933, Section 3 (1) & (4).

² It is not proposed to discuss the methods of appointment to boards of publicly-owned undertakings. Morrison (op. cit.) gives the case for direct ministerial appointment. Mr. Frank Pick defended appointment by trustees, in a lecture on 'The London Passenger Transport Board' at the L.S.E. in February 1934 (reprinted in the *Transport*

must be given due weight; the financial provisions of the Act had far-reaching effects, not least on the Board's relations with its employees. The third is less important, since the persons chosen were clearly selected on the same principles as those observed by present Ministers in their choice of the new Boards, Commissions, Authorities and Executives. The two full-time members of the Board were Lord Ashfield and Mr. Frank Pick, previously of the London Transport Combine, whose claim to be the experts on London passenger transport could hardly be challenged. The five part-time members of the Board included—besides another transport expert, two experienced members of local authorities, and a company director—Mr. John Cliff, Assistant General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, who, like the trade union officials appointed to the new public corporations, resigned his office in the union, and ceased to participate in its activities. He was given special executive duties in staff matters.

During the war the Board came within the scope of the Railway Control Agreement, and under the general supervision of the Railway Executive Committee. Control continued until January 1st, 1948, when the Transport Commission took over under the 1947 Transport Act, and the London Passenger Transport Board was succeeded by the London Transport Executive.

There was no break and little change when the direction of London Transport was handed over by the Board to the London Transport Executive. Sir Cyril Hurcomb, Chairman of the Transport Commission, has referred to the Board as an 'Executive made almost ready to our hands'.¹ In view of this continuity I have thought it permissible, in dealing with matters which carry over into 1948-49, to refer simply to 'London Transport' rather than to 'the Board and its successor the Executive'.

2. LONDON TRANSPORT'S STAFF

On July 1st, 1933, the London Passenger Transport Board took over from 5 railway companies, 14 municipally-owned and

World of March 3, 1934), as a typically British institution, and as a method of ensuring complete freedom from 'political' appointments. The matter was debated at length on the committee stage of the 1933 bill. (*H. of C.*, Vol. 272, cols. 758-790).

¹ *The Organization of British Transport*, London, British Transport Commission, 1948.

3 company-owned tramway undertakings, and 61 firms, companies or individuals operating bus services. Over the following months it took over most of the small bus and coach operators to whom it refused licences to operate within its area, in discharge of liabilities under Section 16 of the Act.

On June 30th, 1934, at the end of the first year of its operation, the Board employed a total staff of 75,468 (a number which, by December 31st, 1947, had increased to 96,963). Of these, 34,148 were employed on the Central Buses, 19,558 on the Tramways, 5,891 on the Country Buses, 14,119 on the Tubes, and 1,752 on Common Services. Manufacturing powers, granted in Mr. Morrison's original bill, were withdrawn by the 1931 Select Committee of Lords and Commons at the instance of the manufacturing interests,¹ but the Board continued to carry out its own maintenance work, and to generate its own supplies of electricity, so that a considerable number of the employees in each section (a majority on the tubes) were maintenance workers, to a total number which was over a quarter of the Board's staff. The road (bus and tram) operating staff was organized exclusively by the Transport and General Workers' Union, and the railway staff by the three railway unions, the National Union of Railwaymen, the Railway Clerks' Association, and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. The maintenance staff and the electricity supply and distribution staff were organized in a large number of craft unions and three general workers' unions (the Transport and General Workers' Union, and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers on the road side, and the National Union of Railwaymen² on the railways). The headquarters clerical staff was mainly organized by the Railway Clerks' Association.

In this and the following chapters, to simplify the discussion of labour relations, the staff is divided into the following groups,³

¹ See Lincoln Gordon, *The Public Corporation in Great Britain*, O.U.P., 1938.

² The N.U.R. is an industrial union, whose aim it is to include all railway workers, but in the railway workshops it organizes mainly unskilled and semi-skilled workers, and thus performs roughly the same job as the two big general workers' unions in the rest of the engineering industry.

³ In Chapters 2 and 3 slight departures from this arrangement are necessary. See p. 47 and p. 81.

according to the manner in which they are organized for purposes of negotiation:

- (a) the road service staff (including bus, tram and trolley bus operating staff, and garage and depot 'inside' staff);
- (b) railway staff;
- (c) workshop staff (including railway depot workers);
- (d) other staff (including headquarters staff, electricity supply staff, canteen staff, etc.)

The approximate numbers in these groups at the end of 1947 is given in the following table; figures for these groups for 1934 are not available, but the proportions would then have been roughly the same.

PRINCIPAL SECTIONS OF STAFF AT DECEMBER 31ST, 1947

A. Wages Staff

1. Road Services:		
Central Bus Operating	27,800	
Central Bus Inside Staff	5,200	
Trams and Trolleybus Operating	13,400	
Trams and Trolleybus Inside (including Permanent Way) Staff	2,900	
Country Bus and Coach Operating	5,800	
Country Bus and Coach Inside Staff	1,000	56,100
<hr/>		
2. Railway Staff:		
Operating (including Booking Clerks)	8,100	
Other	5,000	13,100
<hr/>		
3. Workshops:		
Road	7,300	
Rail	4,200	11,500
<hr/>		
4. Other Staff:		
Electrical Generation and Distribution	2,400	
Other Staff (including Canteens)	5,100	7,500
<hr/>		
<i>B. Supervisory, Control, Clerical, Technical and Executive Staff (all departments)</i>		8,800
		<hr/>
TOTAL		97,000
		<hr/>

The great bulk of the acquired concerns—the railway companies, the three company-owned tramways, and the London General Omnibus Company, by far the largest of the bus con-

cerns—had for many years prior to the Act been united in the London Traffic Combine, under a common central control. Lord Ashfield had been the chairman of the holding company and of the individual companies, and Mr. Frank Pick had been managing director of each operating company. This central control also covered staff relations, and one Staff Officer had duties in relation to all the companies, including matters subject to negotiation with the employees or their representatives, welfare and canteen services, records, the Suggestion Bureau and Employment Registry, and certain common services. Moreover the largest concerns outside the Combine participated with the combine companies in negotiating machinery; all the tramway undertakings, private and municipal, were members of the Metropolitan District Joint Industrial Council for the Tramway Industry, and the two largest bus companies apart from the L.G.O.C.—Thomas Tilling, and Tilling and British Automobile Traction, Ltd.—were associated with the L.G.O.C., in negotiations with the Transport and General Workers' Union, and signed common agreements covering the employees of all three companies.

Despite this large measure of unity there was a considerable diversity of negotiating machinery and of staff representation schemes,¹ and a bewildering diversity of grades of labour and rates of pay.

3. THE ROAD SERVICE STAFF

The London General Omnibus Company was the largest employer of the Combine. The total number of its staff was, in 1929, 29,991 as against 10,699 on the railways, and 3,859 on the Combine's tramway undertakings. The company did not provide a formal scheme of joint bodies for dealing with their staff since the union concerned, the Transport and General Workers' Union, preferred direct negotiations at all levels. The section of the union covering the London busmen was, however, arranged to dovetail as nearly as possible with the operational structure of the Company. The men were organized in branches based on the garages; besides the normal branch officials, each

¹ For an account of this machinery, see Johnston and Spates, *Industrial Relations in the London Traffic Combine*, I.L.O., 1931.

branch elected a delegate who represented the branch at delegate meetings of the whole section. In addition there was a biennial ballot for a Central Bus Committee with eight members, two from each of the three divisions of the L.G.O.C., and two from the employees of the other bus companies. This Committee, entirely of 'lay' members, was responsible under the Executive of the union for all dealings with the Company. Its executive officer was the London District Secretary, now subject to appointment, as all other T. & G.W.U. officers apart from the General Secretary, but in the first instance elected. He was assisted by three sectional officers who covered the districts of the Company, and a schedules officer to deal entirely with that vexed question of bus operation. Thus minor matters could be dealt with on the spot between the garage officials and the branch officials, more important differences could be referred to the divisional officers, and finally to the Central Bus Committee. Major agreements were negotiated by the Executive of the Union and its national Officers, in conjunction with the Bus Committee.

This organization attracted attention, and has been the subject of praise, for instance in Milne-Bailey's *Trade unions and the State*. It had, however, caused trouble before 1933 and was to cause trouble again. The busmen had first been organized in 1913 by the 'London and Provincial Licensed Vehicle Workers' Union' (the 'Red Button' Union), which had achieved its first agreement with the Company, the 'Busman's Charter', in 1914. This union was a small union, catering in the main only for London busmen and cabmen; and it had a name for militancy and readiness to strike. In 1920 it amalgamated with the Amalgamated Association of Tramwaymen and Vehicle Workers—a national body—to form the United Vehicle Workers, which in turn formed part of the Transport and General Workers' Union when that body was formed out of the majority of the constituent bodies of the old Transport Workers' Federation in the following year. The years of post-war depression and rapid deflation, with consequent unemployment and wage reductions, were not an easy time for the new union to consolidate its position. In the autumn of 1921 the Company gave notice of a 3/- reduction, and although in the agreement which followed the Union managed to alleviate the wage reduction by a sliding scale

which provided for smaller reductions for the lower-paid conductors, and by an increase in annual paid holidays from six days to eight, there was considerable agitation in favour of the 'small union' and the benefits thereof in rapid and effective action. The issue of the *Record* (the organ of the T. & G.W.U) for January 1922 reported that a London Bus Section Committee was to be elected and that a special delegate meeting of busmen had been held, at which Mr. Gosling (the first and only full-time President of the T. & G.W.U.) presided. This meeting had 'done much towards alleviating the strained position that we were gradually drifting into. It was felt that the officials of the new Union were determined to do everything in their power to allow the bus workers to direct their own industry.

The rules permit of much more power locally than has hitherto been the case . . .'

The article concluded with a special appeal to young workers to remember the benefits obtained since 1913, and to refrain from becoming 'a party to disruption and disorganization'.

During the course of long negotiations with the Company, lasting from June 1924 to March 1926, there was further trouble. A delegate conference of busmen in April 1925 rejected the current proposals of the company and elected a committee to report on the reorganization of the section. The June issue of the *Record* reported that the committee's scheme, described above, had been accepted by the section and ratified by the Executive.

Under its constitution (known as the Anderton's Hotel Agreement) the section had the right to by-pass the federal machinery of the union and refer its affairs directly to the General Executive Council of the union, instead of going through the Passenger Transport Trade Group. Its negotiations were conducted in association with the G.E.C. rather than with the Trade Group.

The union had secured favourable recognition from the Company. In 1927 the Company posted notices at all its garages stating that: 'While there is no obligation on the part of any employee to belong to a Trade Union, the company find it mutually convenient to have some organization to represent the staff collectively on their behalf. The Company therefore

recognize the Transport Workers' Federation' (*sic!*) 'for drivers and conductors and inside staff (other than craftsmen)'.¹

On January 7th, 1929, during the course of another long period of negotiations, the operating manager issued a statement which confirmed the company's undertaking to call into the office any employee leaving the T. & G.W.U. and to recommend rejoining, in addition to the old undertaking to point out to new employees the advantages of membership.²

On July 31st, 1933, drivers received a basic rate of 86/6d., and were eligible for a small bonus payment for freedom from accidents; conductors received a basic rate of 79/6d.; both for a guaranteed forty-eight hour week (with certain exceptions). Garage inside staff, classified into two grades, assistant craftsmen, and general hands, received respectively 1/6½d. per hour, and 1/4¾d. per hour on the middle shift of forty-seven hours a week, i.e. 72/5½d. and 65/7¼d. per week, and an additional ½d. an hour for early and late shifts of forty-eight hours a week. The skilled craftsmen in the garages, organized by their craft unions, and united into a Craftsmen's Alliance covering all L.G.O.C. garages, received a basic rate of 90/1d. per week, the same rate as applied to the craftsmen in the Company's works at Chiswick.

During 1932 the men had successfully resisted a threatened wage-cut and reduction of staff. The agreement of September of that year overcame the need for the latter by reducing the guaranteed week for staff with under three years' service to forty hours per week, and the former by the 'speed' agreement, under which the companies (including the two Tilling's concerns, who were parties to it) were to introduce such higher speeds as might, 'in their opinions be found safe and convenient', undertaking not to discharge any staff who might become redundant due to the speeded schedules, and 'to record the resultant economies,'³ [in order to divide the proceeds, apparently on verbal agreement, between the company (40%) and wages (60%).] The agreement eased the conditions of drivers and conductors to some extent in order to counteract the effects of

¹ Quoted in Milne-Bailey, *Trade Union Documents*, Bell, 1929, p. 459.

² *The Times*, Jan. 8th, 1929.

³ Minute, setting out the understanding upon which the agreement had been concluded, produced as evidence before the 1937 Court of Inquiry into the London Omnibus Dispute.

strain due to speeded schedules. This was done by reducing the maximum total time on duty to $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours, instead of 9 hours, by laying down that 80% of duties with a 'spreadover' must be completed within $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours, instead of 75% within 9 hours, and by certain other alterations. These changes were desired by the men, but by reducing the possibilities of overtime working, they of necessity reduced the weekly earnings of the men by a small amount.

Wages and conditions in the small bus undertakings absorbed by the Board cannot be exactly summarized, but in 1931 wages were undoubtedly higher, in many instances, than the L.G.O.C.'s rates, good though these were in comparison with other industries. Mr. A. G. Partridge of the Chocolate Express Company and Chairman of the Association of London Omnibus Proprietors Ltd., told the Joint Select Committee of Lords and Commons on the London Passenger Transport Bill in 1931¹ that whereas the company was paying drivers $1/8\frac{3}{4}d.$ an hour, and conductors $1/6\frac{5}{8}d.$ an hour, 'on most of the independents you will find that they' (wage-rates) 'range from $1/8d.$ to $2/-$ per hour. My company have always paid $2/-$ per hour because we believe in paying high wages', and again, 'Our men have received from $\pounds 1$ to $30/-$ higher than the wages paid by the Combine'. He later testified that his men worked a forty-eight hour week, and were allowed longer meal-times than the employees of the L.G.O.C., a fortnight's holiday with pay, and other privileges. This is supported by the *New Survey of London Life and Labour*² in describing the conditions of 1933. His evidence was not challenged, but, in 1933, when the independents were acquired by London Transport, rates of pay and conditions of work had, in most instances, to be *improved* to bring them into line with those obtaining under the L.G.O.C.-Tilling's agreement. Union and London Transport officials point out that higher rates, where paid, were dependent on the activities of the small employers who 'creamed off' the traffic at the busiest hours and left to the Combine the expensive business of providing a regular service at all hours and on all routes, that conditions under some of the

¹ Minutes of Evidence and Proceedings of the Joint Select Committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons on the London Passenger Transport Bill. Vol. II, *Minutes of Evidence*, H.M.S.O., 1931.

² *New Survey of London Life and Labour*, Vol. VIII, 1933, chapter iii, p. 80.

'pirates' were bad, hours in particular being long, and finally that the 'pirates' in general refused to recognize the union, maintaining and frequently using the right to discharge at will, or even at whim.

In 1932 the L.G.O.C. formed the London General Country Services to acquire the separate undertakings in what was to be the Board's Country Area; by June 1933 a single system had nearly been achieved. 'Green Line' coaches had been set up by the company in 1929 and had become the major express service in the area, absorbing certain independent undertakings. The T. & G.W.U. had agreements with Green Line Coach and the London General Country Services. These provided for conditions roughly similar to those of Central Area staff, and rates of pay slightly less for coach drivers, and considerably less for bus drivers and for all conductors, than for staff in the Central Area. Negotiations were direct, and there was at that time no elaborate union structure, or system of joint committees. The operators remaining outside were not, in the main, covered by agreements, and paid rates in most cases somewhat lower.

The tramway undertakings, private and municipal, amongst which the L.C.C. undertaking was by far the largest, were the constituent bodies, on the employers' side, of the Metropolitan District Council of the National Joint Industrial Council for the Tramway Industry, formed in 1919. The employees were represented by the Transport and General Workers' Union, and were organized in a manner similar to that of the busmen. Their branches were based on their depots, and machinery for representation within the union, by a committee responsible to a delegate meeting, had been set up at the same time, and presumably for similar reasons, as that of the busmen.¹ This committee was elected directly by the delegate meeting, instead of by ballot of the section membership, as with the busmen, and was known as the 'Trams Council'.² It, together with the Central Bus Committee, elected from amongst themselves representatives who, together with a representative of the cab members, formed the No. 1 Area Passenger Trade Group Committee, in its turn a subordinate body to the National Passenger Trade Group,

¹ *The Record* (organ of the T. & G.W.U.), March 1923.

² The Trams Council did not have the right to by-pass the Union's federal machinery, which had been granted to the Central Busmen.

directly subject, along with the other trade groups, to the executive of the union. Rates of pay had been raised considerably, by 6/- a week for drivers and conductors, and by 4/- for inside staff, by the settlement terminating the strike of March 1924, which immediately preceded the London Traffic Act of 1924. This increase brought drivers' and conductors' rates of pay between 65/- and 73/- per week, well below those of the busmen, but considerably higher than the provincial tram rates, which later in the same year were classified by a Special Tribunal, set up by the National Joint Industrial Council to avert a crisis within the industry, into six groups, the rate for drivers in the highest group being 63/6d., and for conductors 59/6d.¹

In 1933 the L.C.C., the three companies and West Ham were paying 73/- a week to both drivers and conductors, and others a rate of 71/- or below; the lowest, at Erith, was 65/-.² Nearly all concerns paid the same rates to both groups of workers. A forty-eight hour week had been in force since 1919; as with the busmen there were provisions covering 'spreadover' duties and the like. There were a variety of rates for inside staff and permanent-way-men, semi-skilled and unskilled organized by the T. & G.W.U., the highest grades being paid slightly more than drivers or conductors, and the unskilled about 60/- a week.

In September 1932 a reduction of 1/- was agreed by the Metropolitan District Joint Council, just before the bus agreement in the same month. This was restored in the following April, partly no doubt due to the anomalous position created by the unexpected withdrawal of the proposed reduction for busmen.

4. THE RAILWAY STAFF

On the railways arrangements were, on the whole, in line with those on the Main Line railways. The 1921 Railways Act, mainly concerned with the amalgamation of the railways, gave statutory weight to a scheme recently negotiated between the companies and the railway unions, which revised and extended the arrangements of 1907 and 1911 for local and sectional representative bodies, and added thereto a Central Wages Board and a National

¹ *The Record*, November 1924.

² These figures were given to me by Mr. J. T. Barrett of the T. & G.W.U. London Transport has no record of tram rates before July 1st, 1933.

Wages Board.¹ The Underground group, which was not subject to the provisions of the 1921 Act, avoided the scheme for Wages Boards—later generally recognized as cumbersome, and revised in 1935—preferring direct negotiations with the three Railway Unions—the N.U.R., the R.C.A., and the A.S.L.E.F. with reference, in case of need, to the Industrial Court. They followed in general the Main Line agreements, and referred matters under discussion to the Main Line bodies to ascertain whether they were also affected by them. The other Main Line arrangements were followed more closely: Local Departmental Councils, intended to provide for the representation of staff at stations and depots in which the number of staff in a particular section exceeded seventy-five, were clearly inapplicable to the small underground stations, and the need for local representation was less in the compact metropolitan area, so the 'London Underground Staff Council Scheme' provided for some ten sectional Committees, each covering a section—booking office staff, supervisory staff, locomotive staff, etc.—for the whole of the Underground group, four departmental councils for other sections of staff, and an Underground Railway Council with a Negotiating Committee. The purpose of the scheme was to provide for the discussion of 'wages, hours and conditions of service, and other matters affecting the staff,'² and carried a proviso reserving managerial functions. The competence of the various bodies was to deal with matters within the authority of the official members (each body was constituted of two equal parts, one elected by the staff concerned, and the other appointed by the companies). Failing agreement on Sectional or Departmental Council, provision was made for 'reference to management' by which a more authoritative view than that of the officials present could be discovered, and finally for reference to the Underground Railway Council and the Negotiating Committee.

The National Agreements of 1919 and 1920 had unified the grading system and the rates of pay for staff on the Main Lines after the 1914-18 war, to fit in with the amalgamation of the companies. These agreements were followed by the Under-

¹ *Industrial Relations Handbook*, Ministry of Labour and National Service, H.M.S.O., 1944, pp. 38-42.

² Johnston and Spates, *op. cit.*

ground Group, and the rates payable to each grade were those paid by the Main Line companies for the London Area. Despite this unification there were a bewildering number of grades—over thirty for traffic operating staff alone—and many of these were subdivided into classes, staff within each class sometimes receiving different rates of pay according to length of service. Some idea of the rates in force in 1933 may be given by those of four representative grades:

Motorman (driver)	93/- per week (after 6 years service)
Guard	68/- per week (after 6 years service)
Booking Clerk (Class 5)	£210 per annum (maximum)
Porter (Grade 1)	46/- per week „
(Grade 2)	42/- per week „

To compensate for the loss of earnings suffered by the companies in the depression, cuts had come into operation in September 1932. On the Main Lines similar cuts had been made in March 1931, but the effects of the depression were not so quickly felt by the Combine and proposals were delayed until 1932; then throughout the Combine strong resistance was offered (successfully by the busmen) on the railways particularly by the A.S.L.E.F., and agreement was only reached in September. These cuts provided for a deduction of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ from all earnings, a further deduction of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ from earnings in excess of 40/- per week (or £104 p.a.) and a 'supercut' of another $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ from earnings in excess of £750 per annum, but no reduction was to be made which would reduce the earnings of an adult member of the staff below 50/- per week (or £130 p.a.). They were to be temporary cuts to meet a particular emergency, and were, in fact, later restored. A forty-eight hour week, again the outcome of post-war negotiations including all the railways, was in operation for the underground.

5. WORKSHOP STAFF

In addition to the staff mentioned so far the Board took over staff in a number of repair workshops. National machinery for railway shopmen on the Main Lines had been set up in 1927 after long negotiations following on a 1924 Court of Inquiry into a dispute between the N.U.R. and the A.E.U. over the

application of Award 728¹ to the old Great Northern Railway on its incorporation into the L.N.E.R. under the 1921 Act.² This settlement followed on an agreement between the unions concerned, and provided for Shop Committees, Works Committees, Departmental Committees, and a National Council. The Underground were again not parties to this agreement. In 1925, while Main Line negotiations were in progress, it concluded an agreement on its own. The craftsmen, organized in their own unions, were expressly excluded, at their own wish, from the machinery set up to cover the bulk of the unskilled and semi-skilled, organized by the N.U.R. The agreement provided for departmental committees in the Mechanical, Civil, and Signal Engineering Departments with a common Line Committee as the superior body. These bodies were of similar constitution to those on the traffic side, with roughly the same functions and competence. A Departmental Committee, and a Line Committee, had been set up in 1924 to cover members of the Electrical Trades Union in the Mechanical and Signal Engineering Departments, and in 1930 a Departmental Committee was set up for members of the National Union of Vehicle Builders employed in the Department of the Chief Mechanical Engineer (Railways). Rates of pay followed Award 728 with its considerable variety, and included, of course, the London differential, besides a special bonus.

The L.G.O.C. workshop at Chiswick had a Works Council recognized by the management and the trade unions concerned. The rates of pay had originally been the normal district rates for the crafts concerned, and during the 1914-18 war the national engineering bonuses of the Committee of Production had been followed. Soon after the war, however, one of the most important unions concerned, the National Union of Vehicle Builders, had gained an additional 3*d.* per hour above the outside rates; this represented a sharing, by the staff concerned, in the result of improved processes of production. In 1924, an amalgamation of rates was negotiated for Chiswick, and the N.U.V.B. plus rate was agreed as the rate for all skilled craftsmen. All semi-skilled workers were regarded as Assistant Craftsmen, and

¹ An Award of the Industrial Court which unified rates of pay and grading for railway shopmen as the 1919-1920 agreements had done for 'conciliation' staff.

² *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, May, 1924.

'General Hands' made up the third grade. In 1933 the rates of pay in force were 90/1*d.* for skilled men, 78/4*d.* for assistant craftsmen and 70/6*d.* for general hands, in each case well above 'outside' rates. The working week was, as in the other workshops, and for 'inside staff' on the middle shift, the forty-seven-hour engineering trades week.

In the various tramway workshops, negotiations were carried on with the craft unions and with the general unions as at Chiswick, but multiplicity of rates prevailed, and most of these rates were well below the Chiswick rates for similar work.

During 1932, mainly on the initiative of the N.U.V.B. and the E.T.U., the craft unions concerned came together to form an organization to represent the workshop staff on both trams and buses and in addition the craftsmen in the railway shops and in the road service garages and depots. This organization was known as the London Transport Joint Trades Committee; the central committee was at first mainly nominal, and left the bulk of the work to the three sub-committees dealing separately with the railway, the bus and the tramway sections. It was recognized as the appropriate negotiating body shortly before the establishment of the Board.

6. OTHER STAFF

Two sections of staff were engaged in the generation and supply of electricity, one for the Combine railway and tramway undertakings (at Lots Road and Neasden) and one for the L.C.C. tramways (at Greenwich). The former were covered by direct negotiations, mainly with the E.T.U., and the Underground Group had also negotiated a scheme for a Local Joint Committee for the generating stations and sub-stations, analogous to the other underground joint bodies. The L.C.C. tramway generation staff came under the Metropolitan District Council of the National Joint Industrial Council for the Electricity Supply Industry, set up in 1919. Rates of pay for the various grades concerned differed materially between the two groups, being higher under the Joint Council agreement than under the Combine agreement, for most, but not all grades.

Negotiations concerning canteen staff were direct, with the

N.U.R. on the underground, and with the T. & G.W.U. for the road service undertakings. There were a number of purely internal schemes in the Combine for the representation of higher supervisory grades (inspectors, etc.) set up after the General Strike, which had caused many transport concerns to look with disfavour on the organization of officials by trade unions. In so far as these grades were organized, the Railway Clerks' Association, as well as the T. & G.W.U., claimed members, and the staff employed at headquarters, below the 'special' grade, was covered by an Administrative and Clerical Staff Committee Scheme negotiated in 1922 with the R.C.A. On the L.C.C. tramway undertaking inspectors were organized by the T. & G.W.U. who had resisted any internal schemes after the General Strike, but the headquarters staff was mainly covered by the L.C.C. Staff Association which was not, and did not consider itself to be, a trade union.

7. LABOUR RELATIONS UNDER THE COMBINE

In general, the claim of the Combine, and also of the tramway undertakings, to be 'good employers' can hardly be challenged. Rates of pay were in most cases equal to, and not infrequently considerably above, comparable rates outside. Conditions of work were good, and were the result of careful negotiations with the trade unions concerned, to whom the employers were willing to give full recognition. Mess-rooms were generally provided, the Combine and the L.C.C. assisted sports associations run by their staff, and various institutes, particularly the railwaymen's Albert Stanley Institute (called after Lord Ashfield) were at the service of the staff. Besides pensions schemes for sections of the salaried staff, the Combine ran a T.O.T. (Trains, Omnibuses, Trams) Benevolent Fund, and gave *ex gratia* grants to staff retiring after ten years' service or more. The L.C.C. had a similar scheme, giving considerably higher grants, but only for employees who had served twenty years or more.¹ Some of the other local authorities provided pensions schemes for their staff (including tramway staff).² West Ham, under a Labour Council,

¹ Under the terms of the L.C.C. (General Powers) Act, 1930.

² Under the adoptive Local Government and Other Officers Superannuation Act, 1922, Section 17, since replaced by the compulsory Local Government Superannuation Act, 1937.

paid the highest rates permitted by law for non-contributory service.

G. A. Johnston and T. G. Spates, who wrote an account of the Combine's industrial relations in 1929 for the International Labour Office, tried to summarize the general principles of its industrial relations in five points: that of collective agreements in association with other transport employers; that of maintaining direct contact with the trade unions; that of setting up schemes in conjunction with the unions 'to facilitate industrial relations'; the express exclusion of management and disciplinary questions from negotiation; and the primary use of direct communication between employee and appropriate official. This is sound enough; but they also say that:

Relations between the management and workers within the Combine are extremely good. Though the Combine was involved in the General Strike of 1926, and, together with the Main Line Railways, in the National Railway Strike of 1919, it is safe to say that the origin of those strikes was foreign to conditions of work within the system of the Combine.¹

Here they might be accused of errors of omission. The tramway strike of 1924 has already been mentioned. The origin of this strike was a claim presented by the union to the employers' side of the Metropolitan District Council on December 19th, 1923, for an 8/- increase for all staff. This claim arose, curiously enough, out of a demand for a reduction on the part of the London and Suburban Traction Company, the holding company of the Combine's tramways, whose general manager, in a letter of June 19th, 1923, to the union notifying the reduction, said: 'Owing to the large and rapidly increasing number of omnibuses which are working in the areas served by the tramways, the earnings of my company are being seriously affected and tend to become worse and worse.'² Mr. Bevin, the General Secretary, in reply, urged the need for stronger government action. 'Our own organization has made strenuous efforts to bring about the establishment of a single traffic authority for London under public control.' He criticized a wage-cut as 'the easiest method' of obtaining relief.³ The Traction Company's notice duly expired, but the old rates continued to be paid, and the union's 8/- claim soon followed.⁴ In February 1924 a mass meeting of London

¹ Op. cit. ² Quoted in *The Record*, July 1923. ³ Ibid. ⁴ Op. cit., November.

tramwaymen instructed their committee to strike if no agreement was reached. The Metropolitan District Council reported the dispute, as the Constitution provided, to the National Council, who in their turn, seeing no solution, reported it, on March 13th, two days before the strike notices were due to operate, to the Minister of Labour. Meanwhile the busmen had authorized their committee to strike in sympathy at the same time. Both moves received the sanction of the union's Executive. The efforts of the Ministry led to a postponement of the strike until the 20th. The men refused to submit the case to arbitration, and refused offers, made by the L.C.C. and the majority of the municipal authorities concerned, of advances of between 2/- and 5/- for the various grades, as insufficient and not covering all London tramwaymen. On March 21st the Minister appointed a Court of Inquiry—Sir Arthur Colefax, Mr. G. W. Paton, and Mr. Arthur Pugh—under the Industrial Courts Act 1919, to investigate the dispute. The men nevertheless struck at midnight, to the indignation of *The Times*, which carried a leader on 'An Unjustifiable Strike'.¹ Mr. Bevin explained that a dispute had been submitted to a Court of Inquiry in 1921, whose findings the employers had refused 'to accept or consider', and the union was determined to avoid a repetition.² 16,000 tramwaymen and the L.G.O.C.'s 23,000 busmen were on strike, transport in London was disorganized, and the tubes and the 300 'pirate' buses, who enjoyed the benefits of non-unionism, were heavily overcrowded. On March 24th the Court presented its interim report, maintaining, curiously enough in the face of press comments, that the merits of the claim for an increase were not questioned; that 'the present crisis has, in the main, arisen through the tramway undertakings in the metropolitan area being unable to earn sufficient to meet the claim' due chiefly to 'the severe competition of the omnibuses in the absence of any co-ordinating control'; that all witnesses had declared that fare increases would be no solution, and had demanded central control; and that 'a definite undertaking by the government to introduce and press forward legislation placing

¹ *The Times*, March 21st, 1924.

² *Ibid.* The report of the Inquiry to which Mr. Bevin referred (House of Commons Paper No. 37 of 1921) recommended consideration of a standardization of wage-rates, examination of the circumstances of the lower paid grades, and postponement of further wage-cuts.

the passenger traffic of the Metropolitan area under some co-ordinating control affords, in our view, a basis and the only one at present suggested, for re-opening negotiations between the parties'.¹

On receipt of the report the Government announced their intention of bringing in a Bill (which was already in draft form, based on the recommendations of Sir Henry Maybury, Director General of Roads under the Ministry of Transport, to the Royal Commission on London Government in 1922), and got into touch with the parties.² On March 25th the Bill received its first reading, and the offer of all employers except Erith, Ilford and Bexley Councils to grant 5/- at once and refer the rest of the claim to arbitration was rejected. The railwaymen were now becoming restive. Mass meetings of N.U.R. members were calling for a strike, and on the 26th the Executive of the A.S.L.E.F. instructed its members on the underground (the vital motormen) to come out on the 28th. Meetings with the Minister of Labour and with the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, failed to reach agreement, and the Prime Minister stated that 'the major services must be maintained'.³ *The Times* reported that a cabinet committee was preparing plans to carry on the transport of the metropolis should a state of emergency be declared, and on the 27th a joint committee of the T.U.C. General Council and the Labour Party Executive met to deplore the suggestion that the Emergency Powers Act should be used.⁴ On the 28th, however, a provisional settlement was reached, the tube strike was called off, and on the following day a ballot vote of the tramwaymen accepted, by 9,428 votes to 4,377, the offer of 6/- for drivers, and conductors, 4/- for inside staff, and an adjustment of the sliding scale. Busmen and tramwaymen returned to work.

The Combine were by far the largest employers concerned, and came close to a general strike of their forty thousand odd staff, but this must not be taken too readily as evidence of poor labour relations. The origin of the claim was unusual. It was

¹ Interim Report of the Court of Inquiry, *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, April 1924.

² *The Times*, March 25th, 1924.

³ Quoted on p. 85, *Post-War History of the British Working Class*, Allan Hutt, Gollancz, 1937.

⁴ *The Times*, March 28th, 1924.

general knowledge that government plans for a measure of unification, which was the chief demand of the Combine, had been shelved. A Labour Government, peculiarly vulnerable to a claim based on the need for higher wages, was in office. The Combine's witnesses before the Court, including Lord Ashfield, concentrated on the need for unification, rather than on the wage issue, and the Combine only made an offer after the Government had announced its legislative intentions, whereas the majority of the municipal authorities and the L.C.C. had made an offer before the strike started. All this may be taken as some evidence that the Combine and its employees, whose union was also strongly in favour of unification, were not entirely out of sympathy, in spite of the dispute.

Apart from this strike, there was almost unbroken peace on the railways and tramways in the years leading up to the formation of the Board, but the more militant busmen showed restiveness from time to time. To understand this period it must be remembered that after the General Strike the great majority of the trade unions followed the leadership of the T.U.C. General Council, and supported its attempt to enter into negotiations with the employers' organizations for joint discussion and joint action on industrial problems, through the 'Mond-Turner' talks. Mr. Bevin was one of the sponsors of this move, and took a leading part in the talks, thus arousing the violent antagonism of the minority, which included the A.E.U., Mr. A. J. Cook, the Miners' Secretary, the Minority Movement (a loose grouping of left-wing trade unionists, started in 1924, largely through the efforts of the Communist Party) and the Communist Party itself. Thus Mr. Bevin, who had been denounced by the Conservative press during the 1924 strike, and the Dockers' and Smithfield disputes of the same year, as a troublemaker,¹ now found his bitterest opponents on the left, and was in turn perhaps a little too ready to discover a Communist plot behind any criticism of, or disobedience towards, himself.

During the course of the 1924-26 negotiations there were unofficial strikes against schedules alterations and transfers of staff. The necessity of alteration of schedules twice a year for summer and winter services, and the difficulty of ascertaining

¹ Trevor Evans, *Bevin*, Allen Unwin, 1946, pp. 94-95.

beforehand the exact effect of a proposed schedule when tested under traffic conditions, provides a constant and ready source of disputes. At the beginning of April 1929 there was a 'go-slow' movement at Cricklewood L.G.O.C. garage as a protest against a schedule previously agreed by the union. *The Times* of April 8th reported that 'The Communists in the omnibusmen's section of the Transport and General Workers' Union have set themselves in open revolt against the leadership of the movement and against Mr. Bevin, the General Secretary, in particular'. On October 6th in the same year occurred the 'Barking Clock' dispute, a small unofficial strike over a minor difficulty, remarkable only for Mr. Bevin's telegram to the strikers instructing immediate return to work and telling them that: 'Literature now issued proves conclusively that the stoppage is a Minority Movement stunt and definite challenge to union and elected representatives of busmen',¹ a statement which later, after seeing a delegation from the branch concerned, he 'unreservedly withdrew'. On November 11th, 2000 men from four garages struck on a 'closed-shop' issue.²

In 1932 the union fought a hard delaying action from January to July against the reductions proposed for London busmen and tramwaymen. On the last day of that month notices were posted by the L.G.O.C. announcing the proposed dismissal of 800 men. The busmen felt that something had been decided behind their backs, and in the face of numerous mass meetings threatening strikes, the Company postponed the notices.³ A number of branches passed formal votes in favour of strike action if the dismissals were put into force on August 24th, and on August 10th Mr. A. F. Papworth, Secretary of Chelverton Road Branch, recently decorated with the union's silver medal for recruiting 170 new members, invited all branch delegates to a meeting to discuss the situation, which was held on August 12th.⁴ Twenty-one delegates attended and criticized Mr. Bevin and the Central Bus Committee for negotiating a provisional agreement on the same lines as those which the men had previously rejected, and for concealing this from the busmen's delegate conference of July 25th. The meeting decided to call mass meetings of the

¹ *The Times*, October 7th, 1929.

² *The Times*, November 12th, 1929.

³ *Daily Worker*, August 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 1932.

⁴ *Ibid.*, August 13th.

men, which were duly held. Indignation was increased when it became known that a reduction had been accepted by the tramwaymen on the understanding that a similar 'reduction in pay had been negotiated with the railway unions, the Joint Trades Committee and the London Bus Committee'¹ and there were some signs of unrest amongst the tramwaymen. The Central Bus Committee decided to ballot the section on the proposed agreement and large majorities rejected both the wage cut (16,593 to 4,169) and a plan for seasonal discharges (13,461 to 4,212, the inside staff not voting) despite the official recommendation to accept. The following two weeks brought conferences, mass meetings, and Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square meetings, called by the 'Provisional Committee of Garage Delegates', which soon changed its name to the 'Rank and File Committee'. The *Daily Worker* instructed London Communists to give the movement active support. On August 30th the official delegate conference of the section, by 51 to 7 votes, demanded that the Executive should authorize strike action for September 23rd, when the Company's notices were now due to operate. Meanwhile, Mr. Bevin used every means to arrive at a new agreement. On September 19th he presented the draft 'Speed' agreement to a delegate conference of busmen, which accepted it by 33 votes to 25. The Rank and File Committee issued a 'Call to Action' claiming that the delegate conference had 'weakened', that the new agreement would mean harder work for the same wages, and eventual redundancy, and called for a demonstration outside Transport House, the Union's headquarters. On the 22nd a delegate conference finally ratified the agreement, which was not submitted to a ballot, and the Rank and File Committee claimed that any credit for improvement was theirs. On the 27th the *Daily Worker* published an article accusing Bevin and his colleagues of being agents of the company, fighting for the company and against the men; on this Mr. Bevin based a libel action which was decided in his favour at the beginning of the following year.

On October 5th a busmen's rank and file conference decided that their movement should continue on the basis of branch affiliations; that garage committees should be set up, each sending

¹ Union Cyclo No. 6402, of July 30th, 1932, quoted in the *Daily Worker* of August 29th.

six representatives to the Rank and File Committee, two of whom should represent the inside staff; that a direct approach should be made to the members of branches which declined to affiliate. The policy of the committee was not to form a 'breakaway' union, but to organize within the union to oppose attacks on wages and conditions. It decided to take over the *Busman's Punch*, a paper run by a Communist group at Holloway Garage, as its official organ.¹ The leading members of the new committee were: Mr. A. F. Papworth, already mentioned; Mr. Frank Snelling, of Merton Garage; Mr. W. Payne, of Dalston Garage; to whom Mr. J. W. Jones, also of Dalston, was soon added. There were only two acknowledged Communist Party members on the Committee, Mr. B. Sharkey and Mr. W. Ware, but all its leaders paid tribute to the support of the *Daily Worker* in the dispute.

It seems clear that by the end of July the Bus Committee and Mr. Bevin had decided that a cut could not be avoided, and had at first been surprised by the antagonism of the men. Although in September they had given all their efforts to reach an improved agreement, suspicion and hostility remained, for the Rank and File Movement continued to receive widespread support.

The movement's first successes were the return of Mr. Sharkey at a by-election to the Central Bus Committee, and a small strike at one of the independent operators' garages, which achieved its object. On Wednesday, January 18th, 1933, the branch at Forest Gate Garage decided to strike against the company's decision to modify a schedule which had previously been sanctioned by the union. The strike spread rapidly (as bus strikes readily do, for most services are run from two garages, and a strike at one garage is a strong incentive for the men operating the same service at another garage to stop work, the strike then spreads to the other services there, and thus to other garages, with snowball effect), and by Sunday between twenty and thirty garages were out. On Monday tube workers at Morden held a meeting in favour of a strike. The Central Bus Committee, backed by the Executive, refused to recognize the men's action, but that day received a delegation of the strikers led by Messrs. Snelling, Payne and Papworth, and promised immediate negotiation on Forest Gate's

¹ *Daily Worker*, October 6th, 1932.

grievances, and an attempt to speed up the negotiating machinery, and prevent victimization. The men thereupon resumed work, and negotiations proceeded.¹ The union journal argued that nothing had been achieved which could not have been obtained through the constitutional machinery. The *Busman's Punch* claimed a rousing victory, attributing the undeniable discontent of the men to the effect of the 'Speed' agreement's operation, and argued that the only solution was the introduction of a seven-hour day without loss of pay.

The Rank and File Committee won a great success at the elections for the thirteen delegates to represent the busmen at the union's biennial conference in July; ten of those elected were Rank and File committee men or supporters. At the Conference, Mr. Bevin praised the union's democratic constitution, even referred in friendly terms to rank and file movements, such as the Dockers, which served a purpose and then died away. 'The London Busmen's Movement was, however, different. It did not die. It was controlled by outside influences.'² The Conference at his request amended the rule-book to require officers to act 'strictly in accordance with the constitution', and 'in the conduct of trade negotiations affecting wages and/or conditions' to operate 'by and through the machinery provided by the union', and to empower the Executive to declare any office vacant if any of the conditions governing appointment or election were violated.³ After the Conference, Mr. Sharkey, the recently-elected 'Rank and File' member of the Central Bus Committee, was asked to give an undertaking to dissociate himself from the Committee. He refused, appealed to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the appropriate body, and no further action was taken. This takes the story a month or two beyond the advent of the Board.

8. THE UNIONS' ATTITUDE TO THE LONDON TRANSPORT BILL

The attitude of the unions to the proposed scheme for the unification of London Transport was generally friendly. The

¹ A full, if one-sided, account of the dispute is given in the *Busman's Punch* of February 1933.

² *Busman's Punch*, August 1933.

³ T. & G.W.U. Rule Book.

attitude of the T. & G.W.U. at the time of the 1924 strike has already been mentioned.¹ They welcomed the Act of that year, so far as it went. In June 1927 Mr. John Cliff, the Assistant General Secretary and an old road transport worker, read a paper to the National Joint Council for the Tramway Industry, attacking 'wasteful competition', giving his approval to Lord Ashfield's 'Common Fund' scheme and advocating a scheme of national unification by areas.² A memorandum to the Royal Commission of 1929 had embodied a similar scheme, and Mr. Cliff had given evidence in favour.³ The union supported a private member's bill of the early part of that year to unify London's transport under the Combine, thus incurring Mr. Herbert Morrison's displeasure. On the formation of the Labour Government the latter, as Minister of Transport, undertook to present a government bill for control under a public authority.⁴ Union leaders thought, with the directors of the Combine, that the prosperity of transport depended on the ending of 'wasteful competition', and prosperity would determine the wages and conditions of their members: moreover the staff of the Combine, and of municipalities elsewhere, was well organized in the union, which had always found great obstacles to its headway among the employees of the smaller companies and operators. The railway and other unions were also in favour of unification, although less energetic in the matter than the T. & G.W.U. Most of the unions concerned presented petitions to the Select Committee of Lords and Commons which in 1931 considered Mr. Morrison's bill, but in defence of their particular interests, rather than against the principle of the scheme. The two major matters of concern to the unions which were discussed were: the method of appointment of the Board, in which the T. & G.W.U. were deeply concerned, and the provision for the embodiment of the underground joint representative schemes in the bill, which affected the railway unions, the others being chiefly interested in the exclusion of their members from such

¹ In September 1929, a Dublin transport strike, supported by the Union, led a Court of Inquiry to declare in favour of transport unification in that city, as a means of avoiding competitive wage-cuts. (*The Record*, October, 1929). This was an exact repetition of the tactics of 1924.

² *The Record*, June, 1927.

³ *The Record*, April, 1929.

⁴ Herbert Morrison, *Socialization and Transport*.

schemes (for which the bill provided). Mr. Neep, representing the T. & G.W.U. before the Committee, argued in favour of an enlarged representation on the London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee (a body originally set up under the 1924 Act, and reconstituted by Mr. Morrison's scheme with thirty-four members instead of nineteen), and for direct representation of labour on the Board, or at least statutory provision for the consultation of labour interests before appointment, as under the Acts constituting the Central Electricity Board, and the Port of London Authority. (On the latter body the union had two representatives, and twice in the previous decade had sought to augment the number by private members' bills.) Mr. Morrison came in person to reiterate his well-known thesis of the board of experts, arguing that trade unionists should be appointed only on grounds of ability, and not in any way as representatives. A compromise was reached, increasing labour representatives on the Advisory Committee from three to five, and slightly altering the wording of the clause which laid down the qualifications required for membership of the Board from:

'persons who have had wide experience and have shown capacity in industry, commerce or finance'

to

'persons who have had wide experience and have shown capacity in transport industrial commercial or financial matters or in the conduct of public affairs'.¹

This change appeared to satisfy the union that labour would suffer less danger of exclusion from the Board, an attitude which the Committee, understandably, found a little difficult to comprehend. The controversy between Mr. Morrison and the union over direct representation on the boards of nationalized industries was continued at length in the debates of the T.U.C. and Labour Party Conferences in the following years. In the event Mr. Cliff was appointed to the London Passenger Transport Board, and resigned his office in the union in order to accept.

As mentioned above, the railway unions had been satisfied by inclusion in, and the other unions by exclusion from, the scheme for formal representative bodies. Sir Lyndon Macassey,

¹ Joint Select Committee, *op. cit.*, pp. 614-615.

for the Combine, made a half-hearted attempt to object that administrative, supervisory and technical staff, previously excluded, would now be liable to inclusion in a trade union scheme.¹ He was answered by Mr. Blanco White for the railway unions, who showed that such staff were not excluded either under the 1921 Act for the Main Lines, or under the Underground schemes, and that in fact there was in existence on the Underground a departmental council for clerical staff, and, for supervisory staff, three sectional sub-committees. Strong objection came from the L.C.C. Staff Association, who claimed that 600 of their members would be transferred under the scheme, and become liable to inclusion along with trade unionists. The Association, its representative claimed, was not a trade union; 'in our view the staff has a responsibility for keeping the undertaking going, and, therefore, in our view it is not open to the staff to press its contentions by the threat of the withdrawal of its services, and one of the objections that we have to being placed in this position, where we must either go completely unrepresented in the Conciliation Machinery, or join a Trade Union that has not that principle working, is that we do not feel justified and do not wish—it is against the principles that we believe to be right—to be involved with a body that is prepared to withdraw its services in order to enforce its demands'.² The promoters of the bill pointed out that the schemes were desired by unions representing a large majority of the staff concerned, and that it would be open to the association's transferred members to form their own organization to meet the Board in their interest, if they so desired. Later the Board set up a separate representative scheme to satisfy these tender consciences.

The Rank and File Movement showed no pleasure at the prospect of employment by a public authority or in Mr. Cliff's appointment. The scheme was looked on as 'state capitalism', and an article in the *Busman's Punch* of December 1932 drew attention to the threat to wages and conditions which the writer alleged to be contained in the clauses laying down the Board's prior obligation to meet the interest charges on its stock.

1 *Ibid.*, p. 1244.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 1247.

The Board, then, inherited a comparatively well-paid staff, enjoying good conditions, and considerable welfare and other benefits; good relations, and carefully planned machinery for discussion and negotiation, with the unions concerned, who were well disposed towards its objects; and a troubled situation on the Central Bus services.

CHAPTER II

NEGOTIATIONS AND THE NEGOTIATING MACHINERY

IN contrast to some of the industries nationalized by the present Parliament (for instance the Electricity Supply Industry), the Board and the trade unions concerned have not agreed on a simple hierarchical structure for negotiations. This is partly due to the number of unions concerned (some seventeen), and to the number of sections of staff engaged on different types of work. The extension of negotiations has produced some simplification, by bringing together unions and sections of staff, but this has in most cases led to an increase in the number of negotiating bodies, for the new have been treated as supplementing, rather than superseding, the old. Fortunately, however, most of the negotiating schemes affect only small sections of the staff, and the vast majority of London Transport workers are covered by three of them. The first of these in importance is undoubtedly that for road service section, excluding the workshops and the craftsmen.

I. ROAD SERVICE STAFF

The simplicity of the machinery covering the staff working in or from the bus and coach garages, and the tram depots is, in the main, due to the organization of the whole, apart from craftsmen and some members of the higher supervisory sections, in the one union, the T. & G.W.U., which has, since 1946, enjoyed 'closed-shop' rights amongst the non-supervisory staff.¹ The structure of the union has already been partially described in the first chapter.² Each garage or depot has its own branch. The most important officers of the branch are the secretary, the conference delegate, the garage or depot representative (whose task it is to represent union members in local discussions), and the shop steward, or stewards, of the inside staff. In the Central

¹ The reasons for this are given below, p. 129.

² See pp. 13-18.

Bus section the secretary cannot be the representative, but in the Tram and Trolley-bus, and Country Bus and Coach, sections, the two offices may be, and frequently are, held by the same person; in all sections the branch secretary may be the conference delegate. These and other officers, together with other elected members, form the branch committee. The delegates, together with representatives elected from and by the shop stewards, form the conferences of the three sections, which meet every other month and are, within the limits set down by the General Executive Council of the union, according to union rules, the governing bodies of the sections, although issues are from time to time referred back to the branches for decision. Each section has a committee; that of the Central Bus Section is elected in a ballot of the membership every two years, and consists of two members from each of the three divisions, and two inside staff representatives elected by the shop stewards; the Tram and Trolley-bus Council, and the Country Services Committee¹ are elected by the conferences of those two sections; the former has three from each of three divisions, two inside staff representatives, and one representative of the permanent way staff; the latter has two representatives from each of two sections, and two from the inside staff. The committees, together with the appropriate permanent officials, form the negotiating bodies for the sections.² Each sectional committee elects four members, one of whom, and one only, is from the inside staff, to the Area Passenger Transport Group Committee, which also includes two representatives of the London cabmen. The Group Committee, less cabmen, is the negotiating body for the whole section.

In the Central Bus and Country Service sections, inside staff workers are members of the same branches as the operating staff, but in the Tram and Trolley-bus Section the inside staff belongs to separate branches, organized on a geographical basis, in order to give branches of a sufficient size (fifty members is the minimum for a T. & G.W.U. branch). This change came in 1938 at the wishes of the members, who felt they would then be able to give fuller attention to their rather different problems. In all three sections shop stewards' conferences, and negotiating com-

¹ Also known as the 'Outer London District Committee'.

² The Tram and Trolley-bus Section elects from its members one for each division to form a Negotiating Committee of three members.

mittees elected by them, may deal with matters concerning the inside staff alone.¹

Each of the eight divisions, and each of the three sections, has its own permanent officer. The Central Bus Section has in addition a schedules officer, and an inside staff officer, who also deals with T. & G.W.U. members employed in Chiswick Works. The Area Group Committee Secretary is the senior officer of the Area Trade Group. This post, and the post of sectional officer for the Country Services, were added at the end of the war. All the officers are appointed by the Executive of the union.

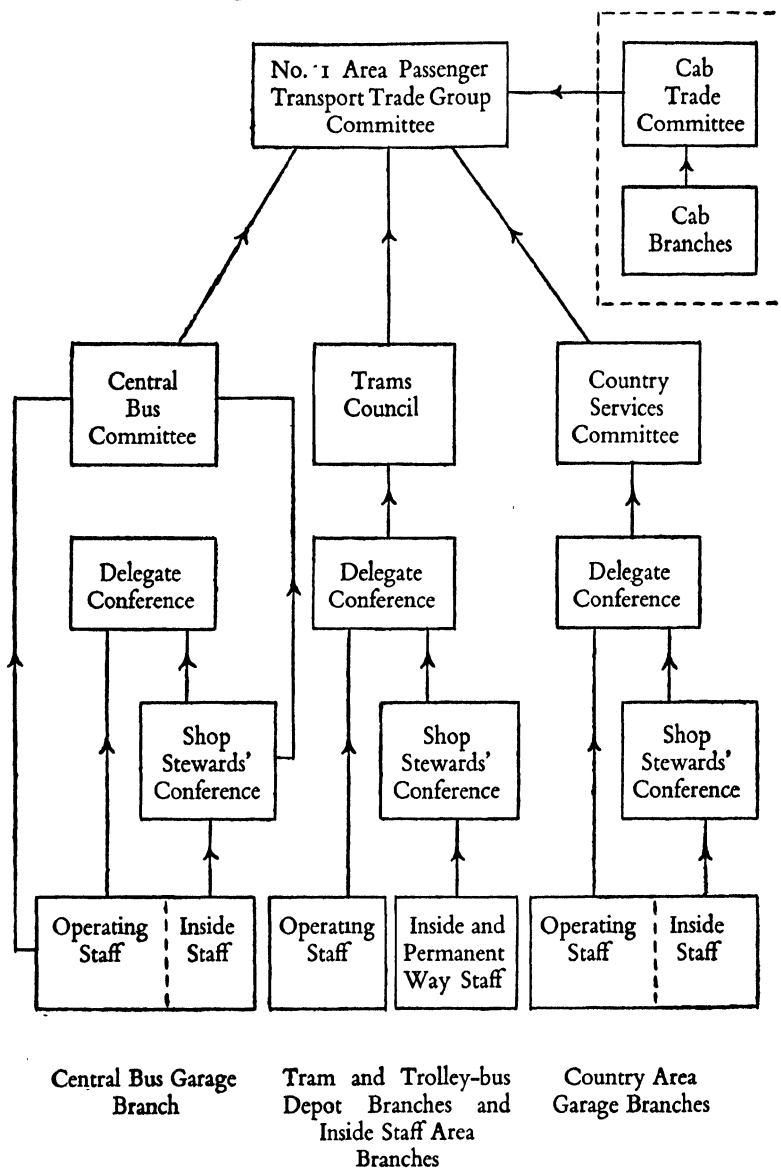
The Area Passenger Trade Group forms part of the No. 1 Area of the union, and its offices are in the Area Office buildings. It also forms part of the National Passenger Trade Group.

The Country Service members were originally in Area No. 2 of the union, but in January 1938 they were transferred to Area No. 1. This transfer has greatly facilitated the practice of carrying on negotiations common to all three sections, which has become the rule since the outbreak of war. Prior to 1938 joint action had required the setting up of an *ad hoc* joint committee. The special privileges of the Central Bus Section under the 'Anderton's Hotel Agreement',² with regard to direct access to the union Executive and the conduct of negotiations in conjunction with the Executive, have been extended to the Area Trade Group. On a number of occasions since the war, joint conferences of the delegates of the three sections have been held to decide on policy in important negotiations. This practice, although it has led to some difficulty over voting rights—the Central Busmen, who outnumber the other two Sections, may be outvoted at such a conference—is regarded by union officials as a remedy for the sectional suspicion which was noticeable on occasion before the war, and would tend to prevent a repetition of the charges and countercharges of provoking conflict between sections which were bandied about by officers of the union and 'Rank and File' leaders after the Coronation Strike.

This union organization fits neatly into the structure of London Transport. Apart from major agreements which are a matter for

¹ The permanent way (trams) representatives have their own separate negotiating body.

² See p. 15.

No. 1 Area Passenger Transport Trade Group of the T. & G.W.U.

negotiation between London Transport and the union Executive (in consultation with the No. 1 Area Passenger Transport Trade Group Committee), more important difficulties can be discussed in regular meetings between the Board's officials and the Group Committee, or between sectional officials of the Board and the sectional committees at their regular meetings;¹ more informally they may be raised with the Group or Sectional Officers. Local difficulties are discussed in the first instance by the garage representative (or another union officer acting for him) and the Board's garage, depot or district officials; failing settlement they are passed up through district to divisional levels, at which Divisional Superintendent can meet Divisional Officer, to the Operating Managers and the sectional officers and committees. Schedules complaints are dealt with in a similar manner, but most branches have schedules representatives (or delegates), who 'peruse' new schedules and raise questions in the first instance; further discussion is between the Board's schedules superintendents and union officials (in Central Buses the schedules officer) up to section committees and Operating Managers. Matters concerning the inside staff, when not settled between the shop steward and local officials, are passed up to union officers and Divisional Engineers, or next, to the Rolling Stock Engineer, and, in the last resort, to meetings of the Inside Staff Negotiating Committee and the Chief Mechanical Engineer (Road Services).

The majority of the supervisory staff in these three sections is organized by the T. & G.W.U. into branches separate from the operating and inside staff, within a different section of the union (Clerical and Supervisory) and having their own union officer at the Area Office. The advantage of this separation is obvious. Some of the members of the higher supervisory staff (District Inspectors and above), who were at one time debarred from union membership by the L.G.O.C., and one or two clerical and lower supervisory grades in the Country Services² are members of the R.C.A. The R.C.A., from its foundation, aimed to cover the clerical and supervisory staff at the head offices of the Underground Group, as of the Main Line Companies, and it has,

¹ London Transport's chief officers for these sections meet their union committee each month (Central Bus meetings run for two days). In Country Services the meetings are quarterly.

² Depot inspectors and depot clerks.

perhaps, some additional attraction for senior staff as an organization confined to 'black-coated' workers. The T. & G.W.U. recognizes the right of the R.C.A. to organize Country Service depot inspectors and clerks, and in general the understanding is that those promoted to higher posts from the road operating staff remain in the T. & G.W.U. and those promoted from amongst the clerical staff remain in the R.C.A.; there is, however, competition between the two unions for the right to represent some of the higher Central Bus supervisory grades.

For the supervisory staff there are a number of Committees covering the various grades within each section. Some of these consist of London Transport officials and union representatives (the appropriate union official and representatives elected by the members); these committees, like those described above, are informal. Others, for staff amongst whom union membership is insufficient to warrant union representation, are 'domestic' schemes for staff representation, at which the Board's officials meet representatives elected by the staff concerned; these committees have formally agreed constitutions which lay down the objects, limits and procedure of the committees, and methods of nomination and election of staff representatives. The old antagonism to union membership among supervisory grades, which was for a time renewed after the General Strike, has now disappeared, and ballots of the staff concerned are arranged should unions claim that their membership is sufficient to justify a change from a domestic to a union scheme. The tram and trolley-bus supervisory staff has always been represented by the union and the four grades of Inspector, Depot Inspector, District Inspector, and Charge Depot Inspector have committees on which they are represented by the T. & G.W.U. In the bus sections there are still 'domestic' schemes for some grades of the inspectorate, and union committees for others in which the T. & G.W.U. has organized a majority. The depot inspectors and clerks in the Country Area have an R.C.A. committee, and since September 1948 the district inspectors and district mechanical inspectors in the Central Bus Area have also been represented by an R.C.A. committee, following a ballot in which that union achieved a majority. There are 'domestic schemes' for most of the supervisory grades of the garage and depot maintenance staff

and permanent way (trams) staff, but one or two grades are represented by the T. & G.W.U.

This structure looks neat; it also works well. By agreement, the union officials are allowed to collect union dues in a place provided by the Board in each garage or depot (normally the rest room). The union allows a small commission on dues collected, so that the Secretary, and in a large branch also the chairman, can take the day off from work in order to collect dues from members after they have been paid on Friday (in a small branch it may be necessary for the union to make up the secretary's pay to the full amount).¹ As members come in to pay irregularly throughout the day, as their shifts finish, they have an excellent opportunity, which they take, to mention any grievances which may arise out of the week's work. An important matter may be raised with local officials at once; frequently the secretary has a regular arrangement to meet the Superintendent, along with other committee members, towards the end of Friday afternoon, and raise all matters that have come up during the day. The union officers wait in their offices on Friday afternoons for the telephone messages which will tell them of difficulties that cannot be satisfactorily settled in the garages and depots, so that they can give advice, make arrangements for the appropriate further stages, and, if necessary, contact officials of the Board immediately.

Local difficulties are not confined to Friday; if at any time an urgent matter arises and the local officials fail to agree, arrangements are made for an immediate meeting between the Board's senior officials and union officers, sometimes on the spot. If the matter requires further investigation, arrangements are made as soon as possible for a joint committee to be set up. Less urgent matters are considered by the branch meetings, which are usually held fortnightly in the two central sections, and monthly in the country services, and alternate with branch committee meetings. Attendance at branch meetings is, as in most unions, low (suggested figures vary between 5% and 20%); when the reports of the schedules representatives are being considered, or similarly important matters discussed, it is customary to hold two meetings, so that both early and late shifts may voice their

¹ This practice is not universal in the Country Services.

opinions, and by these means up to 40% of the membership may be brought together. It is fashionable to-day to criticize low attendances at union branch meetings;¹ but it should be remembered that, on London Transport road services, there is ample provision made for the member to seek the advice and help of his representatives, or to make his views known to them, without attending branch meetings; and no doubt most members feel that there is no need to spend two hours in doing what can be done in five minutes. Ballots on matters concerning the section, on agreements with the Board, for instance, show a high proportion of members voting.²

Both national officials of the union, and senior officers of the Board, state that it has been their policy to encourage open and easy contact between those who have to negotiate on both sides. This has depended partly on the selection of persons (and here it must be remembered that all branch officials are elected), and partly on the fostering of good relations. It is clearly impossible for any outsider to give an authoritative judgment on the matter, but both sides (and this includes the 'left' amongst the union officials and representatives) claim that to-day relationships are excellent. Upon these relations depends, in the first instance, the smooth working of the negotiating machinery. The number, and frequent meetings, both formal and informal, of joint committees, or of management and negotiating committees, gives every possible opportunity for the airing of grievances and the discussion of difficulties.

The machinery works well; but there have been conflicts, and, at times, strikes, particularly of Central Busmen, the most important of which are described in the fourth chapter; negotiations have often been difficult and protracted, and sometimes unsuccessful. But this has not necessarily been due to weaknesses in the negotiating machinery. The causes have lain deeper.

The introduction of new schedules has always been one of the main sources of friction. From time to time particular schedules require alteration, as demand for transport varies, and as traffic conditions change, and twice a year there is a wholesale revision, at the time when summer or winter services are introduced.

¹ See, for instance, N. Barou, *British Trade Unionism To-day*, Gollancz, 1947.

² The ballot held during the Coronation strike obtained a 75% vote. For figures of union ballots in general, see *British Trade Unionism*, P.E.P., 1948.

The exact timing of a schedule makes all the difference between a satisfactory job and over-work. Frequent changes in working conditions are in themselves disturbing, and particular changes may affect, or appear to affect, some workers adversely. Such changes have frequently been the occasion for a crop of minor strikes. Moreover, schedules which have worked well for some time may cause trouble if traffic conditions change, and on one occasion it was found that discontent over schedules which had for long seemed satisfactory was due to the fact that a number of men who had previously lived close to the garage concerned had moved further away under a housing scheme, and required either much longer 'spread-overs' so that they might continue to go home between spells, or shorter schedules to reduce the time they now had to spend at the garage.

The 1937 Court of Inquiry, set up after the Coronation Strike, spent much of its time in consideration of schedules' difficulties, and in their Final Report the members of the Court added to their recommendation of casement a suggestion that the procedure for the submission of complaints to Head Office was too centralized, and that it should be 'preceded by discussion between representatives of the men and the Board at the garage at which the complaint arises'.¹ This has since become the recognized procedure, but it is doubtful if it is a complete solution. The core of the difficulty is that schedule compilation must be centralized, and particularly so in an area in which the volume of passenger transport is as heavy as in Central London. Each route intersects, or from time to time, runs on the same road as a large number of other routes; accordingly the schedules for each of these routes must interlock, and, in fact, every route in the area affects and is affected by the schedule of every other route, directly or indirectly. Schedule compilation is thus a skilled job; the story is told that a union branch secretary, who claimed that he would improve on the Board's schedules for his garage, was given a week and every opportunity to do so, and failed lamentably, producing schedules which neglected many points of contact with other routes. Although, however, compilation is skilled, and a given set of schedules may be accepted by the union members who specialize in such matters as the best solution of a

¹ Final Report. Section 40. Cmd. 5464 of 1937.

given problem, schedules that seem satisfactory on paper may not suit the traffic conditions under which they must be worked, and the final test of the schedules in traffic conditions is their effect on the men who have to operate them, who are not expert compilers. Some union members have from time to time suggested that union representatives should participate in the actual compilation; officials of the union reject this, on what seems to be solid grounds, that the result would be to transfer the conflict into the union itself. It is clear that there is no easy solution to this difficulty, and it would be bold for an outsider to criticize the methods and the efforts of both parties to overcome it.

The last paragraph of the Court of Inquiry's Final Report, a little homily on the avoidance of industrial disputes, suggested that there should be established 'by agreement . . . a final court of investigation and appeal on any matter where the ordinary methods of negotiation have failed to find a settlement', and referred to the existence of such schemes elsewhere.¹ We have seen that, from the beginning, neither side has shown liking for such a formal scheme. It is at least debatable whether arbitration would have averted the Coronation Strike; the roots of the trouble went deep, and such methods might have converted a strike that remained to the end an officially conducted dispute, into an uncontrolled unofficial strike which could, in the conditions of the time, have extended nationally. Certainly its absence has not led to major trouble since 1937; during the war a tribunal was set up to conform with the terms of S.R. & O. 1305, and twice used, but the onus has in general remained on negotiation. Indeed the experience of the national award of the National Council for the Omnibus Industry in 1943² shows that, at least on some occasions, negotiation can succeed where arbitration has not; and a Committee of Investigation can provide independent assistance, as with the forty-four hour week claim, less formally, and perhaps more successfully, than an arbitration tribunal.

Both Board and union appear to be content with the machinery of negotiation; union members have no loudly voiced criticisms, with every opportunity to voice them. It is difficult for the outsider to see that more could be done. The only authoritative body which has pronounced on the machinery found it wanting

¹ *Op. cit.*, Section 43.

² See p. 92 below.

in some respects. Its recommendations have been partly carried out, and it is doubtful whether full implementation would bring any benefit.

2. RAILWAY STAFF

The structure of negotiating committees for the railway staff is not quite so neat as that on the road operating side: first, because there are the three railway unions instead of the single T. & G.W.U., and secondly, because, for historical reasons, some of the committees include other sections of the staff, for example the lower grades of the headquarters clerical and technical staff (up to Senior Clerical Assistant, and equivalent technical grades). For other purposes, the headquarters staff is quite distinct from the railway staff, and serves all sections; for negotiating purposes, its lower grades are, since they are organized by the R.C.A., included in the railway machinery.

A second difference in comparison to the road service side is the formalization of the scheme. The committees operate under carefully drafted constitutions in accordance with the terms of the London Passenger Transport Act. The bottom tier consists of staff councils, which represent the employees on an occupational and not a territorial basis. There is considerable reason for this: railway operation requires a much greater variety of tasks than road operation, but it prevents the integration of branch, place of work and negotiating machinery which adds much to the neatness of the road service structure. There are nine staff councils, covering the Office Staff, Booking Office Staff, Trainmen, Station Staff, Supervisory Engineering Staff, Supervisory Traffic Staff, Signal Staff, Permanent Way Staff, and Mechanical Staff. Staff representatives vary in number from three (Supervisory Engineering Staff) to eleven (Trainmen), who meet 'not more than a corresponding number of officials nominated on behalf of the Management'. The functions and procedure of these councils, as laid down in the constitution, are similar to those of the Sectional Councils on the Main Lines. They are for the discussion and settlement of questions such as:

- (a) The local interpretation and administration of agreements governing employment.
- (b) Questions relating to working hours, reliefs, timekeeping, holidays, rosters, seniority, etc.

- (c) Questions of physical welfare, safety appliances and prevention of accidents.
- (d) Questions affecting economy and improvements in all matters relating to the operations of the Board.
- (e) Publicity as to rules and regulations, etc.
- (f) Questions of mutual interest affecting the well-being of the staff or of operation.

Questions which are not covered by the above provisions may be discussed and recommendations put forward to the management.¹

In contrast to the constitution which is still in force on the Main Lines,² there is provision for joint meetings of two or more councils on matters of joint interest, and for reference of matters not agreed in the first instance to the Management (i.e. informal discussion between the Staff Representatives and the Chief Officer concerned), and not immediately to the higher constitutional negotiating body. Each side has its own secretary, who is entitled to take part in the proceedings. The staff side secretary need not be in London Transport's employment, i.e., may be a trade union official. This concession dates back to the Main Line Councils' Constitution of 1911, and was one of the major victories of the railway unions in their struggle for recognition. There is elaborate provision for the nomination and election of staff representatives, who, as on the Main Line, need not be trade union members, though in fact they always are. The N.U.R. would like to see nomination made the prerogative of the trade union branch.

The Negotiating Committee, also established according to the provisions of the Act, consists of six representatives of the management, and two of each of the three unions. Its function is to consider applications from either party for a revision of agreements, and matters referred to it by the Sectional Councils. It is perhaps a weakness that the union side includes no 'working' members. Matters not agreed may be referred by either side to a Wages Board, which originally consisted of an independent chairman nominated by the Ministry of Labour, six representatives of each party, and four other persons nominated by bodies representative of labour or of employers. In 1948 this was altered in the interest of simplicity to correspond with the

¹ Scheme for the Establishment of Staff Councils, L.P.T.B. 1934, Section 3.

² A new procedure for consultation has been recently agreed.

changed Main Line body, the Railway Staff National Tribunal of 1935; the Wages Board now has three members only—an independent chairman, and a member nominated by each of the parties—who must not be members or employees of London Transport, or of the Trade Unions; there is provision for representatives of the parties to act as assessors.

The number of meetings and the number of agenda items for those meetings vary considerably between the different staff councils, partly according to the number of staff covered, and partly according to the method of transacting business (the council of the Head Office Staff, for instance, performs much of its work through a sub-committee). The councils covering the wages grades discuss, in the main, matters of welfare, such as the cleanliness of vehicles and rest rooms, draughts in vehicles, provision of special clothing; and operational problems (this affects the trainmen more than other sections), such as the provision of equipment, the introduction of new equipment, the operation of signal and lighting equipment, and times of running. Operational problems are frequently 'referred to management', often for tests and experiments observed by both parties.

One subject concerns the supervisory staff very deeply and takes up much of the time of the other councils—claims for reclassification to a higher grade. The councils have the right to discuss and advise on such claims. The number of grades and rates of pay would in themselves make reclassification a vexed question, but further complication is caused by the fact that promotion does not follow the simple pyramid of most occupations (since progress from the lowest to the highest grade may go along a number of routes); and by the jealousy between members of different unions whose paths of promotion cross or join at various stages. The present line of promotion for operating staff, agreed by the Negotiating Committee in 1947, is with difficulty illustrated by a chart. The chart does not reveal the whole system, for the principles governing selection vary with the different sections (promotion 'according to service', or 'according to seniority by class'), and old employees may still follow previous lines of promotion settled by agreements of 1928, 1932 and 1934 ('protective dates') for different

undertakings. The sectional councils are concerned with the application of principles of reclassification, and with the discussion of complaints of individuals passed over, and of applications for, and refusals of, reclassification. For the higher grades covered by this line of promotion, the traffic supervisory staff, classification is a matter of stations rather than men, and applications are based and decided upon numbers of staff and of stations supervised, and traffic peculiarities at those stations. This line of promotion does not include the office or engineering staffs. The Head Office Staff Council deals with reclassification by means of a sub-committee which sits as a semi-judicial body. Promotion here is not by length of service or seniority within grade, as in the operating department, where unsuitability is merely a negative check, but is more on the positive merits of the case, and thus requires more careful handling. The staff side secretary, an officer of the R.C.A., usually acts as advocate for appellants before this body. The full council meet roughly every six months to hear the reports of the sub-committee and consider other business. Meetings of the other councils, especially those of the wages grades, are more frequent, running to six or more a year, each of which may last for two days, with further time for subsequent meetings 'with the Management'.

The R.C.A. would like to give the councils executive powers on classification, and would like them to have full judicial powers to call for information, on which to base claims.¹ This demand has the support of the other unions. London Transport, however, takes the view, that since it is responsible for the efficiency of operations, it must be responsible for such decisions, which vitally affect efficiency.

Joint sectional council meetings are now held more frequently than in the earlier years of London Transport. They discuss such matters of common interest as the provision of trains for transporting staff on late turns to their homes.

The Negotiating Committee deals mainly with major agreements concerning the staff included in the councils. Although all applications for the making or revision of such agreements come before it, agreements concerning the members of one or

¹ The unions do not accuse the Board of obstruction in this matter, but they feel that the Board's records should be at the disposal of both parties for this purpose.

two of the unions are signed by the representatives of the unions concerned. The Wages Board has recently been used for the first time.

Negotiations through this machinery have not been so frequent or attracted such attention as those between the Board and the T. & G.W.U. The reason for this is not only the smaller number of employees concerned. The London Transport railway operating staff is not so clearly differentiated from the rest of the railway union membership as is the No. 1 Area Passenger Transport Trade Group from the rest of the T. & G.W.U. Although organized in separate branches, with their own 'line' conferences (the R.C.A. in particular arranges its branches to cover the various grades of members employed by London Transport, and has a full-time official—a 'Line' Secretary—to deal with their affairs alone) the railway union members come within the London Districts of their various unions, in which Main Line membership predominates, and thus the interests and problems of London Transport members tend to become merged with those of Main Line staff.¹ After the victorious rise of the railway unions between 1906 and 1920, Main Line railway unionism settled down to relative quiescence in the period between the world wars, partly at least owing to the deteriorating financial position of the railways in the face of road transport competition. The main task of the unions in the twenties was defensive, and after the temporary cuts of the depression, the recovery of lost ground in the thirties. There was little attempt to separate the interests of London Transport employees who shared in the losses and gains of their more numerous comrades, through the almost automatic extension of Main Line agreements. War advances and post-war agreements followed, as we shall see, those negotiated for Main Line employees. Where there have been differences for particular grades they have usually been due to the initiative of London Transport, which has insisted that it must consider the rates of its railway staff in relation to the rest of its employees, and not only in relation to Main Line rates. Where London Transport rates have been below those

¹ This does not apply to railway workshop staff, especially craft union members, who are interested more in nearby engineering shops (e.g. Chiswick) than in remote railway shops, whose craftsmen will probably be organized in different districts of their unions.

paid on the Main Lines, the unions have pressed for the Main Line rates.

The jealousy between unions, and the considerable attention given to matters of promotion and classification, perhaps also serve to divert attention to some degree away from major negotiations. The A.S.L.E.F., as a craft union, comes into frequent conflict with the N.U.R.; the latter regards itself as an industrial union and claims to represent all railway workers, although it accepts the separate organization of clerical and supervisory staff with better grace. The journal of each union is critical of the other; the A.S.L.E.F. claims that the promotion rights of its members in London Transport do not receive proper respect from the N.U.R.¹

The relative quiescence of railway negotiations has not in the long run adversely affected the wages and hours of railwaymen. Although the road service staff were advancing more rapidly in the thirties, the railwaymen have more than made good that loss, and have now received slightly greater advances, since 1933, than corresponding grades on the roads. Nor do wage figures substantiate the claim, sometimes made, that the N.U.R., as an industrial union, neglects the interests of the craftsmen. The motorman's full rate, including London allowance, has risen from 93/- in 1933 to 140/- in 1948. Over the same period the rate for the Relief Signaller (the highest paid grade among the signallers, who are organized by the N.U.R.) has risen from 80/- to 140/-. The explanation may be that the N.U.R. looks after its craftsmen all the better because it has to compete, in certain grades, with a craft union.

Some London Transport officers prefer negotiations through the railway machinery to those with the representatives of the road service staff. If industrial peace is the sole criterion, this preference has some justification; if vigour and virility in industrial relations are desirable, the judgment might be reversed. There are no grounds for supposing that the one type is in the long run

¹ *The Locomotive Journal* (organ of the A.S.L.E.F.) March, 1948:

'For many years the staff have suffered from a diabolical policy of perpetual transfers from one side of London to the other. Some powers that be have ridiculed our negotiating machinery on this question . . . I hope that when the new L.T. Executive get down to these matters which vitally affect the staff's welfare we shall have done with all this tomfooling of the past, and when Agreements are signed they will be implemented whether they meet with the approval of lower levels or not.'

less costly to the Board than the other, providing that the relative numbers of the two sections are taken into account. The railway negotiating machinery has been tested and found satisfactory by most of those concerned; although it must be noted that criticisms of the machinery, and demands for its alteration (e.g. the extension of powers) are more frequent than amongst T. & G.W.U. members. The busmen and tramwaymen, having a less formal structure, tend, if they have criticisms, to make them of persons concerned in negotiations, on both sides, rather than of methods used.

3. WORKSHOP STAFF

Since 1932 the London Transport Joint Trades Committee has expanded to cover all the road service workshops and all garage and depot craftsmen. Works Committees constitute the intermediate negotiating bodies in the three workshops, and garage and depot alliances for the craftsmen among the 'inside staffs'. One or two semi-skilled grades who have, by agreement (mainly for historical reasons), been organized by the craft unions, are represented by the garage alliances instead of the shop stewards of the T. & G.W.U. The Joint Trades Committee includes representatives of thirteen unions:—the A.E.U., the E.T.U., the N.U.V.B., the T. & G.W.U., the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, the United Boilermakers and Iron and Steel Shipbuilders' Society, the Associated Blacksmiths, Forge and Smithy Workers' Society, the National Union of Sheet Metal Workers and Braziers, the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers, the National Society of Metal Mechanics, the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, the Amalgamated Society of Wood-cutting Machinists, and the National Union of Enginemen, Firemen, Mechanics, and Electrical Workers. Each of these appoints representatives, frequently permanent officials, from one to three in number according to the size of the membership amongst London Transport employees, to the Joint Trades Committee, where they sit with elected delegates of the shop stewards in the workshops and in the garage and depot alliances. Most of the Committee's work is performed by a Negotiating Committee of nine members: a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and two others from the

permanent union officials, and four rank and file members who must be from the delegates elected by the road service workshops or the alliances; when railway workshop matters are under negotiation, four other lay members, elected from the craft union representatives from those workshops, serve in their place.

Industrial relations in the workshops were, on the whole, quiet during the thirties, as on the railways. The centre of workshop organization has always been Chiswick works, and unionism there suffered considerably in the years following the depression. A correspondent of the *Busman's Punch* wrote:¹

For many years there was a strong Trade Union organization at Chiswick, but through victimization of the loyal shop stewards² and the 'promotion' of others this position was broken down, combined with the general disillusionment with labour, and trade union developments, naturally up to 1931 this brought about apathy which was reflected in the Constitution and Works Committee procedure negotiated in 1932.

With the centralization policy of the Board, 34-35 workers from outlying coach and bus shops of amalgamated companies were transferred to Chiswick . . .

The transferred workers had already achieved considerable organization in the transferred undertakings, and this had the effect of reviving some of the old trade union spirit in Chiswick. This reached its most complete expression in the issue surrounding the case reported last month, and now in the Metal Shop victory. Now, roughly a year after the last transfer of men, it is estimated that Chiswick is 75 per cent trade union, and each week sees recruits and re-entrants; more important, there is now a growth of militancy and reliable leadership.

This renewed interest led to little more than a couple of brief sectional strikes; and, in addition, the revision of the Works Committee Constitution; but the revival of trade union membership proved lasting, and had its effect in later years. The Works Committee Constitution, as further revised in 1947, provides for the election of shop stewards in accordance with union rules, and for their recognition, and the provision of facilities, by the management. These Shop Stewards form separate Union Committees to deal with questions affecting their own membership, and send not more than two delegates from amongst themselves to a Works Committee, which operates through a Negotiating

¹ No. 47, September 1936.

² A charge of victimization is notoriously easy to make, and difficult to substantiate, even when true.

Committee of one delegate from each Union Committee, meeting, in the first instance, the officer in charge of the department concerned, next the Works Manager, and finally the Chief Mechanical Engineer (Road Services). The Works Manager may provide facilities for shop stewards' or workshop meetings, outside working hours.

A similar procedure is used in the other workshops and in the depots and garages, though not covered by a formal agreement, without the intermediate stage of the union committee, and with alliance substituted, where necessary, for committee. It serves as the channel for normal complaints, such as those which go through delegate to committee on the road services, and to sectional councils on the railways, and also as the machinery for communication between the union officials and members, since the number of unions makes communication through union channels cumbrous. Officials may explain and defend agreements they have signed at a works meeting at Chiswick; and this meeting may be lively.

The original Joint Trades Committee operated through three different sections for buses, trams and trolley-buses, and railways. The sections negotiated common advances during the war, and in 1944 reconstituted their organization into its present centralized form, in preparation for the post-war negotiations which have achieved 'levelling-up' of wages and an incentive bonus system. The committee is allowed considerable autonomy by its constituent unions, and negotiates on all common matters, including hours and wages. Agreements on such matters are not signed, as on the railway operating side, by the various unions, but by the officials of the Committee. The Committee consults the unions during the course of negotiations. Domestic matters, such as relaxation of union rules to allow 'dilution' in war-time, are negotiated directly between craft unions and London Transport, but the secretary of the Committee states that issues of this kind are decreasing. The unions have not yet granted the Committee power to deal with all questions affecting their members in London Transport.

There is some criticism of the number of stages in this structure, from shop steward up to Works Committee, and from Works Committee through the Joint Trades Committee to the Negotiat-

ing Committee, and the number of stages of reference back before the Negotiating Committee can come to a decision, but much of this is inherent in the nature of a body which must co-ordinate the members of a large number of unions. It seems unlikely that this Joint Trades Committee, after the great success of its unifying policy in recent years, would consent to any considerable measures of decentralization.

The N.U.R. and the Joint Trades Committee had of necessity to work together in the railway workshops, and sometimes met the Board's officials together, as in May 1941 over the employment of women in skilled trades. The war fostered co-operation, and in 1944 the Joint Committee of Unions for Workshop Staff (Railways) was formed, of the five Joint Trades Committee union officials, and four representatives of the railway workshop craftsmen, along with nine representatives of the N.U.R. This was the committee which negotiated the 1947 'levelling-up' agreement, giving solid proofs of the benefits of joint action.

The lower stages of the negotiating machinery for the railway workshop staff are 'shop' and 'lines' committees, which provide for representation of the staff by departments and by unions. The agreement with the N.U.R., which is the only railway union recruiting among the workshop wages staff, provides for twenty-six representatives of works and depot staff, three of the permanent way staff, and four of the Signals, Ticket Machine and Lighting Staff to meet London Transport officials in Shop Committees—one for the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Department, and one each for the Chief Engineers' Departments (Civil) and (Signals). Thirteen representatives from the first, and two from each of the others form the staff side of the Lines Committee. The constitution of these bodies is similar to, but somewhat less formal than, that of the sectional councils and negotiating committee on the operating side. The departmental (shop) committees are to discuss and settle 'questions relating to rates of pay, hours of duty and conditions of service, other than matters of Management and Discipline'. The Lines Committee is allowed rather greater latitude; it is not expressly excluded from managerial and disciplinary matters, and may, in addition to the three usual topics, deal with matters of common interest to staff of all departments (shops). In fact all these shop com-

mittees concentrate on matters of wages and hours to the exclusion of other topics far more than do the operational staff Councils.

There are departmental committees and a Lines Committee for E.T.U. members, and a departmental committee for N.U.V.B. members. The E.T.U. agreement dates from 1924, and covers members in the Mechanical Engineering Department (seven representatives), in the Signal Engineering Department (three representatives) and in the Permanent Way Department (one representative); with five from the first and one each from the second and third forming the staff side of the Lines Committee. The N.U.V.B. membership is in the Works and Depots. These committees are all allowed to discuss and settle 'other matters', and are not debarred by agreement from managerial prerogatives. They are, in effect, formal shop stewards committees. Both agreements, being made in the days when the agreements and awards applying to railway shopmen were followed by London Transport, give these priority over decisions of the departmental and lines committees.

The formation of the Joint Committee of Unions has rendered this separate machinery out-of-date. Common workshop committees would be better,¹ but as yet no Common Works Committee, akin to that of Chiswick, has been constituted at Acton or elsewhere. The numerical preponderance of the N.U.R. over the Joint Trades Committee in the railway shops makes agreement on the number of representatives for each party on such a Works Committee difficult. The Joint Trades Committee would like equal membership, as on the Joint Committee of Unions; the N.U.R. feels itself justified in asking for a majority of the places.

The final stage in negotiations for all workshop staff is the Arbitration Tribunal, set up by an agreement of December 1940 between the Board and the N.U.R. and Joint Trades Committee to comply with S.R. & O. 1305.

The Workshop Supervisory Staff in the road service workshops is covered by 'domestic' schemes, one for Chiswick, and one for Tram and Trolley-bus shops and depots. A scheme for

¹ The E.T.U. and N.U.R. committees occasionally have joint meetings with the management on matters of common interest.

the establishment of staff committees, with functions roughly similar to those of sectional councils, was negotiated in May 1934 between the Board, and the N.U.R., R.C.A., and National Foremen's Association (now the Association of Supervisory Staffs, Executives and Technicians) to cover supervisory staff in the department of the Chief Engineer and Chief Mechanical Engineer (Railways). Further discussion on the railway side could take place between the Board and the unions concerned. In 1947 a Joint Negotiating Committee for Workshop Supervisory Staff (in which the A.S.S.E.T., the A.E.U., the N.U.R., the R.C.A., and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions were represented), claimed negotiating rights for all workshop supervisory staff in the negotiations concerning 'levelling-up' and the output bonus. This claim was granted after the Board had examined the credentials of the Committee, and the agreement negotiated with it in November 1947 includes a Clause (6) which provided for the establishment of an agreed departmental committee for the road workshop supervisory staff. As yet no scheme has been agreed, and it is not yet decided whether it should be a new scheme similar to the rail workshop supervisory staff committee scheme, or whether these staff committees should be extended to include road workshop staff.

Order is being created out of disorder in the negotiating machinery for the workshops of the Board. The process is not yet complete, and it would be difficult to suppose that the present machinery will not be altered further to provide greater unification, and greater conformity on the railway side with the pattern laid down by Chiswick and the Joint Trades Committee (as regards wages staff). This whole section of negotiating machinery has shown itself to be highly effective in the recent years of its extension.

Part of the staff of the Civil Engineering Department is not yet integrated into this scheme. The road service building staff is paid the district building rate, and although members of unions included in the Joint Trades Committee (A.E.U., N.U.V.B., Sheet Metal Workers, Blacksmiths, and T. & G.W.U.) are represented there, the negotiating bodies for the building staff remain separate. There are three of these bodies: the Parsons Green Works Committee, which include representatives of these unions,

and of the National Federation of Building Trade Operatives, the Signwriters' Union and the N.U.R.; the Chiswick Works and Major Works Committee of the N.F.B.T.O.; and a Committee of other district rate staff represented by the N.F.B.T.O. and the N.U.R.¹

4. OTHER STAFF

In March 1938 the Board agreed with the N.U.R., A.E.U., E.T.U., and the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers on a new scheme for the establishment of two local committees for male wages staff employed in the railway generation and distribution sections, similar to the railway sectional councils. The Greenwich (ex-L.C.C.) electricity supply staff had ceased to be subject to the National Joint Industrial Council for the Electricity Supply Industry on September 1st, 1935, when the Board gave notice that they would no longer be governed by this body, and, with an eye no doubt towards the lower paid Neasden and Lots Road (ex-Combine) staff, granted an increase of $\frac{1}{2}d.$ an hour, whereas under Industrial Court Award No. 1622 the rates of the outside industry were increased by $\frac{3}{4}d.$ an hour. In 1937 a shop stewards' committee scheme and a Negotiating Committee was established for these workers by agreement with the E.T.U., A.E.U., N.U.E.F.E.W., T. & G.W.U. and N.U.G.M.W. This machinery is cumbrous, consisting of seven separate stages, from discussions between shop stewards and local officials to the Negotiating Committee sitting under an independent chairman. The standardization agreement of 1946 was negotiated by an *ad hoc* committee of the unions concerned on both railway and road sides (excluding the A.U.B.T.W., which seems to have no members left in this section). This Committee has become, in effect, the final negotiating body, making the machinery on the road side more cumbrous than ever. The unions are proposing a new simplified scheme for local shop stewards committees; three local negotiating committees for power stations, sub-stations, and distribution, appointed by and from the shop stewards committees, with

¹ Since March 1948 this body has also represented 'Award 728' staff in the Building Department, i.e., staff who have not been included in the 'levelling-up' agreements, and who are therefore still paid on the basis of the Main Line agreements for workshop staff.

representatives apportioned between unions according to the numbers represented; and a Central Committee with representatives ('official' and 'lay') appointed by the Union Executives, again in proportion to membership in the section. The E.T.U. is the most important union in this section, and outnumbers all the other unions together. This scheme is not yet finally accepted; it would clearly bring great simplification, and the destruction of barriers between the two sections would accord with the standardization of wages and conditions.

In 1943 an informal committee including representatives of the N.U.R. and R.C.A. was set up to deal with railway generation and distribution supervisory staff. Further discussion is with the R.C.A. headquarters. There is no committee on the road side; discussion is direct with the unions concerned. Although A.S.S.E.T. has some members, the R.C.A. is the dominant union, and it alone signed the most recent agreement. Thus there is also a *de facto* simplification here.

As we have seen, the lower grades of the Headquarters Clerical and Technical Staff are included in the railway negotiating machinery. There are no committees for staff above the status of Senior Clerical Assistant or Engineering Assistant, though, as on the Main Lines, the R.C.A. may negotiate for staff up to a certain annual salary (the London Transport figure is £620) and represent staff above that figure on an individual basis.

To satisfy criticisms expressed before the Joint Select Committee of Lords and Commons in 1931,¹ the Board's agreement with the Unions for the establishment of staff councils excludes, along with employees in the Special, or equivalent supervisory grades, and employees working under shop conditions, or in electricity generation and distribution, ex-members of the L.C.C. Staff Association, 'so long as not less than one hundred of such persons . . . express their desire to be excluded from the scheme'. These employees have formed a London Transport Association, which is entitled to send three representatives to meet officials of the Board in a staff council established for that purpose. The scheme provides that matters not settled by the council are referred to the chief officer concerned, and if necessary to discussion between him and officials of the

¹ See p. 35.

Association. This provision has never been used; direct discussion between the staff concerned and their superiors has been found satisfactory. The Association has not made inroads on the membership of the R.C.A. and will no doubt ultimately lapse through wastage.

The eighty-eight members of the police staff were covered by a domestic scheme, but, under the Transport Act, provision is made for a conference to consist of representatives of all the Transport Commission's police forces, with an equal number of members of the Commission.¹

An informal committee agreed with the R.C.A. for the separate representation of female ticket staff in the Chiswick ticket office, depots, and garages (who are already covered by Sectional Council No. 2, which thus goes outside the normal scope of the railway scheme), complete the complex negotiating structure. All other sections of staff, such as the Canteen Staff, are covered by direct negotiations with the unions concerned.

5. THE MANAGEMENT

Negotiations, like quarrels, require two parties, and although it is clear that one side is always a section of the staff or their representatives, the 'management' side, in normal negotiations, does not consist of members of the London Transport Executive, but of senior officers who are, like the 'lay' members of the staff side, London Transport employees. To the bus driver or the craftsman an inspector or a foreman may seem to be part of the management, and, in their turn, the inspector and the foreman, or their representatives, may form the staff side to meet higher officers in other discussions. All the middle ranks of the hierarchy are both part of the 'management', seen from below; and from above, part of the staff.

For negotiations, however, the situation is fairly clear. In the formal sectional councils, and other committees, the management side is nominated from amongst those senior officers who are above the line which separates those who may be represented on joint committees, and those who, although they may be members

¹ Transport Act, 1947, Section 97. Provision is also made for the selection of an independent chairman, who may give binding decisions.

of unions, and may be individually represented by those unions, are neither members of, nor represented on, formal negotiating bodies. In the less formal procedure of the road services, any but minor differences are taken up to Divisional Officers who are again above the line of separation. It may be that lower supervisory grades feel conflicting loyalties, when, for instance, supervisor and subordinate are members of the same union (although there is no suggestion of trouble arising out of this, and it might be that common union membership would improve relations in some ways) but, as far as possible, short of barring senior officers from union membership, confusion of this sort is avoided in the negotiating machinery.

Primary responsibility for staff matters lies with the heads of departments concerned, and they or their assistants conduct the negotiations with their own staff and its representatives. This is regarded as a matter of principle in London Transport, and it is thought that failure to observe it would divide responsibility and lead to friction.

Responsibility for the development of policy in staff matters rests with the Staff and Welfare Department.¹ This department is the direct employer only of staff who work in the canteens and other Welfare services, but, in addition to its comprehensive responsibility for these services, it has charge of the conduct of major negotiations which affect more than one section of the undertaking; and it provides an advisory service for the departmental officers of the various sections to assist them in their dealings with the staff which they control.

Decentralization is often considered to be an essential to the development of good staff relations. As we have seen the compilation of schedules in London Transport is necessarily a centralized matter, and in other matters the compactness of the area enables officials of both parties to investigate difficulties and to spot them rapidly. Moreover, the unions themselves have played an important part in the movement towards centralized negotiations. Nevertheless some employees criticize the organization of London Transport as too centralized. On the road services, local authority is concentrated in the hands of the district superintendent rather than in those of the charge depot

¹ For a fuller account of this Department, see below, p. 164.

inspector,¹ who is the senior official in the garage, and it is to the district superintendent that the branch representative is supposed to bring his complaints and suggestions. Some employees suggest that this makes it difficult for them to obtain information or rapid decisions on matters which are not considered sufficiently important to warrant the intervention of high officials. They also admit that this is far more a matter of personalities than of rules, that if good relations exist between district superintendent, charge depot inspector and representatives, no difficulties occur, and that it would not be easy to devise an organization in which a local official would find it impossible to avoid responsibility, if he was determined to do so. The evidence of union officials is that London Transport has encouraged these good relations. The problem does not appear to be so urgent as the decentralization difficulties of the Railway Executive or the National Coal Board, and because of the smaller number of employees and compact area of operation, London Transport's experience may not be very relevant to those difficulties. Certainly there have been no major experiments in decentralization. The functional organization of those larger organizations is sometimes criticized as adversely affecting labour relations. The departments of London Transport have always been to some extent functional, but considerable power over general matters, such as employment, training and day-to-day negotiations with labour has remained with the operating and engineering departments, and headquarters specialists in those matters have served to co-ordinate and advise. Thus, though a representative of the Staff and Welfare Department will be present at negotiations, their conduct is a matter for the head of the department concerned; whereas on the Main Line railways there might be no representative of the department present. Perhaps London Transport has an advantage here. The functional organization of the new Executive, and its relationship to the Transport Commission, have not as yet had much effect on the lower levels of London Transport's organization.

¹ The position of the district superintendent is thus roughly analogous to that of the Coal Board's Area Manager.

6. THE PRINCIPLES OF NEGOTIATIONS

In 1929 Johnston and Spates¹ suggested that the general principles of industrial relations of the London Traffic Combine were as follows:

1. Basic conditions of work are regulated in accordance with collective agreements. In all cases the Combine has been associated with other undertakings engaged in passenger transport in the negotiations with the trade unions which led to these collective agreements.
2. The Combine remains in direct contact with the trade unions concerned and makes direct settlements with them on matters which concern its employees.
3. In conjunction with the trade unions concerned the Combine has set up a wide variety of schemes to facilitate industrial relations within the Combine.
4. Negotiations between the Combine and the trade unions and between management and workers cover wages hours and conditions of service. They expressly exclude questions of management and discipline.
5. Nothing in the various schemes is to be taken to cancel the regular channels by which employees communicate with the officials and officers on matters which concern them, it being understood that every employee shall in the first instance address his case to the official immediately over him, or through him to the official or officer authorized to deal with it. It is a general principle that all disputes shall be dealt with in the first place locally and as rapidly as possible.²

The first principle remains true, except that London Transport, having absorbed other London undertakings, now normally negotiates alone.

The second principle, seemingly arid, still covers the core of labour relations. However important the pyramids of formal and informal committees and councils, much of the most important work in these matters depends on individual meetings and conversations, between garage representatives and charge depot inspector, between the chief officers of the departments and union officials, or even, on occasion, between Mr. Cliff and a trade union general secretary. Committees designed for discussion between management and joint trade union representatives, for instance, are not, perhaps, the best means of settling demarcation disputes between unions. These are not rare; something has

¹ *Op. cit.*

² These principles might, perhaps, have been better stated. The first was not true 'in all cases', and, as it stands, the second seems to contradict the first.

already been said of tension between the railway unions, which is part of a national problem; the Joint Trades Committee, although it has been the means of useful co-operation, has not overcome disputes between constituent unions, which may occur, as on the railways, over promotion matters, or, more frequently, over the proper persons to perform a particular job. A job may carry overtime: craft union members may claim that they alone are qualified to perform it, and therefore earn the overtime, and semi-skilled or unskilled workers, represented by T. & G.W.U., N.U.G.M.W., or N.U.R., may claim that they are qualified to assist, and therefore to share in the earnings. If unions remain adamant in these disputes, joint committees can do little, and direct contacts alone can bring settlement. This is but one example of the need for direct contact.

The third principle is still followed. London Transport has, in addition, shown itself ready to abandon 'domestic' schemes in favour of schemes negotiated with the trade unions, once it has satisfied itself of their bona fides, and the justification of their claim to represent a section of London Transport staff.

Although some of these schemes still expressly exclude matters of 'Management and Discipline', it is not at all clear what validity the fourth principle retains. London Transport states that there is no topic which they are not prepared to discuss with the unions, and trade union officials substantiate this. The London Transport Executive is subject to the obligation placed upon the Transport Commission by the Transport Act 1947, to conclude agreements, not only on terms and conditions of employment, but also for 'the promotion of measures relating to safety, health and welfare and other matters, including efficiency of service'. There remain, of course, matters on which London Transport acts without previous consultation with the unions, and matters, such as promotion, in which the unions would like to play a greater part, although even in promotions by merit London Transport may be prepared to explain its action, and moreover to allow a union official to observe the proceedings of the promotion committees. This borders on the subject of Chapter 5.

The fifth principle remains embodied in many of the recognized procedures, especially on the railway side, but, in fact, road service and workshop employees are in the habit of taking their

complaints direct to their delegates and shop stewards, leaving it to the latter to approach officials if they think fit. There seems to be little disadvantage in such a practice; it is more rapid, and probably weeds out a number of trivial complaints with which officials would otherwise have to deal. Speedy local settlements have been assisted by the fostering of close relations between officers on both sides.

In addition London Transport has, at least in recent years, declared its support of the union objective of common standards for its employees,¹ and has assisted in the extension of common negotiations for their attainment. Some union officials say that it has co-operated in this matter more readily than they would normally expect a private employer to do. It may be that London Transport would be willing to go further than the unions in common negotiations. Some London Transport officers suggest that it would be easier to deal with one trade union. The unification achieved so far has come, in the main, through co-operation between unions, and an amalgamation of this sort would be unexpected, and indeed unprecedented.² T. & G.W.U. members say that they receive greater support from their huge union than they would from an organization which could, at the most, include about 90,000 members, and no doubt other unions would offer similar objections.

The effect of the closed shop, agreed in 1946 for the staff of the road services of London Transport, does not, as yet, appear to be great; relations between management and staff do not appear to have been affected, and it would be difficult to say how far the freedom of the staff is materially curtailed, or how far the move is likely to lead to trouble within the union. In giving its consent to the closed shop there, the Board indicated that it would be ready to consider a similar application from the railway unions.³ The N.U.R. supports the closed shop, but the other railway unions do not, and the application of the rule to the grades in which the unions compete for members would thus be difficult. Moreover in some railway grades union organization is not

¹ See pp. 68-70.

² The N.U.M. is still not the only union to meet the Coal Board, and it had the advantage of representing the vast majority of mineworkers before the formation of the Board.

³ Annual Report, 1946.

sufficiently complete for the Board to consider the application of the closed shop to them as justifiable. It is too early yet to attempt to estimate the importance of the closed shop from London Transport's experience, or to use that experience to judge similar demands made by the employees of other public corporations.

The time spent on negotiations is considerable, and worth noting. A number of trade unions officials (particularly in the T. & G.W.U.), and some officials of London Transport, together with clerical staff on both sides, are continuously occupied with the relations between London Transport and its employees. Many of the higher officers in the operating and engineering departments spend considerable time in negotiation and discussion with employees and their representatives. In almost every garage and depot, one or more of the branch officers devotes at least one working day a week to trade union affairs; in addition there are delegate conferences. The committees of the road operating staff and the sectional council staff sides have regular, and sometimes extraordinary, meetings with London Transport officials, and time off in addition to prepare their cases. 'Lay' staff side secretaries, and Central Bus Committee or Trams Council members are likely, if they hold other union offices, to spend more time on trade union matters, and in negotiations, than at their regular jobs. Some 'lay' trade union members are, in effect, full-time officials. The last issue of the *Busman's Punch*¹ asked 'if Bert [Papworth] who we hope will have started by the time that this is in print, will like "bus" work?' While Mr. Papworth was on the General Council of the T.U.C. his opportunities for bus work were still fewer. It is impossible to make any serious estimate of the time and expense involved (expense borne partly by the unions and partly by the Board, according to the nature of the work involved), but it must clearly run into hundreds of man-years, and tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of pounds each year.

¹ No. 57, October–November, 1937.

CHAPTER III

WAGES, EARNINGS AND HOURS OF WORK

I. WAGES POLICY

THE different wages levels inherited from the acquired undertakings were bound to create a problem for London Transport. 'Levelling-up' was the only acceptable method of removing anomalies. In the beginning there was general acceptance of the need for levelling up, within departments, for those employees previously employed under varying conditions with different rates of pay in various undertakings, by means of raising the lower paid, usually in stages, to the levels of the Combine employees, and compensating any receiving higher rates (under the clauses of the Act providing for the compensation of officers and servants suffering direct pecuniary loss or worsening of their general conditions of employment),¹ by lump sum payments, or by continuing the difference between the rates as a personal rate, which should be merged in any subsequent increases. The second Annual Report of the Board states:

Before effective progress could be made in the co-ordination and consolidation of the acquired undertakings, it was essential that the anomalies that existed in consequence of the diverse conditions of service should be removed as far as was reasonable and practicable within each section in order that a full and free interchange of labour could be effected in each form of transport, and the services of the staff directed and employed to the best advantage . . . The anomalies have now been largely removed . . .²

This process was accomplished against a certain amount of opposition. Consolidation of conditions on the trams had to be temporarily abandoned in the face of the opposition of the men, some of whom thought they would suffer as a result.³ An offer of increases of wages in the Country garages at the beginning of 1935 was temporarily withdrawn because those who were receiving personal rates refused to agree to the merging of these rates in the increase.⁴ Coach drivers from private companies complained

¹ London Transport Act, Sections 73-77.

² Annual Report, 1935.

³ See p. 115.

⁴ *The Record*, February, 1935.

that they were not receiving their former earnings, presumably owing to a reduction of hours or overtime to conform with Green Line practice.¹ More enduring trouble occurred over the differences of *ex gratia* and pension payments on the trams, which were likewise continued by the Board for the employees concerned; at West Ham (with which East Ham was amalgamated), four different practices continued concurrently—West Ham Council pension rates, East Ham Council rates, L.C.C. *ex gratia* payments,² and the Board's *ex gratia* payments for new employees—, and this depot became the most favourable recruiting ground amongst the tramwaymen for the N.P.W.U.³

These may, however, fairly be regarded as teething troubles. The question of levelling-up between sections involved deeper principles, and larger sums of money. On this matter London Transport's policy was stated, in retrospect, in the last Annual Report of the Board:

The policy was adopted of aiming at the establishment of appropriate Board rates of pay and conditions of service for the various grades throughout the undertaking which would adequately recognize different degrees of responsibility and different standards of skill as well as the generally accepted regional differentials in rates. At the same time, it was necessary to have regard to the rates of pay and conditions of service of staff of other transport undertakings, particularly the Main Line Railways, and, where the Board drew upon supplies of labour common to other industries, to the rates and conditions prevailing in those industries. It was appreciated from the outset that progress towards the attainment of this object would be slow, being necessarily conditioned by various factors, including the Board's financial resources.⁴

At the time, however, the Board had to state this policy more cautiously than the T. & G.W.U. or the leaders of the 'rank and file' movement; for the Board had to pay for its application. For instance, in March 1934, Mr. Pick said, in the course of a lecture delivered at the London School of Economics:

For another example, take a group of related problems concerned with the rates of pay and conditions of employment of the staff. These again cannot all be standardized. There is no good ground for it. Differences due to organization, habits, practices will remain, and while it is admitted that certain over-riding principles based on social justice and equity must prevail in order that the Board may count itself a good employer, the Board could not accept

¹ *Busman's Punch*, No. 34, August, 1935.

² See page 24.

³ The break-away union organized after the Coronation Strike. See p. 128.

⁴ Annual Report, 1947.

the doctrine that a common employment should in itself lead to a general levelling up any more than it should lead to a levelling down. In the fable it was possible to break the sticks but not the faggot into which they were tied, yet the sticks were unchanged.¹

Side by side with 'levelling-up', London Transport has pursued a policy of reducing differentials, particularly during the war years, when differentials were greatly reduced in almost all industries. It is frequently difficult to distinguish between these two processes. Establishing the same rate for skilled craftsmen in all London Transport's Workshops is clearly 'levelling-up', and raising the rate of unskilled workers in relation to craftsmen's rates is a reduction of differentials; but is the abolition of the difference between the rates of the tramwayman and the bus conductor 'levelling-up' or reducing differentials? It is proposed here to follow the practice of the T. & G.W.U., and of London Transport, in looking on the jobs of these two workers as roughly equivalent, and therefore to treat this equalization as 'levelling-up'. The approach of Country Service to Central Area rates, although conditions of work in the two areas differ, is at least in part to be considered as 'levelling-up'.

2. ROAD SERVICE STAFF

Levelling-up in the three Road Service Operating Departments has been considerable. These three departments employ just over 50% of the total staff of London Transport, and drivers and conductors constitute about 94% of their staff, so that, although there is a considerable number of rates of pay within each department, the majority of these rates apply to control and supervisory grades. These higher rates are closely related, with differentials, to those of drivers and conductors. The rates of the latter are therefore a reasonable guide to the process of levelling-up. The table opposite shows the alterations in their rates.

The first thing to be noted about this table is that it gives only *rates of pay*, and not total earnings. Over the last fifteen years earnings have tended to rise more rapidly than wage rates in British industry in general, and this holds good for London Transport. Owing to increased payments for week-end work,

¹ Pick, *op. cit.*

and to increased compensation for spreadover duties, earnings have advanced more rapidly than rates of pay in all the road

	Central Bus		Tram & Trolley (Driver and conductor)	Country Services			
	Driver	Conductor		Coach driver	Coach conductor	Bus driver	Bus conductor
1933 July	86/6	79/6	73/-				
Oct.				80/-	60/-	72/6	60/-
1934 Jan.	87/6	81/6					
1935 Jan.			75/-				
April 3	88/6	83/6					
Apr. 4			76/-				
Nov.			78/-				
1936 Jan.					62/-		62/-
Oct.							
Nov.					64/-		64/-
1937 June	90/-	84/-					
1938 Dec.			82/-				
1939 Dec. 6			84/-				
Dec. 20 (war increase)	94/-	88/-	88/-	84/-	68/-	76/6	68/-
1940 June (war increase)	97/-	91/-	91/-	87/-	71/-	79/6	71/-
1941 Apr. (war increase)	101/-	95/-	95/-	91/-	75/-	83/6	75/-
Oct.					77/6	86/-	77/6
1942 Mar. (war increase)	105/-	99/-	99/-	95/-	81/6	90/-	81/6
1943 July (war increase)	109/6	103/6	103/6	99/6	86/-	94/6	86/-
1944 May (war increase)	114/6	108/6	108/6	104/6	91/-	99/6	91/-
June					94/6	102/-	94/6
1946 Jan.	121/6	117/6	117/6	114/6	104/-	111/-	104/-
1948 Mar.	129/-	125/-	125/-	122/-	112/6	118/6	112/6
Increase 1933/34-1948	42/6	45/6	52/-	42/-	52/6	46/-	52/6
Increase	49%	57%	71%	53%	88%	63%	88%

Note.—These are maximum rates. Women conductors receive the same maximum rate as men, but reach it after an additional six months.

service sections. Between July 1st, 1933 and June 30th, 1934 the Central Bus driver averaged £4 11s. 10d. per week, and between January 1st, 1948 and December 31st, 1948, £7 1s. 6d. per week (both figures gross), an increase of 54%, as against an increase of 49% in wage rates. Since 1937 (earlier figures are not available) the weekly earnings of the Country Service conductor have risen

from £3 8s. 2d. to £6 3s. 3d., an increase of 81% as against an increase of 76% in wage rates over the same period. We are here dealing with levelling-up of rates, but levelling-up in earnings has proceeded at roughly the same pace.

At the end of 1933 the financial results under the 'Speed Agreement'¹ had been ascertained. Out of their share the busmen decided to increase their annual holidays to twelve full working days, and to increase the pay of drivers by 1s. and of conductors by 2s. per week. A further increase of the same amount was granted, under the same agreement, a year later. Whatever effect this increase may have had on the men was largely nullified by the fall in overtime earnings under the reduced maximum time on duty under the same agreement. In January 1937 a driver's average earnings were 2d. per week less than in the corresponding period of 1932.

In 1935 advances totalling 3s. were granted to tramwaymen. An agreement at the end of that year gave a further increase of 4s. in two stages, and accepted the principle of levelling-up to Central Bus conductor's rates, provided that further discussion on the matter should be postponed until the autumn of 1937.²

When that discussion took place, we were informed that the two conditions which would enable the Board to give effect to the principle³ had not materialized, and no further adjustment to wages was possible at that time. The matter was taken up again with the Board, but no further progress was made, and the discussion was adjourned until after the publication of the accounts for 1938. As a result of a number of meetings between representatives of the two parties an offer has been made of half the amount of the claim.⁴

This was accepted by the delegate conference of the section, who, however, expressed their dissatisfaction, and instructed their officers to raise the question of the balance at the earliest possible moment, to such good effect that it was granted a year later, and equality reached.

The choice of this section as the first to be pushed upwards was due partly to the lack of any obvious difference between the work and the needs of the tramwaymen and the bus conductors,

¹ See p. 16.

² See below, p. 115.

³ No doubt these were: Financial improvement, and no further increases for Central Bus conductors, who received 6d. a week in June 1937, when the drivers' accident bonus was consolidated into their weekly rate.

⁴ *The Record*, Dec., 1938.

whereas the country section had some benefit from a lower cost of living, and operated in less arduous traffic conditions; partly to the earnings of the section, which were increasing owing to the introduction of the trolley-bus, whereas the country section was, until 1938-39 operating at a loss;¹ and no doubt partly to the drive coming from a well-organized and closely-knit body of workers. The principle, laid down by Mr. Pick,² that each section should be on a self-supporting basis, although each might make a different contribution to 'the general support of the Board's undertaking', was so far modified as to allow two increases of 2s. to the relatively low-paid country bus and coach conductors in 1936 in anticipation of improvement. The first common negotiations followed in 1937, when special rates of pay were arranged for the period of the Coronation, rates which, of course, did not operate for the Central Bus section. The war brought a greatly increased demand for the country services, due to the movement of population, industry and commerce out of Central London, so that the Country Busmen had a good claim both on the grounds of earnings and on the grounds of operating conditions (a claim augmented, perhaps, by the effect of rationing and price control on geographical cost of living differentials) for a relative increase. This claim was recognized not only by the grant of flat-rate war advances, which improved the relative position of the lower paid, but also by two permanent increases totalling 5s. for Country Bus drivers, and 6s. for Country Bus conductors, and Coach conductors. Coach drivers did not share in these advances. In 1946, and, for conductors, again in 1948, differentials were reduced. In the 1946 agreement the coach driver, who had long ago been left behind by the tramwaymen, received the greatest increase of all. At the same time the difference between the rate for the Central Bus driver, and that of his conductor and the tramwaymen, was reduced to 4s.

Finality may not yet have been reached. The country services may have further cause to claim that the differential between town and country be reduced, and that the difference between conductor and driver should be reduced to that of the central area

¹ Letter of Mr. Pick to Mr. Bevin, dated October 21st, 1935; produced as evidence to the Court of Inquiry on the Coronation Strike.

² *Ibid.*

buses.¹ Maximum rates of pay are reached in two, three or four stages of six months each. But levelling up has at least gone far towards completion amongst the largest group in the London Transport staff, and the replacement of trams by buses under the South London Tramway Conversion scheme will complete the process for the tramwaymen.

The apparent simplicity of the guaranteed forty-eight hour week, since 1947 reduced to forty-four hours, covers considerable complexity, something of which has already been seen as far as the busmen are concerned. It is impossible for a transport undertaking to utilize 8 hours or 7 hours 20 minutes a day in the same way as a factory. If a driver and conductor are operating a route on which the journey out and back is scheduled to take $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours, the remaining twenty minutes of the working day may well be of little use to the undertaking, and, if so, is treated as 'building-up' time to complete the guaranteed 7 hours 20 minutes. Moreover transport undertakings are, from Monday to Friday, faced with the problem of two peaks of traffic a day, separated by eight or nine hours; this makes it all the more difficult to utilize the full 7 hours 20 minutes. Some relief is afforded to these difficulties if duties can be broken, and spread over a larger number of hours, but this clearly makes the worker's task more onerous. The maximum length of time on duty, and the maximum time of spread-over duties (which are usually governed by percentage agreements—80% of duties within a certain spread-over time, and so on) are clearly important elements in negotiations between the employer and the trade unions concerned.

This problem is also important when special rates of pay are considered; these cover not only rates for overtime, for Sunday work, for working on public holidays, and payment for holidays, but also payment for spreadover duties above a certain length of time. This is an additional penalty incurred by the employer if he spreads a man's total duty over the day in the manner most advantageous to the service (for instance to cover two 'peak' periods) but at the expense of the man's convenience. The

¹ It must, however, be remembered that their rates of pay are considerably higher than those of the neighbouring company undertakings operating on the perimeter of the London Transport Area. The maximum rates (107/6 for drivers, 103/6 for conductors) of the Eastern National Company, for instance, are, 11/- and 9/- less than London Transport Country Area rates.

practice on the Central Buses before the war was for the payment of spreadover time exceeding $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours at half the ordinary rate, and on trams, trolley-buses and country services for the payment of allowances varying from 6*d.* to 2*s.* according to the length of the spreadover. During the war an agreement was signed to extend the maximum time for spreadover duties to allow the Board to cope with the manpower shortage, in return for which spreadover duties in excess of $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours were paid at the standard rate on all services.

Since the Board took over, agreements, some of which have been mentioned, improved the position of the employees in these matters from time to time, and section by section. In 1946 negotiations commenced for the general introduction of a forty-four hour week for the Board's employees, as in a number of other industries. This raised a number of difficulties with regard to drivers and conductors, the most important of which concerned the maximum duty per day, the payment for spreadover time, and the concurrent introduction of time off with pay to compensate for public holidays worked, in addition to two weeks' paid holiday. The T. & G.W.U. argued for a maximum of 7 hours 20 minutes, and the Board, who argued that this would reduce the time actually worked below forty hours a week, offered 7 hours 50 minutes. The union wanted the retention of the standard rate for spreadover time, now for time in excess of 8 hours, and the Board a return to half the standard rate. The dispute was referred to the Minister of Labour, who appointed a Committee of Investigation, chaired by Lord Terrington, under the Conciliation Act, 1896. The Committee reported on May 2nd, 1947, recommending a maximum time on duty of 7 hours 40 minutes,¹ spreadover payment at the standard rate over 8 hours 20 minutes (7 hours 40 minutes, plus 40 minutes meal relief) and the concession of the holidays demanded. The Committee made further recommendations on minor points, but left open the question of payment of Sunday duty at the rate of time-and-a-

¹ The normal time on duty is 7 hours 20 minutes, to make up, in six turns, the guaranteed 44 hour week. For duties exceeding 7 hours 20 minutes overtime is paid at the following rates:

- (a) An additional quarter rate to be paid for scheduled time from 7 hours 1 minute to 7 hours 20 minutes.
- (b) Scheduled time in excess of 7 hours 20 minutes to be paid at a rate of time-and-a-half. (Very little overtime is in fact worked on London Transport road services.)

half, which the union desired, instead of time-and-a-quarter. This concession had been granted to municipal passenger transport employees in March 1947.

The subsequent agreement, which embodied the recommendations, but did not include payment of time-and-a-half for Sunday duties,¹ was the first major common agreement on conditions of service for all three sections, and contained an almost complete unification for them. Minor differences remain, partly due to unavoidable differences between the operation of different vehicles, and partly traditional, as for instance in the methods of compilation of the agreed percentages of duties to come within certain time limits. 'Joint compilation' by averaging different routes worked from the same garage or depot clearly offers increased latitude. The Central Busmen have always been hostile to this method, and will allow no more than two routes to be thus grouped. In addition there are still in existence agreements on certain matters not mentioned in the 1947 agreement, such as the agreement limiting the garages to which a Central busman may be transferred or loaned from his own garage, which is much more elaborate than similar provisions for the other sections.

3. RAILWAY STAFF

The Railway Conciliation Grades include all railway staff apart from the higher officers, and workshop employees. In 1947 these grades included about 13,000 persons, some 14% of London Transport's total staff. Despite some regrading and grouping of grades in the agreements of 1947 and 1948, there are still nearly 100 different rates of pay for Conciliation Staff, although some of these are rates varying with length of service within one grade. The large number of grades is in part due to the considerable number of jobs on the railways which have no equivalent on the road services, even on the tramways, for instance signalling. An idea of the movement of wages in these grades can be given by the figures for the four main grades in the department of the Operating Manager (Railways)—motor-men, guards, booking clerks, and porters. The four grades include about 5,500 (69%) of the 8,000 (including supervisory, clerical, station and train staff)

¹ This was granted in the subsequent agreement of March 1948.

in his department, and approximately 44% of the total conciliation staff.¹

RAILWAY CONCILIATION STAFF : OPERATING DEPARTMENT

	Motorman ²	Guard ²	Booking clerk ² (Class 5)	Porter
1933	93/-	68/-	£210 p.a.	46/-
1938				50/-
1939				52/-
1940 Jan. (war advance)	97/-	72/-	£220 p.a.	56/-
June (war advance)	100/-	75/-	£228 p.a.	59/-
1941 (war advance)	104/-	79/-	£238 p.a.	63/-
1942 (war advance)	109/-	84/-	£251/12/- p.a.	68/-
1942 (agreement)				72/6
1943 (war advance)	113/6	88/6	£263/6/- p.a.	77/-
1944 (war advance)	118/6	93/6	£276/6/- p.a.	82/-
1945 (war advance)	121/-	96/-	£282/16/- p.a.	84/6
1945 (agreement)	129/6	103/6	£303 p.a.	89/-
1947	137/-	111/-	£330 p.a.	96/6
1948	140/-	118/-		97/-
Increase 1933/48	47/-	50/-	£120	51/-
Increase per cent	51%	74%	57%	111%

Here again it must be remembered that these are rates and not total earnings. The average earnings of the motor-men increased, between 1933-34 and 1948, from £5 os. 8d. to £8 7s. 9d., an increase of 67% (as against an increase of 51% in wage rates). The porters' average earnings rose (from £2 14s. 9d. to £6 os. 7d.) by 120%, whereas their rates rose by 111%.

The war advances on the railway side, following Main Line agreements, were 28s. in all for adult male workers, as against 24s. 6d. for the road service staff. The same tendency as on the road side, towards the reduction of differentials by greater relative (and in most cases absolute) increases for the lower paid grades, is visible in the figures in this table, but the process is less marked. This is partly due to the fact that the railway workers

¹ Some conciliation staff, for instance in the Signals Department, are included in the workshop incentive bonus scheme, so that their total earnings do not vary exactly with those of the grades quoted.

² These are maximum rates, previously payable after six years service' for motormen and guards, but since 1948 after three years, and to clerks over twenty-five years of age. They include a London rent allowance of 3/- per week for motormen and guards, and a London allowance of 4/- per week for booking-clerks, which is now assimilated in the rates.

are organized by three different unions, the two smaller of which, the R.C.A. and the A.S.L.E.F., cater for the higher paid grades. An advance for the lower paid grades on the road side can be claimed as a victory for the T. & G.W.U. An advance for N.U.R. members can only act as a spur to the other two unions to do as well as, or better than, the N.U.R. for their own members. The second of the pre-war advances for porters (and other workers on a similar rate) was negotiated at the same time as a similar advance on the Main Line. The latter was followed by a general claim of the A.S.L.E.F. for higher wages and improvements in conditions, the rejection of which by the Main Line companies led to a national strike threat, withdrawn at the last moment due to the international situation in the few days prior to the declaration of war on Germany. The increase for lower paid grades in 1942 was merged in subsequent advances, so that its effect on differentials was lost. The 1947 Agreement for a general advance of 7s. 6d. and for the forty-four hour week (almost concurrently with the forty-four hour week on the road side), followed on the report of a Court of Inquiry into a national claim of the railway unions for an increase in wages and shortening of hours; the Court dealt only with the claim against the Main Line Companies. The main recommendations of its Report¹ were: a flat rate 7s. 6d. increase, and the forty-four hour week, which were accepted, and put into practice, by the Main Lines and the Board. The Court also recommended, having regard to another part of the claim, that there should be 'an examination of the grading of railway workers with a view to the more accurate assessment of the relative value of different types of work performed, and to the rearrangement of intergrade margins so that adequate incentive may be given for the acceptance of higher responsibility consequent on promotion', a matter to which the Court did not feel itself able to give adequate attention, and so recommended the flat rate increase, in order to avoid prejudicing subsequent reclassification. The Board was not subject to these recommendations, and in two particulars did not agree with them so far as London Transport staff were concerned. Firstly, in the Board's view, in any agreement for a shorter working week,

¹ Cmd. 7161 of 1947.

Sunday should be included in the working week;¹ secondly, whilst recognizing that the lower paid staff required an increase of wages, they considered that certain grades, such as the motor-men, were reasonably well remunerated at that time. They came to the conclusion, however, that a reference of the union's claim to the Wages Board would be misunderstood by the staff and, taking everything into consideration, decided to seek a settlement on the lines of the Court's Report. The subsequent agreement of September 3rd, 1947, between the Board and the railway unions, included a clause (5) which stated:

The process of examination of grading already undertaken or in progress will be extended to other sections of the Board's railway staff, with a view to simplification of the grading and the removal of any anomalies in the wages scales.

At the time of the Court of Inquiry negotiations were being carried on between the Board and the R.C.A. for a regrouping of Head Office male clerical staff (but not shop and depot clerks), from the old five classes (1-5) into two new classes (A and B). Classes A and B cover staff previously in Classes 1-3. Recruitment to the old classes 4 and 5 ceased on the introduction of the new classification, the work of those classes being covered by women clerical staff (A and B). Existing staff in Class 4 and 5 is to be maintained in those classes pending absorption by promotion, or wastage. The reason given for this reclassification, which divorces London Transport's headquarters staffing arrangements from those of the Main Line Railways, is that the clerical functions in London Transport's necessarily more compact headquarters do not require such diverse classifications as those of the Main Line railways; they lend themselves to a simpler organization.

In March, 1948, the railway unions concluded a new agreement with the Main Line Railway Executive in fulfilment of the Court of Inquiry's regrading clause quoted above. In May 1948, London Transport signed a similar agreement with the N.U.R. and the A.S.L.E.F., in fulfilment of Clause 5 of their previous agreement, granting similar increases, but in some

¹ On the road services Sunday duties are rostered as part of the working week. On the railways Sunday is not treated as a working day, and London Transport must arrange special additional rosters for Sunday duties. Moreover, the payment for the rostered Sunday duties on the road services is at the 'penalty' rate of time-and-a-half, whereas Sunday duty on the railways, since it is additional to the forty-four hour week, must be paid for at the Sunday overtime rate of time-and-threequarters.

cases (e.g. for guards) slightly higher, and in some cases (e.g. for motormen) slightly lower, than on the Main Lines.¹ As can be seen from the table, one result was that differentials between higher and lower paid workers were increased. It must not be concluded that this was desired by London Transport, but it was felt that this was the best settlement that could be made at the time. In June came a supplementary agreement with the R.C.A. to grant increases to those remaining in Classes 4 and 5, and to women, in the headquarters clerical staff, similar to those granted to Main Line clerks in March.

Simplification of classification has not proceeded far, even under the 1948 Agreements, for staff other than clerical; perhaps not as far as London Transport would desire. The two lowest paid sections of the station staff, previously rated at 96s. 6d. and 97s. have been brought on to a common rate of 97s.; certain higher paid grades, such as signalmen, or train staff, have undergone a reduction in number of classes, since there are now only two rates for signalmen (special), and a guard reaches his maximum after three years' service by annual increments, instead of by four increments spread over six years; some grouping among the carriage cleaning, greasing and examining staff and the lift and escalator staff in the Mechanical Engineering Department completes the tale of simplification.

Although there are agreements covering duties over 8 hours and split turns (—spreadovers) for the station train and booking office staff, these matters have not given the same trouble as in the road service departments, just as alteration of schedules causes less troubles on the railways, where there are no 'traffic conditions' to be taken into account, and the routes do not require frequent alteration. Certain improvements in these matters were included in the 1947 agreement, which also introduced a regular rest-day for the first time for railway operating staff. Since the railway unions have always refused to recognize Sunday as a working day, the railway staff has to work, on an average, one Sunday in two as overtime. With a six-day week this allowed only one rest-day in a fortnight. This was found irksome by some of the railway staff, particularly returned

¹ This was intended to take account of differences in responsibility between the work of the London transport staff concerned and equivalent grades elsewhere in the railway industry.

ex-servicemen, and the introduction of the forty-four hour week as an eighty-eight hour fortnight of alternately forty-eight hours and forty hours a week has given them one week-day rest-day, in addition to one Sunday rest-day, each fortnight.

4. WORKSHOP STAFF

In dealing with the Workshop Staff, we must leave the normal practice of this book. In the negotiating machinery garage and depot 'inside Staffs' are included with the road service operating staff; but their rates of pay have always been mainly determined by the rates paid in London Transport Workshops, and it is on the basis of those rates that 'levelling-up' has proceeded. In this chapter, therefore, the inside staff must be included with the Workshop Staff.

The three-fold grouping of rates in Chiswick works has already been mentioned.¹ By 1933 this grading system had been extended, but with lower rates for semi-skilled and unskilled workers, to the maintenance staff in the L.G.O.C. garages. The craftsmen there had long been covered by the same agreement, and enjoyed the same rates of pay, as operated at the Works. An agreement of 1927, slightly amplified in July 1931, absorbed the semi-skilled in the garages into the grade of assistant craftsmen at 1s. 6½d. per hour, and the unskilled into the grade of general hand at 1s. 4¾d. These rates, although they constituted advances in all cases, were still below the rates for the similar grades in the Works. In April 1934, a similar grouping was applied to Country Bus and Coach Inside Staff, on lower rates than those of the Central Garages, one agreement being signed with the craft unions, and the other with the T. & G.W.U. for assistant craftsmen and general hands.

Next came unification for tram maintenance staff.

In May 1935 a five-fold grouping was introduced in the main tram and trolley-bus works at Charlton. There were two grades of semi-skilled workers, since levelling-up to the highest rate would have proved too costly, and levelling-down to a common and economic rate too unpopular; and two grades of unskilled, the second of which, consisting of medically unfit,

¹ See pp. 22-23.

subsequently lapsed through wastage. At the same time a grouping was applied in the depots, with only one unskilled rate, and here, in contrast to the bus section, the lower grades of the depot workers, who had received two advances of up to 1s. 6d. in January and April of that year, were on slightly higher rates than comparable grades at the Works. A two-fold grouping of semi-skilled and unskilled grades was introduced for some of the Permanent Way (Trams) staff. In the following year the Charlton grouping was applied in the smaller tram and trolley-bus Works at Fulwell.

The tram maintenance workers, like the tram drivers and conductors, envied their more fortunate fellows in the bus works and garages. Chiswick rates were also coveted by the railway maintenance workers in the railway workshops, particularly at the large Acton Works, which is adjacent to the Chiswick Works; railway workshop staff were on rates determined by Award 728 (plus a special bonus). The pressure for leveling-up was increased by the organization of the skilled workers in all three sections in the same craft unions. Success came after the war. Tram depot rates were levelled up to bus garage rates by a special award in January 1946, although the two semi-skilled rates were retained. In March 1947 the Chiswick grouping of grades, and the Chiswick rates of pay, were applied at Charlton and Fulwell. At the same time, grouping was applied for the first time in the railway workshops¹ and rolling-stock depots, and Chiswick rates of pay introduced, with this difference: shop and depot rates had always been the same for railway workers, so that, instead of introducing a differential such as existed between Chiswick and the garages for semi-skilled and unskilled, it was decided to maintain common rates, but to have two semi-skilled grades, grade 1 at Chiswick rates, and grade 2 at garage rates, at the shops and at the depots.

In March 1948, bus garage rates were levelled up to Chiswick rates. Tram and trolley-bus depot semi-skilled grade 1 and unskilled staff were levelled up at the same time, and grade 2 staff were rated intermediately between grade 1 and unskilled. It was agreed that the rates of pay of the railway semi-skilled staff

¹ Including Acton Works, and workshop staff in the Lifts and Escalator Section, the Signal Department, the Permanent Way (Railways) Section, and the Works and Building Department (Railways).

should average the same as the road service semi-skilled staff. At the request of the unions, this was achieved by introducing a third semi-skilled grade—the grade 1 starred—at a rate higher than those of the existing grades 1 and 2, instead of raising the rates for these grades.

The whole process is shown in the following tables:

	CHISWICK WORKS			CENTRAL BUS GARAGES		
	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled
1933 July	90/1	78/4	70/6	90/1	72/6	65/7
1938 April					74/5	67/7
War increases shop 32/6 garage 24/6	122/7	110/10	103/-	Shop war advance 122/7	98/11 106/11	92/- 100/-
1946 Jan.					110/10	103/-
1948 March						

	CHARLTON AND FULWELL T. & T. WORKS					T. & T. DEPOTS			PERMANENT WAY	
	1 Skilled	2 Semi-skilled	3 Semi-skilled	4 Unskilled	5 Unskilled	1 Semi-skilled	2 Semi-skilled	3 Unskilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled
1935-36	80/-	74/-	69/-	64/-	60/-	74/-	70/-	66/-	70/6	68/-
1938 Jan.	82/6									
War advances 24/6	107/-	98/6	93/6	88/6	Wasted	98/6	94/6	90/6	95/-	92/6
1946 Jan.	118/-	107/-	102/-	97/-		106/11	102/11	100/-	102/6	100/-
1947 March	122/7	110/10		103/-		110/10	106/10	103/-	111/-	107/-
1948 March										

	COUNTRY GARAGES		
	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled
1934 April	74/5	62/8	52/11
1936 Jan.			53/10
July			54/10
Oct.	78/4		
1937 June	80/4		
1938 April		64/8	
1941 Oct.		68/7	58/9
1943 Nov.	82/3		
1944 June		70/6	60/9
War advances 24/6	106/9	95/-	85/3
1946 Jan.	114/9	102/11	93/11
Oct.	116/8		
1948 March		106/10	97/10

	RAILWAY WORKSHOPS				
	Skilled	Semi-skilled 1		Semi-skilled 2	Unskilled
		semi-skilled 1*	semi-skilled 1		
1947 March	122/7	110/10		107/-	103/-
1948 May		115/-	110/10		

This is once more a table of wage-rates and not of total earnings. The 'levelling-up' process is again marked. The main increases before and during the war were for the relatively low-paid country garage staff, and, since the war, differences between grades in each section have been absolutely as well as relatively reduced, and differences between the sections, apart from different practices with regard to semi-skilled groupings, and the small remaining town/country differential, abolished.

It will be noted that basic rates in Chiswick have not increased at all, and post-1946 increases in other maintenance sections have been small. This is explained by the introduction of an output bonus. During the war Chiswick Works was part of London Aircraft Productions, and on its return to the Board's service output was considerably below pre-war level. To meet this decline the Board agreed with the unions an output bonus scheme. Special fixed bonuses had been paid to workers in the railway shops since 1922, but this was the first full scheme to be applied in this country to maintenance work, at least on such a large scale. The first scheme (No. 1) was experimental, and a ceiling of 12½% was established, so that experience could be gained without too great expense. The bonus is paid on basic rates only, so that the craftsman who qualified for the maximum bonus under Scheme No. 1 received a bonus of 11s. 3d.—12½% of 90s. 1d.—making, with his war advance, a total of £6 13s. 10d. Soon after the extension of bus maintenance rates to the other sections (March 1947), similar schemes, varied according to the nature of the work, were introduced for tram and trolley-bus, and for railway, workshops.¹ At the same time a fixed bonus, at a lower rate, was introduced for garage and depot staff, whose work is not of the sort to allow a variable bonus, in return for undertakings that the volume and quality of work should be increased.

In order that the workers in other sections should be on the same basic as well as total rates, and thus qualify for the same rate of bonus, as the bus workers, some standard rates had actually to be reduced. Before March 1947 the Charlton craftsman, for instance, was receiving 118s. a week; this included his pre-war

¹ In some railway engineering departments output bonus schemes apply to conciliation staff, as well as shop staff levelled up to Chiswick group rates.

82s. 6d., a war advance of 24s. 6d., and a special award of 11s., granted in January 1946. His standard rate was thus 93s. 6d., so that when his rates were levelled up to those at Chiswick, and his total weekly rate became 122s. 7d., an increase of 4s. 7d., this had to be achieved by first reducing his standard rate to 90s. 1d. (the Chiswick standard rate), and then granting him an advance of 8s. It should be noted that war advances have not been incorporated in standard rates for the calculation of incentive bonus. This is the common practice in major allied industries such as vehicle building and engineering.

When the forty-four hour week was introduced in the following summer, the bonus earning weekly rate was further reduced, since the bonus is paid on the hourly rate. The full weekly rate was maintained by transferring three hours' pay at standard rate to the consolidated weekly advance. Thus, in the case of the craftsman, 5s. 9d. (= 3 hours at 1s. 11d. per hour, since 90s. 1d. for a forty-seven hour week is 1s. 11d. per hour) was transferred to the consolidated weekly advance, making it 38s. 3d. per week. As a consequence of the reduction of the bonus earning weekly rate in this way, the output bonus ceiling was raised to 13½%, giving approximate compensation.

No. 1 bonus scheme was experimental. It proved successful enough in the road workshops to be followed in March 1948 by a more elaborate scheme, fully variable with no ceiling. Under this, each shop engaged entirely on 'rated' jobs is paid, once the standard time has been agreed, a bonus at a rate of $\frac{\text{time saved}}{\text{time taken}} \times 100^1$ calculated for the output of that shop; other shops and non-productive workers receive a 'Works Average Rate'. Any idle time book is paid at 50% of the prevailing rate in that shop. The agreement includes thorough provisions for setting initial times for jobs; for the subsequent fixing, by rate-fixing methods, of provisional standard times, which are to allow the average worker to earn a bonus of at least 15%; for the contention of these rates while still provisional; and for the final establishment of a standard time to last for a period of at least six

¹ This formula, it should be noted, gives a higher rate than the commoner

$$\frac{\text{time saved}}{\text{time allowed}} \times 100$$

months. In August 1948 the Chiswick rate was running at 33%, so that a craftsman received a bonus of £1 8s. 1d., and a weekly total of £7 10s. 8d.

Acton Works, the Signal Department, the Lift and Escalator Section, the Rolling Stock Depots and the Permanent Way (Railways) Shop, remain under the limited, fixed-ceiling bonus schemes. It is intended to convert the Acton Works Scheme, when appropriate, to a full scheme. The road garage and depot maintenance staff remain under their fixed bonus scheme; the rate was raised in March 1938 from 11% to 15%.

The maintenance staff have thus experienced even greater levelling-up than that of the road operating staff. Variations between grades have been reduced from 37s. 2d. in 1934 (between the Chiswick craftsman on 90s. 1d., and the Country Garage general hand on 52s. 11d.), to 24s. 9d. in 1948, so that the Chiswick craftsman, who then received 70% more than the Country Garage general hand, now gets only 25% more. The calculation of bonus rates on standard rates, however, and the difference between the Chiswick variable bonus and the garage fixed bonus, reduce the effect of this levelling-up.

The grouping of the maintenance workers is a notable achievement, compared either with outside engineering rates (with the chaos of semi-skilled grades), or with the railways shopmen's rates elsewhere. The grouping does not, however, cover the whole of the maintenance staff. In the road workshops, for instance, there are some thirty-four grades of supervisory or specialist craftsmen, grouped into seven groups, each one of which has a rate above that of the craftsman, and one or two grades, such as driver and tester, outside the grouping, besides the lower rates for women and apprentices. The numbers in these outside grades, except in the Permanent Way (Trams) Section, are small. In Chiswick, in 1947, there were some 4,250 in the wages grades, and of these approximately 2,250 were Craftsmen, 1,150 Assistant Craftsmen, and 300 General Hands, totalling 2,300; so that 87% of the wages staff were in the three grades; the proportion is even higher among the garage maintenance staff, although there the Assistant Craftsmen far outnumber the Craftsmen. The total number of those covered by the levelling-up process just described is some 20,000, about 21% of the Board's staff. It

should be remembered that on the railway side only the Rolling Stock Shop (Acton) and Depot shop staff, the Works and Building (Railways) Staff, and the shop staff of the Lifts and Escalators section, the Signals Engineering Department and the Permanent Way (Rails) Department are covered by the levelling-up agreements. The majority of the staff in the last three sections, not being workshop staff, is still graded and rated as conciliation Staff.

5. OTHER STAFF

The separate agreements and grading systems for the two sections of electricity supply staff¹ (ex-L.C.C. and ex-Combine) remained until the war. Then both sections received the 28s. war advances granted to railway staff, and an *ad hoc* union committee was formed to negotiate for all generation and distribution wages staff. In the summer of 1946 a committee of representatives of this body and of the Board, chaired by an independent member (Lord Terrington) applied common composite rates of pay,² based in general upon the rates in the Electricity Supply Industry (which were higher than railway rates), to both sections. This gave further increases to most grades; provision was made for the retention of previous merit rates at Greenwich (ex-L.C.C.) as personal rates. Although based on Electricity Supply Industry rates, those new rates were, in most instances, below, and remain below, those in the outside Electricity Supply Industry.³ The agreement resulted in an extension of grouping for certain grades, already applied at Greenwich, to the staff at Lots Road and Neasden.

Canteen staff now comes within the jurisdiction of the Catering Wages Commission, established under the Catering Wages Act of 1943, and so received, in addition to war advances, a statutory increase of wages in 1945. Further increases of 4s. to 16s. were negotiated for this section in 1946, and in the summer of 1948 a system of grading, intended to increase efficiency, was introduced; this resulted in increases for a majority of the staff.

¹ See p. 59.

² There had been a brief strike at the Neasden generating station on the issue of the difference of pay between the sections in October 1945. (*The Times*, October 10th, 1945.)

³ Late in 1949 agreement in principle was reached on closing the gap between London Transport and outside Electricity Supply rates.

6. THE EFFECTS OF THE WAGES POLICY

Since 1933, then, there has been considerable levelling-up in wage-rates for London Transport staff. On the road services and for maintenance and repair staff in workshops, garages and depots there has been a considerable reduction of differentials, and an extension of common agreements on special rates of pay, hours of work and conditions of service; in addition there has been wide application of a three-fold grouping of maintenance grades, and a notable experiment in incentive bonus payment for maintenance work. The same process of reducing differentials has gone on on the railways, but to a slightly less extent, for, although the lower paid grades have received increases roughly equivalent to those of the lowest paid grades on the road services, the higher paid railway grades have received slightly larger increases than the higher road grades.¹ There persists a multiplicity of grades amongst the railway staff, in part due to the great variety of types of work involved, in part to objections raised by the railway unions to schemes of simplification suggested by London Transport, and no attempt has been made to introduce for them any so far-reaching simplification as the work-shop staff grouping system.

The advantages of levelling-up and grouping in producing simplicity, for what that is worth, are clear; from the point of view of social equality, greater relative advances for the lower paid are to be welcomed. Incentives are provided in the workshops, where they are most effective, by bonus payments, and by higher rates for specialist workers. Reduction of differentials does not appear to have caused any shortage of candidates for promotion. The popularity of grouping may be gauged from its

¹ Since 1933 the railway porter has advanced from 46/- to 97/-, an increase of 51% (111%). The lowest paid adult road service worker, the Country Garage general hand has advanced from 52/11 to 97/10 + 15% bonus on 1/4½d. an hour (= 8/11 per week) = 106/9, an advance of 53/10 (102%). There has thus been a slight reduction on the differential between these two low-paid grades. The motorman, however, has over the same period advanced from 93/- to 140/-, an increase of 51% as against the 49% of the Central bus driver (from 86/6 to 129/-), thus increasing the differential between these two relatively highly paid grades. This is accentuated by movements in earnings, for the earnings of the motorman have increased by 67%, compared with 54% increase for the Central bus driver, over the period 1933-34 to 1948.

extension throughout the maintenance staff. The preamble to the agreement extending grouping to railway shop and depot workers states that both parties consider 'that greater efficiency could be obtained by a reduction of the present number of grades'.

The most obvious effect of the process is the extension of negotiations to cover an increasing proportion of the Board's staff. Although road service staff, including 'inside' staff (except craftsmen) have always been represented by the T. & G.W.U., it is only with the process of levelling-up that negotiations for all these sections have been unified. Since the formation of the joint Committee of Unions for Workshop Staff (Railways), by the joint Trades Committee and the N.U.R., negotiations to deal with regrouping and levelling-up for the road service and railway workshop staff have been drawn closer together. Negotiations for railway conciliation staff are usually common; although sometimes one or more of the unions negotiate separately. The 1947 forty-four hour week negotiations were common to almost the whole of the staff, although they were embodied in a number of separate agreements, which included wage advances for the rail staff, alteration in output bonus for the workshop staff, and a number of consequent adjustments in conditions of service for the road service staff. The 1948 negotiations leading up to the agreement of March with the road service operating and maintenance staff, and the workshop staff, perhaps provide the best example of the extension of negotiations due to the innovations of the last fifteen years. Negotiations were going on concurrently for workshop staff and for road service staff (including garage and depot maintenance staff). The rates accepted as initial minima for the variable output bonus scheme in the workshops clearly would affect, and in fact decided, the rate at which the fixed bonus would be paid to the garage and depot maintenance workers (who were, by the same agreement, to be levelled up to the Chiswick rates). The level of this fixed bonus, however, would determine the increase in earnings accruing to the garage and depot inside staff, and this could clearly not be decided out of relation to the amount of the advance for the road operating staff, which was being discussed in the same negotiations. These

negotiations, then, were inseparable and covered between 60,000 and 70,000, almost three-quarters, of the Board's staff.¹

The translation of piece-rate advances into time-rate advances, and vice-versa, has been notoriously difficult ever since the famous 12½% and 7½% awards of the Committee of Production in 1917 and 1918,² and these negotiations did not run very smoothly, their course being rendered more difficult by the publication of the White Paper on Personal Incomes, Costs and Prices³ before an agreement was reached. The extension of negotiations has complicated output bonus negotiations in another way. The bonus, as we have seen, was first introduced to improve the output of Chiswick Works, but has since been extended to cover almost the whole of the Board's maintenance staff. Workers in some of the smaller shops were already doing work of about as high a standard as could be attained. The payment of the bonus was claimed for them as for workers elsewhere, but, when granted, had to be made payable for tasks they were already, in fact, accomplishing. Promises of improved work were, however, made on behalf of the garage and depot inside staff in return for the extension of the bonus to them, and these were so far fulfilled that the agreement could be followed by a reduction in personnel in the garages and depots.

One obvious advantage of a wage-structure internal to the Board is the isolation of its employees from outside disputes. The N.U.V.B. members employed by the Board did not take part in the national vehicle builders' strike of April 1948, since their rate of pay is determined by the craftsman's rate negotiated by the Joint Trades Committee for workshop, depot and garage craftsmen, and not by the national rate negotiated by the union. The process of levelling-up has removed the cause of innumerable petty jealousies and frictions, and if the current orthodox view, that deliberate action is to be preferred in economic affairs to the outcome of uncontrolled interacting forces, is accepted, the extension of negotiations should be welcomed, for the planner clearly has more opportunity of planning wages if all rates which closely affect each other are brought into one set of negotiations.

¹ The amount of the increase was also affected by the 7/6 granted in 1947 to the railway staff, at the same time as their forty-four hour week agreement.

² See Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, Oxford, 1923.

³ Cmd. 7321 of 1948.

7. OUTSIDE COMPARISON

(a) Road Passenger Transport

Comparison with similar outside industry, as far as railway conciliation staff is concerned, would be uninformative, for as we have seen, railway wage rates have followed Main Line rates fairly closely. Comparison would therefore show London Transport railway rates moving parallel to Main Line London rates, and converging slightly with industrial and rural rates, since differentials have remained fixed while rates have been advanced.

There is also close agreement in the movement of rates for the Board's road service operating staff and for passenger transport employees in the rest of the country, but this is not part of London Transport's inheritance from the past; it is the result of the achievement, through the efforts of the T. & G.W.U., of *de facto* national negotiations for road passenger transport. In 1937 the union succeeded in getting the old National J.I.C. for the Tramway Industry enlarged to include the municipal bus undertakings. Immediate prior to the war the union, having established agreements with those companies united by the two great Combines, Tillings and British Electric Traction, and with the Scottish Motor Traction Company, was using the fair wage clause of the Road Traffic Act 1930¹ to bring smaller operators, particularly in the north of England and in Scotland, up to the rates thus negotiated. The issue of *The Record* for February 1940 claimed that in the preceding year forty-eight such cases had been taken before the Industrial Court, and in forty-three favourable verdicts had been given, two others being withdrawn on technical grounds, and one settled on the union's terms outside the court. In November and December of 1939, negotiations led to agreements with the Board, the N.J.I.C., the two Combines, the Scottish Motor Traction Company, and the Northern Ireland Transport Board for war advances of 4s. for adult male workers. On June 14, 1940 the National Council for the Omnibus Industry was formed. Its constitution was considerably more restricted than that of the N.J.I.C.; it had no powers to make

¹ Road Traffic Act 1930 Section 93 as amended by Section 32 of the Road and Rail Traffic Act 1933.

national agreements, but it was soon decided that it should, without prejudice, negotiate general war advances. In the following month came a further general 3s. advance negotiated with all the separate bodies, and the lowest paid company employees received rather larger increases of up to 7s. The negotiations of the following year led to a general 4s. advance only after recourse to the Industrial Court for the N.J.I.C., and to special arbitration tribunals, appointed to fulfil the conditions of S.R. & O. 1305 of 1940,¹ for the Board and the N.C.O.I. The N.C.O.I. award also granted female conductors the male war advances in rates of pay in conformity with a previous award² of the Industrial Court for the N.J.I.C. which had been followed by the Board. The Scottish Motor Traction Company granted the same increase by negotiation; it did not join the N.C.O.I. until January 1946. Awards continued to run in step. In April 1943 it was agreed that the N.C.O.I. Tribunal should examine the applications for an increase for the private companies', the municipal undertakings' and the Board's employees. The rejection of the unions' case by this Tribunal probably surprised the employers as much as the unions. The announcement of the decision was followed by direct application to the employers for an increase, and in July the unions met representatives of the three groups of employers. These negotiations concluded in the grant of a further war advance. In 1945 and 1946 the union, after some rebuffs, at last succeeded, through the recommendation of a Court of Inquiry,³ in getting a 'Model Agreement' for company employees widely accepted by the constituent members of the N.C.O.I. (British Electric Traction had at first refused to conform to it, as an agreement which the N.C.O.I. was not empowered to make), and a grouping system for wage rates, almost identical to that of the N.J.I.C. [The latter had, by a process of upgrading of undertakings, reduced its groups from five to two.] Wage negotiations have continued to grant common increases for all passenger transport undertakings throughout the country and the forty-four hour week was

¹ 'The Conditions of Employment and Arbitration Order' made under Regulation 58 A.A.

² This Industrial Court award also granted male rates of pay to female conductors (after six months extra probation) for the N.J.I.C., followed by the Board, but not accepted by the N.C.O.I. until after the war.

³ Cmd. 6796 of 1946

granted to all employees in the industry during the course of 1947. The N.C.O.I. Tribunal Award granting the forty-four hour week, also decided that a full national conditions agreement should be made between the parties, thus making the N.C.O.I. a negotiating body of almost equivalent authority to the N.J.I.C.

There remains a considerable gap between the rates of road passenger transport workers in the London area and elsewhere. Since March 1948 the rates have been:

MUNICIPAL AND COMPANY UNDERTAKINGS			LONDON TRANSPORT EXECUTIVE		
<i>Maximum rates</i>			<i>Maximum rates</i>		
Driver	Group I	107/6	Driver	Central Bus	129/-
Driver	Group II	105/6	Driver	Country Bus	118/6
Conductor	Group I	103/6	Conductor: Central (and T. & T. driver)		125/-
Conductor	Group II	101/6	Conductor: Country area		112/6
Inside Staff:			Inside Staff:		
	Skilled	117/- ¹	Skilled, Central		122/7 + bonus
	Semi-skilled, Grade 1	106/-	Skilled, Country		116/8 + bonus
	Semi-skilled, Grade 2	102/-	Semi-skilled, Central		110/10 + bonus
	Unskilled, Grade 3	98/6	Semi-skilled, Country		106/10 + bonus
			Unskilled Central		103/- + bonus
			Unskilled Country		97/10 + bonus

The difference between the two groups of maintenance workers is somewhat obscured by the incentive bonus, for clearly, if it is a true incentive bonus, comparison between provincial rates and London rates plus bonus are not entirely justifiable, whereas mere comparison of rates is misleading. The bonus, at 15%, adds between 8s. 11d. and 14s., according to grade, on to the time rates, and thus the provincial worker receives about 10s. less than the London Transport Country Area maintenance worker, and from 15s. to 20s. less than the Central Area maintenance workers. Operating Staff (Group I, provincial) have 9s. or 11s. less than Country Area, and 21s. 6d. less than Central Area workers.

Since some municipal undertakings pay above the nationally agreed rates, a comparison of earnings is, perhaps, more satisfactory. In the last pay week of October 1938, the average earnings of road passenger transport workers (including London Transport)

¹ Agreed June 1948 by the N.C.O.I.

was 68s. 7d.¹ For the last pay week of October 1948 the figure was 124s. 10d.,² an increase of 56s. 3d., or 82%. In the year ending July 30th, 1938, average weekly earnings of *all* weekly paid staff of the L.P.T.B. were 82s. 9d., and in the year ending December 31st, 1948, 135s. 10d., an increase of 53s. 1d., or 64%. These figures are not strictly comparable, since the period over which the averages are calculated, and the base dates are different, and the London Transport figures include those for their railway staff. They do, however, serve to indicate the narrowing of the differential due to the common flat rate advances of the war period, and give some indication of the amount of the remaining differential.

The differential between provincial and London rates is rather larger than in most other industries (2d. an hour, or 7s. 10d. over a forty-four hour week, is the usual figure for skilled trades; for railway workers 4s. between the London and rural rates) and it has not gone unquestioned. At the first conference of the National Bus Federation (T. & G.W.U. and N.U.R.) in 1937, the secretary, Mr. Harold Clay, was questioned on this point, and is reported to have replied:

The situation in London was unique, and the men in that area were not affected by the deliberations of the Conference . . . In reply to an interjection he said that if conditions analogous to those in London existed elsewhere, then similar results could be obtained for the men working in the services, for the same people who had been in the one series of negotiations would be in the other.³

Traffic conditions are certainly to be taken into account in assessing the merits of the difference in rates. No provincial workers have to contend with difficulties as great as those of the Central Area workers, and London Transport Country Services operate, to a considerable extent, in a succession of built-up areas in which traffic is often congested, and from which there is no quick escape into the open country as in the majority of provincial areas. There can, however, be little doubt that historical reasons also contribute to the difference between the rates of provincial workers and of London Transport Country Area workers—most of all the association of the latter with their

¹ *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, December, 1940.

² *Ibid.*, March, 1949.

³ Quoted in *The Record*, March, 1937.

powerfully organized Central Area fellows. In so far as this is true, there is a problem in these differentials which will have to be faced by the Transport Commission as the Road Passenger Executive extends the area of its authority, and makes it even more true that the same people would have responsibility in both series of negotiations.

(b) National Comparisons

For comparison with national figures, and with cost-of-living indices, earnings' figures are probably more suitable than time-rates:

<i>Average weekly earnings in last pay week of</i>	<i>All workers</i>		<i>Males</i>		<i>Average weekly earnings of L.P.T.B. staff in year ending</i>	<i>All weekly paid staff</i>		<i>Central bus drivers</i>	
Oct. 1938	53/3	100	69/-	100	June 30 1938	82/9	100	94/9	100
July 1940	69/2	130	89/-	129	Dec. 31 1940	90/11	110	100/9	106
July 1941	75/10	142	99/5	144	Dec. 31 1941	95/5	115	104/0	110
July 1942	85/2	160	111/5	161	Dec. 31 1942	99/4	120	111/10	118
July 1943	93/7	176	121/3	176	Dec. 31 1943	105/5	127	114/3	121
July 1944	96/8	182	124/4	180	Dec. 31 1944	111/2	134	124/3	131
July 1945	96/1	180	121/4	176	Dec. 31 1945	113/10	137	126/10	134
Oct. 1946	101/-	190	120/9	175	Dec. 31 1946	120/3	145	127/6	135
Oct. 1947	108/2	203	128/1	186	Dec. 31 1947	125/5	151	128/6	136
Oct. 1948	117/4	220	137/11	200	Dec. 31 1948	135/10	164	141/6	149

Here again differences in time and in the period covered by the averages render the figures not strictly comparable. The fairer figures to use in comparison with London Transport earnings are those of male workers, since only a small proportion of London Transport's staff, by the end of 1947, were females (8,726 = 9%),¹ and over a third of these were female conductors, who have, since first recruited, received male conductors' rates (although reaching the maximum after an additional six months). Even so, the comparison is remarkable, and reveals reduction of differentials on a national scale, and reflects the relative decline of wages, during the war period, in the inter-war 'sheltered' industries.

There are no official cost-of-living or retail price indices which

¹ At the end of 1944 the female staff of the Board was nearly a quarter of the total, but those employed in substitution for men fell from over 15,000 (20% of the total staff) to 4,340 (4.5%) by December 1947.

cover this period, but such indices as are available suggest that prices of consumer goods were about 80% higher in 1948 than in 1938.¹ This would indicate that the real earnings of the majority of London Transport workers (but not the lowest paid grades) have, disregarding the effect of increased direct taxation and of increased social services, fallen by several points since 1938, whereas the real earnings of the workers in the country as a whole have risen.

One reason given for this is that transport charges, receipts, profits and therefore wages always rise less in an economic upswing and fall less in an economic downswing than prices, receipts, profits and wages in other industries. This is certainly true of the wages of railway workers over a long period.² The motor bus industry is, however, relatively new, and it is thus less easy to substantiate this generalization for road passenger transport. In the early 'twenties road passenger transport workers were relatively highly paid, having, like the railway workers, retained more of their gains of the post-war boom in the subsequent depression than had workers in other industries. The average earnings of all road passenger transport workers covered by the 1924 census of earnings³ was 69s. 8d., and in the 1928 census 69s. 5d. The figures for workers covered by the 1931 census is 65s. 6d. (a fall of nearly 6% from 1924), and for the 1935 census 68s. 4d. (a recovery to within 98% of the original figure). For all male workers covered by these censuses⁴ (chosen for comparison, since there were then few female workers in road passenger transport) the 1924 average figure is 57s. 6d.; the 1928 figure, although there are no separate figures for male and female workers, is apparently approximately the same;⁵ the 1931 figure is 55s. 7d. (a fall of less than 4%); and the 1935 figure 56s. 9d. (a return to within 2% of the original figure). It appears, then, that over this period road passenger transport workers' earnings fell rather more than those of other workers in the depression of

¹ The price index given in 'National Income and Expenditure of the U.K., 1946 to 1948' (Cmd. 7649 of 1949) shows an increase of 80% in 1948 as against 1938.

² See *Wages in Theory and Practice*, J. W. F. Rowe, Routledge, 1928.

³ The figures for this and the subsequent censuses are given in the *Ministry of Labour Gazette* of December, 1926, December 1929, March 1933, and May 1937.

⁴ These averages are given in *Wages and Income in the U.K. since 1860*, A. L. Bowley, Cambridge, 1937, Table XI, p. 51.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

1931, and had risen slightly higher than the average by 1935, since which time earnings in other industries have risen noticeably faster than in road passenger transport. Employment in road passenger transport has indeed been much more stable than elsewhere. Owing to the changed scope of the undertaking no exact comparison of figures of earnings before and after the 1933 Act can be made for London Transport workers, but since the busmen did not suffer any cuts in *wage rates*, and the tram cuts were in force for only a few months, it is almost certain that earnings in London Transport fell less during the depression than in road passenger transport in general, and perhaps than in other industries. The argument, then, may hold good for London Transport workers, but whatever advantage they then gained was a matter of only one or two points in a hundred.

However that may be, between the wars London Transport workers were relatively well off. The miner, the textile worker, the agricultural worker could only improve their relative position by catching up on such well-paid workers. The earnings of the lower paid workers in London Transport (for instance, the porters) have advanced about as rapidly as the national average, and the higher paid grades are still above the national average. In so far as the reduction of differentials within London Transport is to be welcomed on grounds of social equality, so is the national decrease in differentials. It is in accordance with government policy. Any attempt to re-establish the relativities between London Transport and other industries at their 1938 level would be excluded by the terms of the White Paper on Personal Incomes, Costs and Prices, and of the more recent Government and T.U.C. pronouncements on wages policy.

London Transport workers were lucky between the wars; so that the relative decline of their position may be looked on as the loss of a special, and possibly a not altogether desirable, advantage.

This re-adjustment is particularly noticeable in the case of the Central busmen, who, prior to 1933, were the employces of a highly profitable private company. Perhaps if the 1933 Act had not been passed and the L.G.O.C. had remained a separate organization, the Central busmen might have fared differently. It is possible that they would have advanced more rapidly if

they had not been organized in the same union as the tramway-men and the Country Area busmen. That, however, does not mean that the re-adjustment was undesirable. There was nothing sacred about the 1933 differentials, which could easily be criticized. Since common negotiations started, the Central busmen, and all honour to them for it, have helped to extend benefits that they have won to the other road service employees of London Transport. But we may conclude that their trade union militancy has brought the Central Busmen no pecuniary advantage.

We may draw one final conclusion from this brief comparative study: that public ownership does not necessarily bring increased real incomes to the majority of the workers in the undertakings concerned.

8. FARES, INTEREST RATES AND WAGES

In any undertaking the financial interest of the shareholder is to some extent opposed to that of the salary—or wage-earner, and the interest of both must be to some extent opposed to that of the consumer. All parties have also interests in common, for instance, in improved productivity, and, in so far as their interests conflict, it may be possible so to balance them as to give generally a satisfactory result, but surely few undertakings have long remained untouched by complaints that profits or wages or prices are either too high or too low.

During the early years of London Transport the emphasis was placed on the conflict between wages and the interest paid on the Board's stock, and not on the conflict between producer and consumer. The opposition of Lord Ashfield and of the other members of the Board to an increase in fares was widely known, and those who criticized the capital structure of the Board as pressing too heavily on wages were political opponents of higher prices. Such critics were many. The bulk of the original stock was issued at fixed rates of $4\frac{1}{2}\%$ or 5% , and just under a quarter ('C' stock) at a variable rate, which was to rise after three years to $5\frac{1}{2}\%$. Above that figure profits were to be divided between 'C' stockholders and the Board, but the maximum distribution was to be 6% . Failure on the part of the Board to pay the required rate for three consecutive years was to give 'C' stockholders the right to apply to the High Court for a receiver. Since

there was general agreement that fares should not be raised, the interests of 'C' stockholders and of the Board's employees were in conflict. The critics held that the interest rates, originally negotiated in 1930, should have been reduced in 1933, since both road and rail profits had fallen heavily in the intervening years. However that may be, the Board had a strong incentive to resist increases in its wages bill, and its resistance to the demand of the Central Busmen for shorter hours has been attributed to this cause.¹ Moreover, the bulk of the capital was invested in the railways, whereas the central buses were the most profitable section of the whole undertaking.

Wages form the largest item in the costs of London Transport (in 1947 just over 70% of the total working expenses). Despite the slow growth of the wages bill from 1933-34 to 1938-39 (an increase of about 2% per person employed), the Board was not in any year able to pay the full 5½% on 'C' stock, and in 1939 a threat of application for a receiver at a meeting of stockholders called by the managing director of Tillings (the largest single holder of 'C' stock) was followed by an application to the Railway Rates Tribunal² for an increase in fares sufficient to raise the Board's gross income by 2½%. At the same time the Tribunal sanctioned a 5% increase in Main Line suburban fares.

This opposition of interests should not be over-emphasized. There was just under £26,000,000 of 'C' stock. Interest payments from 1934 to 1938 varied between 3½% and 4¼% (they fell to 1½% in 1939), so that the average annual deficit on the required rate (5½%) for the whole of the 'C' stock was a small sum in relation to the Board's total expenditure, or even its total wages bill; though it was not far off the figure (£500,000) estimated as the annual cost of meeting the Busmen's claim for a 7½-hour day. A reduction in the rate of interest on the whole of the Board's stock to 3% would, if it had been politically possible, have meant a saving of over £1,250,000, or something like £15 per annum per person employed. Even this is not a vast sum,

¹ 'They (the busmen) were the first victims to fall before the immutable and uncompromising demands of excessive compensation'. *National Enterprise*, Ernest Davies, Gollancz, 1946, pp. 112-13.

² Under the 1933 Act only applications by local authorities concerning services withdrawn or new services desired were to come before the Railway Rates Tribunal. Nevertheless the Board submitted the whole scheme for its approval.

and, had the maximum demands of the critics for a reduction of interest rates been granted, the advent of a conflict between fares and wages might even so not have been long delayed.

During the war, and until December 31st, 1947, the Board and the Main Line companies came within the scope of the Railway Control Agreement, under which the obligation to pay interest on the capital of the companies concerned was transferred to the Treasury (which, after 1941, compounded for a fixed lump sum), and the Treasury, in turn, received the profits of those companies. Fares were fixed by the Minister of Transport, on the advice of the Charges Consultative Committee. The interest payable on the Board's capital under the agreement was £4,835,705 (the interest on 'C' stock being determined by an average of that paid over the years immediately prior to the war). There were further increases in the Board's fares designed to produce an additional 10% in takings at the time of the first general increase of transport charges in 1940, but thereafter rising costs were met out of the increased charges, and greatly inflated war traffic, on the Main Lines. Each year the Board drew upon the Pool, sometimes for part of its interest payments, and in 1940 and 1941 for the whole of that and for some part of its other expenses.¹ In 1946 a scheme was presented by the Board to the Charges Consultative Committee to cover the estimated deficit for 1947 and the interest payable under the Agreement; it was altered by the Committee, and further revised by the Minister, before its application, and brought into effect in February 1947, increasing the level of the Board's fares by about 30% over that of August 1939. The estimates on which these increases were based were rendered inaccurate by further wages increases and the reduction of hours negotiated in 1947, but they remain in force to-day.²

During the period of the Railway Control Agreement, the conflict between interest payments and wages was reduced; for the payment of interest was the responsibility of the Treasury, and over a large part of the period the Treasury was receiving handsome profits under the agreement, not from London Transport services, but from the heavily increased Main Line

¹ *Economist*, July 6th, and July 13th, 1946.

² The increased number of passengers per vehicle, due to the return of London's population, and the delay in the supply of new vehicles, operated on the other side; this matter is more fully discussed in Chapter VII.

traffic. Under the agreement claims for wage increases were dealt with through the normal negotiating machinery (and, in addition, the Tribunals constituted in accordance with S.R. & O. 1305), and settlements were authorized by the Ministry of Transport through the Railway Executive Committee. Up to 1947 the movement of wages bore little relation to the level of fares; since it was thought expedient to maintain the 1940 level of fares on London Transport as part of the national policy of stabilizing the cost of living. The attempt of 1947 to relate costs and revenues is already out of date, but the rise in earnings due to increasing travel by London's population, has offset the rise in costs.

Since January 1st, 1948 the financial supervision of the Railway Executive Committee has ceased, and London Transport has become one of the constituent undertakings of the British Transport Commission, which is under an obligation to treat all the business carried on by it 'as one undertaking'.¹ Since then, moreover, main line traffic receipts have fallen heavily, and the moral pressure of the government's wages policy has reinforced financial pressure against wage increases. The Commission has not yet brought forward any national scheme for transport charges; and it is too early to judge how it will interpret its obligation to treat the various concerns under its control as one undertaking in relation to fares, to wages and to capital costs in the different sections. It is difficult, therefore, to assess the position to-day. If, however, it should be suggested that direct pressure against wage increases has lessened since 1939, it must be admitted that the figures of the previous section show no grounds for supposing that either London Transport or the unions have misused that circumstance.

One conclusion is worth the attention of the economic planner. At least since 1933, the productivity of London Transport has not increased at as rapid a rate as that of manufacturing industries, or as that of the nation as a whole.² This is to be expected, for manufacturing industry in the U.S.A., as is well known, is far more productive than that of this country, whereas U.S. transport and consumer services are but slightly

¹ Transport Act, 1947, Section 3 (4).

² See Chapter VII.

less expensive in terms of man-hours than our own. There is no reason to suppose that this disparity will not continue;¹ in fact, if current hopes of a rapid increase of productivity in Britain, to a level nearer that of the U.S.A., are realized, it is highly probable that it will increase. If the policy of the White Paper on Personal Incomes is followed, the relative position of passenger transport wages, and of other services, would deteriorate further.² The economic planner must decide whether this is justifiable, or desirable. If more equalitarian views prevail, it must be decided whether the earnings of passenger transport workers are to be maintained on a level with those in manufacturing industry by means of increases in transport charges greater than those of prices in general (thus reversing the trend of recent years) or by means of subsidies. Transport charges are a considerable element in the cost of living, so that there might be grounds for considering the latter method preferable, but its use would contravene the provisions of the Transport Act 1947, which lays down that 'the Commission shall so conduct that undertaking and, subject to the provisions of this Act, levy such fares, rates, tolls, dues and other charges, as to secure that the revenue of the Commission is not less than sufficient for making provision for the meeting of charges properly chargeable to revenue, taking one year with another'.

¹ Such economies as may be expected from co-ordination of transport would tend to reduce the disparity. But such economies would be non-recurring, and the history of London Transport shows that it is easy to over-estimate them.

² Apart from undermanned industries, wage-increases are justified only if the workers' standard of living is below a reasonable minimum, or if his productivity increases. According to the policy proposed by the T.U.C. General Council in December, 1949, only the latter reason is, for a period, to be regarded as sufficient, provided the interim index at retail prices is held within certain limits.

CHAPTER IV

STRIKES

THE most spectacular aspect of labour relations is the strike, and just because it is the most spectacular aspect it is liable to be over-emphasized. London Transport has not been free from strikes, the most important of which was the Coronation Strike of the Central Busmen in 1937, which was one of the largest of British strikes in the thirties. Because of the scale of this strike, and because of the importance of attempting to assess how far public ownership increases or reduces the likelihood of conflict between employer and employed, the story of this dispute, and of the Busmen's Rank and File Movement which led up to it, must be told, at the risk of over-emphasizing this aspect of labour relations, and although the story is as much part of the history of the T. & G.W.U. as of London Transport.

I. THE NATURE OF THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

The Rank and File Movement was in its origin a syndicalist movement, if not in the strict classical tradition of the early C.G.T., of Pelloutier and Griffuelhes, at least in the British tradition of the famous Unofficial Reform Movement among the South Wales miners, of the Clyde Munition Workers in the first World War, and of the railwaymen's Vigilance Committees.¹

The most famous document of the British syndicalist movement is 'The Miners' Next Step'. Almost every paragraph can find its parallel in the files of the *Busman's Punch*. 'The Miners' Next Step'² opens with an attack on the 1902 award of Sir David Dale, and the 1910 agreement, which, it alleged, were the cause of a reduction in the earnings of South Wales miners compared

¹ See *History of Trade Unionism*, S. and B. Webb, Longman's 1920 edition, p. 533, and *The General Strike*, W. H. Crook, University of N. Carolina Press, 1931, pp. 258-60.

² *The Miners' Next Step, being a suggested scheme for the Reorganization of the Federation*. Issued by the Unofficial Reform Committee, Tonypandy, 1912. Mr. Noah Ablett was the leading member of the group which composed it.

with prices and profits. The claim of the *Busman's Punch* was that the 'Speed Agreement' had allowed the Company and its successor, the Board, to increase their takings without increasing their wage-bill. 'The Miners' Next Step' complained of the long delays which resulted from the use of the negotiating machinery, and that the Conciliation Board naturally took the employers' view. *Busman's Punch* became highly critical of delay as the negotiations on the 7-hour day dragged on through 1936 and into 1937, and felt that, in the negotiations between the Executive and the Board, the arguments of the latter received undue consideration.

The wrath of the syndicalist miners was concentrated, in the main, on leadership, not only on the particular leadership of their own Federation, but on the principle of leadership. Leaders, they admitted, might bring efficiency, order, and responsibility, but they inevitably demanded trust, and plenary powers, which 'inevitably lead to corruption', and obstructed solidarity amongst the workers, and 'the use of the legislative power of the workers'. The busmen were highly critical of their union's Executive, and of Mr. Bevin and the other officials. The origin of the Movement in 1932 was the belief that union 'leaders' were negotiating an agreement against the interests of the men. Mr. Papworth claims the 1926 negotiations as the real beginning; then again it was thought that the Central Bus Committee were exceeding their mandate in negotiations; the section's constitution, as we have seen, dates from an incipient revolt against leadership.

The Busmen also attacked the principle of leadership, as did the Miners. An article entitled 'Against Permanent Officials'¹ tells us

'If you lay down these two rules:

1. Limited time of office.
2. Wages not to exceed those of the men they represent,

then you would eliminate the parasite place-seeking official.' The second rule is a time-honoured proposal of left-wing unionists, designed to give officials a direct interest in wage-increases.

¹ *Busman's Punch*, No. 7, May, 1933.

A later contributor¹ says:

If the permanent union officials had to go to a ballot of the members every year or two years, like the local Branch Officials do, would they dare to consistently oppose the wishes of their members? Of course they would *not*.

'The Miners' Next Step' set itself to devise a constitution which would make the leaders servants and the workers 'bosses'. The busmen argued for no such radical overhaul, partly because the Movement's leaders soon became the Central Bus Committee, and partly because some of the items on the miners' programme—rule by delegate conference, and a 'lay' committee—were already incorporated in the section's constitution (the Busman could hardly attack the constitutional powers of the Executive of the union over the section, without laying themselves open to the charge, which they sought to avoid, of desiring a break-away), but they did demand a common conference and negotiating machinery² for the whole of the union's members employed by the Board, to increase solidarity and 'the legislative power of the workers', and, again with the Miners, to convert sectional disputes into disputes of the whole industry.

The final chapter of 'The Miners' Next Step' lays down the long-term programme. Nationalization was represented as tyranny, as the last resort of the owner against the reduction of profits by militant action to increase wages. In its place a policy of eliminating the owner by a series of strikes which would ruin him, and leave the industry to the worker and to 'democratic control', was presented. To the *Busman's Punch* the Board was state capitalism', a tyranny, and scant respect was paid to the financial obligations of the Board; the object of militant action was to reduce profits; although there was little direct propaganda for 'workers' control'.

Another objective of the Unofficial Reform Movement in South Wales was the elimination of non-unionism.³ The Rank and File Movement also worked for '100% unionism' (the 'closed shop' being barred to them under the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act,⁴ as employees of a public authority), and in

¹ No. 32, June, 1935.

² No. 22, August, 1934.

³ This was one of the issues in the famous South Wales coal strike of 1915, which was proclaimed under the Munitions Act. See *Labour in the Coal Mining Industry (1914-21)* Cole, O.U.P., 1923.

⁴ Clause 6 (1).

January 1935,¹ under their influence, the quarterly delegate conference decided to call a 'fleet stand-down' over a non-union conductor at Norwood Garage. This was averted at the eleventh hour when the man joined the union. This particular demand is not, of course, confined to syndicalists, but they have been among the foremost in demanding 'militant action' to enforce the 'closed shop'.

The Movement was not, however, pure syndicalism. As soon as its leaders became the official leaders of the section, they saw the problems of leadership from a different angle. On July 26th, 1935, Windsor and Slough Green Line garages, in the Country Area, went on strike over insufficient rest days and speed in general, and the timing of a particular route. The Board refused to negotiate until the men returned. Next day two more Green Line garages and some Country Bus garages came out in sympathy. Mr. Bevin issued a statement attributing the trouble to 'unauthorized and irresponsible persons not connected with the industry at all but with the Minority Movement and the Communist Party'.² By Sunday 28th, nearly 3,000 men were on strike, and twenty-four out of thirty-three Green Line garages were closed. The Slough strikers issued a statement complaining that they were 'the victims of a soulless machine and a dictator's policy'.³ The strike collapsed on the Sunday evening, largely because Messrs. Snelling and Papworth, after a meeting with full-time union officials, went to Slough, not as Central Bus Committee members, for it was outside their province, but as Rank and File representatives, and advised a return to work in order that negotiations might proceed. They were accused of 'cold feet' and resigned from the Rank and File Committee. The movement could not afford to lose its two most prominent leaders, and at its September meeting the Committee resolved that it was

of the opinion that Brothers Papworth and Snelling acted in good faith in the attitude they took up in the Slough Green Line dispute

and persuaded them to withdraw their resignations.⁴

To lead a movement against leadership is indeed a difficult task.

¹ *Busman's Punch*, No. 28, 1935.

³ *The Times*, July 29th, 1935.

² *The Times*, July 27th, 1935.

⁴ *Busman's Punch*, No. 36, October 1935.

The 7-hour day negotiations brought further trouble for the Movement's leaders. An anonymous letter¹ asked why, in the face of the declared policy of the Movement, only eight delegates, none of them Rank and File members, had voted in favour of strike action for the 7-hour day. 'Will you tell us why the R. & F. sold the Busmen?' In reply Mr. Payne said that the Rank and File delegates 'used their influence to prevent an unofficial dispute; their concern being to bring about unity in the Section, with the support of the Central Bus Committee and the Executive Committee behind them'. In February 1937, two months before the Coronation Strike, Payne and Jones contributed 'Are We Going Wrong?'²:

The Movement, in our opinion, is losing its grip on the seven-hour day position, and, as an agitational and propaganda body, failing in its object.

During these last few months doubt and uncertainty has crept into our ranks . . .

We are convinced the membership is still ready and prepared to follow a clear line and bold leadership . . .

After twelve months of talk and investigation . . . we find ourselves challenged by the Board by their 'lousy' proposals, while we find uncertainty and doubt as to the future line of the Central Bus Committee . . .

We as individual members of the Movement will at the coming meetings demand that the Movement give this militant lead. We demand that we get back to the spirit of 1932 . . .

Mr. Bevin always argued that the Movement was under the domination of the Communists and the Minority Movement. Communists had been in the Movement since its inception, and its activities had received the support of the party and the *Daily Worker*. The Communists claimed more. In his speech to the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in August 1935,³ Mr. J. R. Campbell explained how the British Communist Party had changed its method of work in trade unions. It had early in 1932 abandoned the Minority Movement as an organization which 'appeared as a body outside the trade unions, dictating to the trade unions as to what they ought to do' and 'as an alternative apparatus to that of the unions. This

¹ *Busman's Punch*, No. 44, June, 1936.

² No. 52.

³ *The Communist International*, Vol. XII, No. 16.

enabled the officials to raise the question of loyalty . . . ' and 'to isolate the militant workers'. Since then, however,

We worked to conquer the lower organs of the unions to a militant policy . . . We have in a number of unions developed rank-and-file movements . . . The new rank-and-file movement is a grouping of militant branches and shop stewards springing out of the growing life of the unions themselves and expressing all the militant and progressive tendencies of the rank-and-file.

The rank and file movements were more flexible than the Minority Movement, and 'because they grow up from within the unions' less vulnerable to 'expulsion tactics'.

It seems probable, however, that both Mr. Bevin and Mr. Campbell had overestimated the importance of Communist influence amongst the busmen. We have seen that the majority of the leaders of the Movement claimed that they were not members of the Party. The *Busman's Punch* was never tired of denying the charge of Communist domination. Its editorial of May 1933¹ claims that:

The statement is made that the movement is dominated by Communists and that its policy is that of the Communist Party. This is definitely untrue and is known by the people making this statement to be untrue . . .'

Since this domination was admitted by the accusers to be secret, it is naturally difficult to gauge its importance, but even now, long after the event, leaders who have since joined the Communist Party, and therefore have no interest in belittling it, deny that the party was then more than a close ally—and an ally may, of course, try to influence policy. The policy of the Movement towards the Spanish conflict, the Soviet Union, and Communist affiliation to the Labour Party, may well have been dictated by the Communists, but its industrial policy was the result, in the main, of influences working within the territory of the Board and the T. & G.W.U. Mr. Bevin has always, as for instance in the 'Barking Clock' dispute,² shown a tendency to see Communist influence in any opposition to himself, and Communists are not famed for their modesty.

Certainly there can be no doubt of the popularity of the Movement among the busmen, to which the continued electoral success of its leaders in relatively heavy ballots, and the support which they received after the Movement was broken, testify.

¹ No. 7.

² p. 35.

2. 1933-1936

The Movement, as we have seen, achieved considerable results during its first year. In the elections at the end of 1933, the Southern District returned Papworth and Snelling, the Eastern District Hayward and Ware, the Western District re-elected Sharkey, and returned with him a busman not actively associated with the Movement, Mr. Higgs. This committee was re-elected in 1935 and remained in office until its removal after the Coronation Strike. At the same time Papworth was elected top of the poll as one of the two area representatives on the union's Executive. Payne came fourth in the poll.

The organization of the Rank and File Committee remained loose. Delegates from affiliated branches met monthly; an organizing committee and an editorial committee, elected by them carried on the work. The officers of the Committee were:

Chairman:	Frank Snelling
Vice-Chairman:	Bernard Sharkey
Organizer:	A. F. Papworth
Treasurer:	W. Payne
Correspondence Secretary:	J. W. Jones.

Finances were difficult: affiliation fees were not always forthcoming, and could not be too rigorously collected. According to the *Busman's Punch* 'all work done in this Movement is entirely voluntary, our only expense being the publication of this paper'.¹ Socials were arranged to raise funds.

At the meeting of the Committee to which Papworth and Snelling tendered their resignations after the Green Line dispute, J. W. Jones introduced a series of resolutions to tighten up the organization;² and they were carried. Only affiliated branches could vote at committee meetings, at which they were entitled to six delegates, but only one vote. The organizing committee was to have one member from each affiliated branch. The full committee only was to elect the editorial committee, though the latter, and the Organizing Committee, were granted powers of co-option. The Correspondence Secretary was empowered to call a meeting of the organizing committee if a strike was

¹ *Busman's Punch*, No. 24, October, 1934.

² *Busman's Punch*, No. 35, September, 1935.

impending. Finally no member was to make a public statement on questions of policy affecting the movement in relation to any dispute until policy was declared by the organizing committee thus summoned. The dangers of leadership were in this way to be warded off.

At first the Movement lived mainly for strikes, and by strikes it achieved notoriety. As soon as a difference arose a vote of the interested branch or branches was sought. If the matter was settled before a strike took place, it was a 'victory for militant action'; if not, it made possible an even greater display of militancy. These strikes were all small affairs, lasting only a few days at the most, and bringing out only a few thousand men; but transport strikes create the maximum disturbance on the first day, before the public or the authorities can arrange any alternative form of transport, and passenger transport strikes affect more people than perhaps any other stoppage, and have good news value. Schedules provided the matter for most of these disputes. The Board issued warnings, severe warnings, threatened dismissals, said that 'this can no longer be tolerated', and pointed out that they were trying to do their best for their staff.

The Board have attempted within the limit of their resources to deal fairly with the staff. As already mentioned in the Report, improvement in the rates of pay and conditions of services have been effected during the year . . . The Board hopes that the Trade Unions concerned and the staff themselves appreciate the action which has been taken, and they rely upon the continued co-operation of the staff in the consolidation and advancement of the undertaking, based upon a loyal and willing partnership between themselves and the staff for the discharge of the duties placed upon the Board by Parliament.¹

The Board have publicly stated that they expect their employees to observe their agreements with the Board, and to use the machinery for settling disputes which has been set up with their assent and concurrence; and that these stoppages made in direct violation of the established procedure for settling differences are a direct challenge to constitutional methods and must be resisted in the interests of the staff and of the public.²

The union also threatened strikers, and pleaded the services of the union to its members.³ The union, however, could not be so strong in its protests as the Board, for the threat of unofficial strikes is frequently a useful counter in negotiations. In presenting

¹ Annual Report, 1936.

² Annual Report, 1935.

³ For example, in an article by Bevin in *The Record*, December, 1933.

his case to the Court of Inquiry which sat on the Coronation Strike, Mr. Bevin claimed that, especially since the Board took over, there had been difficulty over schedules due to the official on the spot being bound by a narrow estimate of costs fixed in advance, which only a threat of strike action could alter. Mr. J. J. Mills, the London District Secretary for the Busmen, later gave evidence to the Court on this point.

It was his duty to intervene when matters in dispute could not be settled either by the local officer or by the schedules officer, and it was his experience that when acute difficulties arose and he made reasonable proposals for easement he was frequently turned down until the men threatened to strike; then what he had suggested was secured. That had happened at Hammersmith, Forest Gate, Barking, Mortlake and Hanwell and elsewhere in the last two or three years.¹

Mr. Pick, replying for the Board, took the view that a policy of attrition had been followed by the men, and that the Board had done everything in their power to ease the hardships involved in schedule alteration.

There were other causes of dispute. Although employees of Tillings and of the L.G.O.C. were subject to the same agreement with the union, Tillings had interpreted the document less leniently than the L.G.O.C. in a number of respects, for instance, disciplinary procedure. The ex-Tillings' employees demanded a common interpretation, and, not satisfied that the Board's offer provided the desired change quickly enough, threatened a strike. The Board offered further concessions, but before the common interpretation could be fully implemented, there was a short strike over the matter at Bromley.²

In June 1935 Nunhead Garage struck over the disciplinary action taken five months before by the Board, against a driver and conductor who had failed to report an accident of which they denied all knowledge. The penalties were twice reduced on appeal, but the branch made further protests, and a retrial was granted. At this retrial no decision was reached, and the branch, claiming that this constituted further delay, in breach of promises made by the Board, went on strike. Other garages came out in support until *The Times* reported 5,000 on strike. The Bus Committee leaders and Mr. Harold Clay, the National Secretary

¹ Report of the 1937 Court of Inquiry in *The Record* for May 1937.

² *Busman's Punch*, No. 24, October 1934.

for the Passenger Transport Section, returned by 'plane from the union's biennial conference at the Isle of Man, and arranged an evening conference at the union's headquarters, immediately prior to midnight garage and depot meetings which might well have voted to stop both bus and tram services completely. At midnight Mr. Clay and the Committee met the Board, whose Disciplinary Board had that day withdrawn the charge against the driver, and reduced the conductor's penalty to a final caution; the union representatives persuaded the Board to agree to a suspension of action, an overhaul of disciplinary machinery, and payment for time lost by the men. The Bus Committee received congratulations from the section and a number of unions and other bodies throughout the country. The Board were hardly to be congratulated on their part in the affair.¹

The Movement found local disputes easily fomented, and petty concessions easily gained, but that was hardly sufficient to justify its claim to 'have taken the place of the engineers in the leadership of the Trade Union Movement'.² From its origin it had a long-term policy—the achievement of the 7-hour day—demanded first during the 1928 negotiations, and then, along with the ending of spreadovers and the abolition of standing passengers, in one of the Trafalgar Square meetings of 1932.³ The Movement had stuck to this claim, and the claim, it may be said, had stuck to the Movement. From the first issue of the *Busman's Punch* editorials had coupled attacks on 'speed' with the demand for a 7-hour day as the solution, and this was reiterated on almost every occasion that there was no chance of reporting that 'Rank and File Unity Wins Again'. This demand was associated with complaints of bad health; of an abnormal incidence of gastric disorders amongst busmen, due to schedules, irregular meals and traffic conditions; of the need for excessive use of patent medicines; and of suffering from petrol fumes in the garages, and on the vehicles. Before the 1937 Court of Inquiry, Mr. Bevin stated that he had gathered material during the 1928 negotiations on busmen's health, and had asked for a joint inquiry, 'and I must confess that the approach made by the officers of the company seemed to me to prove that I was wrong, rather than an attempt to see

¹ *The Times*, July 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 1935; *Busman's Punch*, No. 33, July, 1935.

² *Busman's Punch*, No. 26, December 1934. ³ *Daily Worker*, September 5th, 1932.

what the problem was'. In 1935 Lord Dawson of Penn, the Board's medical adviser, had investigated busmen's blood-pressure in various centres. The union had borne part of the expense, and had voted £1,000 for research by the Industrial Health Board, through which it was hoped to establish a *prima facie* case on carbon monoxide poisoning.¹

The Rank and File Movement might have decided to call a large-scale unofficial strike to press for this demand. The dangers of that course were clear; the dispute might well be prolonged, and would require a turn-out of at least the whole Central Bus Fleet, which the Movement, by itself, never managed to achieve. Having captured the Bus Committee, and finding sympathy for health complaints from the union leadership, the Committee decided to pursue their claim by official means. This brought delay, for the old agreement had its course to run; it was not until the end of 1934 that the second instalment of pay under the 'Speed Agreement' was granted, through 'pressure from the Branches',² and the Union Executive had to consider its claims with regard to the other sections of its members employed by the Board, on the trams and trolleys, and in the Country Area, and arrange its demands in some order of priority, and had considerable difficulty in bringing the Board to negotiate at all. The latter considered the busmen the most favoured section, and were not prepared to listen to claims on their behalf. They wanted the union to give an undertaking not to press such a claim before making any settlement with regard to the other sections—an undertaking which the union would not give. It was not until May 1936 that a joint committee of busmen and Board was set up, the Board agreeing to participate, but re-affirming its refusal to consider a reduction of hours. This committee continued to sit fairly regularly for six months. In November it was at last agreed to enter into definite negotiations for a new agreement by February 1st, 1937, and these negotiations were proceeding at the end of the year, the Board remaining obdurate on the matter of hours.

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The Movement also sought, from the start, to extend its

¹ Report of the Court of Inquiry in the *Record*, May, 1937.

² *Busman's Punch*, No. 27, January 1935.

influence. At first its objective was a T.O.T. Movement (Trains, Omnibuses, Trams). An attempt was made to call the sections together at the inception of the Board. In July 1934 a T.O.T. Conference was organized. Representatives of thirty-one bus and tram branches, and of five railway union branches attended. To the bus demands were added: a demand for busmen's rates of pay for tramwaymen, improved holidays all round and better rest day arrangements. A paragraph relating to rail employees' demands was withdrawn, the railwaymen present promising to draft another after consultation with their colleagues. A joint campaign was planned, and a T.O.T. Anti-Fascist Movement inaugurated.¹

Little further was heard of the Railwaymen. In March of that year the London District Council of the N.U.R. had threatened a strike over the suspension of a man for an error in his log book. The N.U.R. Executive had issued a stern warning, reminding the Council that it alone had power to authorize a strike, and after negotiation the man was reinstated.² The railway unions concentrated on their demand for restoration of the 1932 cuts, which came in 1936.

There was more scope for the Movement among the tramwaymen, for they, to some extent, shared the irritation of schedule changes. They also had a reasonable claim for rates of pay equal to those of the bus conductor (the bus driver's job being fairly regarded as more arduous), and at this time had their peace of mind disturbed by the introduction of trolley-buses. A trolley-bus is cheaper to run and more pleasant for the passenger than a tram, and the tramwaymen were not opposed to their introduction. They wanted to ensure their transfer to the operation of the new vehicles, to which all parties were agreeable, and they were worried about the rates of pay for the trolley-bus staff. The Board argued that trolley-busmen had been treated as tramwaymen wherever the vehicles had been introduced in the provinces; they used the same depots, operated on the old tramway routes; and therefore they were to be treated and paid as tramwaymen in London. The busmen were apprehensive of the trolley; it might prove a better vehicle than the petrol bus; with lower rates of

¹ *Busman's Punch*, August, 1934, No. 22.

² *The Times*, March 29th and March 31st, 1934.

pay it might undercut their position; and to avoid that they demanded bus rates for trolley-bus workers. Thus the tramwaymen, who would all be transferred in the end, would make sure of achieving bus rates in the long run through transference. The union agreed with the Board; if the trolleys carried bus rates, the remnants of the declining trams section would be left behind for as long as the tram survived; assimilate the new, and more economical, vehicle, to the tram section, and the whole section would have an argument, in increased takings, and in changed traffic conditions, for levelling up to the bus rates. The tramwaymen, after some heart searching, took the Executive's line on the issue, and, although the demand for common rates all round could still be made, there remained suspicion between the two sections.

At the end of 1934 the attempt to impose common conditions of service on the tramwaymen from the various undertakings, in a manner agreed between the Board and the Trams' Council, had to be temporarily withdrawn as a result of the opposition of the men. *Busman's Punch* claimed a victory.¹ *The Record*² argued short-sightedness: 'if improvement is to be effected . . . there must be a common basis from which we can all start'.

At first tram branches were encouraged to affiliate to the Rank and File Committee, without great success. In 1934 the Eastern District Committee of the trams section came forward for a time as the 'rank and file committee for the trams'.³ In 1935, while negotiations on a new agreement for the section were proceeding slowly, and the men becoming restive, the 'Justice For London's Tramwaymen Committee', with one representative from each branch, managed to bring twenty-one representatives together. The claim was for an increase of 7s. 6d. The Board offered 2s. at once, 2s. a year later, provided that no further claim would be made on behalf of the tramwaymen before November 1937, and agreed, in principle, that tram and trolley wages should eventually be brought up to those of bus conductors. This offer was at first rejected by the majority of the branches and the Trams' Council. The Executive judged that it was the best that could be got and advised acceptance, with an undertaking

¹ *Busman's Punch*, No. 25, November, 1934.

² *The Record*, October, 1934.

³ *Busman's Punch*, No. 17, March, 1934.

on the Board's part that the change-over to trolley-buses should cause no unemployment, and that the agreement should be followed by a revision of conditions of service. The Trams' Council agreed, and thus laid themselves open to the charge of disregarding the wishes of their members, and of unconstitutional action, on which the new Committee thrived for a few months.¹

In March 1936, it tried its hand at 'direct action'. On the 9th Streatham and Clapham depots struck on a question of meal reliefs for those working tramcars which ran late. The decision was taken by a large majority, and the 'Justice for London's Tramwaymen Committee' met at once to issue a call for sympathetic action. On the following day only two more depots had followed—I,000 men in all—and after union officials had addressed a meeting of the men, and the Board had issued threats of dismissal, the strike fizzled out.

It was arranged by a body calling itself 'The Justice For London Tramwaymen's Committee' . . . This . . . Committee consists of 27 men drawn from as many depots. They act together. In the present case they fixed on Streatham and Clapham as depots at which a strike could be engineered under the leadership of the men's local officials, and they counted upon arousing enough sympathy to induce men at other depots to join them. It was this Committee of 27 which met at Streatham on Tuesday night and carried the resolution for a general strike of London tramwaymen in the hope that the resolution might have weight with meetings that had been hastily summoned for a late hour at three or four other South London depots, and influence them also to carry strike decisions . . . A few members acting in this way can make nonsense of the union's undertakings. A midnight meeting may be attended by comparatively few men but if they carry a strike resolution and post pickets, they may, without much difficulty, arrange a one-day local strike. A skeleton organization of energetic men may succeed another time . . .²

But another time did not come. A brief schedules dispute at Fulwell trolley-bus depot on April 9th did not spread. No more was heard of the Committee after this fiasco. Its chances of an electoral victory in the section had gone, and in the following October the second instalment of the pay increase was granted, and followed in November by a full and favourable revision of conditions of work.

Country Buses and Coaches had always been well reported

¹ *Busman's Punch*, Nos. 38 and 41, December 1935 and March 1936; *The Record*, December 1935, March 1936.

² *The Times*, March 10th, 11th, 12th, 1936.

in the *Busman's Punch*. The staff there also had their grievances over unification of pay and conditions, and in the summer of 1935, when Romford struck over a schedule grievance on July 11th,¹ and was soon followed by the large-scale Green Line strike already described,² the Movement seemed to be making headway. The action of Papworth and Snelling, however, decreased its popularity. The Board later agreed to two increases of 2s., in January and in October, 1936, for Country Bus and Coach conductors; the Board was losing money on these services, but agreed to anticipate an expected rise in earnings. The distance between the country garages, and the fact that the branches in that area were at that time organized in a different area of the union (No. 2) from the London men in Area No. 1 made official control easier, and organization by the Movement more difficult. It is interesting to note that the few coach branches represented on the Rank and File Committee were opposed to the incorporation of their section into Area No. 1, a change desired by the Committee as part of their programme for unified negotiations, and arranged by the union in January 1938.³ A minor stoppage at Slough was the last of 'militant action' in that section for some time.

The Movement was isolated, and this isolation was increased during 1936 as the Busmen concentrated their attention on the one objective—the 7-hour day—which was accepted by the union as official policy, but for their section alone.

The last attempt to find allies was in the provinces, where there were signs of movement amongst company-employed busmen.⁴ Unrest in the provinces was in the main the result of the growing control of three large combines, in which the railway companies, Tillings, British Electric Traction and Scottish Motor Traction were the controlling interests. Many of the companies which were taken over were paternalistic, easy-going little companies, and the new owners introduced methods of rationalization,

¹ *The Times*, July 12th, 1935. ² p. 106. ³ *Busman's Punch*, No. 43, May 1936.

⁴ The direction of the Movement's affections can be gauged from the title of their paper. No. 36, October 1935, was also printed as *Tram and Bus Punch: Tram Edition of the Busman's Punch*. The next number came out, in a brief flirtation, as the *Cabman's Punch*, and in December there was a return to the *Tram and Bus Punch*. The edition of September 1936 (No. 47) also appeared as No. 1 Provincial with a separate editorial, and the issue continued until the end of the year. It was hoped 'to strengthen trade union organization and create an additional bond of unity between all members of the passenger section'. [Provincial Edition, No. 1.]

which were opposed by the men, who turned, in many cases for the first time, to union organization for protection. The union, however, was pursuing its own long-term policy; it was seeking to establish negotiating rights with the companies concerned on what terms were obtainable as a step to achieving a national negotiating body for provincial busmen. In December 1935 a National Municipal Omnibus Agreement was signed as a step towards the transformation of the old National Joint Industrial Council for the Tramway Industry into the National J.I.C. for the Road Passenger Transport Industry,¹ and high hopes were entertained of similar success with the company undertakings.² The union thus took a high-minded attitude to minor disputes. With reference to one that arose in the United Omnibus Company over the conversion of weekly to hourly rate, *The Record* wrote:³

There has been considerable ferment in large sections of the omnibus industry during the past few weeks, due to speeded schedules and increased traffic, but for each branch to act as if it were vested with Executive powers is the way to anarchy and disruption . . . The Executive . . . has responsibilities to discharge. It must see that agreements which the union has entered into are carried out by the employers. Inversely (*sic*!) it must also be prepared to honour the agreements to which it is a party.

Communist influence was divined. In this dispute

statements were made by men not employed on the undertaking that had no relation to the facts of the case, and without any regard for truth and accuracy; their only concern was to throw discredit upon the Union and those in positions of responsibility.

But provincial busmen did not always take the long view, and during 1936 there was a crop of unofficial strikes, sometimes in protest against agreements negotiated by the union. A Northampton striker wrote:

When the union officials assured us that this was all the company could afford to pay and all we had a right to expect, we began to wonder whose side they were on, to say the least of it . . . I don't know how we got into this mess. The men blamed the union officials, the officials said that if we did not know about this agreement it was our fault. As no one was prepared to hold

¹ Set up on May 6th, 1937.

² Finally achieved in June 1940 as the 'National Council for the Omnibus Industry' (excluding Municipal and L.P.T.B.).

³ *The Record*, August, 1935.

the baby, it was decided to disown the damn thing altogether and get in a spot of direct action—in short, to go on strike.¹

Here were spirits kindred to the London busmen.

In September 1936, the Committee made an attempt to draw the craft unions, along with their own inside staff, into the 7-hour demands. These unions, not being subject to the T. & G.W.U. Executive, might have brought further sections *officially* behind the demand. Chiswick Works, after some years of quiet, had had two disputes in the previous two months; first over the dismissal of a bodymaker in the Coach Section for 'indifference to job', (on a threat of a stoppage of the whole works, N.U.V.B. officials secured his reinstatement); and secondly, a strike of the same coach section in favour of 100% unionism, which achieved its object.² Representatives of craftsmen in the garages and depots and in bus, tram and railway workshops attended a conference; all but the Chiswick coach section voted in favour of the forty-hour week, a motion later supported by the various power station staffs. No union executives were, however, won over, and the matter was dropped. For a few issues Chiswick's problems were reported.

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As the Movement concentrated on its official demand, its leaders regarded unofficial disputes in their own section with less favour. On October 7th, 1936, a strike started at Chalk Farm and Nunhead garages over an alteration in a route common to both garages. By the evening over 2,000 men were out, South London garages having joined in. On this occasion the Central Bus Committee persuaded all the garages, except Plumstead, to return, after the Board had issued their usual warning. Plumstead branch stayed out, putting forward their own grievances, and were only coaxed back by a promise of priority in the consideration of these. Sidcup voted a withdrawal of labour for the 14th, but a member called the branch's attention to a recent resolution of the delegate conference, that all branches considering drastic action should first consult the Bus Committee. This was done,

¹ *Busmen on Strike. A vivid account of the United Counties Bus Strike, written by a striker.* Fred Marsh. Modern Books, 1936.

² *Busman's Punch*, No. 46, August, and No. 47, September, 1936.

and the Committee managed to settle some of the branch's grievances in the men's favour.¹

3. THE CORONATION STRIKE

In early 1937 the negotiations between the Board and the union dragged on over the appointed day. The Executive reduced the demand to one for a 7½-hour day, the Bus Committee, now committed to official action, sanctioned the change, and a delegate conference supported them. The Board still refused to discuss a reduction in hours. On March 31st one month's notice was given to the Board, the necessary period having been reduced from three months by agreement at the beginning of the negotiations. Meetings continued; on April 23rd the Board finally refused to entertain a proposal for a reduction of hours, and asked that the matter should be held over until June, after the Coronation.² On the following day a delegate conference refused to postpone the notices, and the Minister of Labour asked both parties to meet at the Ministry on the 26th. This meeting was duly held under the chairmanship of Mr. F. W. Leggett, who saw both parties again on the 28th. On the following day the union Executive empowered the delegate conference of the Central Bus Section to take control, and the failure of the Ministry to effect an agreement was announced. The notices expired at midnight on April 30th. At last the Movement was given its head.

Meanwhile the provincial busmen had acted. Disputes had continued throughout the winter, reported and occasionally visited by the London busmen. On April 14th employees of the Maidstone and District Motor Services Ltd. staged a 'lightning' strike in support of their demands for better conditions, at Tunbridge Wells and other Kent depots. The next day several more Kent depots joined them; a conference at Transport House to which delegates were summoned failed to agree on a return. The union, which had approved the conditions, refused to recog-

¹ *The Times*, October 8th and 9th, 1936. *Busman's Punch*, No. 49, November 1936.

² Some participants in the events of this period confidently assert that the strike was arranged to coincide with the Coronation. The union strongly denied it. The truth cannot be determined. Blame hardly attaches to continuing to negotiate for so long, and further delay would almost certainly have led to a revolt of the section.

nize the strike, but the men decided to stay out, and meetings of busmen in various parts of the country asked the union to recognize the dispute. On April 20th Sussex and Essex men struck, along with Luton Corporation busmen, who stated they were acting in pursuit of their own claims. They were followed the next day by Bedford's Eastern National employees. Cambridge and Norwich men came out next, a few days later Oxford and Northampton joined them, and on May 3rd some East Yorkshire employees came out. After appealing to the union to convene a conference, the strikers called delegates of all provincial company employees to Chelmsford on April 28th, where a common programme was elaborated, and hopefully sent to the Executive for presentation to the employers; threats were made of an extension of the strike to 20,000 more busmen unless the demands were granted.

It seemed that the Movement's latest search for allies had been successful, but in fact no profit accrued to the Central Busmen. The union refused to recognize the provincial strikes. Mr. Bevin insisted upon the honouring of agreements, and offered only the discussion of grievances pending the termination of agreements, should the men return to work. The two disputes were kept quite distinct. The provincial strikers, after a weakening at Chelmsford, moved their headquarters to Oxford, and soon afterwards requested a meeting with union officials. This request was granted, and after a long meeting on May 5th between Mr. Harold Clay and delegates from the centres of the strike, it was agreed that the union should arrange a collective return on the basis of no victimization, resumption of local negotiations, and immediate negotiations for national agreements on conditions. The last allies were lost.

On May 1st the London busmen turned out to a man, and the Minister of Labour appointed a Court of Inquiry under the Industrial Court Act of 1919, to investigate the dispute, with Mr. John Forster as Chairman, Mr. Basil Sanderson, and Sir Arthur Pugh. Hearings began on the following day. Mr. Bevin, a tried advocate before such courts, stated the case of the men. He denied that the dispute was timed for the Coronation, or that the dispute was intended to influence Parliament to review the

financial provisions of the London Passenger Transport Act.¹ He gave an account of the history of the claim, and of the 'Speed Agreement'. He detailed the difficulties of bus operation, and the irritation caused by nicely calculated schedules. He sought to show that the Board had never seriously considered a reduction of hours, as indeed it had not, and that its railway employees already enjoyed a 7½-hour day, since their 8 hours included a half-hour meal break. The core of his case, however, was the claim that the conditions of their work had a bad effect on the busmen's health, on which he enlarged, and gave an account of the attempts of the union to investigate the matter; he had not been permitted to see the results of Lord Dawson's investigation, and the Industrial Health Research Board had not finished their inquiry. With regard to the costs of the reduction of hours, which was the Board's main objection, he argued that the Board's policy was that the other sections should pay their way; there was sufficient return on the buses to pay the concession; and he argued that the Board's estimates of the cost of such changes were invariably exaggerated.

On the second day Mr. Bevin called witnesses, in particular medical witnesses, who could give evidence of their experience of the treatment of busmen. These three doctors could speak at length on the nervous disorders of their busmen patients, but they were unable to give figures of the incidence of such disorders amongst bus workers and comparable sections of the population.

On the third day Mr. Pick called his witnesses, questioned many of Mr. Bevin's assertions, and the relevance of the medical evidence; and on the fourth, he summed up his case, still basing it upon the inability of the Board, within its financial limitations, to meet the cost (estimated at £500,000). In his summing up Mr. Bevin, harking back to his presentation of the dockers' case in 1919, poured scorn on the application of statistics to human problems.

If the Board were going to run a great human family by a mind that operated on a process of slide rule, then they would never get an appreciation of the men's difficulties.²

¹ The latter disavowal was a reference to the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act, Clause 1 (1) where an illegal strike is defined as one which '(1) has an object other than or in addition to the furtherance of a trade dispute within the trade or industry in which the strikers are engaged; and (2) is a strike designed or calculated to coerce the Government either directly or by inflicting hardship upon the community'.

² Quoted in *The Times*, May 7th, 1937.

He asked the Court not to come to a decision 'based purely on the mundane consideration of the statistical basis'.¹

The Court issued an interim report² on the same day, which recommended that negotiations should proceed at once to alleviate hardship caused by schedules within the 1932 agreement which had yet operated 'somewhat onerously on the men'.

As regards the claim for a seven-and-a-half hour day, which is based fundamentally on the grounds of injury to health, the evidence placed before us is inconclusive. Nevertheless we are of the opinion that a *prima facie* case has been made out for further investigation by a properly qualified body specially constituted to deal forthwith with this important matter.

Should such a body find that the complaints as to injury to health made upon behalf of the men are substantiated, then, in our judgement, immediate and appropriate steps should be taken, either by reduction of hours and/or by such other measures as may be agreed, to meet the position.

We recognize that any recommendation under this head must inevitably place an increased liability upon the Transport Board; but should satisfactory proof of the need for remedy be forthcoming, we cannot but think that the Transport Board would be assured of the goodwill of the public when budgeting for any extra cost involved.

Meanwhile the tramwaymen had shown signs of a desire to join in the dispute, provided that they were associated with the claim for the 7½-hour day. This proposal had been discussed at a meeting of the Area Passenger Group, on which both sections were represented, prior to the dispute. Later there was considerable disagreement between the busmen and the union Executive about this meeting, the Executive claiming that the busmen had refused to allow tramwaymen to join them;³ at least it is clear that, before the strike began, both Executive and Bus Committee were agreed that the tramway agreement had still some months to run, and no claim could therefore be made for the tramwaymen. On May 4th, the tram and trolley-bus section appointed delegates to ask Mr. Bevin for a grant of plenary powers to their section; the trans London Secretary, Mr. Barrett, made it clear that this was to further demands for improvement in their own conditions.⁴ On the next day a delegate conference of the section

¹ *Ibid.* ² Cmd. 5454 of 1937.

³ Mr. Bevin's letter to union members of May 29th, 1937; *Busman's Punch*, No. 57, July, August, September 1937. It must be noted that the Busmen had no authority to allow or to refuse a strike of the tramwaymen.

⁴ *Daily Worker*, May 5th, 1937.

accepted the firm recommendation of the Executive to remain at work, influenced, perhaps, by the announcement that an Interim Report would soon be issued by the Court of Inquiry.

On the publication of the Report, Mr. Leggett interviewed the parties. The Board offered to accept the findings, to negotiate on immediate easements, with resort to arbitration if desired, provided that the question of hours was left until after the proposed inquiry into health, whose findings they undertook to stand by. A delegate conference of the bus section decided to refer this to the branches, who decided to refuse the Board's offer; forty-seven branches were opposed to it, and only three in favour. The Executive met on the 11th to consider the position, and informed the busmen that the Court had established the trade union case that 'health investigations should not be comparative, but in the light of the industry concerned', that the Board had agreed to hold the health inquiry, accept the findings, and had further assured the Executive that if shorter hours were shown to be justified, the costs would be met, and that the basis of immediate negotiations, the Board's offers of April 8th, showed promise of some relief by the reduction of the average time on duty, and revised schedules.

Therefore, looking at the matter without any prejudice and without any desire to influence the members, the Executive Council suggest that this is a 75 to 80 per cent victory, together with the possibility of obtaining better results from the investigation . . .

In concluding their statement the Executive state they are reluctant to see this opportunity thrown away, and with their industrial experience, they seriously suggest that members of the Bus Section should reconsider the whole matter, and reflect whether it is not now wise to authorise the Union to proceed to construct a new agreement and take advantage of all the recommendations and possibilities.¹

This advice was rejected by the busmen's delegate conference by 46 votes to 4, and a vote of the men of 17,459 to 1,776. The temper of the section was not in doubt. On hearing of the decision, Mr. Bevin announced his acceptance, and wished the strikers 'good luck'! Hanwell trams depot and a mass meeting of tramwaymen at Wood Green voted in favour of a sympathetic strike.

The Coronation ceremonies were over. Londoners were

¹ *The Record*, May 1937.

accustoming themselves to other means of transport.¹ It was said that, owing to the crowds of Coronation Week, the buses were best off the streets. The Movement decided that they could not succeed without sympathetic action by the trams and trolley-bus section. On May 16th the busmen held rallies at Hyde Park and Victoria. At the Hyde Park meeting Mr. Papworth declared:

If our comrades in the other sections of the London Transport are to be forced to blackleg the busmen will not tolerate it. We do not blame the tram and tube men, but we blame the policy that has been operating since 1926, the policy of reactionary leadership in the Trade Unions.

Our twenty-six thousand London busmen are not going to stand idle much longer, and if they are not idle their action will not be to drive or conduct buses. Any means we can adopt to call out other sections of London Transport to support us, with the will to win and victory, we shall adopt.

If it means picketing every tram and trolley-bus depot, every country service bus depot, and every tube station, in addition to the Main Line railways, the London busmen will undertake that task.

If it means that we have to throw our bodies across the lines of the London tramway system, we shall throw our bodies across, in hundreds and hundreds.

I do not speak irresponsibly. I speak with the backing of 26,000 men, and with the backing of their wives and children.²

On the 18th a meeting of the London Trams Council heard Mr. Papworth and Mr. Snelling plead for sympathetic action, discussed the strain caused to the tramwaymen by overcrowding due to the strike, and decided to summon an emergency delegate conference on the 20th. The conference rejected by 31-9 a motion for sympathetic action, and resolved unanimously:

That this Conference declares that it is not prepared to extend this strike on unofficial lines.

We pledge ourselves to assist in carrying out any action that the Executive Council desires.³

Since the Executive had refused all along to consider breaking the trams agreement, which could not be terminated until 1938, and then only by six months' notice, this seemed final, but Mr. Papworth, in a statement to the press,⁴ argued that the tramwaymen were prepared to give support if the Executive would

¹ Bus riding is a habit. It took some months for bus revenues to recover to their pre-strike level once work was resumed. (Annual Report, 1937, p. 9.) Possibly the busmen's leaders calculated that the Board would fear that a prolonged strike might have that effect.

² *Daily Worker*, May 17th, 1937.

³ *The Times*, May 21st, 1937.

⁴ *Busman's Punch*, No. 56, June 1937.

call them out, and that the Executive should do this. The Bus Committee submitted a formal request to that effect. The Executive refused. Over £100,000 had now been spent in strike pay.

On the 24th and 25th the busmen's delegates again sat in conference, and finally passed a resolution expressing indignation at the Executive's action, determination to continue the strike, and requesting the Executive to instruct the tramwaymen to prevent overcrowding on their vehicles, and to ask the railway unions to give their members on the tubes similar instructions. This resolution received 40 votes; 9 votes supported an amendment in support of an approach to the Board. The Conference had been addressed by Mr. Bevin.

On the 26th the Executive determined to revoke the grant of plenary powers to the section, met the Board's representatives at the Ministry of Labour, and arranged a return to work for the 28th on terms almost identical to those offered by the Board nearly three weeks earlier. On the same day the Central Bus Committee issued a statement informing members of the refusal of the Executive to extend the strike, of the order for return, and of their own ignorance of the terms. Members were urged in returning to resist 'any attempt to weaken our solidarity as an organized body of workers' and to see 'that you are not robbed of the easement which the Executive Council say they can get', and were thanked for their loyalty in the dispute.¹ This letter was 'unofficial' in that it was not countersigned by Mr. Mills, the section's officer, and one member of the Committee later stated that he had not seen the letter.

On the 28th there was a full resumption of work. The strike was over.

4. THE AFTERMATH

While the new agreement was being negotiated, the Executive started an attack on the Movement. Immediately after the strike Mr. Bevin issued a letter to union members giving the Executive's version of the dispute.² On June 7th the section was informed that, pending an inquiry into the activities of certain members, and their connection with unofficial movements, the functions

¹ *Busman's Punch*, No. 56, June 1937.

² Letter dated May 29th, 1937.

of the Bus Committee, Schedules Sub-Committee, District Committees, Disciplinary Boards Representatives, Delegate Conference, and the Garage Delegates were suspended; meanwhile union officials and branch secretaries were to act.¹ On June 15th a deputation of busmen attended at Transport House to protest to Mr. Bevin; after delay they were seen by the Assistant General Secretary. Mr. Papworth stated: 'In my twenty-one years in the Labour movement I have never seen fascism operated so clearly'.² At the biennial conference in early July, at which fourteen 'rank and filers' represented London busmen, the reference back of the Executive's report was defeated by 269 votes to 63, and a declaration to end Rank and File and similar organizations within the union, to take disciplinary action against members taking part in such organizations, and to render unconstitutional branch resolutions inoperative, was endorsed by 291 votes to 51. On July 13th the Executive adopted a report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee which found outside influences had been at work in the Rank and File Movement, the unofficial provincial dispute, and the conduct of the London dispute by the Bus Committee, and accepted the Committee's recommendations: that the Movement should be branded as subversive, and that strong disciplinary action, including the expulsion of Papworth, Payne and Jones, should be taken against its leaders.³ On the 24th a specially constituted Appeals Committee heard and rejected appeals against these decisions.

The busmen began to fight back. A new Bus Committee, with strictly limited powers, had been elected by district meetings, instead of by ballot of the section. In September, after three meetings, it resigned in protest against the disregard shown to its resolutions by the Executive. A conference, now of three delegates to each garage, upheld this action almost unanimously, and asked the Executive to reconsider the expulsions and to restore the old constitution. A member of the resigned Committee explained that he had accepted office in order to work for the return of the 'true leaders of the busmen' to the Committee.⁴ In November the Executive told a further delegate conference

¹ *Daily Worker*, June 8th, 1937.

² *The Times*, June 16th, 1937.

³ Snelling was at that time in hospital. He was later sentenced to four years' suspension from office.

⁴ *Busman's Punch*, No. 57, July, August and September, 1937.

that the expulsions would stand, but that individual applications for reinstatement might be considered, and in December announced a final inquiry into the disciplinary decisions, to be undertaken by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. A new constitution was agreed, and a new Committee ('all militants'¹) was elected.

The *Busman's Punch* continued irregularly until November 1937, announcing new campaigns, and holding inquests on the dispute. The question of a break-away union was canvassed. The Communists were strongly opposed to such a move, and Mr. Papworth and Mr. Jones, of whom it was soon afterwards announced that they had joined the Communist Party, took the same view. A last meeting of the Rank and File Committee decided, by a small majority, against a break-away. The dissidents determined to go ahead, and in February the National Passenger Workers Union was formed, with Mr. W. J. Brown, the Secretary of the Civil Service Clerical Association, as its Honorary President.² The Central Bus Committee appealed to members to reject the approaches of the new organization, Mr. Bevin described the new organization as a 'flop', and an acrimonious dispute followed between Mr. Bevin and Mr. Brown.³ The Executive of the C.S.C.A. declared their disinterest in the dispute between the T. & G.W.U. and the N.P.W.U., and in their Secretary's spare-time activities. Three of the busmen's leaders, Messrs. Snelling, Payne and Hayward, and eight out of 150 branch officers were reported to have joined the N.P.W.U.

In April the T. & G.W.U. Executive announced to a delegate conference of busmen that the men sentenced to suspension from office would be eligible for office at the next elections (this, of course, did not refer to those who had left the union), and that Mr. Papworth and Mr. Jones would be readmitted on application, if they gave assurances, but debarred from office for four years. The conference accepted, subject to reservations. The assurances were given.

¹ *Daily Worker*, December 29th, 1937.

² Mr. Brown had offered his services to the London busmen immediately after the Coronation Strike.

³ Mr. Bevin stated that he had been approached to organize a break-away from the C.S.C.A. (*The Times*, March 12th, 1938.)

It is impossible to determine whether Mr. Bevin believed that the bus strike could succeed, or whether, trusting in the firmness of the Board, he allowed the strike to go forward (preventing its extension), in order to destroy the movement which had opposed his leadership for so long. Both views are held by participants in the events related above.

The N.P.W.U. counted some few thousand members, mainly London busmen, with some tramwaymen, and a few busmen from the Midlands. It recruited mainly young members, and its centres were in Merton Garage (Mr. Snelling's) and Sutton Garage. It made claims of what it would do if it should win negotiating rights, and, having no negotiating expenses, was able to offer its members unusually generous legal assistance. It claimed to be increasing its influence until the war, when the younger busmen were called up, and its membership thus depleted. It showed a strong propensity to litigation.¹

On the repeal of the 1927 Act, in 1946, there was a wave of demands for the application of the closed shop to employees of local and public authorities. The T. & G.W.U. informed the Board that their members were no longer prepared to work with persons who were not members of the union. The Board, who for three months had maintained twelve New Cross tramwaymen on the pay roll without allowing them to work, owing to the refusal of the rest of the depot's staff to work with them, as N.P.W.U. members, gave the matter their consideration, and on August 26th decided, in order to avoid conflict, to make membership of the recognized union a condition of employment on their road services. The N.P.W.U., which claimed from four to five

¹ In 1942 it carried a case to the Lords (*Moscrop v. L.P.T.B.*). The plaintiff had been refused the right to be represented by his Union official (the Secretary of the N.P.W.U.) at the hearing of an appeal before an L.P.T.B. disciplinary board, a right allowed to T. & G.W.U. members. He sought under the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act, Section 6 (1) ('It shall not be lawful for . . . public authorities . . . to impose any condition of employment whereby those who are or are not members of a trade union are liable to be placed in any respect either directly or indirectly under any disability or disadvantage as compared with other employees.'), to have this privilege extended to himself. His case was not allowed. Before the Appeal Court his counsel changed the terms of the declaration so that the complaint lay against the privilege being granted to T. & G.W.U. members. This was upheld. The Board appealed to the House of Lords, who reversed the decision, saying that they could recall no action in which a plaintiff had sought to deprive others of a right which did not interfere with his liberty or private rights. (*The Record*, February, 1942.)

thousand members on these services (the Board's estimate was two thousand) announced its intention of seeking an injunction against the dismissal of these twelve members, on the grounds that there was an undertaking between the Board and the T. & G.W.U. that men should not be dismissed except for certain reasons, amongst which this was, of course, not included. On September 19th the case was heard, and it was held that the only remedy was an action for damages for breach of contract.¹ The great majority of the members of the N.P.W.U. joined the rival union. Dual membership was not barred, and for some time the union carried on with a small number of members on these terms, but it is now apparently defunct.

On November 5th, 1939, the final report of the committee set up in February 1938 to inquire into the effects of working conditions on the health of London busmen, was published by the Ministry of Labour.² Its finding had been largely anticipated by Dr. Bradford Hill's report of the Industrial Health Research Board's investigation,³ published the previous July. Dr. Hill was a member of the Committee, which included two union officials, two officers of the Board, and two members of the Medical Research Council under the chairmanship of Sir John Forster. The Committee sought to supplement Dr. Hill's comparison of figures of gastric illness, and of sickness in general, among London busmen and tramwaymen, by further comparisons; the report concluded:

(1) There is evidence that, in the years 1933-35, some relative excess of gastric illness was recorded amongst the London omnibus workers at ages up to 49, as compared with the experience either of the London tramway workers or of the London Passenger Transport Board's maintenance workers employed at Chiswick. The level of that excess is only very slightly increased by the substitution of the latter group for the former as the standard of comparison.

(2) We are unable to say whether the level of that excess has changed in recent years. There is a little evidence that some excess existed in the years 1925-26 also, but the data for those years are too defective to provide any accurate measure of it.

¹ *The Times*, September 20th, 1946.

² *The Health of London Busmen*, Ministry of Labour, H.M.S.O., 1939.

³ 'An Investigation into the Sickness Experience of London Transport Workers, with Special Reference to Digestive Disturbances,' by A. Bradford Hill (Industrial Health Board Report, No. 79), H.M.S.O., 1937.

(3) Allowing for the increased age of the operatives it appears from the figures that, between 1931 (the year before the Speed Agreement) and 1938, the general level of sickness—that is from all causes of illness—had not materially changed amongst the omnibus conductors, and has probably slightly improved amongst the drivers. In other words we have no evidence from these figures that the busmen's occupation has become a less healthy one within this period.¹

The Committee examined the conditions of work of the busmen, and noted the improvements under the agreement of June 1937 which reduced the maximum time per duty from 8½ hours to 8 hours, stressing the improvement in terminal time (time spent in turning the bus) and the introduction of stand time (rest at terminals). Possible causes of the excess of gastric illness were examined. The extent to which carbon monoxide poisoning ('fumes') might have effect in this respect could not be determined. Irregular meals were the result of a rota system, introduced and maintained at the men's request. There were some long spells of duty (maximum allowed—6 hours) without a meal relief, but the great majority were under 4 hours. The average week-day duty was found to be made up as follows:

	January 1937		January 1939	
	Hours	Mins.	Hours	Mins.
Bus Running Time	6	0·0	5	53·7
Reporting Time (at garage)		20·0		20·0
Stand Time		{ 31·5 }		29·9
Terminal Time				6·9
Travelling to and from relief point		12·4		12·2
Excess Meal Relief paid for as time worked		10·5		8·7
Building-up time ²		46·9		48·6
Total time paid for per Duty	8	1·3	8	0·0

On the evidence available, no conclusion could be reached on the advisability of a reduction of the working day.

No action was taken on the report. In 1947 the forty-four hour week was put into operation for the Board's entire staff, except those, such as Head Office clerical staff, who were already working less than forty-four hours a week.

The causes of the Movement remain something of a mystery. Busmen are still convinced that there was some effect on their

¹ Ibid. ² Part of the guaranteed day which the Board cannot fit into its schedules.

health (the introduction of oil buses has since largely removed fumes). Speeds were certainly increased over this period in outer London, and in central London, where speed remained fairly constant, traffic conditions had worsened. Earnings failed to improve with improvement in national prosperity, but the men had not suffered from the depression, and their average earnings were comparatively high. Other industries worked under conditions worse than those under the Speed Agreement, with lower rates of pay; it was the busmen who provided the most famous 'militant' trade union movement of the thirties. An explanation is sometimes offered in the conditions of their work, which, due to heavy London traffic, requires quick decisions to be made constantly, and, it is argued, makes them impatient of delay and eager for action; whereas tramwaymen and railwaymen run on lines: perhaps this does not carry much conviction.

One result, at least for a time, was to create, rather than to destroy, a Communist leadership. Mr. Papworth and Mr. Jones, having joined the Communist Party, and waited the required period of time, were re-elected to their old positions. Mr. Papworth was soon afterwards elected to the General Council of the T.U.C.; Mr. Jones joined him on the Executive Council of the Union, and became Chairman of the Central Bus Committee, and of the No. 1 Area Passenger Group Committee. Whatever the views of London busmen on general political matters may have been, no 'right-wing' candidate could equal the electoral successes of the two Communist leaders.¹ During the war and in the years immediately following, the Communists

¹ This is not an isolated instance of repressive action against 'militant' unionists leading to 'Communist domination'. Communist strength is supposed to be greatest in the Electrical Trades Union, and amongst the Scottish Miners. In 1927-28 the officials of the Scottish Miners' Union postponed a union conference at which, it was feared, Communists and their supporters might gain an electoral victory. Continued postponement caused the latter to form a break-away union, the United Mineworkers of Scotland, whose members, after some years, were readmitted into the old union and, in the end, became its leaders. (A Communist account of these events is given in *Allen Hutt*, op. cit., pp. 183-86.) In 1937 the Executive of the E.T.U. expelled the union's London District Committee for support given to an unofficial strike at Earl's Court in January of that year (not, admittedly the Committee's first act of disobedience). In the next Executive elections, six out of eleven members were replaced, and from that time Communist electoral success has been continuous (all E.T.U. officials are elected). Arthur Horner was expelled, along with his lodge at Mardy, from the South Wales Miners' Federation not many years before he was elected an agent, and later President, of that union.

worked closely with the union's Executive and officers on most industrial issues. In 1949, however, the union decided not to renominate Mr. Papworth for the T.U.C. General Council, and its Biennial Conference, influenced in the main by the post-war series of dock strikes and the T.U.C. policy on Communists, decided by 426 votes to 208, to ban Communist Party members from office in the union. This ban was put into effect by the Executive Council in December, 1949, when Communist full-time officers were dismissed. Communists will be ineligible in the 1950 biennial elections to 'lay' offices in the union. Some protests have been organized, but they have been ineffective, and the Communists' only chance now seems to lie in a revision of the decision by a future Conference. So far it has been accepted by the body of London Transport members, and, pending any such revision, is being loyally operated. The power of the Communists amongst London Transport workers appears to have been eclipsed.

5. RECENT DISPUTES

The Coronation Strike was followed by a period of quiet, but there were schedules strikes in 1939 and 1940. After that, industrial peace, apart from minor incidents, was maintained almost until the end of the war. At the beginning of May, 1945, nearly 7,000 men on both Central Bus and Tram and Trolley-bus routes came out in protest against the summer schedules. In July of the same year a number of Country Bus garages struck for several days at a time of considerable unrest among provincial busmen in the Home Counties and Midlands. Since then there have been one or two more strikes over schedules, but certainly no more than in pre-war years.

One of the most important disputes since 1937 was the enforcement by road service operating staff of a 'No Standing' rule during November 1945, as a protest against the extension of war-time relaxation of the regulations on this matter. This action had the support of the Central Bus Committee, who claimed that the action was not illegal, as the regulations of the Regional Transport Commissioner were permissive and not compulsory; and argued that the proper solution to the problem lay in the provision of more buses, since the shortage of staff was already easing. After

almost a fortnight of queues and of tripartite discussion an agreement provided for a progressive curtailment of the numbers standing,¹ and for further discussion with the Board on the introduction of more vehicles. This solution was accepted by a delegate conference of Central and Country garage representatives, and Tram and Trolley-bus depot representatives.

Negotiations on hours and wages have been frequent in the past ten years of rising prices. The details of these were given in the last chapter; none have been so protracted or so troublesome as the 1924-26 or the 1928-29 negotiations, or the 1936-37 discussions prior to the strike, although the forty-four hour negotiations were long and the assistance of a Committee of Investigation was needed, and the discussion of the wage-claim of December 1948 ran into trouble after the announcement of the Government's views on wage increases. (The membership and their representatives felt that the 7s. 6d. offered was insufficient, and there was some suggestion of trouble, but agreement was reached on this amount, and the decision was loyally accepted.) The only instance of refusal to accept the terms of an agreement came after the terms of the settlement of June 1947 had been announced. These, it will be remembered, did not include the payment of time-and-a-half for Sunday duties, a concession granted to municipal passenger transport employees in March 1947. A number of garages and depots voted in favour of Sunday strikes, to be continued until London also received the concession, but this was rejected by a conference, again of representatives of all road service garage and depot staff, lasting for five hours; and time-and-a-half for Sunday duties was conceded in March 1948.

During the latter months of 1948 a claim for the payment of time-and-a-half for Saturday afternoon working, in addition to Sunday working, was lodged by the T. & G.W.U. on behalf of road passenger transport workers throughout the country. The

¹ The original order for 12 standing at peak, and 8 at off-peak, periods was reduced to 12 and 5 (with no standing passengers between 7 and 10.30 p.m.) to be reduced to 12 and 0 on January 1st, 1946, and 5 and 0 after February 13th, 1946. In May 1948 this was increased again to 8 and 0 by the Minister on joint application of the parties (in consequence of the Agreement of April 1947, as recognition of the 7s. 6d. increase in wages). In April 1949 a joint conference of all delegates demanded a return to 5 and 0 as soon as the order should have run a full year, but a strike on the issue was avoided. Later in the year the return was agreed.

men felt that they had a claim to extra consideration on Saturday owing to the general application of the five-day week in industry, and that the Government's views on wage increases should not be held to apply to a claim of this kind. The employers' organizations argued that the awkward hours of passenger transport services were unavoidable, and already taken into account in the existing rates of pay and conditions of service. London Transport rejected the claim, but stated its willingness that the matter should be referred to arbitration. Since the Government announced its attitude to wage increases, workers have not favoured arbitration, and in December the delegates of the three sections, in joint session, resolved to withdraw their labour on Saturday afternoons from January 1st, 1949, until their claim was granted. Official warnings and appeals from the union to its members in London Transport, and negotiations between the union and Lord Latham, Chairman of the London Transport Executive, failed to avert the trouble, and on December 31st the delegates met to reaffirm their decision. On the afternoon of Saturday, January 1st, most of the road services were stopped. During the following week the Minister of Labour voiced his disapproval of 'this challenge to authority',¹ and the London Transport Executive threatened that further breaches of contract would terminate the employment of the guilty persons, and decided to pay the strikers neither for the lost time, nor for the week's 'building-up'² time, included in the guaranteed forty-four hours, since they had not completed their full week. On Wednesday the delegates met again and voted against further Saturday strikes, and in favour of arbitration. On January 4th the union and the Executive made a joint request to the Minister to appoint an independent tribunal. A tribunal was appointed, to arbitrate on this claim and on the identical claim of the provincial workers. On February 24th it announced its recommendation, that increased sums, making a total of approximately time-and-a-quarter, should be paid for work after 1 p.m. on Saturdays, as a temporary measure; agreements were negotiated accordingly.

The dispute was remarkable in two ways. First, the extraordinary attention of the press made the strike a seven days' wonder. (*The Times* gave it two highly disapproving first

¹ *The Times*, January 5th, 1949.

² See p. 74.

leaders.) This was certainly in part due to political interest in industrial attitudes to the Labour Government, especially of workers in nationalized industries, but it was also an example of the public attention which is given even to a minor strike in the passenger transport industry. Secondly, this determined unofficial action of the London busmen and tramwaymen was not taken under the leadership of their elected chairman, J. W. Jones, the Communist and ex-Rank and File leader, who, whatever his sympathies, behaved, in public, in a most circumspect manner.¹

6. CONCLUSION

London Transport has an extremely good record for freedom from strikes, except for its road service staff, and even amongst them the record is good apart from the Coronation Strike. It is not difficult to see why the road service staff should be the most prone to strike. Some of the reasons for the virility of their unionism have already been discussed. The organization of the branches in the garages and depots, and the close communication between them, especially in the Central Area, help to foster a lively industrial democracy. Due to spreadover duties, there is at any time of day a number of men in the games' rooms and canteens of the garages and depots, and grudges are readily aired. The number of men at each garage or depot is rarely too great to form a manageable unit, and the compactness of the branch makes a strike easy to arrange.

Nor is it hard to find the reasons for the pre-eminence amongst the road service staff, of the Central busmen. They are the largest section of staff within London Transport. Their conditions of work are probably, on average, more onerous and trying than those of Country Service busmen or of tramwaymen and trolley-bus men. Nationally they have always been in the van of road transport employees, and, like another relatively small group of workers—the dockers—have always carried disproportionate weight in the T. & G.W.U. and in the trade union movement as a whole.

¹ Perhaps the Communists would not risk another attack on a prominent Communist union leader for action subversive of union policy, so soon after the attacks on Arthur Horner's alleged misuse of his position in the National Union of Mineworkers during the French miners' strike of October 1948.

If it is easy to see why the road service staff, and particularly the Central busmen, should be more aggressive than other sections, it is difficult to see that they have gained anything by it. Many schedules have been altered after a strike or the threat of a strike, but far more have been altered without. It may be that the Cameron Tribunal of 1949 was influenced in its attitude to the national claim for extra payment on Saturday afternoons by the strike of London Transport workers; even so, the whole claim was not granted. The Coronation Strike brought the busmen nothing that could not have been obtained without a stoppage. Since 1933 the busmen and tramwaymen have gained no greater advances in pay and no greater improvements in conditions than other sections of London Transport workers, who have never, or very rarely, come near to striking. The busmen might claim that improvements throughout London Transport have been won by their action; but the claim cannot stand. The railway staff have closely followed Main Line agreements, and the Workshop staff have an equal right to say that they have shown themselves capable of looking after their own affairs—without strikes. Nor has trade union militancy brought the London busmen greater advances than those of workers in road passenger transport elsewhere or in the country as a whole; indeed, the London busmen have been overtaken. At the most, it might be claimed to have slowed down slightly the pace of overtaking.

The busmen's activity has made them famous, their leaders have been elected to the Executive of their union, and even to the General Council of the T.U.C.; it may have satisfied their pride; but it is hard to see that it has put a penny into their pocket, or into the pocket of anyone else.

Apart from the Coronation Strike, London Transport has probably suffered less from strikes than the rest of the road passenger transport industry, and no more than before the Board took over. This is evidence against the view, held by many, that public ownership will tend to increase strikes. The Coronation Strike itself, however, although in part, at least, arising out of conflicts within the union and the Labour Movement as a whole, was perhaps in part due to public ownership. The Board's case was that it could not afford to meet the cost of the claim.

Whatever the response of the London public to a general increase in fares at that time, increases in charges to those classes of passengers whose demand is inelastic (holders of season tickets, or workmen), could have been made to cover the cost—although such changes might have provoked considerable political opposition. The real defence of the Board was that it had no right to improve the conditions of one section of its staff at the expense of the travelling public—also mainly workers—and that an improvement for one section would be followed by claims for the others. The unification of London Transport, and the Board's obligation to consider the public interest were the results of the 1933 Act. It may be that the events of 1932–33 and the Rank and File Movement made conflict inevitable, but it may be that a private employer, able to deal separately with the busmen, and without the Board's obligations, would have given way in 1937 where the Board stood firm.

The busmen's answer—that their claim was being held up, not for the benefit of the public, but for the recipients of excessive compensation—was a fair reply; but their stand on principle was also open to attack. The principle of revolutionary unionism is that profits and the capitalist should be squeezed out of industry, to the benefit of the whole working class, but, due to the efforts of the union to confine the dispute to a single section of workers, the busmen found themselves demanding, for themselves alone, a concession that could have been claimed with equal justice by their fellow-workers, who were less well paid than they were. The criticism of syndicalism has always been that it is equivalent to sectionalism, and, perhaps contrary to their wishes, the busmen, the heirs of the syndicalists, were fighting for a sectional benefit.

London Transport has been relatively free from strikes, and such strikes as there have been have brought London Transport workers no great gains. The Board was only in part responsible for the one great conflict, and it had the best of this conflict, in fact, and perhaps in principle. At that time a direct attack by the whole of London Transport workers on the rates of interest paid to holders of the Board's stock might have been justifiable, and have won public sympathy; but that was not how the battle was fought.

CHAPTER V

CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

THE Joint Production Committee was a product of the second world war as the Works Committee was of the first, and the principles of the Joint Production Committee have been embodied in the recent Nationalization Acts and in most of the agreements between the Boards set up by those acts and the trade unions concerned, just as the principles of the Works Committee were embodied in the Whitley Report and in the Railways Act of 1921. It is true that the Whitley Report was, in the main, a conservative report, embodying the principle already accepted by the officials of the Board of Trade, and by representatives of employers and of trade unions serving on the short-lived advisory Industrial Council of 1911-13 (and indeed favoured by the Royal Commission on Labour of 1894), that properly organized negotiating machinery was the best means of dealing with industrial disputes.¹ The lesson of the war, in munitions, in mining, in cotton and in other industries, was that alterations in industrial technique and organization, at least under war-time conditions, could only be successfully accomplished through full co-operation with workers' representatives at all levels, and that the proper body for this purpose at the local level was the Works Committee or the pit committee. This, too, was recognized to some extent by the Report in its suggestion that discussion should extend to 'the better utilization of the practical knowledge and experience of the workpeople', to the examination of experiments, and 'co-operation in carrying new ideas into effect', and in the third report of the Committee recommending the establishment of Works Committees. It was also recognized in the abortive clauses of the Mines Act of 1920, providing for the establishment of Pit and District Committees,² and in the railway scheme agreed under the terms of the 1921 Act.

At first sight the Joint Production Committee seems a retreat

¹ See Clay, *The Problem of Industrial Relations*, Macmillan 1929, Chapter VII.

² This section of the Act was subject to agreement between the parties; it was rejected at first by the miners as insufficient, and later, when the miners were ready to operate it, the owners withdrew their support. See Cole, *Labour in the Coal-Mining Industry*, Oxford, 1923.

to humbler methods of co-operation. If the most far-reaching demands of the supporters of the Works Committee had been satisfied it would have replaced the management in the exercise of most of its functions, in the organization of work, in the division of a lump sum of wages negotiated with the management, and therefore in promotion and grading, and in the administration of discipline.¹ The supporters of the Joint Production Committee argue that the exercise of undoubtedly managerial functions in production matters should be preceded by consultation, not with the authoritative negotiating body but with an advisory committee elected by the employees, consisting of trade union members, who should not, however, be directly responsible to any trade union body.² But the Works Committee failed to satisfy high aspirations;³ the post-war slump, the mining disputes and the great engineering lock-out of 1922, almost killed it, and its later slow and steady recovery brought it to a degree of health only as a normal negotiating body, in general not venturing beyond the exercise of the traditional functions which the Whitley Councils themselves had, in the main, accepted as their proper field of activity.⁴ The argument for the consultative production committee is, then, that negotiating bodies cannot satisfactorily deal with other matters, and in fact will tend to see production problems only in terms of their effect on wages, hours and conditions; that it is the worker himself, as a worker, and not the trade union officer, who is primarily interested in the content of his task, and that he is thus the proper person to consult in these matters (so long as conflict can be avoided by ensuring that the consultative committee must consist of bona fide trade union members); and that managements will be more willing to share information and to forego their managerial prerogatives in a co-operative body thus constituted, than in a negotiating body with whom they are accustomed to bargain, and to bargain hard.

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¹ Paton and Gallagher, *Towards Industrial Democracy*, quoted in Scott and Cunnison, *Clyde Valley Industries*, Oxford, 1924; also Carter Goodrich, *The Frontier of Control*, Bell, 1920.

² See, for instance, G. S. Walpole, *Management and Men*, Jonathan Cape, 1944.

³ The Works Committee, as envisaged by the Whitley Report, was a joint body; in fact, a committee of shop stewards which may meet the management often does the same job.

⁴ Balfour Committee, *Survey of Industrial Relations*, 1926.

Part of the negotiating machinery of the London Passenger Transport Board was, indirectly, inherited from the Whitley Report. The Local Departmental Committees and Sectional Councils set up under the 1921 Railways Act were, perhaps, although not Whitley Councils, the most complete example of the type of machinery desired by the authors of the report. The machinery was, in fact, as the report itself, an attempt to adapt pre-war negotiating bodies in the light of wartime industrial experience. It was copied by the Underground Companies, and later accepted by the Board under the 1933 Act, and extended to cover the bulk of the railway, office and supervisory staff of the Board. The working of these bodies has already been partially examined. They deal with topics, such as matters of operation, that are not normally the subject of negotiation, and London Transport officials, either on the committees and councils, or in later meetings with the workers' representatives, take pains to give full information, and to allow participation in the observation of trials and experiments. Both parties assert that there has been, over the years, a considerable extension of matters discussed and of concessions granted. The records of meetings are, in general, too brief to give the outside observer much confirmation of this; the number of meetings, and the number of matters raised, even in fact the type of matter raised, does not show any striking variation between 1934 and 1947.¹ There may well, however, be a different attitude, not discoverable in the minutes, and the increase in the number of 'meetings with the Management', for instance, in Sectional Council No. 3 (trainmen) from one a year in the first years of the Board's operation to some three a year to-day, is a sign of increasing discussion of formerly reserved subjects. Whatever significance should be given to this development, the councils and committees remain the channels by which the employees represented seek redress for grievances arising out of their employment, and seek changes in operation or in equipment for the benefit of their welfare and comfort. Sectional Council No. 1 (Head Office clerical and technical staff) prides itself in taking full minutes of its meetings, which are less frequent than those of other councils, since much of the work is

¹ Where records go back before 1933, considerable progress can be seen between the early twenties and the first year of the Board.

done through a Classification Appeals Sub-Committee or between the Staff Side Secretary and the appropriate London Transport officer. In meetings in 1945-46-47 this Council considered sixty-one items, twenty of which were routine items such as minutes, or reports of the Classification Appeals Sub-Committee which were invariably confirmed; just over half of the remaining items were general issues connected in one way or another with promotion. Other topics were: Office cleanliness, lighting, rest and recreation room facilities; under-staffing, arrangements for the return of evacuated staff, public holidays and staggered hours, the five-day week; and radiography facilities. Almost every item was a request for a concession from London Transport, usually involving some extra expenditure for the benefit of the staff. As far as can be seen from briefer records this is typical, except that some of the councils covering wages grades spend rather less time on matters of classification, and more time on direct claims for increased payment in particular instances, and that facilities desired by trainmen or station staff are different from those asked for office staff.

A common complaint against the working of such bodies, here and on the Main Lines, is that the Management do not co-operate as they should, since they do not bring their own problems for discussion by the men's representatives and thus make them mere channels for workers' complaints. This is borne out by the minutes of meetings of Sectional Council No. 1 (in the other records it is difficult to discern by which side an item was raised). Over the period mentioned, only one item was raised by the management side: a request for first-aid volunteers. The obvious conclusion from this evidence must be accepted with caution. The agenda is an agreed agenda drawn up by the two secretaries. When officers of London Transport wish to sound union views, they usually prefer to get into touch with union officials who may be able to give immediate approval, or indicate the likelihood of union opposition. The officers may then go ahead, or drop the project without formal discussion. If doubt still remains, London Transport may prefer the initiative in discussion to come from the men's side; it is not unknown for London Transport officers to ask the staff side of a sectional council to place an item on the agenda. Informal approach on the other side

is more difficult, for representatives have to satisfy an electorate that they are doing their job, and will therefore prefer to raise a matter on the council, possibly in spite of union advice in favour of an informal approach on the subject concerned.

Criticisms from the side of the management are: that too many trivial items are raised for discussion, even over matters easily settled in other ways; and that, in accordance with joint production theory, matters for co-operation are submerged under matters for negotiation. A discussion on facilities for training, for instance, may too easily become a discussion on grants for education in working hours. The members of the railway unions are also sometimes critical of the machinery, but their solution is to give greater powers to the existing bodies, to determine matters that must now be 'referred to management', rather than to constitute new bodies to be concerned with those matters not normally considered as matters for negotiation.

The objects of joint consultation are to develop the interest of workers in their job, and to make better use of that interest by bringing the workers into closer contact with industrial policy-making. Although much of the agitation for consultation has been agitation for consultative committees, there is no reason to suppose that these objects can only be attained through committees, or that committees are always the best means of achieving them. Some sections of the staff do not entirely approve of committee methods. When asked whether they favour such committees in garages and depots, T. & G.W.U. officers of the No. 1 Area Passenger Transport Trade Group reply that they think the informal relations to which they are accustomed are superior. A good delegate and a sympathetic charge depot inspector or district superintendent, they say, can settle transport problems between them to the satisfaction of both London Transport and the men, more rapidly and more successfully than could any committee, informality (for instance, the use of Christian names) providing a better background for co-operation than the formalities of a meeting. If a man has a complaint about canteen meals, or other welfare matters, if a crew is not working well together, if there is some difficulty of traffic conditions on a route, the problem can be taken at once,

or on Friday, to the delegate who can arrange the solution with the appropriate official. Should staff be required, for special services, or to replace those sick, or should weather conditions require emergency services, the best method is a direct approach by the official to the delegate, who, if he is the right man for the job, will know just what the men are prepared to do on such occasions without invoking formal negotiating methods. The most fruitful method, in their view, of promoting more efficient service is to encourage these relationships. A garage or depot from which they hear nothing from one year to the next is their ideal, and they say there are a number of garages, especially in the country area, where these kind of relations obtain. If a committee is required for a particular matter, it is better to set up an *ad hoc* joint body, as is frequently done, than to maintain a permanent consultative body. War and post-war conditions have affected to some extent, the quality of service, and at least some of the staff are concerned about this. In September 1944, Area No. 1 Passenger Transport Group was reported to have discussed the deterioration of relations with the public, and the absence of 'the old spirit of bonhomie'.¹ Since the war a number of garages, influenced by the Board's 'Courtesy Aids Service' campaign, have set up Joint Courtesy Committees which discuss ways and means of improvement, and in some instances maintain a chart of numbers of passenger complaints each week or each month.² This is the method which these officials prefer. Perhaps the membership would feel that their servants, the union officers, would be under-employed in the circumstances which the latter regard as idyllic, but at least there does not seem to be any serious opposition, either from the union members, or from London Transport, to their view.

Transport undertakings do not lend themselves to joint production methods as readily as engineering or mining concerns, since, in transport, productivity is less dependent upon the effort of the individual or small group; it is largely determined by the central planning of schedules and routes. The wage increase agreement

¹ *The Record*, September 1944.

² Report on Courtesy Committees at Hammersmith and Elmers End in *London Transport Magazine*, November 1947.

of the National Council for Municipal Road Passenger Transport of March 1948 included this final clause:

5. That the employees' side of the National Council shall use every endeavour to ensure the greatest measure of consultation locally in each undertaking to secure more efficient compilation of schedules, thereby tending to the more economical operation of services which, in transport, represents in respect of the platform staff, the only form of increased productivity referred to in the White Paper Cmd. 7321, as a reason for an advance in wages.¹

This is, perhaps, a rather pathetic face-saving paragraph, but it does show the close connection between productivity and schedule compilation, which, as we have seen, is not, in an undertaking as large as London Transport, primarily a matter for *local* discussion.

The theory of Joint Production is strongly in favour of decentralized methods. It is, however, in the constitution of centralized consultative bodies that the post-war consultative boom has had its main effect on London Transport. The London Transport Benevolent Fund, the administration of sports grounds, and similar welfare matters, have always been jointly administered. In 1946 there was a boycott of London Transport canteens by workshop staff owing to an increase in prices. A joint meeting was suggested, to which the other unions were invited, and it was agreed that a Canteen Consultative Committee should be set up, with representatives from the T. & G.W.U., the railway unions, and the Joint Trades Committee, to review canteen prices and similar matters. The union representatives argued that London Transport, as a 'good employer', should bear some of the overhead costs of the canteens, previously covered by the prices charged, such as lighting, gas and water, and the extra cost involved in the concentration of the Chiswick tea-service in a ten-minute interval for production reasons. London Transport incurred considerable expense in going most of the way to meet these claims. So far, consultative machinery had been used for purposes of straightforward negotiation. Subsequently, however, the Committee has settled down to the translation of costs into tariff prices in the manner considered to be most to the liking of

¹ *The Record*, April 1948. The London Transport, Municipal and Private Company agreements all included provision for application to the Minister for an increase from 5 to 8 standing passengers at permitted times.

the men and to consideration of long-term canteen expansion. In June 1948 the costs involved in increased prices of foodstuffs, and in increased wages for the catering staff were considered, somewhat reduced, and charges were raised to cover them. When these increases became effective, in August, they were followed by a boycott of some of the road service canteens for a number of days, which was encouraged by the Communists, who were at that time running a campaign against increases in industrial canteen prices. In the summer of 1949, alteration in the price of foodstuffs following on the Budget of that year, and some revision of canteen staff wages made by London Transport in anticipation of orders under the Catering Wages Act, made a further increase in canteen charges necessary in order to meet a prospective deficit of some £60,000 a year. London Transport's proposal was that the price of the main meal should be increased, since that was the item chiefly affected by the increase in costs. The view of the unions was that the deficit should be met by raising the price of tea from 1½d. to 2d. a cup. After some discussion, and a reference back by the unions to their members, it became clear that the men strongly preferred to take the increase in the price of tea. Their proposal was accordingly put into force, accepted without trouble, and the current deficit was covered. Consultation in this field, after an indifferent start, is proving to be of value.

In addition a Railway Consumer Complaints Committee has been set up, to discuss matters of principle. It has met once, to deal with shortage of crockery and pilferage. Local complaints are settled between staff side members, who are chosen from the staff side of the sectional councils, and the canteen controller, or superintendent. There are informal canteen committees at some of the bigger installations (e.g. at Acton Works). On the Road side canteen complaints are made through the normal channels.

The most important consultative bodies were introduced as a result of the acute difficulties which faced London Transport in 1946, when it became clear that the deterioration of equipment, already severe owing to the war-time restrictions on supply of replacements and of spare parts, would continue for some time, owing to slow deliveries and the priority allocation of steel by the Government to other uses. The mileage lost daily owing

to the lack of buses to perform the scheduled duties rose from almost nil in 1946 to a peak of 27,000 miles in September 1947, when 440 buses required to perform normal schedules were out of action due to the lack of spare parts. After that date the extraordinary methods adopted to deal with the crisis began to tell.¹ Part, at least, of these difficulties were foreseen by London Transport, and at a special meeting with a large number of official and 'lay' representatives of the T. & G.W.U., in the autumn of 1946, Lord Ashfield explained the situation, and the plans of the Board, including the decision to replace South London trams by oil buses rather than by trolley-buses, and appealed for the co-operation of the union representatives in dealing with the difficulties, and for suggestions of suitable methods of liaison to that end. As a result of the discussion which followed, a joint Advisory Committee was set up, consisting of representatives of the Management and of the Union (official and 'lay'). The main work of the committee was to be performed by three sub-committees: the Bus Allocation Advisory Sub-Committee, the Amenities Advisory Sub-Committee, and the Vehicle Servicing Advisory Sub-Committee, the first and the third of which were to consist of three members from each side, and the second of four. The Amenities Advisory Sub-Committee was added to the other two at the instance of the union representatives.

The Bus Allocation Sub-Committee is more important than its name, perhaps, suggests. The allocation of the limited stock of new vehicles is a difficult problem in itself, since they are slightly faster than the previous vehicles, and it is therefore uneconomical to replace only part of the vehicles on a given route, and since one variant of the new type is a wider bus, the operation of which in crowded central London is still in the experimental stage. The added comfort of the vehicles both to the crews and to the passengers is considerable, so that allocation becomes an invidious task. Finally the claims of central and country services have to be co-ordinated. The sub-committee has considered and criticized the original allocation, and the local difficulties arising from it, has altered plans in the face of the Government capital cuts and export plans of 1947, and the vehicle builders' strike of March

¹ *London Transport Magazine*, March 1948. In 1946 the scrapping rate for castings was running at over 50% compared with the pre-war rate of 10%.

1948, both of which affected supplies from the makers, and has altered plans for the scrapping of old vehicles in the face of these delays. One difficulty that has arisen is, perhaps, unavoidable in centralized consultation, but it is particularly noticeable here owing to the confidential nature of the information discussed. The main purpose of the committee is to assure the staff that the best is being done for them, and their views adequately considered, in a matter that vitally affects them, but the information discussed by the sub-committee is confidential. Cautious interim reports were issued by this and the other sub-committees, but their full significance was, perhaps, not readily appreciable. For this, as for the problem of schedules consultation, there is no easy solution. Apart from this, the sub-committee has served its purpose well, and is considered to be one of the most successful of London Transport's joint advisory bodies. During the latter part of 1949 replacement was proceeding rapidly, and the main difficulties of allocation are now over, so that this committee can claim to have carried out a difficult job to the general satisfaction of London Transport and its employees.

The main task of the Amenities Advisory Sub-Committee has been to ensure that the allocation of priorities in the provision of new welfare facilities, or in the repair of old, should be the most satisfactory to the consumer—the staff, and to balance long-term projects with temporary measures. It has investigated several welfare complaints on the spot, and was responsible for a programme of emergency screening and heating for the repair 'docks' in the garages and depots during the unusually cold period of early 1947.

The Vehicle Servicing Sub-Committee is concerned with problems more akin to those of the normal joint production committee. Its function is to consider improvements in the methods of running repairs in the garages. It has considered a number of reports from officials in the engineering staff, and suggestions concerning the relative merits of partial and complete overhauls, methods of training for semi-skilled workers, methods of meeting shortages of staff (particularly in the condemned permanent way section), methods of reducing the wear and tear of vehicles, and of ensuring that proper tests were carried out to ensure that unnecessary repairs were avoided. There has been

disagreement between the two sides of the relative merits of complete and partial overhaul; but on most matters the procedure of London Transport has been approved.

During the last months of 1949 a start was made on the conversion of trams to buses in South London. One depot is already being converted and staff has already been transferred. This programme involves a considerable number of technical and human problems, which are being discussed and settled by the General Superintendent and the Trams' Council, which is thus acting partly as a consultative body, and so far the difficulties, including the important matter of transfer of staff, have been successfully overcome.

The Workshop staff has also maintained and extended the old negotiating machinery, and shown relatively little interest in consultation by other methods. Joint Production Committees were set up under London Aircraft Productions during the war, but on the return to London Transport they were allowed to lapse without objection from either side. The experience does not appear to have been entirely satisfactory; one trade union official spoke of the committee as ineffective duplication of the Works Committee. After the war new methods of production, not previously applied to large-scale repair work, were introduced at Chiswick. By greatly reducing the tolerances allowed, interchangeability of parts in repair work on the new type buses has been achieved, and has permitted a reorganization of work into the reconditioning of pieces, and re-assembly; the latter process can thus be made as repetitive and constant as the work of a mass-production manufacturing plant.¹ This reorganization, which clearly affected staff in a great number of ways and might elsewhere have been 'progressed' by a Joint Production Committee, was the subject of frequent discussion with the Works Committee, matters of major importance being referred to the Joint Trades Committee. In June 1948, however, after some demand from the union side, a Joint Production Consultative and Advisory Committee was set up. Twenty representatives are elected on a craft group basis, but only ten are called to any one

¹ An account of this reorganization is given by the Works Manager, Mr. E. C. Ottaway, in the *London Transport Magazine*, December 1947.

meeting of the Committee, in order to keep its size within manageable limits. There they meet a similar number of management representatives, and anyone who can assist in a particular matter may be co-opted. Joint secretaries are appointed. Its function is to advise on all matters affecting production, such as progress, materials, and the use of scrap. It is as yet early to judge its worth.

In 1949 the Chiswick Works Committee and the Joint Trades Committee gave considerable assistance to London Transport in solving the problem of redundancy caused by the easing of servicing difficulties as the replacement programme got under way. This was met partly by the retirement of staff over 65, partly by returning unqualified craftsmen, temporarily promoted under dilution agreements, to their former grade, partly by the transfer of staff to other departments, and partly by the unions finding other jobs for their members. Very few employees had to be discharged and the measures adopted have been carried out smoothly and to the satisfaction of both sides.

The Traffic Combine provided a staff suggestions scheme, which London Transport has continued and developed. Authors of suggestions which are adopted receive £1 or more, according to the value of the suggestion, and their suggestions are reported in the *Staff News*. Arrangements are made, where desired, for the patenting of inventions.

Some experimental joint efficiency committees for office staff, on which the members drawn from the staff are at present appointed by London Transport, complete the list of consultative experiments. In the main, London Transport has continued to rely upon well-tried and fully elaborated negotiating machinery, and no doubt because of the strength of that machinery, and of its close contact with the unions and with union officers, it has tended to adopt a rather conservative attitude to recently popularized consultative methods. It has tried consultative committees in a number of fields, but it is difficult, as yet, to appraise its experiments. It would be foolish to expect such committees to bring spectacular results at once. The long-established Underground sectional councils, which always had some consultative functions, have not made full use of them; though, perhaps,

more use than have the Main Line Councils.¹ The enthusiast for consultation might say that this was due to the confusion of negotiating and consultative functions. Of the new advisory bodies, two at least, the Bus Allocation Sub-Committee and the Canteen Consultative Committee, have already proved valuable. So far they have been mainly used for acquainting representatives of the staff with the plans of London Transport, and inviting their criticisms, although recently they, and some of the older negotiating bodies, have taken a more positive part in helping to carry out some major pieces of reorganization within the undertaking. Perhaps no more can be said so far than that the new methods have been found a valuable auxiliary to the well-tried negotiating machinery. The more enthusiastic supporters of the principles of consultation, who find therein the complete answer to the problems of industrial democracy,² might think this a disappointing result, but it cannot yet be said that their faith in consultative committees has been fully justified.

¹ Mr. Heady, General Secretary of the R.C.A., is reported to have said, at a London Transport Line Conference of his union, held on November 27th, 1948, 'What he had heard during the morning . . . made it appear that the London Transport membership were to be envied by their colleagues for the substantial measure of consultation with the management, and the wide extent of the education and promotion schemes that they enjoyed.' (*Railway Service Journal*, January, 1949.)

² 'The conclusion of the war will usher in the beginning of an era for industry which will be as different from that which preceded it as was the so-called industrial age from the years preceding the development of the steam-engine . . . It is the inevitable result of an inescapable fact, that the old industrial relationship between employer and employee has outlived its usefulness and is due to be replaced by a new one.' G. S. Walpole, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER VI

LONDON TRANSPORT AS AN EMPLOYER

THIS chapter attempts to deal with the relations between management and workers not yet covered. Most of these—training, welfare and promotion, for instance—are matters in which the management retains the initiative, and the part of the trade unions is less important. Hence the title.

In 1948 London Transport, as part of a policy of background training, published a booklet, *Welcome to London Transport*, for the benefit of staff old and new. The principles of staff policy were defined as:

1. Pay. That the scale of remuneration should be adequate and the system of payment understandable.
2. Security. That there should be security of employment; that schemes should be available in appropriate cases for providing financial assistance in misfortune.
3. Conditions. That the conditions of service, including Staff Welfare provisions, should be satisfactory by modern standards.
4. Opportunity. That in addition to job training there should be opportunities for further education for those who desire to advance in the service; that there should be a system of promotion which manifestly gives fair opportunity for all.
5. Consultation. That the staff should have a reasonable chance to express their views on all matters affecting their work and welfare, with every opportunity for constructive suggestions; that the machinery for representation of staff interests should be designed, and when necessary adjusted, to produce effective results.

The first and last principles have been covered. It would be difficult to provide a satisfactory standard of adequate remuneration; 'levelling-up' has certainly rendered the system of payment more comprehensible than that the Board inherited.

I. SECURITY

Security of employment is an accident of occupation rather than a matter within the control of the employer. Passenger transport staff have, in general, much greater security than most

industrial workers, since the occupation is 'sheltered', and relatively unaffected by the fluctuations of the trade cycle. Late in 1932 the L.G.O.C. was considering the need for dispensing with some 4% of its staff (a project rendered unnecessary by the 'Speed' agreement) at a time when unemployment in some industries (for example, shipbuilding) was nearly 50%. The guaranteed week is the regular form of contract for London Transport. No experiments in extending the advantages of the salaried contract to wages staff, such as that made by the I.C.I., have been attempted. The pre-war practice of employing spare staff in the operating departments to cover summer and holiday working was abandoned in 1938 for the railway services, and in 1939 for the road services, and has not been reintroduced. It is a practice which could hardly be maintained in a period of full employment, but, in fairness to London Transport, it must be noted that 1938 and 1939 were years of redundancy rather than labour shortage; and the first effect of the war was to curtail London Transport services more rapidly than staff was called up; so that the practice was abandoned before the period of full employment. The practice of a reduced guaranteed week for certain sections of junior staff has also ceased. The system of disciplinary boards gives the worker a fair guarantee that he will not be lightly dismissed for reasons other than redundancy. A considerable attempt is made to find alternative employment within London Transport for staff unable to perform their normal work through injury or sickness. Five hundred men were found alternative employment in 1946.¹ For all this, the main guarantee of security may well still be the nature of the employment rather than of the employer.

The disciplinary boards are constituted according to agreements with the trade unions. In the Railway Operating Department the Disciplinary Board, of two Divisional Superintendents, deals with all serious offences, and alone has the power of suspension, reduction or dismissal. Appeal against the decision of the Board may be made to the Operating Manager. The Country Services observe a similar procedure, except that the Board, which also hears appeals against minor punishments, consists of an independent chairman and two District Superintendents.

¹ *Welcome to London Transport.*

In the Central Bus Section, the Divisional Superintendent has the right of dismissal and only appeals come before the Board, consisting of an independent chairman and two officers of London Transport; with a final appeal to the Operating Manager. There are no Boards for the Tram and Trolley-bus Section, appeals from the Divisional Superintendent being by discussion between the union's section officer and the General Superintendent, without the presence of the man concerned. In the railway engineering departments and road workshops section, officers have the power of dismissal, appeals being made not to a Board, but to Principal Officers; a procedure roughly equivalent is followed for Country Service and Tram and Trolley-bus inside staff, and Central Bus inside staff not covered by the T. & G.W.U. The latter section of employees have the right of appeal to a Divisional Board, and thence to a Central Board. The punishments which may be awarded vary somewhat, suspension not being recognized in some departments. Representation by the appropriate union officer is permitted before all boards, and in all cases of appeal against dismissal (except in the Tram and Trolley-bus Section, where the procedure is as described above). In addition, representation is allowed before Divisional Superintendents in Central Bus procedure; and in the Tram and Trolley-bus Section, divisional union officers discuss appeals against district punishments with the Divisional Superintendents. There is no element of workers' representation in any of the Disciplinary Boards. The variations in procedure are incomprehensible to an outsider, but, although there has been some trouble in the past,¹ employees do not now complain of insufficient protection, and seem content with the procedure of their own department.

There are many funds and schemes providing financial and other assistance to staff in misfortune, most of which are administered jointly, or wholly by the staff. London Transport provides facilities for pay-roll deduction of staff contributions to some of the funds. The largest is the London Transport Benevolent Fund, with a membership of some 68,000. Members subscribe 1*d.* a week, and London Transport 1*d.* a week for each contributor. In addition the fund receives financial support from the Lost Property Employees' Benefit Fund. The bodies which

¹ See pp. 111-112.

administer the Fund consist of equal numbers of representatives from both sides. The Fund owns a convalescent home.

London Transport inherited a number of pensions schemes, mainly covering salaried staff, and these it has continued for the employees concerned, and supplemented with schemes of its own. All supervisory and higher grades are included in a contributory scheme. For the wages staff the Board has obligations to fulfil under the National Insurance Act, and in addition carries on *ex gratia* payments in certain circumstances, for those retiring on grounds of ill-health, redundancy, old age or other grounds satisfactory to the Board, or in the event of death whilst in the service. The maximum benefits¹ vary from six weeks' pay after ten years' service, to a regular pension weekly of 10s. to 16s. for those who have completed thirty to forty-five years' service or more, or, in the event of death, a lump sum of between £25 and £150 according to length of service. Higher payments are made to ex-L.C.C. employees with more than twenty years' service, and to some other sections of staff, in order to maintain previous understandings. Mr. Pick said of these schemes before the 1937 Court of Enquiry:

'They are considered *ex gratia* at the will of the Board. It is not a binding obligation upon the Board to continue them, but by customary practice of the companies transferred to the Board to some extent it may be argued I think that transferred servants would have expectation of receiving those gratuities or pensions, as the case may be, and if they did not receive them they might have a claim under the Act of 1933 for worsened conditions of employment as between the Board and their old employing company, but there is no continuing obligation on the Board to make the gratuities and pensions to new employees.'

It has never been suggested that these payments constituted an alternative to a full contributory pensions scheme. Such a scheme has been canvassed, and discussions were opened with the Board more than once in the 'thirties. The attitude of the Board was that extra expense could be incurred for such a purpose only on condition that wage claims were abated to compensate. To this the men could not agree, and the matter dropped. The post-war series of Nationalization Acts has been accompanied by strong demands for general pensions schemes in the industries concerned. The Transport Act 1947 gave the Minister wide powers to

¹ These payments are subject to adjustment in respect of state benefits.

make regulations for the provision of pensions schemes for persons who are or have been employed by undertakings acquired by the Transport Commission.¹ There was widespread feeling amongst transport workers that nationalization should be followed by a general scheme, to which the Commission should contribute the major share. Union officials, however, thought that the effect on the pay-packet of the increased contributions to the statutory scheme under the National Insurance Act 1946 should be fully digested before anything was done, and as yet there are no general schemes, in transport, or in the other nationalized industries.²

2. CONDITIONS

A number of matters not yet considered may be included under the general heading of 'conditions', although not strictly conditions of employment. Staff receive travel-passes for their personal use, valid at all times either for buses (other than Green Line coaches) or for railways.³ Some employees thought that nationalization should be followed by the extension of common facilities to London Transport and Main Line staff.

The medical department is responsible for the examination of entrants, periodical examination of staff employed, control of working conditions in the interests of health, and first-aid arrangements. The department was recently decentralized on to a divisional basis on the advice of Lord Horder, the Board's medical adviser. Doctors employed by the union may challenge decisions of the medical officers on unfitness for work, and there is provision, varying from department to department, for appeal to an independent medical arbitrator agreed between the parties, or, failing that, to the Medical Council. Workers are represented on Safety First Committees in the workshops.

The Board inherited a large number of canteens and mess-rooms from constituent undertakings. The number of canteens

¹ Transport Act, 1947, Sections 98-100.

² At the instance of the National Union of Mineworkers, a section (83) was included in the National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Act, 1946, permitting individual industries to provide agreed schemes in case of injury, in addition to the provisions of the Act. Under this section a general scheme for injured workers, so far the only one, has been agreed between the Coal Board and the N.U.M.

³ Under a war-time arrangement which is still in operation, staff travelling on duty or to and from work may use road service passes on the railways and vice versa.

grew from fifty-two to sixty-nine during the first three years, and at the time of the stress on the importance of proper meal arrangements for health before the 1937 Court of Inquiry, and in its reports,¹ the pace of development quickened:

The Board have given much thought and attention to the welfare of their staff and have appointed Mr. A. W. C. Richardson as Chief Welfare Officer.²

Five hundred and sixty messrooms, and eighty-one fully-staffed canteens, of which eight had been opened during the year, were reported. Thirteen canteens were open all night, and some mobile canteens were in operation.³ The following year eighteen new canteens were provided and fifteen reconstructed. Arrangements had been made with café proprietors for the provision of meals at 350 terminal and meal relief points.⁴ War-time rationing brought renewed demand for canteens, which has continued in recent years. By the end of 1947 the number of canteens was 174 (including mobile canteens), the average number of meals served each day was 125,000, and the turnover exceeded £1¼ millions in that year. The canteen organization had become the largest of any industrial undertaking in the country, and the second largest catering establishment in London (Lyons being the largest).⁵ A five-year canteen plan was announced, which required thirty new canteens, forty-seven complete reconstructions, thirteen major and thirty-three minor alterations, the introduction of the latest catering devices, such as spring-loaded service trays, a canteen training centre at Baker Street, and the provision of new mobile canteens with saloons to seat sixteen persons.⁶

The work of the Canteen Consultative Committee has been described; London Transport now incurs about £200,000 a year in capital and overhead expenditure for the canteens.⁷ In addition to opposition to tariff increases, there have been complaints of insufficient variety of food, and even one short sit-down canteen 'strike' on that score. It would be unfair to blame the canteen management too much for that, or to suppose that there is not a highly efficient service which in general satisfies the consumer. If the customers of public establishments could organize boycotts

¹ Final Report, Cmd. 5464 of 1937, paragraph 41.

² Annual Report, 1937.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Annual Report, 1938.

⁵ Annual Report, 1947.

⁶ *London Transport Magazine*, July 1947.

⁷ *Welcome to London Transport*.

and strikes as easily as the organized body of the London Transport employees, London Transport's troubles in this matter in recent years would surely have seemed to be very minor disputes.

There are a considerable number of London Transport sports' associations catering for all forms of sport. The grounds are provided by London Transport, and two more have recently been purchased. The rental charged is roughly half the cost of maintenance. Some financial assistance is provided from the Lost Property Employees' Benefit Fund. The London Transport (Central Bus) Flying Club was started in 1931, and provided planes and pilots for the R.A.F. in war-time. It now owns three Tiger Moths at Fair Oaks, near Woking, but despite a large number of non-flying members it runs at a heavy loss. Before the war it received a subsidy under the Civil Air Guard scheme, and members would like to have assistance in meeting current inflated costs.

There are six institutes for Railway staff, and recreational facilities are provided at all tram and trolley-bus depots, at most bus canteens, and for other sections of the staff. Some sections of the staff run their own dining clubs.

At the end of the war a Personal Problems section was set up in the Welfare Department, mainly to assist with resettlement problems. It attempts to deal with any kind of personal problem. 'Nobody can do his best work if he is worried by personal troubles.'¹ Assistance provided by this section includes help in looking for housing accommodation, in bereavement, financial distress, matrimonial difficulties, or in caring for children during family illness; and advice on War Damage Claims procedure, Rent Tribunal procedure, National Insurance, and holiday accommodation. The section keep in close touch with the Benevolent Fund and with the staff hostel which provides temporary accommodation for over a hundred persons.

3. OPPORTUNITY

Formal job training is provided for a comparatively high proportion of London Transport staff (about 62%). The vast majority of the road operating staff (all drivers and conductors),

¹ *Welcome to London Transport.*

of the railway operating staff, and of the canteen staff receive such training. The proportion in other departments is much lower; training is provided for apprentices, for unit adjusters (the main semi-skilled grade among the garage inside staff), and for one or two other grades in the engineering departments. There are five training schools: for road services at Chiswick; for railway operating staff at Lambeth North; a Signal School at Earl's Court; an Apprentice School at Chiswick Works; and the Baker Street Canteen Training Centre. In addition a Training Within Industry scheme is operated for some sections of the supervisory staff; there are various voluntary classes in aspects of road and rail transport, and staff are encouraged in spare-time study for qualifications in professional or technical subjects, by training grants and salary additions in recognition of qualifications gained.

All new staff who receive formal job training are given 'background' talks as part of this training; those who receive no formal training attend 'background' courses which last up to two days. These talks and courses are intended to give the trainee a general introduction to the service and its history, and an understanding of the relation which his job bears to the whole of the London Transport system. It is intended that similar talks should be included in all refresher and promotion courses. In addition to *Welcome to London Transport* and these talks, the *London Transport Magazine*¹ should be mentioned. This, the successor of the old *Pennyfare*, is an excellently written and produced monthly, which carries not only full reports on sports and social activity, but also articles on the policy of London Transport, and on the problems, technique and development of the various departments. A weekly bulletin, 'London Transport Staff News,' is posted on the notice boards in all places of work. In 1947 the Operating Manager (Country Bus and Coaches) started a practice of holding Staff Conferences at which he and his assistants, and the union officer for that section, address groups of garages on the problems of the service, the organization of the Country Area, and similar topics. These meetings, held in the men's own time, are well attended and apparently popular.

In 1947 an internal inquiry was conducted into London

¹ 40,000 copies are sold monthly. The limiting factor is paper supply.

Transport Training, in order to discover what revision might be required, and how its functioning compared with that of other establishments. It was found that although the proportion trained was higher than elsewhere, other undertakings often had fully co-ordinated training schemes, in comparison to which London Transport schemes, which had grown up piece-meal to serve departmental needs, showed wide variation in content and methods, and differences of achievement. Recommendations included reorganization under a central officer who should co-ordinate training within the departments, which would themselves conduct the actual schemes; greater attention to the training of instructors; the development of background training; and permanent joint consultation on training with the trade unions.

Voluntary education in road transport matters is organized by the Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee on Road Transport Education, under the National Standing Joint Committee on Road Transport Education, on which sit representatives of the Municipal Passenger Transport Association, the National Road Transport Federation, the Public Transport Association and the T. & G.W.U. The national body was first set up in 1943, and classes started in the London area in 1945, under the auspices of Local Authorities, with London Transport officials acting as voluntary tutors.¹

Members of the staff who attend part-time educational classes may, subject to certain conditions, have their tuition fees and examination expenses refunded by London Transport, and in some cases leave with pay is granted to enable them to attend during working hours.

A Staff Visits scheme, under which staff from all grades and departments visit transport and other undertakings at home and abroad, has been in operation since 1947. During 1947 and 1948 parties visited Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and France, as well as many places in the United Kingdom. The programme for 1949 included visits to the U.S.A. and Canada, and to Italy. London Transport bears the cost, and selection of staff to take part is made in conjunction with the unions. Members of the parties are required to write reports on the visits, and a selection of these is published in the London

¹ *London Transport Magazine*, September 1947.

Transport Magazine. In 1948 a scheme of inter-departmental visits was started. Parties of staff from the various departments visit installations in other departments. Its aim is to stimulate interest in the whole undertaking.

The reclassification of staff represented on the Sectional Councils of the Railway Operating Department and of the Head Office has already been discussed. Promotion in other departments, and especially to the most responsible positions in all departments, is not regarded by London Transport as a matter for discussion in negotiating bodies, and is therefore better treated here.

Promotion in each department is in regulated stages, although the line of promotion in most sections is not so complex as that of the railway operating staff already described. In the Central Bus Section there are eight straightforward stages from driver or conductor to Operating Manager, although the stages of Depot Inspector and Charge Depot Inspector may be by-passed by appointment as District Inspector. In the operating departments promotion can and does lead from the lowest to the highest rung. The former Operating Manager (Trams and Trolley-buses), Mr. T. W. Towers, joined the L.C.C. tramways as a motorman (driver) in 1911, and rose through the regular stages to this position.¹ In the engineering departments the process is not so straightforward: in the first place because promotion from semi-skilled grades to craftsman, except under the present dilution agreements (most important in the post-war years), is difficult; most craftsmen are recruited from amongst qualified apprentices or from outside sources; and secondly, because for the higher technical appointments, technical qualifications are required. Semi-skilled workers and craftsmen are appointed as foremen on the basis of merit.

In the road service operating department promotion, except from conductor to driver, is entirely by suitability. The senior qualified conductor is appointed to a driving vacancy. In the railway operating department, and among other conciliation grades, promotion in the lower grades is by selection of the senior suitable applicant. For higher (supervisory and control) grades promotion is decided on suitability alone. In the engineering departments promotion to foreman and to higher posts is

¹ *London Transport Magazine*, November 1947.

also decided on suitability. In 1947 the pre-war method of selection covering clerical, technical, control and administrative grades, which had necessarily been in suspense during the war, was expanded and improved. Vacancies are advertized to the staff. Applications are sifted by the employing officer and a 'long list' is prepared. The staff on this list is then interviewed by an *ad hoc* Promotion Committee, consisting of an officer of the Staff Department, the employing officer, and an independent officer. This Committee prepares a 'short list' of three, placed in order of merit. The Employing Department then appoints one of these three.

After the war there were a number of appointments to the Junior Executive Class, a class approved in 1939 in order to create a pool, mainly of university graduates, from which, in competition with other members of the staff, higher executive posts could be filled. The scheme had been in abeyance during the war, and ended in 1947. Entrants from the universities are now recruited to the clerical grades, but receive the extra £50 a year which is paid in recognition of a degree to such recruits and to members of the staff who obtain a degree through spare-time study. A scheme for the employment of graduates as 'cadets', similar to that for the Junior Executive Class, was tried by the Combine in the twenties, and pronounced a failure.¹

London Transport summarizes its promotion policy as 'according to merit, with seniority taken into account', and claim that 'few would dispute the justice and good sense of such a policy'.² It is, however, difficult to solve a conflict by juxtaposition of words. Promotion is of the greatest importance to salaried staff, to clerical and administrative grades; many, if not the majority, of wages staff are content with their position in life, and seek economic improvement mainly through increased remuneration for their own job. Clerical and administrative workers do not neglect this method, but promotion for them is often the easiest way of advance. Charges of nepotism are notoriously easy to make in matters of selection, and railway clerks throughout the country are frequently convinced that selection is normally determined by improper considerations. The clerical and technical staff of London Transport is largely organized by the R.C.A.

¹ Johnston and Spates, *op. cit.*

² *Welcome to London Transport.*

and this attitude, however unjustifiable, is not entirely foreign to them, although union officers do not share it.¹ The only certain method of avoiding such accusations is to allow promotion to be determined entirely by seniority, though this creates more difficulties than it solves. Some check can be provided by allowing the employees' trade union officials to take part in the selection, as in certain of the government department Whitley Councils, notably in the Admiralty, where staff representatives scrutinize annual reports, and present evidence to promotion boards as regards individuals,² although many railway clerks would like to go further than this and have a seat on the board for their representative. Railway clerks, however, like many other workers, tend to favour selection by seniority. Not all union officers approve of promotion by seniority,³ but since trade union representatives are appointed or elected in order to give satisfaction to their members, participation in selection might well tend to make seniority the rule. London Transport regards the judgment of suitability as a prerogative of management, and is prepared only to give reasons for particular choices to the

¹ Mr. Barrow, London Line Secretary of the R.C.A., is reported to have said at a London Transport Line Conference of the Union: 'Although there had been some general allegations that some of the selections made by the promotion committees were unfair, little evidence had been submitted in support. The matter was discussed at a recent meeting of Sectional Council No. 1 when the chairman of the management side invited him (Mr. Barrow) to attend meetings of these committees as an onlooker. He accepted this invitation and was bound to say that as a result of what he heard and saw, he was satisfied that every care was taken by the officers concerned to be impartial in their decisions. The interviews with applicants on the short list were conducted in an easy, pleasant atmosphere, and he could find no grounds for suspicions of unfairness.' *Railway Service Journal*, January 1949.

² *Civil Service Staff Relationships*. E. N. Gladden. Hodge & Co., 1943, p. 134. An even more 'democratic' procedure was introduced in the Post Office, on an experimental basis, in 1949.

³ Mr. J. B. Figgins, General Secretary of the N.U.R., is reported to have said to a N.U.R. Women's Guild Conference in June 1948: 'In the past our Union was concerned chiefly with the question of wages, hours and conditions of service, and we did not really endeavour to obtain a larger share in the management and administration of the railways on which we worked. If we are asserting this claim, and if we are going to insist, as this organization undoubtedly does, on some share in management, then we must face up to our responsibilities. It is not just a question of talking; it is a question of facing facts, and it will mean that we shall have to shed many of the ideas we have held which stand in the way of progress and economy. In the past, for instance, we were in favour of promotion by seniority because it was the only safeguard we had against the favouritism that was rampant. Now we are claiming a real share in the administration this question of seniority must be resolutely set aside because it does not always produce the best men. There must be courage in making decisions based on the facts, and the interests of the country must take precedence over those of any persons.' *Railway Review*, July 2nd, 1948.

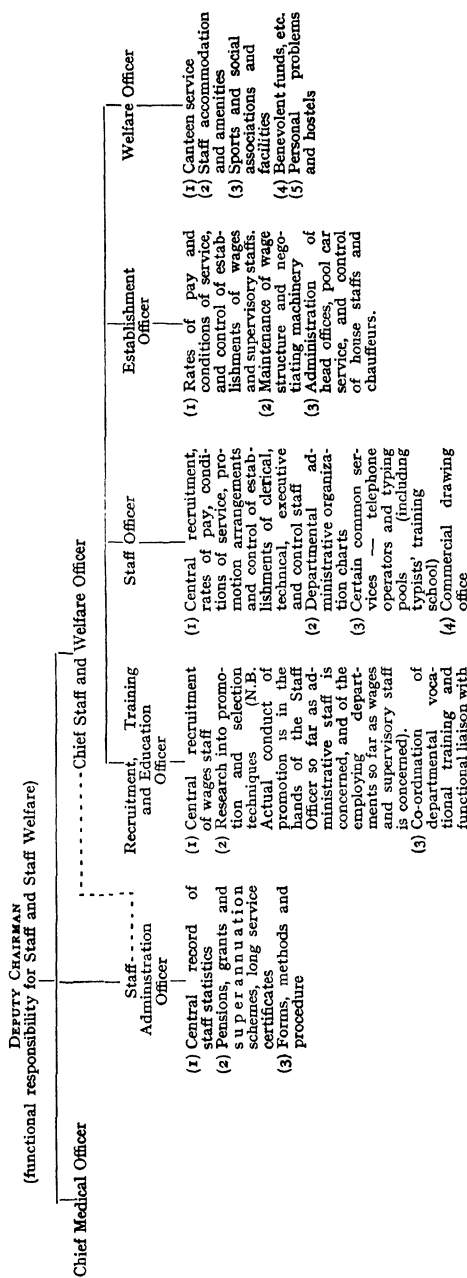
unions, if desired. The members of the R.C.A. are suspicious of what they call the new 'Civil Service' selection methods, and disliked the former Junior Executive Class, which, they felt, reduced their chance of executive appointments.

The staff of London Transport is certainly given considerable opportunity and encouragement to qualify for promotion; the methods of selection may well be the best and fairest available; but it is doubtful whether the entire staff is fully convinced that 'the system of promotion . . . manifestly gives fair opportunity for all'. Although both parties might agree that the principle of promotion by merit, with consideration of seniority, is desirable, the difference between employer and employee as to the best means of fulfilling the principle makes impossible any easy solution which would give completely general satisfaction.

4. THE STAFF AND WELFARE DEPARTMENT

The Staff and Welfare Department, whose part in negotiations has been discussed earlier, has responsibility also in many of the matters discussed in this chapter. The department has retained much of the form inherited from the Combine, and, in the earlier years, most of the Combine personnel. Under the functional structure of the present London Transport Executive, Mr. John Cliff, the Deputy Chairman, is responsible for this and for the Medical Department. Under the Chief Staff and Welfare Officer, who reports direct to Mr. Cliff, are four sections. The first, that of the Recruitment, Training and Education Officer, does not deal with the recruitment of clerical or administrative staff. It is being developed in accordance with the recommendations of the Report on Training Organization and Policy, mentioned above. Its duties also include the development of London Transport's staff relations policy, and the conduct of staff relations agencies, such as the central 'background' training courses and the staff visits scheme. It has thus largely taken over the duties of a temporary policy section, set up after the war, which was originally in charge of the development of these and similar post-war extensions of the department's activities, but has since been wound up, since its object was thought to have been achieved. The Staff Officer deals with recruitment, promotion and

STAFF AND WELFARE DEPARTMENT—LONDON TRANSPORT¹



¹ Chart prepared by the Staff and Welfare Department, London Transport.

establishment matters affecting clerical, technical, and higher staff. The Establishment Officer deals with matters affecting wages and supervisory staff other than recruitment and training. In the past his section has been mainly concerned with wages, records, and the like, but it has recently begun to assume, in regard to these sections of the staff, some of the functions of a Civil Service establishments section, such as the Staff Officer already exercises in regard to administrative staff. The most important task of the Welfare Officer's section is to manage the canteen organization; in addition it deals with other amenities, sports grounds, and personal problems. The administration of the Factory Acts is the responsibility of the Works Managers. The department is still responsible for common services, such as the typing pool, the commercial drawing office, telephone operators and staff cars and chauffeurs. The structure of the department, due partly to the organization and personalities taken over in 1933, is not entirely logical, and it might be doubted whether its system is the most effective possible. In post-war years London Transport has given the problem its attention, but initiative seems to have been somewhat lacking in this matter during the first dozen years of the Board's existence.

5. CONCLUSION

London Transport, like its predecessor, the Traffic Combine, has always been a good employer. Within the limits of its resources it has tried to do its best for its staff. There was, however, no great development of welfare services, training, and the like during the early years of the Board. There are good reasons. The Board and its officers needed time to become accustomed to their new tasks and responsibilities. Labour relations were clouded by the trouble in the Central Bus Section; it was financially impossible, the Board decided, to meet the busmen's claim, so it dug in its heels and waited. Financial difficulties also made expensive additions to the welfare services impossible, for the Board felt that, responsible as they were for a public concern, they would be no more justified in spending large sums at the expense of the London public on welfare than in spending them on a reduction of hours. But if it has been possible, since the

war, to try to improve staff relations, without great expense, by improved training, 'background' training, staff visits and increased consultation with the trade unions, similar methods might then have had some success. Before the 1937 Court of Inquiry it was possible for Mr. Bevin to extract from Mr. Pick the confession that the Board had never, as a Board, discussed the problem of the busmen's health. This did not prove negligence, as the latter was quick to point out, but if the evidence put before the Court revealed any shortcomings of the Board, it was a lack of imagination and initiative in staff and welfare matters. It is not suggested that imagination could have avoided the Coronation Strike; but perhaps more might have been done than was done.

After 1937 the Board faithfully carried out the recommendations of the Court of Inquiry on welfare matters, but it is only in post-war years that there has been an attempt to make plans in staff matters in any way comparable to the imaginative, bold and far-sighted schemes which the Board has always prepared, and, as far as possible, carried out, for the development of the London passenger transport system.

CHAPTER VII

AN APPRAISAL OF LONDON TRANSPORT'S LABOUR RELATIONS

WE have seen that London Transport has a well-articulated and well-trying system of formal and informal negotiating bodies. We have seen that the average earnings of London Transport workers, although still relatively high, have not risen so fast in the last ten years as those of workers elsewhere, or as the cost of living. We have seen that, although the Board was a party to one of the most famous industrial disputes in Britain since 1926, it was only in part, if at all, responsible for the strike, which also arose out of difficulties which the Board inherited from its predecessors, and from internal trade union politics. We have seen that London Transport has made considerable attempts in recent years to foster consultative machinery, and to develop its already good welfare services. We must now attempt to estimate the results.

It is at least clear that the most optimistic and the most pessimistic forecasts made before 1933 have not been fulfilled.

When the subject of union representation on the Board was discussed by the Joint Committee of Lords and Commons in 1931, the following dialogue occurred between Mr. Neep, representing the T. & G.W.U., and Sir Henry Maybury:

'Do you agree with this, that if and when this Board is constituted, any labour trouble between the Board and the workers in the industry will probably have more serious effects than for example if you had labour trouble to-day between the Underground and the worker on the Underground?' — 'I do not think so'. . . .

'Are you then prepared to dismiss from your mind altogether the prospect of any acute difference of opinion between the Board and the workers if the Board is formed here?' — 'I cannot conceive any serious difference arising.'¹

This prediction was not fulfilled, and it would be a bold man who could confidently assert that the workers' representation advocated by Mr. Neep could have soothed all the grievances

¹ Op. cit., p. 163, Qs. 1580, 1583.

which led up to the Coronation Strike. It is equally true, however, that the worst fears of the Committee proved groundless. On several occasions members doubted that a public board could resist the demands of so large a body of workers as the Board would employ. The Earl of Lytton, for instance, asked:

'Would the pressure to raise wages not be more difficult to resist in the case of a Board having a monopoly of the whole area than in the case of a company responsible to its shareholders?'¹

Sir Basil Peto pressed Mr. Morrison on the same point.² The advocates of the Bill tried to allay these fears, and, in the event, the Board proved perfectly competent to resist what it considered to be unjustifiable claims, and the Executive continues to do so. No one could accuse the Board of having exploited the public for the benefit of its employees.

But is it possible to make our estimate more accurate than somewhere between these two extremes?

I. MEASUREMENTS OF GOOD RELATIONS

Figures of production per head are to-day studied more carefully than ever before. Productivity is affected by many factors, but, since the blame for falling output is frequently laid on poor labour relations, rising output per head might be taken as some indication of improving relations. How far is it possible to use this measure in London Transport?

(a) *Productivity*

There is no simple measurement for productivity in a passenger transport undertaking. It is possible to record the number of car miles run by the undertaking's vehicles, but this will not reveal variations in the number of passengers carried, upon which the value of the service, and the income of the undertaking, depend. It is possible to make a fairly accurate estimate of the number of journeys originating on an undertaking's system, or better still an estimate of the number of passenger miles supplied (or rather paid for). This latter figure is the product of the number of (paying) passengers carried and the average distance travelled by each passenger (measured in miles); its shortcoming

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197. Q. 2054.

² *Ibid.*, p. 494. Qs. 5566, 5567, 5568.

is that it fails to show variations in the quality of service provided, an important matter in recent years. An increase in the figure for passenger miles compared with that for car miles may well indicate a genuine increase in productivity—an increase in the utilization of the service; it may also indicate overcrowding, long queues, delays, and bad tempers. The two measurements, however, are the best available, and if used together, each serves as a rough check upon the other. The measurement of passenger service car miles is straightforward (a certain number of 'empty' car miles must be run, but the total is negligible). Passenger miles are calculated by multiplying the number of passengers originating at each fare (obtained by grossing up detailed estimates in February and July to give a yearly total), by an estimate of average distance 'paid for' (the average maximum distance the passenger is entitled to travel for that fare), and aggregating the resulting products for all fare values. Comparison is made with the total staff employed by London Transport; this again is not an entirely satisfactory figure to use, since an increase in say, canteen staff, may even increase productivity, by improving work, through better provision of meals, while seemingly reducing the car miles or passenger miles per person employed. The relevant figures, taken from the Board's Annual Reports, and the two indices of productivity, are given in the table opposite.

These indices must be interpreted with care. The figures for 1936-37 reflect the effect of the Coronation Strikes. It would probably be incorrect to infer from the table that productivity fell in the two subsequent years. The 1935-40 New Works Programme had then got into its stride, and although most of the work was done under contract, it necessitated an increase in the Board's engineering staff. Total railway staff, for instance, rose from 15,905 in 1937-38 to 18,514 in 1938-39, an increase accounting for the major part of the rise of the Board's total staff. Railway car miles rose from 171.5 million in 1937-38 to 173.9 million in 1938-39, a much smaller percentage increase, due not to inefficiency, but to the construction of new underground railways and stations. The programme could not be completed on time, due to the outbreak of war. The fall in the index figures cannot be in any way attributed to the new agreement of 1937 which eased the conditions of work of Central Busmen. Total

Year	A Total staff at end of year	B Car miles 000,000	C Passenger miles 000,000	Productivity 1 B/A	Productivity 2 C/A
1933-34	75,468 100	514.6 100		100	
1934-35	77,500 103	533.8 104		101	
1935-36	77,896 103	546.7 106		103	
1936-37	81,765 108	544.6 106		98	
1937-38	82,833 110	567.0 110		100	
1938-39	86,456 114	573.4 111	8,648 100	97	100
1940	78,092 103	(475.4) (92)	7,211 83	(89)	93
1941	80,071 106	(482.1) (94)	7,829 91	(88)	99
1942	76,263 101	(469.5) (91)	8,651 100	(90)	114
1943	75,433 100	458.2 89	9,210 106	89	122
1944	76,810 102	461.1 90	8,914 103	88	118
1945	85,610 113	479.1 93	9,805 113	82	115
1946	93,656 124	578.9 112	11,479 133	90	124
1947	96,963 129	611.5 119	11,334 131	92	117
1948	(100,798) (134)	(648.2) (126)	(12,885) (149)	(94)	(128)

Notes:

¹ Passenger Service Car Miles figures for 1940-41 and '42 are calculated on a slightly different basis, owing to the Railway Control Agreement, and are therefore not strictly comparable. The figures for 1948 are also on a slightly different basis, owing to the transfer of joint lines during that year.

² The Board has not published estimates of passenger miles for the period 1933-38, and the index given is therefore based on 1938-39. From rough estimates made by the Board's research department the two indices seem to run roughly parallel in the pre-war years.

³ The Board's financial and statistical year before the war was July-June. From 1940 on, it fell in with Main Line practice under the Railway Control Agreement.

Central Bus and Country Services car miles rose from 279·7 million in 1935-36 to 286·7 million in 1938-39 (the 1936-37 figures show a fall due to the Coronation Strike), an increase of 2·5%. From June 30th, 1936, to June 30th, 1939, Country Service staff increased negligibly, from 5,650 to 5,686; Central Bus Staff increased from 36,740 to 39,180, an increase of 7%, but this again was almost entirely due to the New Works Programme, since the number of Central Bus drivers and conductors rose from 24,431 at June 30th, 1937, to 25,126 at June 30th, 1939, a 2·8% increase.

The interpretation of the war-time figures is difficult, since the passenger-mile figures represents alterations in the habits of the population of London (evacuation, etc.) and of government policy, e.g. the restriction of private motoring. The figures for car-miles also varied, in the main, according to government policy, to restrictions on the use of coal for electricity generation, and even more to restriction of the use of petrol and fuel oil, and to the need to economize rubber. These factors explain the decline in the number of car miles run. Passenger miles fell sharply with evacuation, and then steadily increased, as population returned and motoring declined, through the later years of the war, and, after a slight uncertainty, on into the post-war years. Restrictions necessarily decreased the number of car-miles run per employee, and thus reduced the productivity of the employees, as measured in these terms. Restrictions on petrol, oil and rubber may be equally effective whether less vehicles run per hour, or whether the same number of vehicles run over a shorter number of hours. The first method is the most economical, since staff can be reduced in step with the reduction of services; but this method was not open to London Transport, since vehicles are most effectively used at the two peak periods, and passengers at these periods tended to increase, due to the growth of employment during the war. London Transport was therefore compelled to economize by drastic reduction of off-peak services, thus conserving fuel and rubber, but wasting staff. This could be partially, but only partially, compensated by the increase of spread-over working introduced by agreement for the war period. Car miles fell off less rapidly on the railways than on the road services. Between 1938-39 and 1947 the productivity

of all services, measured in car miles, fell by 5%. The number of car-miles for the railways alone rose from 173·8 to 204·7 millions, an increase of 18%. Total staff employed on the railways increased from 18,514 to 19,913, an increase of 8%. Car miles per employee in this department thus increased by 10%. The reason for this is, in part, that the practice of uncoupling cars during mid-day off-peak periods was abandoned during these years, and in part that, despite restricted use of coal for the generation of electricity, and restricted services due to the operation of flood-gates during air-raids, railway services have been much less cut down than road services, and car miles fell in 1944, the worst year, to 92% of the 1938-39 figure, whereas Central Bus car mileage had fallen to 68% over the same period. It has thus been possible to utilize staff more effectively, and this difference has continued in post-war years, since petrol and fuel oil shortages remain and the road service equipment, as we have seen, is badly in need of replacement. The underground had the advantage of starting the war in the later stages of a great expansion of capital equipment, and this programme was taken up again immediately after the war. It is therefore to be expected that the railways should have improved their relative position. It was, after all, the main purpose of the London Transport to co-ordinate passenger transport services in order that it might be possible to make, in the public interest, fuller use of the possibilities of underground railway travel than competition allowed.

Petrol and fuel oil shortages remain, and road service equipment, due to steel shortage and lack of replacements, is still below its pre-war position, and therefore far from allowing the expansion of services which is required to absorb adequately the greatly increased volume of travel. Thousands of new entrants, due to the rapid expansion, and change, of staff have had to be trained and absorbed.¹ Thus pre-war and post-war conditions remain incomparable, and no great significance can be attached to the smaller number of car miles run to-day per employee compared with 1934 or 1939.

The financial results of the Board offer almost no assistance in

¹ Although in 1946 the staff increased by some 8,000 there were 20,000 new entrants, due to the increased labour turnover following on departure of female labour and relaxation of E.W.O. Annual Report, 1946.

the attempt to estimate its achievement. In the pre-war years traffic receipts grew in step with the growth of services, and operating expenses increased at roughly the same rate, so that it was never possible to pay the full amount on 'C' stock. During the war fares were deliberately kept down, so that the Board, taking into account its obligations under the Railway Control Agreement, ran at a loss, in the early years of the war at a very heavy loss.¹ Since the war fares have been increased, but only to about 30% above the level of August 1939. There has, however, been a great expansion in the number of passengers carried per vehicle, so that London Transport is now operating at a profit. On balance, it is clear that Londoners are provided with a relatively far cheaper service than before the war, or under the Combine; that this cheapness is possible owing to a considerable increase in passenger miles per vehicle and per employee (an increase which may, in part, be a real increase in productivity, and which certainly, in part or wholly, represents a reduction in quality of service), and, to a lesser extent, to a less rapid rate of advance of the earnings of London Transport employees compared with those of the working population of the country as a whole.²

Between 1924 and 1929 the number of those employed by the Combine increased from 41,700 to 44,549, and car miles increased from 227 millions to 281 millions. The number of car miles per employee therefore increased by 16% over that period. In 1924 the average earnings of a Combine employee was £3 17s. 9d. per week, and in 1929 £4 3s. 7d. per week; over this period the official cost of living (at that time a fairly useful guide) fell by 7%.³ The undertakings of London Transport, however, are not the same as those of the Combine, and the 1924-29 period was a period of profitable expansion and of technical development in road transport unequalled before or since, and there is no reason to suppose that these factors are insufficient in themselves to explain what seems at first sight to be a remarkable contrast.

¹ See p. 100.

² See p. 95.

³ Spates and Johnston, *op. cit.* The authors attribute these advances to 'rationalization and mechanization'. It must be noted that these figures for earnings are not comparable with the average figure for London Transport weekly paid staff for 1933-34 (£3 17s. 6d.), or for later years. London Transport, for instance, included the lower paid Country Services.

This essay into statistics had not proved very fruitful. The productivity of the Board has not increased as rapidly as did that of the Combine; it is, in fact, difficult to estimate whether productivity has increased or declined since 1933. It is therefore quite impossible to estimate the part which the efforts of the staff, and the steps taken by the Board to improve relations with the staff and the welfare of the staff, have played in increasing or decreasing the output of the undertaking. It may well be that improved working conditions and hours of service have had some effect in reducing car-miles per employee, but whatever effect these changes have had has been more than compensated by the relative lower rate of increase of the earnings of London Transport employees compared with those of other workers, a reduction which has played an important part in providing Londoners with a much cheaper (in real terms), if less convenient, transport service than that of the Combine or of the Board's earlier years.

(b) *The Quality of Service*

It is now commonly said, for instance in letters to *The Times*, that the quality of the service given by London Transport staff has declined since before the war. The volume of complaints from the public, in general, and in relation to staff, have certainly increased considerably.

In 1946-48 there was a progressive increase in the total number of public complaints over the 1938 figure, but the total for 1948 represents no more than 1 complaint per 100,000 passengers carried, and it includes a large number of letters regarding the inadequacy of particular services which are representations or requests rather than complaints.

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS PER MILLION PASSENGER JOURNEYS
(all forms of transport)

1938	1947	1948
7.77	9.76	9.85

Complaints against staff have also increased since 1938, but in a smaller proportion than the increase in total complaints. Moreover this increase has not been progressive: the final figures for

1948 are lower than those for 1947, and represent well under 1 complaint for each 300,000 passengers carried.

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST STAFF PER MILLION PASSENGERS CARRIED
(all forms of transport)

1938	1947	1948
2.57	3.18	2.94

Information supplied by the Staff and Welfare Department London Transport.

The workers themselves, in 1944,¹ showed their awareness of a decline in good relations with the public, but found the fault partly in their own war-time conditions of work, and partly in the war-time difficulties of the public. The black-out and air-raids have ceased, but the vehicle shortage is greater than during the war, queues and standing passengers remain, and rationing and other restrictions still shorten the nation's temper. If a conductor seems surly, or a driver closes up on the bus in front, in order to leave the queues for the man behind, the public may be equally at fault. Indeed some conductors have resigned in the last few years on the grounds that they could no longer put up with the passengers, an event previously unrecorded. In 1947 the Board started a 'Courtesy Aids Service' drive, in which, as we have seen, the staff co-operated, and its officers are of the opinion that it has already had considerable effect. Moreover, consumer complaints are not always a good index of the quality of service. Since the general introduction of the five-day week, the 'complaints' post on Monday mornings has greatly increased; and special commendations from the public have risen with complaints. There is no good evidence for saying that the quality of service has deteriorated faster than the deterioration of equipment has justified.

(c) *Labour Turnover*

There may be other ways of assessing the relationship between employer and employee than in its effect on output. One measurement used is that of labour turnover. It is arguable that, allowing for complicating factors, a decrease in labour turnover shows an increased attachment of employee to employer, although this attachment may reflect an alteration in national or local unemployed percentages, a housing shortage, or increased

¹ See p. 144.

removal costs, or indeed the effectiveness of government regulations, as much as an improved industrial relationship.

There are no full records of the rate of turnover of London Transport staff, but figures for road service staff are available for certain periods.

ROAD SERVICES WEEKLY PAID STAFF ANNUAL WASTAGE¹
(Per cent.)

	<i>Central buses</i>	<i>Country Services</i>	<i>T. & T.</i>
December 1934—March 1935	2.12	4.79	3.45
March 1935—June 1935	2.27	3.89	2.86
		<i>All sections</i>	
July—October 1937		3.3	
October—December 1937		3.16	
December 1937—March 1938		2.70	
		<i>All Sections (drivers and conductors)</i>	
Year 1945		20.1	
Year 1946		25.5	
Year 1947		17.5	
Year 1948		10.0	

Notes:

- (1) Figures are based on the number of staff on payrolls at the beginning of each period and the total wastage during the period expressed as a rate per annum.
- (2) Figures for 1937–38 include staff discharged as redundant. All other figures exclude such staff.
- (3) Transfers within the undertaking are ignored in the pre-war figures, but included in the 1945–48 figures which, therefore, are to some extent inflated in comparison.
- (4) The figures for 1946 reflect the heavy post-war wastage, including the very high proportion of resignations among female conductors.

This wastage is mainly of new employees, who, after a comparatively brief trial, find that the job is, for whatever reason, unsuitable. Such value as the figures have does not appear to be vitiated by an increase of retirements on completion of service, due to increasing age of staff. It is well-known that the average age of bus employees was low in the twenties, when motor-bus services were rapidly expanding, and has increased since. The following table shows, however, that although wastage due to this has increased faster than total staff on the road services, it remains a low proportion of total wastage.

Wastage was low in the early years of the Board, and has run at a much higher (though declining) figure since the war. The post-war figures, however, in a period of the relaxation of

¹ Figures supplied by the Staff and Welfare Department, London Transport.

Essential Work Orders, and of full, if not over-, employment, are quite incomparable with the earlier series.

ROAD SERVICE WAGES STAFF WASTAGE¹

<i>Period</i>	<i>A</i> <i>Total staff at beginning of period</i>	<i>B</i> <i>Total wastage (excluding staff discharged as redundant)</i>	<i>B as percentage of A</i>	<i>C</i> <i>Wastage through retirement on completion of service</i>	<i>C as percentage of A</i>
<i>All Road Service Wages Staff</i>					
July 1937—Oct. 1937	41,900	313	0.75%	34	0.081%
Oct. 1937—Dec. 1937	41,812	292	0.70%	28	0.067%
<i>Drivers and Conductors only</i>					
June 1947—Sept. 1947	44,627	1,714	3.84%	70	0.157%
Oct. 1947—Dec. 1947	45,402	883	1.93%	91	0.200%

It is interesting to note that in recent years London Transport has received a considerable number of re-applications for employment from persons who have resigned. From January 1st to June 30th, 1949, 240 road service drivers and 543 conductors asked to be re-engaged. In the same period 737 drivers and 1535 conductors left the service from all causes. Thus re-applications came to a third of total wastage, although London Transport discourages casual movements of labour of this kind, and employees are told that, if they leave, it is unlikely that they will be re-engaged.

Comparison with other industries is possible. Since its issue of October 1948 the *Ministry of Labour Gazette* has provided a series of figures (starting in July 1948) for labour turnover in certain manufacturing industries. The first six months of this series (up to January 1st, 1949) showed that the number of discharges and other losses, expressed as a percentage of staff employed at the beginning of each monthly period, were running, for males, at an annual figure of 25%—26%, and, for all workers, at an annual figure of 32%—33%. In so far as the figures for London Transport road service staff are comparable with these, they show up very favourably, and the natural conclusion is confirmed by the continued attractiveness of work for London Transport in

¹ Figures supplied by the Staff and Welfare Department, London Transport.

the post-war period of full employment. There has been no general difficulty in engaging staff,¹ or in continuing to exercise selection in engagements. If wastage rates may be taken as an indication of labour relations, these figures suggest that labour relations in London Transport are better than the average of British industry, but they cannot be used to show whether relations have improved or worsened since 1933.

2. OTHER EVIDENCE

Qualitative evidence does not enable us to add much to this conclusion. London Transport is proud of its war record. During the war, members of the staff performed deeds of heroism, and long days of arduous and unusual labour, in order to maintain the public service, as often as, but not perhaps not more often than, other people. When routes were bombed, the staff on occasion prepared and worked emergency schedules; initiative was shown by other groups of workers. London Transport staff worked long hours, and increased spread-overs; but at overtime rates, or for increased spread-over payments. There is no reason to infer that the good war record of London Transport's staff is better than that of other groups of workers.

There is little evidence that the attitude of the employees to their work or to London Transport has changed under public ownership. The effect of attitudes to work might be visible in figures of the quantity and quality of service, which, as we have seen, do not lead us to suppose that there has been a great change since 1933; it might also be visible in 'restrictive practices'. Trade union restrictive practices are frequently discussed to-day, but the nature of the practices is usually left conveniently vague. The chief restrictive practice, if it should be classed as such, and not as indiscipline, in road passenger transport, is failure to maintain correct spacing between vehicles, thus avoiding passengers. How far London Transport workers are guilty of this can only be judged, if at all, from figures of complaints. This is not, however, a trade union restrictive practice, since it is condemned by the union as much as by London Transport. The rules

¹ Early in 1950 London Transport found difficulty in recruiting conductors in certain areas, and discussions were proceeding with the union concerning the engagement of additional female conductors,

giving a figure beyond which the average scheduled week for each service fleet must not go, or limiting spread-over duties to a given percentage, the similar rules for railway operation, and the craft union rules for the type of labour to be employed on given engineering jobs, are mentioned by London Transport officers as examples of restrictive practices upheld by the unions. The refusal of the railway operating staff to allow Sunday to be rostered in the working week may also be regarded in this light. If the disguised demand for increased pay, not very successfully hidden in the pressure for penalty payments, were canalized into a demand for straight time-rate increases, the distorting effect of heavy losses through Sunday operation, which the public continues to require, on the services provided by London Transport, and by other transport undertakings, might be avoided. Officers of London Transport argue that the advantages which the workers gain from these rules and restrictions are heavily outweighed by the disadvantages to the public service. Whether this is true or not, London Transport employees and their unions do not seem to have shown an increasing readiness to meet their employer in this matter, except for war-time dilution and increased spread-over agreements, which were paralleled elsewhere. If they are restrictive practices, they have been continued in recent agreements.

There does not appear to have been any marked change in the attitude of the workers to their employer. Up to 1948 London Transport officers, and union officials, 'lay' and full-time, seemed to be in agreement that the attitude of employees towards London Transport had not altered greatly, if at all, over the years since 1933, or since the days of the Combine. There is nothing necessarily derogatory in this. London Transport has been a good public servant, and a good employer, but the same could be said, and was said, of the Combine, which was certainly a private company, or group of companies.

Some officers of London Transport, however, feel that during 1949 a change became noticeable. During that year, despite a number of difficult negotiations over applications for increases which were in most cases refused, there were no disputes after the road service strike on the first Saturday of January.¹ The

¹ pp. 134-135.

conflict between the T. & G.W.U. and its Communist members was settled without any serious difficulty for London Transport. Moreover, the use of consultative methods led to considerable successes in the solution of the problems of bus allocation, of canteen charges, of redundancy at Chiswick Works, and of the South London Conversion Scheme.¹ Similar results have been achieved by similar methods in private undertakings, and success has no doubt been aided by the favour in which joint consultative methods are currently held, but it may be that the atmosphere of public service and the attitude of the unions to nationalization has helped. Union officers agree that 1949 has been a year of good industrial relations; but it is too early to say more than that there has been an improvement in industrial relations as the main post-war difficulties of the undertaking are being overcome.

We may conclude that the machinery of negotiation has been elaborated and improved; both London Transport and the unions have deliberately fostered good relations between officers on both sides, and in recent years more formal consultative methods have been used with some good results; training and welfare services have been developed; but there is not as yet much to show that this has radically affected the attitude of the staff to their work or their employer.

3. HAS LONDON TRANSPORT HAD ENOUGH TIME?

The London Passenger Transport Board was in existence for fourteen and a half years, six of which were years of war. The effective amalgamation of the constituent undertakings required time; the unification of rates of pay and conditions of service was a long process. The officers of the Board had to adapt themselves to the new tasks imposed by amalgamation and by public ownership. The early years were overshadowed by the inherited labour troubles of the Central Bus Section. Has London Transport yet had enough time to show whether or not public ownership will bring the advance in labour relations that its supporters have predicted?

This difficulty is a real one. Those who, after a few years' or even a few months' experience, convict the Coal Board or the

¹ See Chapter v.

Railway Executive of failure in these matters, are guilty of a hasty judgment, which may be understandable, especially if they are employees of those undertakings hoping for rapid improvement, but is nevertheless silly. Human institutions and human relations grow, and growth takes time.

On the other hand, if there is anything in the socialist predictions of improved labour relations under nationalization, the most patient of us would have expected some results by now.¹ The last sixteen years have not been easy years; can we expect the next sixteen years to provide a much more favourable environment for social experiment? If results could not be expected in such a period and under such conditions, socialist predictions must be radically revised, and socialism will lose much of its appeal.

It is not impossible that the predicted improvements are yet to come. If so, the time for judgment is still in the future. But after sixteen years, it is excusable to look for other reasons for their absence.

4. WAS THIS TRUE NATIONALIZATION?

If we conclude that there has been no great improvement in labour relations in London Transport, can we attribute this to shortcomings in the form of public ownership? To many supporters of public ownership, the financial obligations of the Board, the method of its selection, its freedom from ministerial control, and the lack of representation for its employees, made the London Passenger Transport Act of 1933 something short of full nationalization; or, if it was nationalization, short of socialization. There were therefore some who supposed that the nationalization of London Transport took place on January 1st, 1948, rather than on July 1st, 1933. The Transport Act 1947 certainly included London Transport in the vast undertaking of the British Transport Commission, and the inclusion of London Transport in this great monopoly may have important effects, both in general and in staff matters,² but an increase in size

¹ Unless we held, with the syndicalists, that nationalization has nothing to do with socialism, or, with the guild socialists, that nationalization is only one of the steps towards the industrial democracy which will bring the results.

² Consider, for instance, the effect on London Transport wages if the Commission decided that its obligation to treat all the business it carries on as one undertaking involved a national 'levelling-up' of wages.

cannot, by itself, constitute nationalization. The Act also subjected London Transport, through the Commission, to the direction of the Minister to a greater extent than before. If this constitutes nationalization, then nationalization is not such a great change as most of its supporters believed.

Lord Latham, the new chairman, wrote of the change:

We are now part of a much larger team, and it is our special responsibility to carry into this wider field the fine traditions of public service which have been inherited from the London Passenger Transport Board. Nationalization in itself can accomplish little; it is what we make of it that matters. By our continued co-operation in this worth-while job of providing transport for London's millions we can play our part in the national effort—and further enhance London Transport's already high reputation for public service. Nationalization is at once our challenge and our opportunity.¹

Union journals paid considerable attention to the Act and to vesting day, but wrote almost entirely of its implications for the Main Line railways, and road transport other than London passenger transport. The workers do not seem to have been impressed, except to see reason for demanding higher wages, pension provisions and the extension to themselves of certain facilities granted to workers in other transport undertakings. Some union officials of London Transport workers echoed Lord Latham's conclusion; they felt that the Act gave grounds for requiring improved service from London Transport workers, and felt that it was their task, along with London Transport officers, to encourage this development.

The attitude of one group of London Transport staff at least has not changed since vesting day. One employee, writing of road passenger transport as a whole, has said:

The 'set-up' in those sections of the industry already nationalized is causing a good deal of disquiet. The promised closer co-operation and consultation with the unions, the wider and more personal contacts between the management and the men, are just not being realized. Suggestions and requests already made by the men through their representatives for those things which under private enterprise were considered 'managerial functions' are still considered 'managerial functions' by those who have been chosen to manage the industry.²

¹ *London Transport Magazine*, January, 1948.

² 'Developing Crisis in the Road Passenger Transport Industry' by 'A London Busman' in the issue of July 24th, 1948, of *World News and Views*, the Communist weekly.

Mr. J. W. Jones, the busmen's leader, said of the 1948 increase of prices in London Transport's canteens:

It is the old, old story of passing the buck on to the workers. The increase should have been met by the profits of the industry and not by the consumers.¹

But this was the view of a minority.

Could the results predicted of public ownership have been obtained if London Transport had acted differently, or been differently constituted with different powers? Perhaps the attitude of the employees would have been more favourable to the Board and to public service, if 1933 had brought higher wages and great improvements, in hours and conditions of work; but those who argue, with Mr. Ernest Davies,² that the financial obligations of the Board prevented proper consideration of the workers' demands, must remember that London Transport workers' earnings were well above those of most other workers in 1937; that even a drastic scaling down of interest rates on London Transport stock would not have created unlimited funds for expenditure on the staff; and that, although further increases for the 80,000 employees of the Board before the war might not have immediately involved a large increase in national expenditure, the long-term implications of high earnings in publicly controlled industry for an economy moving towards increased public ownership might be much more serious.

We have seen that the Board, although a 'good employer', followed a conservative policy in welfare matters during its first years. Should it have attempted to imitate the most advanced firms in private industry, such as Cadbury's, Lever Brothers, or the I.C.I.? Long-term contracts of employment might have had little effect in an organization in which, as we have seen, security of employment was already largely assured. The expense of the provision of housing accommodation, of improved pensions schemes, or the payment of special bonus rates above the rates agreed with the unions, would have had to be met. Moreover, trade unions have not shown themselves favourable to provisions of this kind, which are, after all, attempts by highly profitable monopolies to demonstrate to their employees that, although they are favourable to trade unionism, and although they are ready to

¹ *Daily Worker*, August 18th, 1948.

² *Op. cit.*

deal with any unions which have a genuine claim to represent their staff, they themselves are in fact able to do better for their staff than can the unions, whose proper task is to deal with low rates and bad conditions elsewhere. The unions representing I.C.I. craftsmen, for instance, negotiate only basic rates of pay, and disregard the bonus payments under the I.C.I.'s scheme for job appraisement; the unions push up basic rates as far as they can; if the employer can pay additional bonuses, they cannot prevent him, but they dislike the practice, since they fear it may tend to weaken the union's hold on the men. It is doubtful indeed if London Transport would have been able to follow such a policy with workers so strongly organized as the busmen, tramwaymen and railway workers, whose representatives would surely have pitched their demands at such a level as to make every concession of London Transport seem a concession wrung from them by the unions.

If higher incomes and more costly welfare provisions are the solution, publicly owned industries at the moment possess no special advantage; some private employers can afford to do better than they can, for a nationalized industry must take over the least efficient, as well as the most efficient, firm. The economic benefits of co-ordination and control may in the long run enable nationalized industries to outdo the private sector, but so long as the industries chosen for nationalization are the least profitable, are under obligation to pay interest on compensation stock, and 'taking one year with another', to balance their accounts, and are expected to follow a low price policy, this event may be considerably delayed. The difficulties of the Board in the 'thirties may have been due to high fixed interest charges; the provisions of the Transport Act and the other nationalization acts allow more flexibility; but there is still a point and not a remote one, at which a nationalized industry, under whatever form of management, must cease expanding its expenditure on staff if it is to meet its obligations, except in so far as increased efficiency or increased charges permit improvement. If charges are raised to finance improvements for the staff of public monopolies a serious moral problem is raised. Is the management of such a monopoly justified in improving its relations with its own workers at the expense of other workers who pay the

charges? Even if improvements are financed by increased efficiency, has not the public an equal right to share in the benefits from the efficiency of a public concern?

The effect on London Transport of a radically different constitution from that laid down by the Acts of 1933 or 1947 is clearly a matter for guessing. There were never demands for an industrial democracy as pure as that desired by the authors of the *Miners' Next Step*, and the Busmen's Rank and File Movement does not appear to have elaborated any demands of that sort, although it criticized the existing structure and personnel. During the discussion of the London Passenger Transport Bill, however, the T. & G.W.U. desired greater representation, and direct representation, for the employees of the Board. The Communist Party, whose views on London Transport in its early years were, of course, close to those of the Rank and File Movement, attacked the treatment of the Board's employees, the financial provisions of the 1933 Act, the salaries paid to members of the Board, and, more surprisingly, the services provided by the Board:

The Board has cut down and is still cutting down the transport services, because the buses, trams, and underground pay best when every vehicle is carrying the maximum number of passengers all the time. Eventually if the Board were allowed to have a free hand, there would be standing passengers on every vehicle at all times of the day.¹

The Communist Party proposed, as a solution of London Transport's problems, higher wages, shorter hours, reduction of interest rates and 'the right of London Municipal Authorities² to appoint five members of the Board, and the right of the Board's employees to appoint two, the whole Board to consist of seven'.³ Something like this appears to remain, or to have become again since in 1947 their party ceased to support the Labour Government, the goal of the Communists amongst the London Transport employees.

The Board was not representative, nor is its successor, the Executive, and Mr. Cliff was and is a member as an individual

¹ Arthur Downton, *The London Transport Scandal*, London District Committee, Communist Party, June, 1936.

² Presumably it was hoped to get further labour representatives from a Labour L.C.C. and Labour Boroughs.

³ *Ibid.*

with certain qualifications; however much he has improved personal relationships, there is no evidence that he was responsible for major alterations in London Transport's wages policy. Direct representatives, however, must have regard for the views of their constituents, and two consequences of alterations of the sort suggested by the T. & G.W.U. in 1931 and by the Communist Party can be predicted with some degree of confidence. Firstly, the demands of the workers would have received further support, and there would thus, presumably, have been increased pressure to revise the Act to reduce interest charges. London Transport workers do not appear to have ever been entirely satisfied with their pay and conditions—certainly they were not in 1937; certainly they are not now. Who, indeed, is? The second probable consequence would, therefore, have been, in so far as trade union representatives failed to satisfy their members, an increase in the conflict between rank and file and leadership within the union. As we have seen, from 1932 to 1937 the Rank and File Movement strove to get official endorsement of their various demands, which were narrowed down to the 7-hour, and later the 7½-hour, day, and Executive and officials strove to obtain their members' acceptance of their decisions and agreements negotiated by them; neither side showed a strict regard for the constitution of the union in pursuing its objects. There is no need to infer blame; the moral choice before a constitutional leader who is faced with the need for decision between the act which he believes to be right and unconstitutional, and that which he thinks constitutional but wrong, is not easy, and the careful drafting of trade union rules, to restrain the official from action before consulting his members, makes such a situation more likely for the trade union leader than, perhaps, the British parliamentary leader. Had the Board been constituted according to the wishes either of the T. & G.W.U. or the Communist Party, it seems probable that a new source of conflict would have been added, that both sides would have tried to influence the workers' representatives on the Board, and to control their decisions. Had the representatives been appointed by union Executives, the rank and file would have further objects of criticism, and the union Executives more decisions to defend before the members; had the representatives been elected directly

by the membership, the union Executives and officials would, no doubt, have had considerable difficulty in impressing their views on them. What effect direct representation might have had in other matters, or figures of car-miles and passenger-miles, on the quality of service, on the number of strikes, on methods of consultation, and so on is plainly a subject only for guessing.

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5. CONCLUSION

Whatever a differently constituted Board might have done, and whatever the omissions of which London Transport has been guilty, we may conclude that, although London Transport may have served the public as well as, or better than, a private employer could have done, it has not so far achieved relations with its staff markedly better than in the old Traffic Combine, or markedly better than under good employers in other industries; it has not, so far, shown that the public corporation provides an adequate and permanent solution to the problems of relations between employer and employed, between union and management.

It may be that London Transport has not had enough time, and that it will yet provide the solution. It may be that a radically different form of public ownership would have brought a quicker advance (although there is no evidence that direct workers' representation would not have made matters worse, rather than better). Or it may be that the public corporation has no special advantages in this respect; that, although both sides have done their best (certain shortcomings excepted) to promote good relations, the results predicted of nationalization have not been obtained because they could not be; that such results should not have been expected. If this is true it does not follow that other public corporations will not effect improvements in labour relations. Relations in the mining industry before 1947 were notoriously bad, and the National Coal Board might improve them greatly without advancing beyond the standard of London Transport, or of the old Traffic Combine. But if it is true it follows that the road to the Utopia of the industrial democrats does not lie this way, if indeed there is such a road.

