

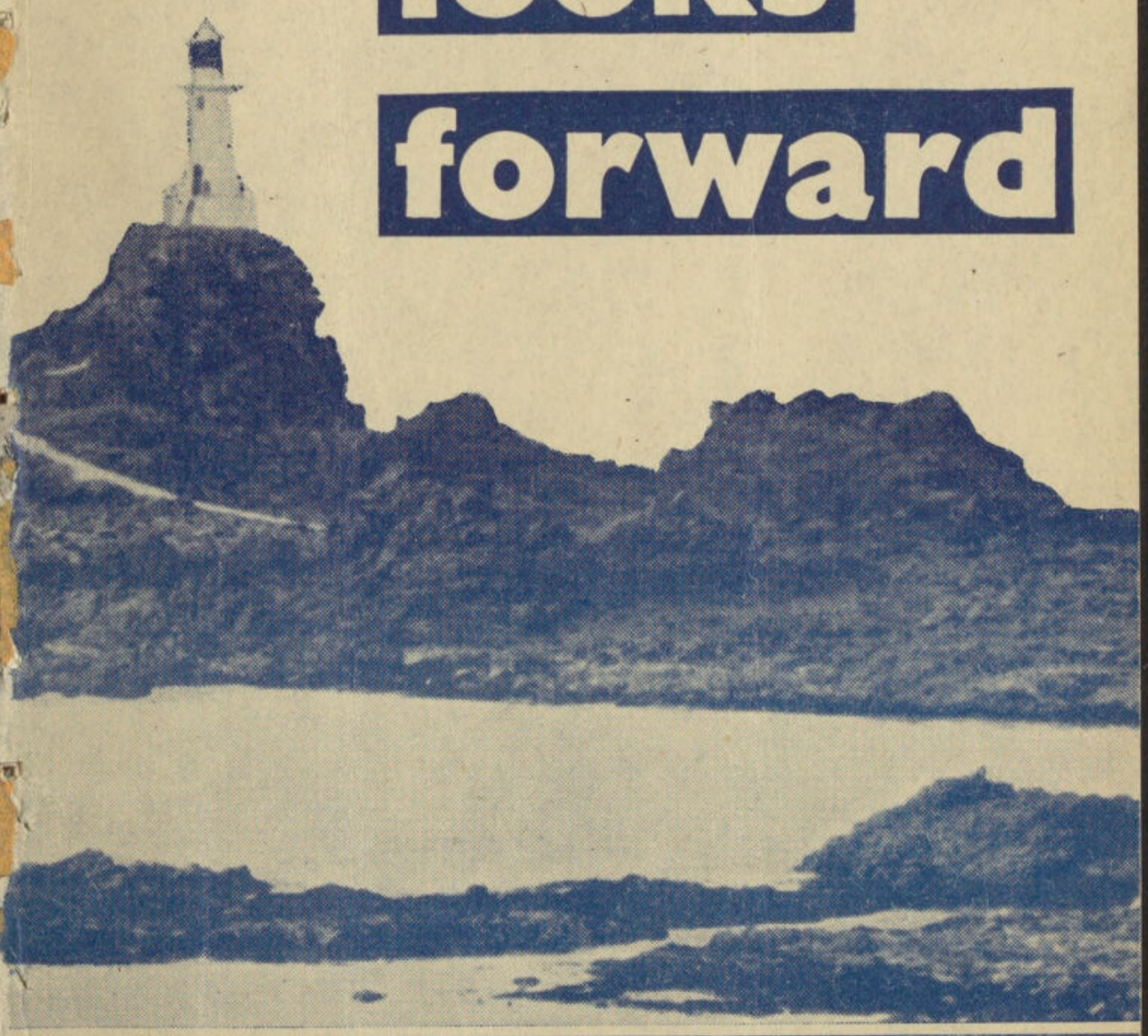
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Jersey

looks

forward



By N. S. LE BROcq

With a Foreword by HARRY POLLITT

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FOREWORD

JERSEY
LOOKS
FORWARD

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FOREWORD

It would be well if this book could be read far and wide outside Jersey—and by those whose sole idea of Jersey people has been that of an industrious and kindly folk.

Industrious and kindly they certainly are. But this stirring account of some of their struggles during the last hundred years or so shows them to be something more. Here is a people with a militant outlook in the finest traditions of the British and other working-class movements.

Their past suggests that we shall be hearing more of them in this period of building the new world. It has also a lesson—that big things can be achieved even by limited forces in a small place, an inspiring example to many working and living under circumstances vastly more favourable to the movement.

During five dark years of the Nazi jackboot, when so many of those in high places in Jersey proved true to type and collaborated with the Nazi scum, the ordinary people of the Island were carrying on the struggle against the hated invaders with the same patience, skill and heroism of the great European liberation movements.

The very fact of those deeds is the surest guarantee of the future. Jersey's people, like the working people everywhere, will have learned much from their experiences in the fight against Fascism. It is safe to say that they will keep admirably in step with the world-wide onward march of democracy towards Socialism.

HARRY POLLITT

JERSEY LOOKS FORWARD

By N. S. Le Brocq

CHAPTER I BEGINNINGS

1

“On Monday morning, very early, St. Helier, usually so calm and busy, was thrown into alarm by the news that all workers had downed tools and that everything pointed to a serious uprising. This was borne out by the reports of the determination and violent character of those who seemed to be the workers’ leaders. The news, which at first was hardly believed, although on Sunday a rumour had circulated that an uprising was planned for Monday, soon acquired a positive nature. The Constable was seen making for the Royal Square accompanied by his four Centeniers. This place was assumed to be the rallying point of the troublemakers.

“Soon all the police of St. Helier were gathered around their chiefs; but at half-past six the Square was still empty, although already a band of three or four hundred persons was abroad, compelling all workers to leave their work.”*

So opened the report of the activities of May 17, 1847, as summarised by one of the local newspapers. This uprising was the climax of a series of riots by the town workers and the Gorey oyster fishers over a period of twenty-five years.

The year 1822 had seen the first popular rising in Jersey over the high price of foodstuffs. That year was notable for the fight made—and won—by the Island States Assembly, backed and urged on by the populace, against the imposition on the island of the British Government’s Corn Laws.

* Translated from *L’Impartial de Jersey*, May 19, 1847.

In spite of the fact that this battle for the free importation of corn into the island was won, the price of corn rose sharply in the years that followed. In 1828, after another easily quelled riot, the States passed a law forbidding the export of any type of grain. This eased the position somewhat, but did not bring bread prices back to a reasonable figure as compared with the local workers' poor wage.

During the years 1821-1851, the population of the island almost exactly doubled.* This large increase was partly due to an influx of English workers employed on the extension of St. Helier's harbours, the building of St. Catherine's pier and other large constructions.

This infiltration of English workers with their more militant outlook woke the Jersey worker to the fact of his extreme misery. They tended to settle here after the work that brought them was finished and they were well to the fore in fighting for better conditions.

The immediate cause of the May uprising is shown by the events of the five months preceding it. In January, 1847, the shipwrights and carpenters employed in the shipbuilding yards left their work, complaining of the high price of foodstuffs. They took possession of several loads of potatoes which were being shipped for export. The *Jersey and Guernsey News* complains that on this occasion "the police looked on, and allowed this to be done. . . . Not one of the rioters was seized or punished."

On the 1st of February the States decided to open a bakery to sell bread to the working poor at 2d. per lb. The market price of bread at this time was 2½d. per lb. By the beginning of May the market price of bread had gone up to 3½d. per lb., while the States bread had advanced to 2½d.

On May 15 the Constable of St. Helier made a statement to the Press that "as the Committee of the States would shortly discontinue selling bread at a cheap rate, a meeting of the constituents of St. Helier would be held on Wednesday, May 19, to open subscriptions for the relief of the working class," and concluded by saying: "that it was a fact which should not be concealed that a great number of workmen had been compelled

* Census of 1821: 28,600 persons. Census of 1851: 57,020 persons.

to put their effects in pledge to supply the wants of their families, and that their resources were entirely exhausted."† The excuse made for stopping the supply of cheap bread was that work was now plentiful—at 12/6 per week—which fact was disputed by at least one of the local newspapers.

This statement of the Constable's reported in *l'Impartial de Jersey*, *Le Constitutionel* and *Le Chronique de Jersey*, caused a feeling of unrest amongst the town workers on the Sunday. It would seem by the magnitude of the rising on the following day that plans were made then for the morrow.

The townsfolk went to bed that Sunday night wondering if there was anything in the many rumours circulating concerning approaching trouble.

The workers employed in the building of St. Aubin's Road arrived at their place of work as usual at 5 o'clock that Monday morning; but instead of proceeding to their normal work they gathered together to the number of about 150 and discussed their plans. They sent a delegation to ask for an increase in pay. This was refused. It was then decided to march to First Tower and call on the carpenters and other workers at Deslande's building yard to come out and join them. This went off according to plan.

The next step was to march townwards about 200 strong. Along the Esplanade came this ragged army calling upon all workers to join them. They turned up Hill Street, gathering force all the way, and here were joined by a group working at the laying of a main drain. Not attempting yet to force their way into the Square, they continued their march down Roseville Street to the shipbuilding and other yards at Havre des Pas. By this time there were over 400 in their ranks. They proceeded to call out all the workers in these yards. Some came willingly, others were reluctant. Threats and arguments were used to bring the Clarke, Valpy and Allix employees out.

Havre des Pas now being at a standstill, the recruiting march was continued as far as the North Pier. Here extension to the harbour was in progress. At first the men remained loyal to the foremen in charge; but after a battle with stones the majority of these men, too, joined in the uprising.

† *Jersey & Guernsey News*, May 22, 1847.

Next came the turn of the men repairing the ships "Peggy" and "Hebe." These men were persuaded by their bosses to remain at work; but after one of the foremen had been downed with a stone, these men went over to support the side of the uprising.

At Ennis' foundry, the marchers found everything locked and bolted against them. After a vain attempt to break in to release the workers cooped up there and some window smashing, this place was left for a march to Henry & de Garis' sail-making factory. Here all the men refused to strike and the marchers drew off, leaving them to it.

By half-past eleven the repair-men on the ships "Ringmahon Castle" and "Speedy Packet" had joined them, and the crowd was now well over 700 strong, apart from parties sent about to call out other workers.

About noon it was decided to march on the Royal Square. Well over 1,000 strong, they entered the Square, led by Jean Picot, journeyman-shoemaker. As he entered the Square, shouting "Rush in, my boys," he was seized by the police. He was immediately hauled before the Court, which was then in session, and in spite of several efforts to rush the Court building and rescue him, he was tried and sentenced to eight days' solitary confinement.

George Sargent, a seaman, was arrested for leading an attempt to rush the Court building steps and capture the Constable, while in a state of intoxication.

Then went up shouts of "To Le Quesne's mill!" "To the Town Mill!" And a band of over a thousand streamed out towards the north of the town. Centenier Le Bailly made for the mill with part of the police force, while the Constable and the rest of the police stayed to hold the remaining crowd from the Court buildings.

Le Bailly entreated the crowd to go away and leave the mill intact; but with shouts of "Break in," a large band went round to the back entrance. Using hammers and pick-axes they attempted to break open the door, but it was not until they brought up an improvised battering-ram that they burst it open. Flocking into the mill, they opened the main door. Then in rushed as many as could. Bags of flour and grain were

carried and thrown into the yard. One man, Elias Selous, was observed to fill his mouth with flour and shout: "That's how hungry I am. I haven't eaten for two days."

Two wagons were loaded with grain and flour and many men gathered as much as they could carry.

By this time the Governor had called out the island garrison and placed it at the disposal of the Constable. About one o'clock the Riot Act was read in the Square by the Procureur General, and the troops were ordered to co-operate with the police in clearing the Square. Another part of the garrison, the 81st Foot Regiment, was ordered to proceed to the Town Mill. At Robin Hood Corner they met the outposts of the rebels and a short engagement followed, the workers using clubs and stones. The two flour-wagons were captured by the troops and the crowd was dispersed. By 2.30 p.m. the Square also was cleared and many arrests had been made. Sentries were left and the main body of the troops was sent round the town to clear the public houses and order them to be shut.

The crowd had swarmed back to the Square by four o'clock; but though they collected there and paraded the town all the evening, the initial impetus was over and there were no more clashes with the authorities. Police and special constables patrolled the town all night.

At five next morning it was found that a large number of the workers were going back to work. The remainder merely walked about and made no violent move.

At seven-thirty the Constable issued the following proclamation:

"To the Working Class,

"All workers are commanded to return to their work immediately. Measures are being taken to assure the distribution of bread to the working class at a reasonable price and to guard against all scarcity of essential foodstuffs.

"A public assembly will be held in the near future to open a subscription for poor relief; but all aid will be refused to those who do not immediately return to work and severe measures will be taken against them.

"Imprisonment with hard labour or banishment for five years, is the penalty ordered in our Riot Act for all those who

take part in riotous gatherings and who do not disperse when ordered to do so by the police.

“If necessary, the military will be called out to reinforce the police.

“The deserving poor will receive help; but all those who take part in any uprising will be severely punished.

“Pierre Le Sueur,
“Constable of St. Helier.”*

May 18, 1847.

At three o'clock Tuesday afternoon it was reported that the Mont Mado quarrymen were marching on the town. The Constable hurriedly called out the troops and accompanied them up to Mont-a-l'Abbé. Here they met the quarrymen and demanded of them their business. The reply was a demand for bread to be made available at 2d. per pound (the existing market price being 3½d. per pound). The Constable told them to go home and he would do something for them. After the Procureur General had read the Riot Act, the quarrymen were ordered to disperse; which, in face of superior force, they did.

During these two days an appeal had been made for citizens to enrol as special constables, and in all 114 rallied to the call. They were used as auxiliary police patrols and distinguished by white armbands. However, these “specials” saw little activity, for by Tuesday night calm had settled over the island once again.

Over the whole period no one had been killed, though there were a number of injuries on both sides.

What were the results of this uprising?

On Monday, in the midst of the turmoil, a meeting of the States Food Committee was convened and issued the following statement:

“The year 1847, the 17th day of May.—The Committee having assembled in order to deliberate on the distribution at a reduced price, of bread baked for the States, which is now sold to the working class at 2½d. per pound, conformably to the decision of the Committee on April the 27 last; considering the reduced rate of wages and salaries, as well as the increased price of provisions, as also the number of persons

* Translated from *L'Impartial de Jersey*, May 19, 1847.

who suffer in consequence of the famine and the dearness of articles of food in general, has resolved to adopt immediate means, in order to reduce in a few days the price of bread to 2d. per pound. The Committee has at the same time decided, if necessary, to take measures insuring for the provisioning of the island. The Committee has also decided to instruct the Constables of the parishes who have not yet increased the allowance to out-door poor to come to an understanding with the churchwardens, in order to give an immediate increase, proportionate to the wants of the present time, and this extraordinary relief.

Charles de Ste. Croix, Greffier.”*

On the Wednesday the Constable of St. Helier held a public meeting to set up a fund for extra poor relief. It was suggested that soup, meat, sugar be distributed cheaply besides bread. Subscriptions were called for on the spot and £211 were collected as a start to the fund.

Such was the scare that the uprising caused in the hearts of the authorities and the well-to-do. The workers had asked for a rise in pay or the resumption of bread sold at 2d. a pound. The latter was granted by the States Food Committee in spite of their previous statement that the issue of cheap bread would be discontinued. And further, the rates of poor relief were increased throughout the island and a public fund was set up to relieve distress.

This was the first victory of the Jersey working class. By a united show of strength they gained their ends. At what cost? A few were injured in the fighting and 27 were brought up for trial. One, John Picot, the shoemaker, was tried on the spot and sentenced to eight days' solitary confinement, as we have seen. George Sargent was released with a caution.

Of the other 25, Thomas Cundy, William Holland, Thomas Connor, Thomas Anthony, Frederick Pyke, Stephen Wilkins, Jean Le Gresley, John Dunn, Elias Selous, George Minton, Joseph Baker, George Carter, Thomas Mouldoun, and Richard Tucker were charged with “forming part of an illegal assemblage of persons, and for having caused a tumult in divers parts of

* *Jersey & Guernsey News*, May 22, 1847, and *Le Constitutionel*, May 22, 1847.

St. Helier, and having thus committed a breach of the peace; and also having wilfully and maliciously broken open a certain mill situated on the Trinity Road, belonging to Messrs. N. & P. Le Quesne; as also having taken by force a quantity of wheat and flour from the said mill, with an intention of robbery; or having aided or abetted in the same." *

Denis Daly, John Gernan, Pierre Voisin, Charles Le Breton, George Laing, Benjamin Brown, Thomas Gillam, Philip Gallichan, Richard Blacker and Henry Dell, were charged with "having been participators in the tumult; for having insulted the police while in the execution of their duty; and for having attempted to rescue some prisoners when arrested by the police." †

John Merrifield was charged "with having participated in the tumult and for having since his arrest threatened on his liberation to murder the person who took him up." ‡

Sentences of varying terms of imprisonment or banishment up to five years' banishment were inflicted on these men. And so finishes this page in the history of the Jersey working class.

A sequel, however, can be seen to this day. In the Broad Street cab rank there is an obelisk erected to Pierre Le Sueur, the Constable of St. Helier, the man who put down the disturbances, erected by his grateful parishioners in memory of his exertions!

2

The Jersey worker was forced into the above violent method of making himself heard because of the lack of interest taken in him by the island authorities. He was beginning to realise that until he made his presence felt no notice would be taken of his sufferings. The Jacobin clubs and "corresponding societies" did not touch the island and the Owenite and Chartist movements passed it by.

The local politicians were divided into "Charlots" (=Carlist) or Conservatives and "Magots" (=baboons; slang for plebeians) or Liberals, and later into "Rose" and "Laurel," the equivalent of the English "Whig" and "Tory." Neither of these bothered their heads about "the rabble." In fact there was really no

* *Jersey & Guernsey News*, May 22, 1847.

† *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*

political strife between these "parties," for all the elections were run on individual merits and not on party programmes. Apart from this, out of the 36 members of the States Assembly prior to 1857, twelve were the Rectors of the parishes who were not elected, while twelve more, the Jurats, though elected, were members for life. Only the Constables were elected at regular intervals. After 1857, 14 deputies elected on a very limited franchise found a place in the Assembly. (This number was later increased to seventeen.)

After 1857, then, out of 50 (and later 53) members of the Assembly, 12 were clergymen, while at least 22 (11 each of Constables and Deputies) represented the farmers. This excludes the Jurats, who may have been elected by a preponderant country vote. Of course there was no hope of the working man getting any representation in the Assembly, and indeed at this time very little chance of the town businessman being represented.

This latter fact is not so important as it at first seems, for the local bourgeoisie had been largely of a special type. This is the farmer-company director. The importance of this class seems peculiar to these islands. They are farmers who have "gone into business" while still owning and often managing their farms. The directors of most local firms in the nineteenth century were of this type and of one other: the lawyer. Not that there is any real dividing line between these two groups, for the lawyers' offices are supplied with clerks—and therefore with lawyers and advocates—in the form of the farmers' younger sons.

So we may say that until the turn of the century, at any rate, the farmer ruled the island aided by the clergy and the feudal seigneurs.

The feudal seigneur? To understand the part he played we must remember that during the nineteenth century Jersey was still in a pre-capitalist state of society. Feudalism was still a force in the island with its staunchly Conservative tradition. This tradition still exists and goes far deeper than party politics. It is the foundation of all local life. The Jerseyman's motto has long been and still is: "What was good enough for my grandfather is good enough for my son."

On the subject of feudal remains in the island society of that day I will quote a contemporary historian:

“The feudal rights which still exist in Jersey, the many fiefs or seigneuries which still share the soil of our parishes, the seigneurial judges or senechals who still judge according to ancient custom, all that is the phantom which I have just mentioned, all that appears alive and strong, all that frightens and makes dupes of us; and yet it is nothing but a mist that one puff of wind can dispel. . . . It is to be hoped that before long Jersey will be freed of all these feudal remains which were never reasonable, and which only continue to exist through the apathy of those who suffer under them.”*

And it was not only the educated historian who saw the need for the abolition of the remaining feudal rights. Two mass meetings were held, one in 1843 and the other in 1858, calling for abolition. At the 1843 meeting, one Elie Le Geyt proposed:—

“Mr. Chairman, in France all seigneurial rights have been abolished; it should be the same in this country. As for me, I think the parishes of this island should buy all the fiefs, so that they would enjoy for a year and a day the property of those who die without heirs of their own flesh and blood, until all feudal rights are abolished. (Applause.)

“The Chairman replied that if Mr. Le Geyt’s suggestion was put into practice, it would greatly benefit all the inhabitants of this land.” (Applause.)†

Notice this reference to France. This points to the fact that in those days the islander was far more aware of how matters stood in that neighbouring land than of what was happening in England. Those were the days of the Charter; but the people of Jersey knew it not.

The arrival of the refugees of 1852 carried on this Jersey-French link. These refugees fleeing from the coup d’etat of Louis Napoleon included many prominent men of whom the best known was Victor Hugo. They founded a paper *L’Homme*, which appears to have been widely read in the island and had some effect on local politics. Of course, this and the Jersey Constitutional Reform Association set up in 1861 had very little to say for the “rabble”; neither was the paper *Reforme* of 1853

* Translated from J. P. Ahier’s *Tableaux Historiques de Jersey*, 1852, pp. 405-6.

† Translated from *Le Chronique de Jersey*, February 11, 1843.

nor the magazine *Le Voix des Iles* of the seventies of more than a progressive liberal nature.

The local worker, after his effort of 1847, remained quiet. His living conditions were terrible while the general prosperity of the island was often remarked upon. Yet he sullenly bore his lot. That his lot was not a happy one can be shown by the following hypothetical budget showing wages and prices as they stood about the middle of the nineteenth century. These remained much the same right up till the turn of the century. The wage of a labourer of that time was normally 12/6, though it rose to the height of 15/- in individual cases.

Out of his 12/6 he could buy:

| | s. | d. |
|--|-------|-------|
| Rent | 2 | 0 |
| Bread (12 lb.) | 3 | 0 |
| Dripping (2 lb.) | | 7 |
| Meat (2 lb.).. .. . | | 10 |
| Vegetables (including potatoes) | 1 | 6 |
| Coal and candles or oil for lighting | 1 | 0 |
| Beer, Tea, Sugar, Salt, etc... .. . | 1 | 0 |
| Milk (3 pints) | | 3 |
| Soap | | 2 |
| Sundries (including <i>all</i> clothing) | 1 | 8 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 12 | 6 |

It will be remarked that he is just on or below the subsistence level. Should any calamity—such as illness—strike his family his wage could not cover it. He lived on cheap and often bad food. It is not astonishing that there were two serious epidemics of cholera in 1832 and 1849.

It is interesting to notice the terms of an indenture of a blacksmith's apprentice of the year 1871. Amongst other instructions the indenture ordered that: "During all which time (six years) he, the said apprentice, his said master shall and will faithfully serve, his secrets keep, his lawful commands everywhere gladly obey, and diligently and carefully demean and behave himself towards him. . . . He shall not commit fornication, nor contract matrimony, within the said term. At cards, dice tables, or any other unlawful game, he shall not play. . . . He shall not haunt ale-houses, taverns, playhouses, or any other places of

debauchery; but in all things behave himself during the said term, as a good and faithful apprentice ought to do."

And all this for one shilling per week with an increase of sixpence per week each year.

These were those idyllic years of the reign of Queen Victoria in so far as the local worker knew them. As one person who lived through these years told me: the worker spent his wage on rent, food and rags, there was nothing left over for anything else.

By 1889 the local worker was beginning to get restive once again. It was about this time that the local newspapers began to take notice of the great Trade Union movement in England and the resulting strikes. In Guernsey a branch of the Stoneworkers Society of Great Britain—the Guernsey Stoneworkers Society—came into being some time during the eighties and fought a not entirely unsuccessful strike over the employment of non-unionists in August, 1890.*

That year, 1890, saw the publication of what is probably the most progressive newspaper Jersey has ever had. It was the *Jersey Reformer*. In its short life of about two years it engaged in a campaign against the local authorities for better living conditions and Constitutional reform. Its first editor, Reynolds, served a prison sentence in default of payment of damages granted to Stanley Malet, Chief Import Officer, in pursuance of a libel action.

In its first editorial it said: "We expect an uphill fight; progress in Jersey seems almost impossible; folk have been so long accustomed to bear their burdens that they scarcely seem to notice the weight of them now. We like folk to be dissatisfied and shall try to make them as dissatisfied as possible, and we hope thereby to be able to improve them a little," the *Jersey Reformer* summed-up the policy it carried out for its short but eventful life.

In February, 1897, the first attempt was made to set up a union branch in Jersey. This was a failure, for the reason that stonemasons and quarrymen who made the attempt found it impossible to pay their dues from their scanty pay of 3/- a day, and the movement fell to pieces.

It was not till September 18, 1909, that another attempt was made when the stoneworkers met at the Beresford Café under

* See report in the *Jersey Reformer*, August 30, 1890.

the chairmanship of W. Kessell to inaugurate a local branch of the Operative Masons Society of Great Britain and Ireland. It was then stated that 85 per cent of the stoneworkers of Jersey had shown their readiness to join. It was resolved that a request be made straightaway to the Society to send down an organiser.

The next four years were devoted to an attempt to obtain a wider franchise. Political activity rather than industrial seems to have been the order of the day. This was probably a reaction against the lack of interest taken in politics by the worker until then. It has always been difficult to get the Jerseyman to understand that the political and industrial struggles must go along hand in hand. He has tended first to concentrate on the one, then on the other, without correlating the two.

In 1910 the Jersey Working Man's League was formed. It held its first public meeting on December 12, 1910, at which was passed the Resolution: "That this meeting, recognising that taxation without representation is unjust, asks for the extension of the Franchise so as to embody the principle of Manhood Suffrage."*

This League merged later with another organisation to form the Jersey Independent Labour Party and Labour League, which affiliated to the English I.L.P. The outstanding leader of the local I.L.P. was Peter Le Noir, a painter, who became secretary. Another name came to the fore—that of Mrs. Trachy—of whom more later.

At a meeting of the Jersey I.L.P., held on February 4, 1912, to discuss the position re the Franchise struggle, it was suggested that a demonstration of at least 5,000 workers in the Royal Square on the occasion of the States discussion of a Franchise Bill would help things along.

This was commented upon and ridiculed by Ed. Le Quesne, Assistant Secretary of the Jersey Franchise and Workmen's Federation at its second annual general meeting held two days later. "We must just keep plodding along," said Mr. Le Quesne.†

So they just kept plodding along, for the Jersey I.L.P. did not have mass support enough to go ahead on its own.

Peter Le Noir kept the ball rolling with controversial letters

* *Evening Post*, December 14, 1910.

† *Evening Post* Report, February 6, 1912.

to the press re Socialism, in which letters, incidentally, he pointed out that he was a Fabian Socialist, and not one of those revolutionary British Social-Democratic Federation supporters. He believed in gradual evolution.

And so, to introduce the thin end of the wedge, Peter Le Noir stood as a Candidate for the Deputyship of St. Helier No. 2 district.

Unfortunately the worker still did not have the vote, so that Mr. Le Noir, the workers' candidate, polled 32 votes out of a total poll of 797. Such is the inevitability of gradualness!

During these last two years another of the many comet-like Jersey newspapers, which periodically flash across the sky and sink into oblivion, had come into existence. *The Jerseyman* gives us a hint of what some, at least, of the islanders thought of their States Assembly in an "Open Letter to the States," from which I take the following extracts:

"... Pray don't think that you will always be able to sit down contentedly drawing in your dividends and pocketing your rents, while white-faced women and starving children die like flies in the dirty, filthy slums. . . . And then, eliminate Seignorial rights. But there again, how many of you are Seigneurs? Ah, there's the rub! . . . What are you going to do for our overworked and underpaid apprentices, girls and labourers; some men earning the princely salary of fifteen shillings per week, with a wife and six children to keep. . . ."*

Yes, at this time fifteen shillings was the labourer's wage. How did he live? Well, here is a typical budget:—

| | s. | d. |
|--|-----------|----------|
| Rent | 3 | 6 |
| Meat (3 lb.) | 1 | 6 |
| Bread (16 lb.) | 2 | 8 |
| Potatoes (20 lb.) | 1 | 0 |
| Vegetables | 1 | 6 |
| Dripping | | 6 |
| Tea, Sugar, Salt, etc. | | 10 |
| Cigarettes (50) and Beer (2 pints) | 1 | 0 |
| Fuel and Gas | 1 | 2 |
| Clothing, Shoes and Repairs, etc. | 1 | 4 |
| | <u>15</u> | <u>0</u> |

* *The Jerseyman*, August 26, 1911.

It must be borne in mind that this 15/- was no minimum wage. The unskilled worker often drew less than that and even the skilled drew very little more. The carpenter's wage, 3/- a day in 1880, had risen to 3/6 a day by 1909; while the stonemasons complained that though a good master was known to give 4/- for a 13- or 14-hour day, the more usual rate of pay was 3/- for a day of twelve hours. Thus the skilled worker would receive anything from 18/- to £1 4s. for his week's work.

That is so, if he were lucky! For he lost all "wet time" and was only paid for the actual hours he put in. And, although there was some talk of accident benefits in the States during those years, it was not until 1935 that any compensation was actually paid.

The Jerseyman points out that it was quite possible for the working-class family to manage on that 15/- per week. If they use "a little care, a firm hand on the milk jug, a measuring of half-spoonfuls of sugar, a spreading of the butter (sic!) as if it were gold leaf, a man, wife and three children can pay rent, keep a small fire, and avoid hunger on 15/- per week. They may even run to a shilling or eighteenpence for meat ('cuttings') on Sunday, and make a currant pudding during the week. But what are they to do for clothing? They 'manage' as we say in Jersey. They either sink their pride and apply to the parish for clothing, or else emulate the idyllic attire of our first parents."*

These were the conditions of life that made the Ronez Quarrymen decide to form a local branch of the Amalgamated Union of Quarrymen on February 3, 1914. A Guernsey branch had been running for over two years and quarrymen coming from Guernsey had brought the idea with them. A meeting was arranged by the Guernsey President and Secretary, and 54 men were signed up on the spot. J. H. Pinel was elected local President.

The Stonemasons' Union had remained quiet all this time, and seems to have been very inactive. Whether this A.U.Q. branch would have woken things up more remains a ground for speculation, for the First World War intervened and put a brake on

* *The Jerseyman*, February 7, 1914.

the developing Union movement in the island for the next four years.

With the outbreak of war the Operative Mason's Union, the Union of Quarrymen and the local I.L.P. branch collapsed, leaving Jersey without any labour organisation until 1918, when the Jersey worker at last found his voice once more.

CHAPTER II

RISE

1

The First World War years showed very little Labour activity in Jersey. This was a period of industrial peace in so far as the island was concerned.

Economic misery undoubtedly increased, but was borne patiently as a temporary evil—as the result of the war. There being no workers' organisation during the years of war meant that the masters reigned supreme.

In 1917 the building and allied trades masters formed a federation to guard their interests. This federation called a meeting of the masters and men that June to discuss wages. The masters put forward a new wages table offering a handsome increase of an average of 25 per cent on all wages. The apprentices' rate advanced most, rising from 1/- per week to 1d. per hour, with yearly increases. The improver was scheduled to receive 3½d. per hour, the mechanic 5½d., the skilled mechanic 6½d. (minimum), the unskilled labourer 5d., and the semi-skilled labourer 5½d. per hour. This "handsome increase," as the local papers termed it, met with opposition on the part of the men, who pointed out that a rise of 25 per cent in money wages meant little to them when the Ministry of Labour estimated that the cost of living had risen 98 per cent!

The lack of workers' organisations resulted in the protest of the building and allied trades workers being ignored and the federation plans being carried through. This backwardness in organising may seem surprising to the onlooker.

The grounds for it are fairly simple. It must be kept in mind that there was still no large-scale capitalist industry in the island. The largest concern was probably the Jersey Gas Light Com-

pany, employing just over 100 men. This meant a lack of concentration of workers where they could discuss grievances and remedies. It is a well-known fact that the larger the concentrations of workers in a district or country the more militant becomes their outlook. Another point making for backwardness was the lack of a real, hereditary working class. In those times, far more than today, the Jersey worker had a brother who kept a small shop or an uncle who owned a farm or perhaps a cousin who was a master carpenter. When times were bad, Jack could go and work for his uncle! There was not the same feeling of being a class apart. The Jersey worker, even more than the English worker, had the mental outlook of the bourgeoisie. He was very far from being class-conscious.

1918! The war still dragged on; prices still rose; wages hardly increased. Even the Jersey worker was growing sceptical about this coming "land fit for heroes."

On September 23, 1918, the Guernsey Branch Organiser of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union arrived in Jersey and was present at a meeting of the local dockers to inaugurate a Jersey branch of the same union.

Ned Moignard was elected President and Jack Hardman, Secretary. One hundred and five men signed on.

This meeting, held at the Herald Mission Hall, Devonshire Lane, was the result of negotiations between Ned Moignard, Jack Hardman and Phil Mallet, Jersey dockers, and the D.W.R. & G.W.U. headquarters. The latter had promised to send an organiser; but he being taken ill, Fry, the Guernsey organiser, came in his place.

A meeting of workers was held on the next Thursday evening at the Mission Hall, Museum Street, which was later purchased by the Union and renamed Unity Hall. Moignard, in his speech from the chair, called for recruits from workers in other branches of industry than the docks. The dockers had already enrolled in large numbers and, speaking of them, Moignard said: "If a master discharges a man because he joins the Union, we will not handle his goods, either import or export."*

The Museum Street hall was packed to overflowing and many more names were added to the membership lists.

* *Evening Post*, September, 1918.

Meetings of this type continued to be held every Thursday evening at the Mission Hall. These meetings were very largely attended and the membership lists continued to grow rapidly.

At one of these Thursday meetings, Deputy Gray of St. Helier, a liberal politician and organiser of the Jersey Political Association, which had sprung up a couple of months previously, pledged the support of this movement for the Union.

This uneasy alliance—uneasy because the J.P.A., a milk and water reform movement, included many employers hostile to Trade Unionism—continued for some time. Deputy Gray was elected Union representative in the States Assembly, which post he held for a couple of months. Then Gray found class conflicts sharpening, decided for the masters, and cut adrift from his connection with the Union.

November 11, 1918! Peace? Or a fight for better conditions? The Jersey worker did not let the relief of international peace interfere with the necessary fight on the home front. He was caught up in the revolutionary upsurge that swept over Europe. At last there was no fear of Jersey unionism petering out for want of support: 105 members in September, 1918—1,000 in November—1,200 in December—1,700 in January, 1919—2,200 in March—3,000 in May—4,000 at the end of a year's work.

The *Evening Post*, Jersey's leading and conservative daily paper, took umbrage at this rising tide, and in December suggested that the workers would have done far better to have formed a purely local union, for they were now committed to the dangerous road of dependence on English organisers, and "by affiliating to an English union they stand committed to its rules and regulations. A local union could have framed its rules to fit local conditions; but, as things are, the Jersey worker will lose his independence totally"*

What the *Evening Post* did not realise was that the worker earning 15/- per week had no independence to lose and had everything to gain by uniting under the banner of a strong English union.

The D.W.R. & G.W.U. got down to work immediately. Even before the cessation of international hostilities two victories were

* *Evening Post*, December 23, 1918.

registered: during the first week of November there were two lightning strikes of dockers over the employment of non-union labour. In both cases the strikes were settled by the men in question joining the Union.

At this time real wages in most trades were extremely low, for money wages had advanced but little, while prices had shot up to almost double the pre-war level.

Some typical wage-rates were: 18/- per week for storemen, 7½d. per hour for skilled carpenters, painters, plumbers, etc., 8/- to 12/- per week for shop assistants, 15/- per week for farm labourers. This, the Union was determined, had to alter!

The first serious clash came with the farmers. Prices of dairy products were rising rapidly—butter, normally averaging 2/6 per lb., rising to an average of 3/4 per lb. The Union decided for action. In January, 1919, a petition was sent in to the Defence of the Island Committee (the body then responsible for the control of foodstuffs) asking for action to be taken re controlling the prices of dairy produce. Until such time as an answer was forthcoming, no cattle were to be loaded for export. The States did nothing, and no cattle were in fact loaded until March 8, 1919, when agreement on all points was reached between the D.W.R. & G.W.U. and the newly-formed Farmers' Union.

The rapid growth of the Union in membership and power had begun to frighten the local bourgeoisie.* This fear came to the surface in January, 1919. Certain States members are reported to have said that they were out to smash the Union and this is in effect what was attempted by a Bill introduced in the States Assembly during that month. This Bill, the child of Deputy F. Bois' brain, begot by bourgeois guile and Hill Street cunning, was introduced to legalise workers' unions in Jersey. Up till this time trade unions had been illegal under the Code of 1771 which ruled that: "Persons, whether workpeople or tradesmen who conspire together with regard to their pay, hours of work, manner of doing it, or delivering it, will be punished with a fine not exceeding £20 to be applied as above, and in cases of a repetition (of the offence) by such punishment as may be deemed suitable."†

* "By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of production and employers of wage-labour." (Engels).

† *A Code of Laws for the Island of Jersey*, 2nd Edition, 1860. Code of 1771, page 242.

Article 1 of Deputy Bois' Bill allowed a Union to be formed and Article 3 allowed disputes to be settled by negotiation between shop stewards and masters. But the sting was in the tail.

Article 5 reads as follows: "Any third party who shall interfere or shall attempt to interfere to prevent an agreement or aggravate a difficulty between masters and employees, as also any person who shall attempt to promote strikes or lock-outs in any industry, trade, or undertaking of any kind, or who shall attempt to bring about a crisis in regard to labour or employers, or who shall attempt by means of intimidation or otherwise, to compel another party against his will to join a union either of labour or of employers, shall be guilty of an offence, and shall be liable for each infraction to a fine not exceeding £100 or to a term of imprisonment with or without hard labour, not exceeding six months, or to both at the discretion of justice."*

There is the sting. Although the Bill legalised the position of the Union in the abstract, it forbade its effective action. One can well imagine the result of the local shop stewards in any concern trying to reach a settlement in favour of the workers under those conditions. No attempt could be made to consult Union headquarters, for that would be introducing interference of a "third party," and no attempt to "promote a strike" would be allowed. Any militant shop steward would soon find himself victimised. That was Jersey in 1919.

However, Bois' Bill was dropped when it met with a storm of disapproval and the Union remained illegal under the terms of the 1771 Code of Laws.

Meanwhile the D.W.R. & G.W.U. Committee had taken up the old Franchise fight from where Le Noir had laid it down. In January, 1919, Moignard and Hardman went to English Headquarters for consultations re the policy to be adopted in the struggle for a wider franchise.

On February 1, Hardman made public the fact that a few days previously a resolution of the Union had been forwarded to Sir Alexander Wilson, Lieut.-Governor of the Island, Sir

* *Evening Post*, January 15, 1919.

William Vernon, Bailiff, and Mr. Lloyd George, British Prime Minister, which read as follows:—

“The Jersey Branch of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers’ Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

“To His Excellency Major-General Sir Alexander Wilson, K.C.B., and Sir William Vernon, and Members of the States of the Island of Jersey:

“Gentlemen,—We, the members of the above Union, being representative of the working classes who have ever been loyal and law-abiding citizens of the Island of Jersey, hereby appeal to you as the Governing Body of our Island, for the extension of the franchise.

“That, taking into consideration the great sacrifices which the classes to whom we belong and represent have been called upon to make during the long period of the most terrible war ever known, and also the compulsory military service that has existed for over a century, which has been a great burden to the working classes.

“That, in recognition of the great sacrifices that have been made by our fellow islanders, we are at least entitled as our brothers of the United Kingdom to a vote and a voice in the government of our Island; and we who produce the wealth of the place in which we dwell, consider that it is our right to determine when and how it shall be used for the benefit of each and all; and that suffrage should be granted at the age of twenty-one years, and also to women on attaining the age of thirty years, the same as in Great Britain.

“I remain your obedient servant,

On behalf of the Union,

J. W. HARDMAN, Secretary.”*

During the same week the J.P.A. suggested a monster petition calling for manhood suffrage.

The States met to discuss the franchise question on February 4. Bills were submitted by Deputies Gray and Cory and the

* “Hear all Sides,” *Evening Post*, February 3, 1919.

Constable of St. Helier. These were lodged "au Greffe" to be printed for discussion on March 20. On that date, after some discussion, a committee was formed to examine the matter. Nothing having been done by the date of the Union's Quarterly Meeting of March 29, a resolution was passed "that this Quarterly Meeting of the Jersey Branch of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union protests against the apparent delay in the passing of the Franchise Bill and urges our accredited representative to impress upon the States Assembly the desire of the, at present, disfranchised men and women to have the privilege of exercising the vote at the next General Election, 1919."*

Finally, on Thursday, May 22, after much delay and opposition, the Franchise Act as it now stands was passed. This Act gives "every male British subject of 20 and over, and every British female subject of 30 or over, who has no Guardian, Curator, or "Procureur Général"† the right to vote if either "their names are mentioned on the list of contributors to the Parish Rate" or "they occupy a house or part of a house, building or land, of an annual rental of at least £10," or "they (men) are on the active list of the Militia or any other organisation for the defence of the Island replacing the Militia" or "they (women) are the wives of men whose names are inscribed in the Electoral list."†

This gave the vote to the majority of the adult population of the Island, but left a minority of at least 20 per cent still voteless.

Leaving the Union's political activities for the moment, we turn to the industrial struggle.

At the second quarterly meeting of the Union, held on March 28, 1919, a report was heard giving details of that quarter's work. The report recorded victory after victory, commencing: "Our first encounter and victory of this quarter was with Bashfords Ltd. The Union has secured from there an average rise of 8/- per head per week. The Storemen, Coopers and Carters employed by the Potato Merchants Association have had their wages increased, in some cases by 7/-, in others 5/- per week.

* *Evening Post*, March 29, 1919. The next election was scheduled for December, 1919.

† Translated from the Franchise (Jersey) Law. *Recueil des Lois*, 1919.

“The cranemen, a rise of 7/6 per week, and their overtime paid at the rate of 1/3 per hour. All Sunday and holiday time in future is to be paid at the rate of 1/6 per hour.

“Several coal merchants have agreed to pay the same wages as the P.M.A. The Veneer Basket Co. has also agreed to pay the same wages as other stores.

“Jobbing ship carpenters in the employ of Watton, South Pier, have had a substantial increase of pay through the efforts of our Union, their rates now ranging from 36/- to 50/- per week.

“Then we come to those members of our Union who are employed by the Local Government. We have approached the States Committee of Piers and Harbours as regards to carpenters, storemen, pier-head watchmen, the crew of the tug “Duke,” and also the pier sweepers, and have succeeded in each case in obtaining a satisfactory rise in wages.

“We have also approached the Mayor of St. Helier on behalf of the destructor firemen and the quarrymen employed by the Parish. These men have also benefited by our Union, and we have by our efforts raised the wages of the firemen by 6/- and the quarrymen by 5/- per week.

“I might also mention here that our Union has been successful with regard to the plumbers in getting their wages raised by 1d. per hour.

“In concluding the above list, we must not forget that in addition to a substantial rise in wages, your Union has obtained in every case a weekly half-holiday, which we regard as very important to all workers.

“We are proud to state that our total membership to date is 2,203, which is an increase on last quarter of 997.”*

Not a bad record for three months' work! Apart from all this, too, it must be remembered that organisational work had been heavy, dealing with the large influx of new members. Branches had been set up for: Dockers and General Workers, Masons and Plasterers, Carpenters, Painters, Plumbers, Coopers, Carters, Cranemen, Gasworkers, Coachbuilders, Shop Assistants, Women Workers, and Agricultural Workers. The activities of the branches were co-ordinated in a District Committee com-

* Reported in the *Evening Post* and *Morning News*, March 29, 1919.

prising the Chairman of each branch and the District Chairman and Secretary.

At this time there were still no paid officials; though soon after the need was felt for a full-time paid secretary.

The next time that the Union hit the headlines was in May. On Monday, May 19, it having come to the ears of the Constable of St. Helier that a number of policemen had joined the D.W.R. & G.W.U., a parade was called and P.C. Osmond, who was a known Unionist, was dismissed and two others, Walters and Poingdestre, were suspended pending inquiries.

On the Tuesday morning a lightning strike of dockers and pier carters was called. This was effective by 9 o'clock, pickets being placed on the quays and the men discussing the situation. It was felt by most that the Police should have formed a branch of the English Police Union, but in any case the dismissals would be fought by the Union. At noon a meeting was held between Union officials and the Police and Pier authorities. This meeting came to an end at 1.30 p.m., Moignard going direct to the pier and addressing the strikers. He told them to resume work for one day pending an inquiry. This was done.

At the inquiry on the following day it was decided to reinstate the policemen on the understanding that the Police Force remained outside the Union. This was accepted by all concerned.

The popularity of the Union at this time can be judged by the number present at the West Park Pavilion on May 23. Over 2,000 people were present at this mass meeting held under Union auspices. It was noted that there were then 3,000-odd Union members.

Thus did Jersey fall in line with the feeling of revolt that swept the workers of Europe. And more was to follow.

2.

It will be noted that one of the Union Branches existing at this time was that of the Agricultural Workers. It was not a large branch numerically, for the agricultural worker in Jersey was about as backward as anyone in making his grievances public.

Although farming is Jersey's chief industry, the large farm is rare. There are some landlords with large landed possessions; but these are split up into small leaseholds, with the owner usually working one of these in person. So in Jersey, tenant and landlord farmers are both great in number. The tenant farmer worked about four-fifths of all cultivated land in 1919. Both types exhibit the typical peasant characteristics: thrift, backwardness of technique, family exploitation, and conservatism in politics.

The average size of the Jersey farm was seven acres (approx.). Out of the 1,820 holdings of more than one acre, 1,579 were smaller than 20 acres, and only five larger than 50 acres.* The number of horses used for agricultural purposes was 2,071. Tractors and lorries were practically non-existent. The number of cattle was 10,172 and the number of pigs, sheep, etc., 4,583. The value of the potatoes exported in 1919 was just under the million pounds. (£994,000.)

Such was the state of Jersey agriculture. What part did the landless labourer play? The figure for 1919 being unavailable, we can only take a figure for 1931. However, it held good in 1919 with very little modification. In 1931 there were 2,569 agricultural workers regularly employed.† We can take 2,500 as being roughly the number for 1919. This shows us that there was only one labourer employed for each eight acres of cultivated land. It will be seen that most of the work was done by the farmer and his family.

The agricultural worker was expected to work anything up to an 84-hour week, for which he received 10/- to 15/- plus, sometimes, his keep, or a cottage rent free, or a supply of vegetables and milk. On the whole he was probably as "well off" as the town worker at that time.

His share of the wealth of the farming community, however, was very small. He dug the farmer's potatoes, with the aid of casual labour taken on for the "season," for £4 per vergee (four-ninths of an acre) while the farmer was selling the potatoes

* These and following Agricultural Statistics for 1919 are taken from the *Evening Post Almanac* of 1920.

† R. R. Marett: *Jersey: Towards a Civic and Regional Survey*, 1932.

at about £2 per cental. (An average crop is 60 centals to the vergee.)

On June 1, 1919, the potato diggers decided that this was not good enough. They struck. The D.W.R. & G.W.U. had been negotiating with the Farmers' Union for some time without reaching agreement. The farmers had offered £4 5s. per vergee; but this was not definitely accepted. The rank and file, particularly in the south east of the island, asked for £5 per vergee, and called for a strike. The men came out. The Union officials refused to authorise it and refused strike pay. At this about half the men went back to work at the new rate of £4 5s. After a mass meeting on Gorey Common and some days of kicking their heels, the remainder drifted back to work. So ended the first, and up to the present, the only agricultural workers' strike in Jersey. So ended also, for all practical purposes, the Agricultural Workers' Branch of the Union.

3.

July 11, 1919. A strike at Grandin's, Ironmongers and Founders, of Bath Street and Commercial Buildings. Twenty-two men were involved. The reason for this action was an attempt to enforce "union shop" at Grandin's. Five men refused to join the Union despite the fact that they were drawing Union rates of pay. The remainder of the employees presented A. F. Gallichan, works manager, with an ultimatum that either he refused to employ non-union labour or they would strike. He refused to do anything in the matter. They struck. The Union officials decided to support the men and strike pay was paid out. At a District Committee meeting, held on July 21, to discuss the situation, the following resolution was passed: "That on and after September 1, 1919, the members of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union will refuse to work with non-unionists (male or female). Furthermore, the dockers absolutely refuse to handle goods consigned to non-union firms on and after that date."

Meanwhile, stalemate at Grandin's. So on July 25 the dockers placed an embargo on the loading and unloading of any goods for Grandin's.

On July 26 a consignment of wire for Grandins Ltd. was placed in the L. & S.W.R. store by the dockers, to remain there till after the dispute had been settled. This was removed by Grandin's non-union labour. That meant trouble. The dockers came out, refusing to touch any goods. On the intervention of Jack Hardman it was decided to resume work for one week pending a ballot re a general strike.

At the beginning of August a demand for £2 10s. a week was put before the Jersey Produce Merchants' Association. There was still no news of the pending general strike; though Hardman was at English headquarters discussing the matter.

On August 18 the local branch of another Union—the English Amalgamated Society of Tailors—called a strike. This was a wage dispute pure and simple. The tailors demanded 10d. per hour, a rise of 4½d. per hour from what they were getting. Finally the tailors got their 10d.

September 1, 1919. The great day had arrived. "We will not work with non-unionists," had said the resolution. Grandin's men had stuck to that and were still "out." BUT English headquarters said "No!" The reason for Hardman's visit to England was made plain. The general strike had been called off and the resolution remained a pious hope on paper. Such were the "leaders of men!"

It is tempting, though unprofitable, to speculate on what would have happened if Union headquarters had backed the men. The local Union was nearing the 4,000 mark and was full of enthusiasm. The employers were distinctly nervous, but hoping that a stern face would frighten off the enemy. It would in all probability have been the greatest victory that the Jersey worker had experienced. But English headquarters said "No!"

On September 4, 1919, Grandin's men were back at work.

The local Branch of the National Union of Railwaymen were called out during the great N.U.R. strike of September, 1919, and the local dockers supported them by refusing to carry out any work normally done by N.U.R. men.

In December a demand was made on the Building and Allied Trades Federation for a 1½d. per hour increase, with a three months' agreement. The Federation offered ½d. per hour increase

for a nine month's agreement. After a strike had been threatened, the case was put before a Ministry of Labour Arbitrator, who awarded a 1½d. per hour increase with a nine months' agreement.

Meanwhile trouble in the ranks. Moignard and Hardman were at loggerheads. Moignard walked out of the D.W.R. & G.W.U., and with a small group of supporters formed a local branch of the English General Workers' Union. This, the only one of those dangerous splitting tendencies that Jersey Unionism has undergone, was straightened out happily a year later by both these Unions affiliating to the newly-formed Transport and General Workers' Union. The local branches were then merged. By this time Moignard had transferred to the N.U.R.

The next major dispute arose in February, 1920, over a demand by the storemen and carters for 55/- per week instead of the existing 35/-, and a demand from the coopers for a rise from 45/- to 60/-. In both cases a further demand was made for a 55-hour week. The *Evening Post* of February 12, in an Editorial headed, "The demand for higher wages—Time to Face the Facts," regarded this as an impossible demand, warning the men that "here in Jersey high wages must mean unemployment," for "we are not a producing community; we live, so to speak, on one another, and if wages get beyond a certain limit our economic system will be completely dislocated and labour will defeat its own ends."*

In saying "we are not a producing community," the *Evening Post* ignored the fact that over half-a-million pounds per annum flowed into the Island in payment of exported potatoes alone. Besides potatoes the Island exported much other agricultural produce. Thus we are definitely a producing community—quite apart from the large amount of money brought to the Island by the tourist traffic. Thus, as in many other cases, the *Evening Post* falsified the issue by making statements quite contrary to well-established facts. In any case, if Jersey's economic system can only be saved from dislocation at the cost of low wages and poor working conditions, then it is time that we altered that system.

A number of existing agreements were due to expire in March

* "Hear all Sides," *Evening Post*, March 2, 3 and 4, 1920.

and a claim for higher pay was put forward by the smiths and metal workers, the coachbuilders and wheelwrights, the journeyman bakers, the gasworkers, the building and allied trades workers, besides the carters, storemen and coopers.

There was some delay in receiving an answer from the Produce Merchants' Association which, when it did come, merely suggested renewing the old agreement with some trivial alterations. This was regarded by Hardman as a refusal to accept the men's demand. He sent a request for the consideration of the men's demands and asked for an answer to be given by the following day. He was told that as the President and Vice-President were out of the Island, nothing could be done for another week. Meanwhile no replies had been received from either Employers' Federations.

The D.W.R. & G.W.U. decided to hold a mass meeting at West Park Pavilion on March 2. R. Greenwood, National Organiser, would be present. Meanwhile, R. J. Blampied, Secretary of the J.P.M.A., Stanley Guiton, Secretary of the Jersey Employers' Federation, and Harry Morris, Manager of the Gas Light Co., rushed into print to deny any delay on their part.*

At the D.W.R. & G.W.U. meeting, Greenwood made a long and enthusiastically received speech explaining the situation. At the end of this the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

“This Mass Meeting of Workpeople, representing all sections of employment covered by the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union, views with grave concern the continued and repeated attempts of the employers to evade and ignore the principle of Collective Organisation, the inalienable right of the organised working class. It vigorously protests against the continuance of a policy, the object of which is to delay settlements advantageous to the workpeople, and the saving of wage payments long overdue to them.

“The meeting solemnly warns the employers that a continuance of those tactics can have but one result, i.e., the complete withdrawal of all essential labour until such time as they (the employers) give an undertaking to promptly meet

* *Evening Post*, February 12, 1920.

the accredited representatives of organised labour, for the purpose of discussing wage and other claims, with a view to an amicable settlement.

“Further, the meeting unreservedly pledges itself to support and stand by ANY action which may be deemed necessary to give effect to the principle of Collective Bargaining, and expresses the hope that the employers will adopt a more reasonable attitude, and by a frank recognition of the inevitable, establish conditions that will safeguard both sides against action of an extreme and undesirable character.” *

On the same evening the newly formed branch of the Workers' Union met and heard M. Giles, Divisional Organiser, say that “the worker could do more by approaching the employer in a courteous way, and they must also appreciate the difficulties of the employer.” † Such was the difference between the two Union locals.

As far as the Union claim of delay is concerned, it should be noted that the demand for an increase from the J.P.M.A. was sent to that body by the Union on February 5. On February 21 a reply was received saying that the Association wished to renew the old agreement. On this very day that agreement expired. Then, owing to all officials being conveniently out of the Island or otherwise engaged, the J.P.M.A. refused to place the Union's demands before the merchants before March 8.

When the J.P.M.A. did meet they made a final offer of £2 per week and backed this offer with a threat that if the men did not accept they would be locked out.

At least that is the Union's story. The J.P.M.A. put it rather differently. In a letter to Hardman, Blampied, J.P.M.A. Secretary, said: “if these Agreements (the £2 wage, etc.) between the Employers belonging to the Jersey Produce Merchants' Association and the representatives of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside & General Workers' Union are not signed by both parties before Saturday next, March 20, the said Employers will refuse to employ any persons until they are prepared to work on these terms.” ‡

* *Evening Post and Morning News*, March 3, 1920.

† *Morning News*, March 3, 1920.

‡ *Evening Post*, March 17, 1920.

In spite of this plain statement an advertisement was placed in the *Evening Post* of that same evening saying that "they (the J.P.M.A.) have no intention whatever of locking out their employees all employees willing to continue work on the new scale are requested to inform their employer." Ah, there's the catch! One might ask: When is a lock-out not a lock-out? Evidently when it is allowable for black-leg labour to continue working!

On February 18 the men concerned met and the following resolution was forwarded to the J.P.M.A.:

"That the membership of the carters, coopers and storemen request the District Secretary to write the Jersey Produce Merchants' Association requesting same to withdraw their ultimatum of the 15th inst., which is nothing but a threat, by 4 p.m. on Friday, March 19, 1920, and an early date fixed for the reopening of the negotiations, otherwise the officials of the Union will consider their members locked out on Saturday, March 20, 1920."*

It was also recorded that at some stores individual men had been approached to sign the new J.P.M.A. agreement and on refusing thus to break Union discipline they were given a week's notice.

On the 20th, no answer having been received from the bosses, all Union store employees struck. Pickets were placed on all stores and on the quays to ensure that no carting would be done. A coal ship, the s.s. *Mechelin* arrived, but could not be unloaded.

At this point F. J. Bois, now local Coal Controller, called for the men and masters to let bygones be bygones and renew negotiations. Hardman agreed on behalf of the men, but the J.P.M.A. refused.

That this was no local dispute between the store workers and masters is shown by a resolution passed by the Employers Central Advisory Council, composed of representatives from the Jersey Employers Federation, the Building and Allied Trades Federation, the Plumbers Federation, the Jersey Produce Mer-

* *Evening Post*, March 20, 1920.

chants' Association and the Farmers' Union. This resolution stated "that this Council fully endorses the offer which the merchants have made to their employees; moreover, seeing that the merchants have taken steps to explain to the officials of the Union their interpretation which is complained of by the employees, the Council is of the opinion that nothing more can now be done by the merchants."*

So the gauntlet was thrown down. Meanwhile the Parish workers had threatened to strike. They were given an increase of 6/- a week to keep them at work. They were to be useful later on.

The next move on the part of the masters was an attempt by the Farmers' Union to cart coal from the s.s. *Mechelin* and *T. C. Hutton* for the members of the J.P.M.A. This brought the general carters out on strike in protest. There were now over 500 men out.

On the morning of the 24th, J. Pinel, Constable of St. Helier, and John Huelin of Huelin's Ltd. were seen making for the *T. C. Hutton*.

After a conference with the captain it was thought that the coal might be unloaded with farmers acting as carters. This was stopped by the threat of a strike by the local members of the Seamen's Union on board ship, should the ship be unloaded by non-union labour. Meanwhile the dockers were ordered to refrain from handling any J.P.M.A. goods.

During the afternoon a stream of parish carts was observed heading for the pier under police escort. On reaching the pier they came up against the pickets. Pinel intervened. Standing on a bollard he attempted to make a speech. He was booed, then somebody threw something. Pinel and his parish carters hurriedly withdrew.

On the following morning another attempt was made on the coal ships. Again the parish carts appeared. Two cranes were manned by non-unionists and the attempt was commenced. Immediately the regular cranemen struck and refused to load the mail boat. At this the attempt was abandoned.

On March 26 a notice was received from Southampton stating

* *Evening Post*, March 22, 1920.

that no Jersey produce would be handled by English dockers until the J.P.M.A. withdrew their lock-out notice.

Twenty head of cattle were due to be loaded on the s.s. *Vera* on the following day. Owing to the active support which the farmers were giving the J.P.M.A., the dockers refused to handle these or any other produce either of the J.P.M.A. or of members of the Farmers' Union.

Strike pay was being paid out at the rate of 15/- per week plus family benefits, from a fund collected in England and Guernsey for the Jersey workers. It was noticed that many of the single men shared their pay with the men with large families. This was the spirit of the Jersey worker at this time of stress.

On March 30 the J.P.M.A. closed down all their stores, this being done because no Jersey produce could be got past the English docks.

The following day brought new developments. The Master Bakers' Federation announced that no bread would be baked after April 6 if the coal ships were not unloaded. A shortage of coal was given as the reason. On April 3 the Union replied that if the bakers applied to the Lock-Out Committee, permits and transport would be granted for the carting of coal to the bakers' premises. This offer was ignored by the bakers. On the 6th they were still delivering bread.

On April 9 the J.P.M.A. increased their wage offer to 45/-. This also was refused by the men.

At this point the States intervened and appointed F. J. Bois to intervene as arbitrator. Bois called a meeting of Union officials at the Bailiff's Chambers, and in the presence of Sir William Vernon. Sir William referred to the Labour Code of 1771 declaring Unions illegal. The delegates refusing to accept the J.P.M.A. offer, he warned them that they left him with the shadow of arrest hanging over them. This, like the Master Bakers' threat, failed to materialise.

April 10. More trouble! Bashfords, having upheld the Union Agreement, had been allowed to ship their produce to England. They were the only growers to whom this concession was made. Thinking themselves extremely clever, they started picking up produce from the back entrances of merchants' stores and ship-

ping it as their own. This was reported by pickets and Bashfords' permit was withdrawn. Bashford and the London and South Western Railway Co. replied by locking out their men.

Two days later the Building and Allied Trades Federation, the Master Plumbers' Federation and the Farmers' Union announced that as the actions of the Union had dislocated trade they would close their places of work to all Union labour. These lock-outs were effective from April 17. On that day the Jersey Employers' Federation gave warning that it was calling for a general lock-out as from April 24.

It was at this juncture that R. Greenwood arrived in the island to take over the case for the Union. Negotiations were proceeding between Bois, the D.W.R. & G.W.U., and the J.P.M.A. However, the J.P.M.A. refused to consider any agreement except their own suggestion of a rise to 45/-.

On April 21 the States called for volunteer special constables. This appeal was backed by a strong editorial on the part of the *Evening Post*. The workers were denounced as an anti-social mob who must be brought to their senses by the forces of law and order.

By this time the s.s. *Wessex* had arrived with a cargo of flour. The States promptly decided to unload it using blackleg labour. The Special Constables, sporting red and white rosettes, stood guard over the blacklegs so that the strike pickets could not touch them.

At this the cranemen struck and even the mail boat had to be loaded to the best of their ability by blacklegs.

Deputy Gray at this point forgot his old connection with the Union and, in a letter to the *Evening Post*, came out with a tirade against the bad leadership urging the men on to rash acts. On the contrary, as even the *Evening Post* had admitted, it was the rank and file that kept on demanding more action. The leadership was following its usual policy of damping down the men's ardour and preparing for a compromise.

On the 23rd this genius for compromise bore its fruit. Bois having promised to offer a settlement, the Jersey Employers' Federation postponed the general lock-out for a week and the Union men unloaded the flour boat.

On April 26 the Union officials announced that both they and the J.P.M.A. had accepted Bois' terms of 47/- per week. It will be remembered that the men had asked for 55/- and the J.P.M.A. had offered 45/-. So the officials of the Union added one more compromise to their scrap book and the fight was over.

But wait! What's this? Bashford refused to take back a couple of the men whom he had locked out. The men stayed out.

Well, the Union settled that! On the 30th Bashford climbed down and took back all men without any reservations.

The next dispute arose over a demand for a wage increase by the wine merchants' and brewers' employees. These men, receiving £2 per week, put forward a demand for £2 15s. at the beginning of May, 1920. The Wine Merchants refused to entertain this and offered £2 5s. This, they said was a final offer. A meeting of the men was called by the Union for June 2.

At this meeting the men refused the offer, but made it plain that they were willing to negotiate. On June 11 the masters repented of their previous statement that £2 5s. was their final offer and made a new offer of £2 10s. After some discussion this was agreed to by the men.

This year, 1920, was a year of wage increases all round. Almost every new agreement signed included a rise in pay of some kind. That these rises were necessary to maintain the workers' standard of living will be realised when it is noted that by now the cost of living index was 264 (1914=100).

The Building and Allied Trades Employees were the next to meet opposition in the fight to maintain this standard of living. On September 20 they demanded a rise from $1/0\frac{1}{2}$ per hour to $1/3$. At the same time they put in a demand for a 48-hour week (they were then working a 52-hour week).

After the B. & A.T. Federation had dragged out negotiations for over a month, the men waived their demand for shorter hours, but held fast to the demand for $1/3$ per hour. This being refused by the masters, a strike was called for on October 25, the plumbers coming out in sympathy. So on the 25th all that could be seen of the building and allied trade operatives was their pickets at various points of the town.

Three days later the men went back to work pending negotiations.

On the following day the B. & A.T.F. offered 1/1½ per hour. This was refused. They then offered 1/2 per hour. After a couple of weeks of fruitless negotiations this was accepted by the men.

In November an ultimatum from the States Dock Employees resulted in their receiving a 10/- per week increase all round.

It was on this note of a determined struggle for wage increases that the year closed.

4.

During the first two months of 1921 the local branches of the D.W.R. & G.W.U. and the General Workers' Union were busily engaged in meetings and balloting on the question of a possible amalgamation of several allied Unions to form one large unit.

The project went through and the Transport and General Workers' Union was born. The split between the local D.W.R. & G.W.U. and G.W.U. branches came to an end.

May Day, 1921, saw the first Jersey Workers' Procession. This, although not a very militant gathering, showed the strength of the Union. Over 2,000 men marched from Union headquarters at Unity Hall, Museum Street, to the West Park Pavilion. They were accompanied by two bands, and on arrival were addressed by the Dean and the Rev. Ralph. Not very militant—yet a big occasion.

The attitude of the employers of Jersey and their wish for "industrial peace," longer hours, and lower wage rates can be seen in the clever appeal to patriotism of a letter to the *Evening Post*.

"Men of grit who stood shoulder to shoulder and came out so well for the common good during the war, remember every strike helps to seal your doom. It is the thin end of the wedge for foreign labour and goods. Take a peep into Germany: there every factory, shipyard, etc., is in full swing, the men working long hours, night and day without cessation,

less pay, with one common aim—the good of their country, to conquer or die. There, there are no strikers and no strikes. Men of Jersey, will you thus stand aside and let these tyrants win?”*

And so to prevent “these tyrants” from winning, the Jersey workers must presumably put up with “long hours, night and day without cessation, less pay . . . and no strikes.” So nice for the Jersey tyrant!

In that year, 1921, even the Conservative *Evening Post* waxed indignant over the way in which schoolchildren were released from school to work in the fields and stores during the potato season. Referring to field work, the “E.P.” calls it a scandal that “in the country parishes, boys and girls of ten or twelve years of age are working in the fields for long hours daily for a period of some nine weeks.”† In the case of store work, the “E.P.” rightly asserts that “if the merchants want extra labour, let them engage grown men and pay them the proper wage.”‡ But even the Union did not seem interested enough to fight this scandal and it continued for some years. Then the children’s place was taken by women—also paid a starvation wage.

Since February, 1921, there had been a controversy over Building and Allied Trades wage rates. The masters wished to reduce labourers’ rates by 2d. per hour and refused to attend a conference to examine affairs or to formulate their grievances publicly. All the summer was taken up with correspondence between the B. & A.T.F. secretary and Hardman. Hardman wrote on August 25 asking the B. & A.T.F. to fix a date and place for a meeting between masters and men. This was a repetition of the same request put forward on February 14 without result.

On September 6, Hardman had still received no answer or acknowledgment of his August letter and he again asked for a time and place for a conference. At the same time he advertised in the *Evening Post* that a mass meeting of the men affected would be held on the following Monday to consider the

* “Hear all Sides,” *Evening Post*, May 9, 1921.

† *Evening Post*, June 6, 1921.

‡ *Ibid.*

apparent unwillingness of the Federation to negotiate. This advertisement upset the B. & A.T.F., who insisted that they had always been ready to meet the men. They replied to Hardman fixing a conference for the following Tuesday, and stated in the columns of the *Evening Post* that this showed that they had been willing to negotiate all along. Presumably, ever since February! Having fixed the date for the conference they then refused to attend until Hardman had apologised for the advertisement accusing them of delay. No apology forthcoming, the conference was off.

At the mass meeting of the men a resolution was passed "that failing the reopening of negotiations (which the employers have broken off) and a definite date fixed for the discussion of our claim, also a guarantee that the existing rates to both mechanics and labourers will be maintained pending a settlement being arrived at; further, that failing a satisfactory reply from the Building and Allied Trades Federation and the Plumbers' Association by Friday, September 16, there will be a cessation of work as from Friday evening, as the men are strongly opposed to work without an agreement."*

The masters met and answered that, providing they received an apology from Hardman, they would re-open negotiations.

The Union's reply was: "that with reference to the statements and advertisement which have recently appeared in the Press above the signature of J. W. Hardman, the meeting was unanimous that these statements shall not be publicly retracted until such time as the employers have proved to the public before an independent tribunal . . . that such statements are wrong and without foundation. . . . The meeting also agreed to suspend the strike notices for one week, in order to give the Federation ample time to prove Mr. Hardman's guilt or otherwise."†

A letter appeared in the *Evening Post* on September 19, giving a good answer to the employers' claim that the men were so unsatisfactory that they (the masters) were losing money.

"If," said this scribe, "labour is so unsatisfactory, why do the masters tolerate it? Or, in other words, why don't the employers start a lock out?"

* *Evening Post*, September 14, 1921.

† *Evening Post*, September 17, 1921.

"The answer to all this is that the employers are not likely to kill the bird that lays so many golden eggs."

On September 19 the B. & A.T.F. decided to meet the men. However, the conference resulted in a deadlock.

On the 23rd the strike was again postponed and a suggestion was made that the Board of Trade be approached to arbitrate.

The employers refused to consider arbitration and announced that as they could get cheaper unskilled labour easily from the ranks of the unemployed, labourers' wages would be reduced by 2d. per hour as from October 1, 1921.

At a special meeting of the men concerned held on the evening of September 30, it was decided that an immediate strike should be called. The following day, October 1, over 700 men were out. Ned Le Quesne, in a letter to the "E.P." on October 3, criticised Hardman and the Union. If Hardman insists on not apologising to the Federation for accusing them of delay, then Mr. Le Quesne thinks "that in this instance the only course open to the employers is to be obdurate in their insistence on an apology from Mr. Hardman before opening negotiations with the men's representatives." Thus the "Workers' Friend"! At the same time Ned Le Quesne sympathised with the workers' wives and children in the coming time of hardship during the strike. This sympathy was the subject of a letter by Philip Hodge:

"Having regard to the utter disproportion subsisting between the rise of wages and the increase in the cost of living, and therefore, to the apparent indifference of the employers to the welfare of their men during those years of war that preceded the advent of the Dockers' Union; remembering, I say, the attitude of the masters towards their men during the above named period, the sympathy which Mr. Edward Le Quesne, as an employer, expresses in his letter of this evening, for the wives and children of the men on strike does not, somehow, awaken quite the same sentiments that it was bound to do, had those women and children been the subjects of a little more consideration by the employers during the above-mentioned years of stress."*

* "Hear all Sides," *Evening Post*, October 4, 1921.

Or, as one might say: "Crocodile's Tears."

W. Paul, Area Secretary, having arrived in Jersey re the dispute, inserted a résumé of the conflict in the *Evening Post*. He referred to a letter from the Federation which the *Evening Post* had *not* published when they published a *full* account of the correspondence. In this letter, Paul says, the Federation gave notice "that on and after September 15 the wages of the labourers would be reduced by twopence per hour; further that no agreement would be entered into with the Union for the future for any of the men."* It was following this that Hardman had inserted his "offensive" advertisement in the *Evening Post*. Paul insists that the Union's Area Executive are backing the men, contrary to rumours which had spread in the island and that the executive is "convinced that there is a deliberate attempt to misrepresent the whole position."†

During the first fortnight of the strike there were a few clashes between pickets and blacklegs. One picketer was pulled up before the police court and fined £5 for "intimidating a blackleg."

All through October the strike dragged on without any result save a spate of letters for and against the Union and the strike in the local Press. Letters from employers, letters from "workers" who were obviously not workers from the very style of their letters, letters from unionists, letters from the general public!

Then on October 25 the States offered to arbitrate. The Union unreservedly announced their willingness to accept this offer, but the masters turned it down.

On the same day at a conference held between the Transport and General Workers' Union (Gas Workers' Branch) and the management of the Gas Company, the Company announced that they were considering a reduction of 1d. per hour in the rates of pay of unskilled workers for the term of the new agreement. The men refused to accept this cut. As it looked as though the men might strike, Harry Morris, manager of the Gas Company, suggested taking the matter to an Arbitration Board.

* *Evening Post*, October 11, 1921.

† *Ibid.*

The Union replied that so soon as the B. & A.T.F. agreed to arbitration in their dispute, the men would agree to arbitration in the Gas dispute. But not before!

Consequently on the expiration of the existing agreement on October 31, the gas workers struck. The *Evening Post*, in an editorial on that day struck the note that was echoed all through this Gas Strike. In their hysterical leader they stated "that it is a monstrous thing that any one section of the community should be allowed to practically paralyse the commercial and industrial life of the town;" they considered "the present action of the gas workers quite unnecessary."*

The ball was kept rolling with a beautiful push from "Indignant," who wrote to assure the gas workers of the "contempt they have incurred by their cowardly and altogether poisonous action in arbitrarily and without notice depriving the people—those in sickness as well as those in health—of the means of light, heating and cooking."†

"Anti-Bolshevik" carried on the game with a plea to the employers that they, "whether they belong to the Builders' Federation or the Gas Works, remain firm. Let them remember," he says, "that to give in now to direct action will be equivalent to placing a mortgage on the future."‡

At this stage the Lieutenant Bailiff called a conference of men and masters at the Bailiff's Chambers. Paul and Hardman attended; but there was no sign of the masters' representatives.

At a mass meeting of all Union branches, held on November 5, a general strike was hinted at.

Meanwhile the letter offensive was continued. Mrs. Trachy, President of the Women's Branch of the Union, and a great letter writer, came out into the open to oppose the "extremists" as she had done all through her career. She wrote:

"Months ago I told the men that the Secretary would lead them on the rocks. He has done so in such an expert manner that if he had been paid by the enemies of Trade Unionism he could not have done it better. Now the workers' ship, i.e.,

* *Evening Post*, October 31, 1921.

† *Evening Post*, November 2, 1921.

‡ *Evening Post*, November, 3, 1921.

the Union, which is so necessary to guard their rights, is in great danger of being wrecked on the reefs of Bolshevism. Some of the workers may not recognise it as such, but the marks of the Beast are plain to an experienced eye.”*

But the goal was scored by “A.M.” who made two suggestions to prevent further trouble: “First: Close all licensed and off-licensed houses. . . . Second suggestion: Request the British Government to send a warship to Jersey.”†

On November 10 the following form of apology was agreed on by the Union and the Federation and Hardman signed it: “After the discussion, which has clarified the whole position, I am prepared to withdraw the imputation contained in the Press of the 9th and 10th September last.”‡

On receiving the above signed by Hardman, the B. & A.T.F. agreed to negotiate over the question of a reduction in pay. On the 11th the gas workers were to return to work pending negotiations. However, owing to the possibility of a deadlock they remained out till matters should be cleared up somewhat.

A conference was held on November 16. The Federation put forward a seven-point plan. Point 1 called for a reduction of 2d. per hour in wages.

Point 2 guaranteed that no further reduction would take place before the following February.

Point 3 asked that the Board of Trade cost of living figure be recognised.

Point 4 called for a drop of 1d. per hour for every fall of 5 points on this table.

Point 5 guaranteed no drop of more than 2½d. per hour during the yearly agreement.

Point 6 called for a loyal working of the next yearly agreement.

Point 7 asked the Union to stop the men from sending in round robin demands to the masters.

During the Conference Point 1 was modified to an immediate cut of 1d. per hour, to be followed by a similar cut in February.

* *Evening Post*, November 7, 1921.

† *Evening Post*, November 8, 1921.

‡ *Evening Post*, November 10, 1921.

The Union officials rejected this plan and offered to accept a cut of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per hour from January 1, 1922, with a similar cut to operate from March 1. They agreed to the operation of a sliding scale based on the Board of Trade table.

No agreement was reached. The men remained on strike.

On November 19 the gas workers returned to work at their old rate of pay pending negotiations re their wage dispute. The Building and Allied Trades men remained out. Then contrary to usual procedure and to the chagrin of the B. & A.T.F., the Union began to sign agreements with individual masters, who were members of the Federation. Many masters signed these agreements, the terms of which were the continuance of the old agreement until a new general agreement was drawn up and accepted.

This rattled the B. & A.T.F. Here was their organisation falling to pieces. On November 22, J. V. de Gruchy, their Secretary, announced his willingness to accept arbitration. Hardman agreed, but insisted on all the men being allowed to resume work on the old terms pending negotiations. This the Federation refused. Again deadlock! On November 29 the Federation climbed down and agreed to take the men back as soon as the date for the sitting of the Arbitration Board was settled.

While waiting for the award of the Arbitration Board, we will glance at the position of the workers' movement in Jersey at this time.

The Transport and General Workers' Union had a membership of over 5,000. Local branches of the National Union of Railwaymen, the Typographical Association of Great Britain, and the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, brought the total of Unionists to not far short of 6,000.

A local Labour Party had been formed in September and had already attracted attention to itself.

Labour was strong and the rank-and-file knew it. They were determined that the day of bad pay and worse conditions was over.

On December 5 the Arbitration Board concluded sifting the evidence in the Building and Allied Trades' dispute. The following day their award was made public:

"1. That the wages of unskilled labourers be reduced by one halfpenny per hour till 1st of March, 1922, and that from that date to the 1st day of December, 1922, the reduction should be at the rate of 1d. per hour over and above the halfpenny above mentioned.

"2. That the wages of skilled labour should not be disturbed till the 1st of March, 1922, when a reduction at the rate of one penny per hour should operate till the 1st of December, 1922."*

An interesting point is shown by the *Evening Post* report of the sitting of the Board. Here is the conversation in question:

"Mr. Charles Le Quesne said that the employers could not accept.

"The Chairman then said, after reading the finding of the Board, that the award would be issued next morning.

"Mr. C. Le Quesne said that it was probable that the Federation would not exist after the meeting. The general feeling amongst their members seemed to be that the Federation as a body dissolve, and then they could get labourers at 30/- to 36/- per week.

"The Chairman said that he considered they were bound for the next twelve months to accept and abide by the finding of the Board.

"Mr. C. Le Quesne said that they would not be bound if they dissolved.

"The Chairman said he would consider that as a gross breach of faith."†

No comment is necessary.

However, the members of the Federation did not support Mr. Charles Le Quesne in his attempted breach of faith, and the Federation was not dissolved.

So ended one of the sternest struggles of the Jersey Unionists. The rank and file were dissatisfied.

It is true that the award was compulsory. But the men felt that there would have been no wage cut had they stood out long enough.

* *Morning News*, December 6, 1921.

† *Evening Post*, December 6, 1921.

It is true that the Union had fought hard for them. But the men had wanted more.

It is true that compromise is sometimes necessary. But the men were tired of the officials' endless compromises.

It is true that, as Mrs. Trachy once said, the Union had prevented revolution. But the men did not seem to care. The rank and file knew their strength and were tired of compromise. They knew their power and wanted better conditions—wanted a clean sweep of all that meant degradation and exploitation.

The Union leaders were satisfied; but the men were not.

In the next chapter we talk of decline.

CHAPTER III

DECLINE

1

The year 1922 opened with a Union membership of nearly 6,000 spread between the Transport and General Workers' Union, the Typographical Association, the National Union of Railwaymen and the Amalgamated Society of Tailors.

These Unions had conjointly formed a local Labour Party branch which was growing in membership. Though many compromises with the masters had been made by local Union Officials, yet the Jersey worker's standard of living was higher than it ever had been.

The future looked rosy.

The year 1937 opened with a Union membership of less than 500, spread between the same Unions. The local Labour Party had ceased to exist save in the hearts of the few staunch veterans of the Unions. Attacks on the workers' standard of living were rampant.

What had happened in between ?

2

Following the cut awarded by the B. & A.T.F. Arbitration Board, the Gas Dispute Arbitration Board awarded a cut of one halfpenny per hour to operate from the commencement of 1922. It was suggested that there should be a further reconsideration of wage-rates in the gas industry in the following March.

Following from this, a Joint Council was set up during February, consisting of representatives of men and masters.

Labour in Jersey at this time was strong enough for a Mr. Duncan Wingan to write to the *Evening Post* that "It is quite on the cards and freely rumoured that a Labour man, apart from

the employing type, will, backed by the coffers of a powerful trade union, stand for the office (of Constable). . . . Although a comparative stranger to your island, I will be bold enough to warn you that if the ratepayers do not wake up and combine and take action, some morning in April a coal-heaver, maybe a dustman, will be O.C. Town Hall." *

However, this scare fell through, for there was no Labour candidate for the post of Constable of St. Helier in the election of June, 1924.

About this time the States woke up to the fact that something ought to be done about Seignorial rights. A Bill of long-standing was at last brought up for discussion and was finally passed on February 2, 1922. This allowed proprietors to commute Seignorial Rights in their property by a cash payment of 4 per cent of the value of their land, and 3 per cent of the value of their buildings, etc.

Another Bill was introduced in the Assembly during this February. This was to effect the removal of the twelve Rectors from the States and to replace them by twelve elected Councillors. Until recently nothing more has been heard of this Bill, and they continue to sit there.

Continuing this spurt of activity regarding reform, the States failed to pass a Bill tabled in March dealing with compulsory arbitration in trade disputes. The voting was 20 for the Bill and 20 against. Sir William Vernon refused to use his casting vote. The Bill was dropped.

On the industrial front things were very quiet. Though at a mass meeting held by the T. & G.W.U. in November, Ernest Bevin, who was visiting the Island, had to admit that there had been an all-round drop in wage-rates during the year, yet the membership had remained steady.

The housing conditions of the Jersey workers were beginning to come to the public notice. The Jersey Labour Party had placed better housing as one of the planks in its platform. That this was necessary is shown by a few cases drawn from Census (1921) statistics. These showed that among other cases, at a house in Albert Street nine persons were living in two rooms. In Ann Street there were cases of 10 and 11 persons living in

* "Hear all Sides," *Evening Post*, January 23, 1922.

three rooms; while in Old St. James Place families of five and six called one room their home.

In spite of the general trend of falling wage-rates, it was not until April, 1923, that there was any determined effort to make a stand.

During the first few months of the year, the cost of living had gone down 10 points. This meant that the men employed by the Jersey Produce Merchants' Association suffered a cut of 1/3 on a normal week, reducing their wage from £2 5s. to £2 3s. 9d. In spite of a slight increase in the cost of living figure for April, the J.P.M.A. proposed a further cut of 7/9 on a normal week, bringing the wage level down to £1 16s. Even the *Evening Post* admitted that this seemed "hardly justifiable."

The men held two mass meetings on April 11 and 18, at which it was decided to put forward counter proposals and to continue negotiating.

On April 25 a joint meeting of the men and masters was held at Unity Hall. The men put forward their counter proposals, which went over to the offensive. They were:

"That in lieu of the £2 5s. of last year's agreement, storemen and carters should receive £2 7s., coopers £2 8s., and motor drivers £2 10s., those latter doing running repairs £2 15s.

"The sliding scale based on rise or fall in cost of living be abolished altogether." (It only worked one way, in any case.)

"Work should finish at 12 o'clock on Thursdays, not 1 o'clock.

"Overtime be paid at the following rates: First two hours, time and a quarter; thence to midnight, time and a half; after midnight, double time.

"A wage of £4 per week be paid to able-bodied men during the potato season (as against the existing £3 10s.)

"The clause re the working of women in stores to be deleted.

"Overtime to be optional, not compulsory.

"That during the potato season no imported French labour be employed in the stores.

"Carters when coaling or vracicing to receive 1/- per day extra.

“Lorry drivers of lorries of over two tons to be supplied with extra man.” *

This, the employers said, was impossible. However, they modified their own proposals to the following :

“That the minimum wage for storemen, carters and lorry drivers be £2 per week for able bodied men; coopers, £2 1s.

“Coopers’ piece-work to be agreed upon between employer and employee.

“During the potato season, the wage for able-bodied men be £3 per week.

“Women to be employed only when there is a scarcity of male labour.

“Employers shall determine at all times when any reasonable overtime be worked.” †

Thus it will be seen that already by the mere fact of meeting with resistance, the employers’ offer had risen by 4/- for a normal week. This offer also was refused by the men. Negotiations continued.

On April 30 the J.P.M.A. increased their offer to £2 2s. 6d. This was refused; but the men made it known that they would be satisfied with the old rate of £2 5s. This the J.P.M.A. refused; but on the threat of a strike they raised their offer to the existing rate of £2 3s. 9d.

On May 6 (Labour Sunday) this was considered by the men and a ballot was arranged for May 9. On this Sunday, the second Union Procession was successfully held; over 2,000 men again marching through the town as in 1921. However, this time they were not addressed by the Dean but by English Union organisers. An appeal was made to men still outside the Union to come in.

On May 8, the J.P.M.A. conceded most of the proposals originally made by the men; but stood fast on the cost-of-living table clause and insisted that their offer of £2 3s. 9d. with £3 10s. for the potato season was final. On the ballot being taken on the following day, 134 men voted for the acceptance of the last

* *Evening Post*, April 26, 1923.

† *Ibid.*

offer and 130 voted for insistence of the Union's proposals. So by this narrow majority the agreement was made. When we realise that the original offer of the J.P.M.A. was £1 16s. for a normal week and their final offer was £2 3s. 9d. for the same, we must admit that the men had gained a substantial victory in standing up for themselves. The merchants had grumbled that they would be bankrupted if they could not reduce wages to £1 16s. Yet there were no cases involving Jersey merchants before the Bankruptcy Court that following year.

Later in May, the resentment of the merchants towards the "interference" of the T. & G.W.U. was shown by Dennis Ltd., refusing access to their employees by Union officials in their stores. This was easily settled in favour of the Union by a lightning strike.

When the B. & A.T. agreement came up for reconsideration in November, 1923, the Union again went over to the offensive. A rise in pay of 1½d. per hour was claimed—this to restore the cuts imposed by the arbitration award of the previous year.

The B. & A.T.F. refused to consider this claim and put forward the proposal of a cut of 1d. per hour in labourers' pay. This was later modified to ½d. per hour. The negotiations were still dragging on in February, 1924.

Then this dispute fell into the background for a time owing to the outbreak of the Great English Dock Strike.

The local Dockers Branch of the T. & G.W.U. came out at noon on February 16 to a man. They stayed out till the T. & G.W.U. Headquarters accepted the bosses' terms in England on February 25, 1924.

In the meanwhile the B. & A.T. dispute had reached a climax. The men had suggested turning the whole matter over to an Arbitration Court. This the B. & A.T.F. refused to do. The Federation then announced that whether the men accepted or not, the ½d. per hour cut would be imposed as from February 23.

Hardman disclosed that the Union officials had suggested to the Federation that if the latter would drop their claim for a wage cut, the Union officials were prepared to recommend the men to waive their demand for an increase. This had been turned down.

At a meeting held on February 23, the men decided by a majority of 500 to 7 to strike immediately. On February 28 the

local dockers refused to handle any goods consigned to members of the B. & A.T.F. as an act of sympathy with the strikers.

On February 29 the B. & A.T.F. offered to accept arbitration on their suggested 1d. per hour cut. This was refused by the men unless the Federation took into account their (the men's) counter claim for an increase.

On March 3, Charles Le Quesne, becoming worried for the safety of his blacklegs, issued a warning in the Press that any attempt to molest them would be met by legal prosecution.

On the following day the first attempt made during any local strike at keeping the men occupied and cheerful was begun. The men organised a Recreation and Sports Committee. This would seem to be the only case on record where the Jersey strikers have taken any such action to keep themselves occupied or informed.

Then the B. & A.T.F. agreed to work under the old agreement till the following December if the men agreed to waive their demand for an increase in the meantime. A ballot having been taken, it was found that the majority of the men were agreeable to this and work was resumed on March 12.

During this dispute, the usual torrent of letters had appeared in the *Evening Post* abusing the workers and attempting to draw them from their loyalty. In this case they were answered by C. W. Nicholls, who, calling himself a Socialist, made no bones about attacking capitalism in its entirety. This drew upon Nicholls the concentrated fire of Jersey's large and mouthy reactionary set.

Under the heading (in large black type) "British Workmen, Beware!" the *Evening Post* published a letter from one who called himself "Britisher" and who blamed all the world's ills on the evil and malicious designs of the Jews. He finished up with the exhortation: "Good British workmen, beware, there are enemies in the camp, whose propaganda is misleading you and causing you to play their game. England's connection with Ireland has been loosened, and India, under a policy directed by the Jewish race, is fast slipping away from the British Empire."* Which, presumably spells ruin for the English worker!

Nicholls replied at length finishing: "You speak as though

* "Hear all Sides," *Evening Post*, March 4, 1924.

Socialism is a terrible thing. Go to Poplar and ask the poor of the East End their opinion of Mr. George Lansbury and Co. Go and ask the unemployed of England today what the Socialists have done and are doing for them. Now, good British workmen, don't let these so-called non-capitalists and Britishers sell you their dope, but think for yourselves, and as workers of the world, unite. You have nothing but your chains to lose, and you have the world to gain."*

This must have left the enemy speechless either with rage or fright, for there was no answering avalanche.

The workers employed by the Jersey Produce Merchants staged a come-back in May, 1924. It will be remembered that in 1923 they had demanded a normal week's wage of £2 5s. 0d. and the abolition of the cost-of-living sliding scale. They had compromised on £2 3s. 9d. and the sliding scale clause had been accepted.

When the yearly agreement came up for renewal the men put forward the old demands and stood firm. This time they won, and the J.P.M.A. agreed to sign the new agreement on these terms on May 17, 1924.

We must turn now from the industrial to the political front.

The third Labour Sunday procession was held in 1924, Frank Keates of Guernsey and Mary Carlin of England addressing the marchers.

In July, 1924, a by-election took place in St. Helier No. 1 electoral district. The local Labour Party announced in June that it would fight it. This caused a split in the ranks: some of the more prominent members refusing to back this policy. In fact the Chairman of the Party, T. M. Duffett, resigned his position because of this decision.

The committee suggested S. P. Channon as the Party's candidate. This was agreed to by the Party. Channon was as bad a choice as could have been made. The only thing that could be said in his favour was that he was prepared to relieve the Party of most of the cost of keeping him in the States should he be elected.†

* "Hear all Sides," *Evening Post*, March 6, 1924.

† It must be realised, of course, that the real worker has very little chance of sitting in the States Assembly under the existing Constitution of the Island for all representatives are unpaid.

Channon was not a fluent speaker. He had very little influence with the working class rank-and-file. The only prominence that this semi-clerical worker had risen to previously was as Choir-leader of the Union's Male Voice Choir and organist of St. Saviour's Parish Church.

Channon, however, was Labour's man. He had opposed to him John Renouf, a reformer of the old, well-known Jersey type. A "man of the people" who would probably, like all those other "men of the people" that the Islanders had trustingly elected to follow, forget his friends the people just so soon as he was elected.

Even John Renouf's posters were true to type. He announced himself as the "Practical Representative of all Classes." Anything more unpractical than a "representative of all classes" can hardly be imagined. But no matter! Renouf had the whole of Jersey's Press behind him. The *Evening Post* summed up the situation in an editorial by telling the electors that John Renouf would do far more for Labour than would their own candidate.

Channon, in choosing the slogan "Government of the People, for the People, by the People," rather upset our friends the *Evening Post*, who retaliated with: "We in Jersey have 'a Government of the People, for the People'; let us show those who despise our little Constitution that we are very much alive to this fact and that we wish to retain this glorious privilege."*

Even the dauntless Mrs. Trachy, the local missioner, suffragette, controversialist and ex-unionist, wrote her usual anti-union letter (these were by now becoming a regular feature of the *Evening Post* correspondence columns) in which she said: "Mr. Renouf has promised his support for our Woman's Movement, which does not need the 'Red Flag' nor any of its agents, men or women, to keep it alive."†

In spite of the overwhelming odds against them and the shy, retiring attitude of Channon, Labour polled 143 votes to Renouf's 748, a good advance from poor Peter Le Noir's 32 votes in 1913.

Labour left the field defeated, but on the understanding that

* *Evening Post*, July 7, 1924.

† "Hear all Sides," *Evening Post*, July 7, 1924.

more would be heard from them at the next election. Yet nothing more has been heard of them at any election to this day.

Mrs. Trachy! We meet that name throughout the immediate pre-war and inter-wars periods of Jersey's history. We will meet her in a big fight in a few moments. It is as well that we know something of her career.

Miss Smallcombe was well known in the second decade of the twentieth century in Jersey as a partner in the firm of Duffey and Smallcombe. They ran a mission hall in Devonshire Lane. It would seem to have been the usual semi-Puritan mission that Jersey knows so well. Through her contact with the Jersey workers, Miss Smallcombe appears to have become interested in the Labour movement. She regarded herself, and came to be regarded, as the champion of the Jersey worker's wife. As such, in 1918, she was elected Chairman of the Union's Woman Workers' Branch. By now Mrs. Trachy, she dropped most of her mission work and devoted herself to the workers' struggle. However, she kept her evangelical outlook and consistently opposed any militancy in the Labour camp.

In time, this policy of hers led her into conflict with the local Union Executive, particularly when she made statements in public to the detriment of the Union's accepted policy. Mrs. Trachy, on her side, regarded the Union Executive as a lot of "Bolshevists"—to her the "Anti-Christ." So there was trouble. The outcome was that Mrs. Trachy and the D.W.R. & G.W.U. parted company.

Not to be left out in the cold, Mrs. Trachy teamed up with a few other women to form the Jersey Women's Political Union. This, it may be said, developed into Mrs. Trachy's private property so far as policy was concerned.

Such is a brief outline of this meteorite that flamed across Jersey's political skyline for a few brief years.

The chief achievement of the J.W.P.U. was to run Mrs. Trachy as a candidate for the deputyship of a St. Helier Ward.

In 1922 an attempt was made. The nomination of Mrs. Trachy was turned down on the plea that women were not eligible for positions in the States Assembly. The next two years were spent by the J.W.P.U. in revising this decision. In February, 1924, they succeeded. The States passed an Act declaring women eligible for Deputyship.

Mrs. Trachy was again nominated at the General Election for Deputies in December, 1925, but was declared ineligible on technical grounds which were never fully explained. In 1928 Mrs. Trachy made her third attempt and polled 169 votes out of a total poll of 1,565.

This was the last that the political world heard of Mrs. Trachy.

It must be admitted that in spite of Mrs. Trachy's backsliding from the cause of the workers; in spite of her then teaming up with the leading "ladies" of Jersey society; in spite of her bitter attacks on the Union after her break with it; in spite of the figure of fun that she became; in spite of all this she did gain a lot for the Jersey working woman in her fight for women's rights—which shows what might have been done if the right policy had been pursued.

Apart from these two attempts at putting their own representatives into the States Assembly, the Jersey workers and the Jersey women were content during the inter-wars period to let such "friends of the people" as Ned Le Quesne represent them in the States. They made no further attempt at direct representation.

4

We left the industrial struggle at the end of the May, 1924, Storemen's dispute.

From then on for some years, we have to record a marked decline in Union activity. We have to record also a catastrophic drop in membership.

The period June, 1924, to June, 1927, was a prosperous time for Jersey. The Island shared in the boom that lifted the capitalist world to new heights of self-congratulation during the late 'twenties. As elsewhere the local workers did not share in this prosperity. Wages were barely maintained in spite of a slight rise in the cost of living. The workers' share in the general income was reduced, in comparison with the share of the bourgeoisie.

During this period of boom only the Docker's Branch took any

militant action. All other branches rested on their oars and lost heavily in membership. Leadership was non-existent. Hardman seems to have sat back and gone to sleep on the job.

The dockers had a clash with J. W. Huelin Ltd., over a case of victimisation in August, 1924. In January and February of 1925, there was trouble over the unloading of petrol boats. The petrol was being carted by non-union lorry drivers, so the dockers refused to unload it. After trouble with three ships, the dockers won the day, and only Union men were employed to cart the petrol. The local dockers also put forward a demand for better rates of pay as part of the Southampton Area fight for better dock conditions. This matter was settled satisfactorily in Southampton in January, 1926. In this year there was more trouble over the employment of non-union labour on the quays. This was all settled in favour of the dockers.

But all these were sporadic attacks. There was nothing more done to hold the members of the T. & G.W.U. together. There were no attempts made to enforce Union shop in any industry. It was a period of organisational stagnation—stagnation on the part of the *leaders* as much as, or more than, apathy on the part of the rank and file. There has been much talk in Jersey of the workers' apathy. This seems due far more to the lack of leadership and the presence of bad leadership in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties than to any inherent apathy.

After 1925 even the May Day celebrations were dropped, and no attempt was made at holding frequent mass meetings, as had been done in the hectic early days.

It was in this atmosphere of stagnation and decline that the Jersey workers heard the call of the 1926 British General Strike.

The local headquarters of the N.U.R. received instructions to stop work with the English railwaymen at midnight on May 5. The local T. & G.W.U. branch was instructed not to interfere with internal trade, but to stop work on the quays as from the same time. Consequently, the Dockers' Branch of the T. & G.W.U. came out and the storemen and carters refused to handle any work in connection with imports or exports. The N.U.R. employees of the Southern Railway obeyed their instructions, but the Great Western employees remained at work.

The States enrolled Special Constables and much volunteer labour for work on the quays. Hardman was approached re the handling of foodstuffs. He said that Union men could not perform any dock work, but that they would not interfere in any way with volunteer labour.

The local Typographical Association members remained at work, thus enabling the Jersey people to get a good reactionary viewpoint on the situation from the local papers.

The Rev. Quarrie showed his sympathy towards the working-class movement in his usual manner, in a letter to the *Evening Post*. This letter concluded with the appeal:

“Let Jersey remember her proverbial patriotism. Let the older members of the Union, who form its real strength, demand a return to work. Ignore the hotheads. Carry the leaders with you in a tidal wave of loyalty and common sense.

“Up Trade Unionists! Up Jerseymen!

“To work, and strike a blow for King, for Country, and for the Island!” *

So was the real attitude of another of these self-styled “Workers’ Friends” revealed. All these bourgeois reformists run true to type whenever a period of stress is reached in the class struggle. They all abandon their support of the Labour movement to call for “Industrial peace” or for a patriotic forgetting of the workers’ rights and needs.

However, as we all know, the General Strike collapsed through the weak policy of the T.U.C. chiefs. Of course, the local strike was called off at the same time.

Just as in England, Sir John Simon declared the strike illegal, so in Jersey the States warned the strikers that their action was illegal under the Labour Code of 1771.

In England the collapse of the General Strike was a serious set-back to the Labour movement. In Jersey it was almost a death blow. Coming on top of the compromises of local Labour leaders, falling on the general feeling of frustration of the rank and file; following the stagnation in local Union affairs of the

* “Hear all Sides,” *Evening Post*, May 11, 1926.

previous two years, this fresh disillusionment had a shattering effect.

In 1927 Jersey began to feel the breeze that forecast the coming gale of depression. The winter of 1927 brought more unemployment than Jersey had previously known. The States were compelled to lift the burden from the shoulders of the Parish Authorities. In December, 1927, the States Assembly voted £3,000 for Unemployment relief.

From 1927 to 1936 the number of unemployed increased each winter. It must be understood that most of the unemployment in Jersey has been seasonal. In the spring and summer the produce-exporting stores absorb all excess labour. It is during the winters that the problem arises. By 1936 the figure of unemployed had risen to over 500.

Even this figure, the highest that Jersey has experienced, is only just under 3 per cent of the registered workers. When compared with the 75 per cent of some English districts it will be seen that Jersey has had very little to grumble about in spite of the serious view that the Local Authorities and Press took of it.

The only Union activity worthy of record during the period 1927-1931 is in the Storemen's Branch. In all other branches the Union played a conciliatory role; accepted the terms of the masters where agreements were drawn up and more or less abandoned the workers in the more backward trades.

The first drive of the Storemen was an attempt to resist a wage cut. The Jersey Produce Merchants Association attempted to reduce wages of all grades by 5/- weekly when the yearly agreement came up for renewal in May, 1929. This, the men refused to accept. The matter was placed before an arbitration court which granted a reduction of 2/6 per week.

The Storemen staged a come-back the following May. When the J.P.M.A. again demanded a reduction of another 2/6, bringing the basic wage down to £2, with a wage of £3 to be paid for the potato season, the men refused to accept this demand. They put forward a counter demand for a basic wage of £2 5s., with £3 10s. for the potato season. This was refused by the merchants. During further negotiations the merchants accepted the demand for £2 5s., but clung to their refusal of the increase for the potato season.

The *Evening Post*, in an editorial on May 22, 1930, urged employers to compromise, if possible, on £3 5s.

The Union held a meeting on May 21, at which R. Greenwood, National Organiser addressed the men. Greenwood was the only militant organiser that Jersey had seen during the whole of the Union's local history. He came up to standard during this dispute. Concluding his speech at the meeting, Greenwood said: "The merchants flatly refuse any concession on the season, and what they are offering you now is only what you were robbed of last year, so it is no gift. It was taken away unfairly last year, and for many months a considerable number of men have been losing 2/6 a week, and to have that back is not sufficient. We want a little more to make up for what we have lost in the last nine months." (Cheers.)*

Usually the Union leadership had attempted to hold back the meeting's enthusiasm. It was something rare for Jersey to find a lead given in the direction of militancy. A Resolution was passed threatening a strike if the merchants refused to increase their offer. When the merchants realised that this threat was serious they raised their offer to £3 5s. which was accepted, after discussion, by the men.

The only other item of interest during these years was a strike of coal trimmers for increased pay in July, 1931. The Union allowed the strike to be broken by the employment of relief workers supplied by St. Helier's Parish.

In July, 1932, Hardman retired from the secretaryship of the local T. & G.W.U. Branch. Though he had held the reins while the great upsurge of 1918-1922 took place and had done so efficiently, of late years his leadership had been most noticeable by its absence. He it was, without doubt, who was responsible for the tremendous decline in the Union's activity and membership.

The membership of the T. & G.W.U. local Branch at this time had dropped right down to 305, the lowest figure ever reached. A membership of 305, when it was over 5,000 in 1922! Such was the appalling state of the Union when A. G. Lenfant took it over from Hardman.

* *Evening Post* Report, May 22, 1930.

A. G. Lenfant had been District Delegate to the Area Council for some years. When Hardman resigned it was decided by Area Headquarters that the size of the local district did not warrant his immediate replacement by a full-time secretary. So more names added to the register. This upset the S.C.S. management. Lenfant took over the secretary's duties.

It's an old saying that a new broom sweeps clean. Certainly Lenfant began with a spurt of energy. Taking over his duties at the end of July, 1932, by September he had formed a new branch—that of busmen. He had also reorganised the Building Trades Branch very effectively. In fact, by the end of September, Lenfant could report an increase in union membership of 462, bringing the total up to 767.

Despite this the T. & G.W.U. membership had dropped back to little more than 400 by 1936.

The most energetic work put in during the Lenfant period was in the Busmen's Branch. When the branch was inaugurated in September, 1932, the Jersey Motor Transport employees were quickly organised. On the other hand, the men employed by the other large bus company—the Safety Coach Service—could not be drawn in. In April, 1933, a meeting of S.C.S. employees was held at which 16 men joined, and the following week saw a man who fired Driver Toy. After correspondence had passed between the T. & G.W.U. and the S.C.S. management, Toy was reinstated and C. W. Binet, Chairman of Directors in the S.C.S. stated that he had no objection to his employees joining the T. & G.W.U. On April 18, Binet stated that at a meeting of the men held by the Company nearly all the men pledged full loyalty to the Company and deprecated "outside interference." He stated further that he had chatted with some of the conductors and that they had told him that they were perfectly content with the wage of 25/- for a 74-hour week which they were getting, and did not want the 35/- for a 60-hour week for which the Union was agitating.

The long-felt antagonism between the local T. & G.W.U. dockers' branch and the N.U.R. local branch flared up into the

open in 1933, over the employment of N.U.R. men as hatchway-men, a job considered by the T. & G.W.U. to come into the province of their members. After a dockers' lightning strike the matter was settled in favour of the T. & G.W.U.

Returning to the busmen, we must now record Jersey's first bus strike. As soon as the busmen's branch had been organised a draft agreement had been sent in to the J. M. T. Company. The Company turned it down on the excuse that they were meeting heavy competition from the S.C.S. and could not consider any amelioration of working conditions. The Union had then made the attempt outlined above to organise the S.C.S. men. Having failed in this, they returned to the attack on the J.M.T. Company. A proposed agreement was submitted, the main points of which were :

" 1. WAGES. Drivers—Grade 1 to receive £3 per week.

Grade 2 to receive £2 15s. per week.

Conductors to receive from 35/- to 47/6, according to length of service.

Overtime to be paid at the following rates:

(a) First eight hours weekly: normal rates.

(b) Any other overtime except that coming under (c): time and a quarter.

(c) Hours between midnight and 5 a.m.: double time.

" 2. HOURS OF WORK to be fixed at 54 hours weekly.

Holiday: A seven days' paid holiday to be provided to all men yearly at the Company's convenience.

" 3. UNION RECOGNITION. No man to be employed for a longer period than one week without becoming a union member.

" 4. RENEWAL to be effected yearly." *

On June 19, 1933, the J.M.T. management turned this down,

* For full text of Agreement see *Evening Post*, June 20, 1933.

again offering competition as the bugbear. At midnight the men met. A unanimous decision was taken to strike at midday on the 20th. This decision was kept secret for the effect of surprise. The men were instructed to complete their trip, should they be on the road at this time.

So at 12.5 p.m. on June 20, the first bus crew left their vehicle on the stand and walked to the garage. Others soon joined them and the garage hands came out in sympathy. A Company inspector tried to move off with a double-decker bus, but he was intercepted by pickets and forced to desist. By 12.50 the stoppage was complete.

At 1 o'clock the management agreed to negotiate should the men return to work immediately. This was put to the men, but their answer was: "We will not go back until that agreement is signed." The management declared its readiness to meet the men that afternoon and urged Lenfant to get the men back to work in the meanwhile. This Lenfant achieved by 1.15.

Negotiations dragged on for over a week. The J.M.T. offered wages of £2 15s. for drivers and 30/- for conductors, a 66½-hour week, and a flat overtime rate of 1/- per hour for drivers and 6d. for conductors. They refused to consider the clause imposing union shop.

The men put forward modified demands, the most important being the payment of £3 and 35/- respectively to double-decker drivers and conductors. They withdrew their demand that union shop be enforced, but insisted that no new men should be taken on if they were non-unionists. They brought their claim for a 54-hour week down to 56 hours. On other points they were willing to accept the Company's terms.

At a meeting held on June 28, between men and bosses' representatives, the final agreement was signed. It embodied all the men's modified demands save that of hours, which were fixed at 60 per week, and that concerning compulsory union membership, which was dropped.

Matters remained quiet till the following December, when the J.M.T. sought to break the agreement. At first they demanded a 5/- cut in the drivers' rates of pay. When this was refused they attempted to obtain a working week of 66 hours in place of the existing 60. This too was refused. The next move of the

management was to call a meeting of the men. When asked if a union official would be allowed to attend, Blakeway, the manager, said that none could be present. The men, scenting some kind of intimidation, as had occurred at a similar S.C.S. meeting, refused to attend unless a union official was present. The company countered by dismissing 10 men, including Joe Manning, Union branch secretary, and G. Le Claire, branch collector. This was a clear case of victimisation, and as such the men decided to fight it. On January 3, 1934, all J.M.T. employees, including workshop staffs, struck.

Blakeway posted up a notice on the main garage doors announcing that should the men not be back at 11 o'clock the same morning they could consider themselves dismissed. Eleven o'clock passed and nothing had happened. Then along came the Company's Traffic Manager, who posted up another notice asking for drivers and conductors. As a response a number of volunteers from amongst the country bourgeoisie came forward.

However, these volunteers were not needed for the strike had been broken by the following morning.

The settlement was :

“Work to be resumed this morning on the old terms. The men dismissed to remain dismissed, but the Committee to be empowered to negotiate with the Board regarding the case of these men.” *

This settlement was brought to the men by Lenfant and Leake, the branch chairman, at a midnight meeting on January 3. Lenfant insisted that the Company had stated that the men were dismissed for “unsatisfactory work.” Manning replied: “Some weeks ago, I attended a meeting and asked Mr. Frank Le Quesne (a J.M.T. Company director) if, as I had heard rumours, there was anything against my character. He said. ‘Manning, you are one of the best we have in the Company, one of the hardest working, and the Board has full confidence in you.’ How does that statement agree with the one just made?” †

Later Manning addressed the men. He concluded: “Unconditional surrender, that's what the Board's offer means to you men. If they beat us tonight, they beat the union. If you let

* *Evening Post*, January 4, 1934.

† *Ibid.*

this go through, you'll be letting down other branches who are prepared to stand by you."

However, Lenfant and Leake carried the day and the men went back to work with the dismissals standing. Lenfant made a statement to the *Evening Post* on behalf of himself and Leake in which he said: "We desire to state that Deputy Ed. Le Quesne strongly advised us that the terms of settlement should be accepted, and we were largely guided by his influence in advising the acceptance of the terms."

Lenfant and Leake were not the first to be caught by Ned Le Quesne's smooth tongue.

Lenfant won the day at this union meeting; but he lost this Union branch. From that day membership fell away, and has never yet been brought back to what it was then. Such are the fruits of this type of compromise by union officials.

During 1934 the States Assembly were discussing the introduction of a contributory, compulsory Workmen's Compensation for Accidents Scheme. It was put before a committee for examination. This committee reported its findings on March 1. Deputy P. N. Richardson suggested an amendment exempting farm workers from the provisions of the Act. This was carried by 22 votes to 17.

The T. & G.W.U. organised a mass protest meeting in the People's Park on March 11 against this decision. This protest was successful, farm labourers coming under the scheme when it was finally passed.

At this time politics in Jersey were in the ascendant. After a few attempts, the first of which was in 1926, the Fascists got a good foothold in the island. In April, 1934, the Imperial Fascisti League and the British Union of Fascists local branches amalgamated, having a combined membership of 79.

An attempt was made to revive the defunct Jersey Labour Party. This, however, came to nothing.

In April there was a scare that Trotsky might settle in the island. However, he was refused permission to land, and this upset passed over.

When the yearly Jersey Produce Merchants agreement came up for renewal in April, 1934, the men put forward a demand

for an increase of 2/- per week for a normal week, bringing their rate of pay to £2 6s. They also asked for an increase of 5/- per week for the potato season, bringing the pay rate to £3 10s. The matter was sent to arbitration. The Arbitration Court sat on May 12, but failed to come to any decision. Meeting again on May 15 the Court still came to no agreement. Finally, on May 18 an award was made granting an increase of 1/- on the normal week, and 2/6 on the potato season rates.

June 1934. More bus trouble! The Union was making a further bid for the men's support. A suggestion was made that the States should control the bus services. The S.C.S. management refused to take part in any negotiations, either with the Union or with the States. Webley, S.C.S. manager, said that his men were perfectly satisfied, and that conditions of work in the S.C.S. were better than in any other company. This statement was denied in a letter to the *Evening Post* by 18 employees and former employees of the S.C.S. They said, "We wish to let Mr. Webley, as well as the public, know that he has even worked us up to 83 hours per week at wages ranging from £2 to £2 10s. per week, and *no overtime paid*. These hours which we have quoted had to be done without extra pay whatsoever. Conductors wages from 15/- to 27/6 a week for the same number of hours."*

With a sinking membership Lenfant grew disheartened. That it was through his unfortunate and slack policy that the membership had again reached such a low level, of course, did not occur to him. Blaming the apathy of the rank and file, Lenfant offered his resignation at the end of November, 1934, this to come into operation at the close of the year.

A number of letters came into the correspondence columns of the Press expressing regret for Lenfant's decision. One particularly noticeable was that of J. H. Amy, President of the Jersey Merchants Association, complimenting Lenfant on having, throughout his period of service, been "prepared to see both sides of the question, and to weigh the pros and cons fairly as between the employer and employee."†

On December 12 Lenfant decided to withdraw his resignation.

* "Hear all Sides," *Evening Post*, June 22, 1934.

† "Hear all Sides," *Evening Post*, December 1, 1934.

During the following May another attempt was made to organise the S.C.S. employees, but still without success.

Lenfant again caused a split in the Union ranks in September, 1935. This time it was the Dockers' Branch that suffered. Lenfant was asked by the Railway Companies to allow a modification of the existing agreement. This was to the effect that a 3 p.m. call-time be added to the existing times. At the meeting of dockers employed by the Railway Companies, held to discuss this, the new call-time was accepted on behalf of the *whole port*. This led to active opposition on behalf of the other dockers, who had not been invited to the meeting. The opposition held meetings and attempted to reverse the decision, but Lenfant won the day.

For some time there had been trouble with the firm of J. W. Huelin Ltd., particularly over the employment of casual dockers. Huelins were a non-union firm throughout. A most difficult firm to handle from the point of view of Union organisers, they are one of the largest and richest of Jersey's industrial magnates. Thoroughly anti-Union, as one would expect from such a firm, Huelins had never yet paid Union rates. When any trouble occurred they applied for, and received, the services of parish relief beneficiaries, whom they used for strike breaking and such like duties.

The Union officials allowed Huelins to employ men at starvation wages without any attempt to fight the issue.

Matters came to a head when the local fascists, in their attempt to discredit the workers' unions, seized on this opportunity to canalise the casual dockers' discontent over the Huelin business. William Brasier, local fascist chief, organised a lightning unofficial strike of the men unloading one of the Huelin cement boats on March 14, 1936. Huelin's simply discharged the men concerned, and carried on with others.

This, of course, still further discredited the Union in the eyes of some of the dockers. Thus did the failure of the Union officials to take a strong line originally with Huelins fall in with the fascists' policy of discrediting working-class organisations.

At this particular time Union local headquarters were far too

involved in domestic trouble to worry their heads over this and other outside splitting movements.

Lenfant was found to have mishandled Union funds, and was dismissed from his post. This, coming at a time when Union prestige was very low, naturally only roused even more bitterness.

Under the temporary official, J. Wetherall, matters merely continued to decline. Wetherell was a man totally unfitted for the position and merely managed to keep the Union in a state of survival.

It was into this state of bankruptcy on the part of local leadership, resulting in apathy and bitterness in the attitude of the men, that the local district of the T. & G.W.U. had fallen by 1936.

Having built up a seemingly solid organisation by 1922, the Jersey workers, through the election of unsuitable officers and the lack of interest shown in the routine work of their organisations, had let this structure crash to the ground, bearing with it all their hopes of improved living conditions.

When the States in 1935 finally passed the Workmen's Compensation Act that they had been talking about since 1930, the number of workers registered under the Act was over 17,000. Of these, less than 500 belonged to a Trade Union branch.

Such was the position when the Southampton Area Headquarters of the T. & G.W.U. decided to send an English organiser to reside in Jersey as Channel Islands Officer.

CHAPTER IV.

REVIVAL

1.

Edward Hyman arrived in the island on January 12, 1937, to take up his duties as Channel Islands Officer of the T. & G.W.U. He granted an interview to the *Evening Post*. From their report we see that Hyman was a determined young man out to build up solid and efficient Union branches in the Islands.

This interview also shows us Hyman's limits. He was a fighter for reform, but certainly not a revolutionary. He summed up what was to be his policy in saying: "In industrial, as in political affairs, I put my trust in the peaceful path to prosperity."* Here we see Hyman as no opponent of Capitalism, but as another Reformist trying to fit the demands of the workers into the existing social order.

Having said that, we must go on to say that within that limit Hyman's work was most effective. His first duty was to revive membership and interest. That he succeeded in this no one can attempt to deny. Beginning with the Building and Allied Trades and gradually extending his efforts to other branches, he organised a membership drive the like of which had not been seen since the first great outburst of Unionism in 1919.

After he had been in the island for three months, Hyman could claim an additional 420 members. It is true that Lenfant had beaten this with a quarter's increase of 462 members in 1932, but Lenfant's drive then stagnated, while Hyman's ever went on to new heights.

In March, 1937, came Hyman's first fight. The old trouble with Huelins broke out once more. Two cement boats were in

* *Evening Post*, January 12, 1937.

the harbour and, following their usual custom, Huelins engaged casual labour to discharge them. These men were paid 1/- per hour, the normal dock rate being 1/4 per hour. These men struck. Huelins replied by sacking the men and employing others—chiefly the unemployed drawing Parish relief—and won the day as usual.

This time, however, events moved in a new fashion. Hyman went amongst the casual dockers, many of whom were non-Union men, and won them over to the Union. By the end of the year the stage was set. In May, 1938, Huelins again began to look for cheap casual dock labour. Hyman immediately took up the matter. He notified Huelins that if they did not sign an agreement conforming to the National Dock Agreement, a boycott would operate on all their shipping. At this Huelins climbed down and signed the agreement. As a result of this victory the T. & G.W.U. was enabled to bring the other recalcitrant firms into line and thus to make Jersey a Closed Port, with an all-round agreement and only Union men employed.

To return to 1937. In June of that year, Union membership had reached over 1,000 for the first time for ten years. At this juncture Hyman was engaged in a successful drive for holidays with pay. The enforcing of this clause in nearly all agreements signed during that year led to a large number of new members joining the T. & G.W.U. Also in 1937 Hyman signed the first agreement to be concluded with local haulage firms. This agreement brought an increase of up to 5/- per week for drivers.

During the 1937 tomato season women store workers received a rise of 5/- per week, bringing their wage up to 30/-.

The Building and Allied Trades Federation had come out victorious in every dispute with the T. & G.W.U. ever since 1922. For the first time since that date the B. & A.T. Branch of the Union, with a membership of over 200, now passed to the offensive. They gained a rise of 1d. per hour from the commencement of the working of the new annual agreement.

In the autumn of 1937 a Waterworks Branch was organised, and in the spring of 1938 Hyman carried through the reorganisation of the Ronez quarrymen as a branch of the T. & G.W.U.

In the face of a hostile employer these men had remained unorganised ever since the collapse of the Amalgamated Union of Quarrymen's local branch in 1914.

When the Jersey Produce Merchants' agreement came up for renewal in March, 1938, Hyman was in a strong position. With Union membership in the neighbourhood of 2,000, advances could be made. And in this case made they were! The minimum pay for storemen was increased from £2 5s. to £2 7s. 6d., with corresponding increases for coopers and lorry drivers. The wage for the potato season rose from £3 7s. 6d. to £3 10s. A clause was inserted granting a week's holiday with pay each year. This agreement gave the men the best conditions that they had ever known.

It must not be thought that this was gained without a struggle. When Hyman first put these demands before the J.P.M.A., they were turned down. He then asked for the matter to be put before an arbitration board. This brought a further refusal. Hyman's next move was to warn the J.P.M.A. that if they refused both to consider the demands themselves and to accept arbitration, he would have to take the only other alternative—that of a strike. At this the J.P.M.A. agreed to accept arbitration. The board decided in favour of the Union.

In the autumn of 1938, Ernest Bevin, General Secretary of the T. & G.W.U., visited the Island as the guest of the local District. At this time the Union claimed a membership of 2,500—an increase of more than 2,000 in two years. The organisational work which Hyman had been sent to carry through had been successful. So had the drive for better working conditions. Improvements in pay and hours had been won in nearly every local industry of importance save that of agriculture, which still remained dead territory from the Union point of view.

As far as the other local Union Branches were concerned, there had been little change. The N.U.R., the Typographical Association, and the National Union of Tailors have never become strong forces in the island because of the small number of men eligible for membership. It is unfortunate that apart from some collaboration in the short-lived Jersey Labour Party, there has never been any attempt to co-ordinate the work of the

various Unions locally, as could be done in a local Trades Council.

In the T. & G.W.U. the year 1939 was employed chiefly in consolidating the position both as regards membership and working conditions.

Apart from this, Hyman carried out some sound work in connection with the legal position of the local workers. The first fruits of this type of work came in March, 1939, when the States Assembly repealed the section of the 1771 Code of Laws referring to Labour organisations. So at the end of a year's negotiations and work on the subject, Hyman succeeded in regulating the position of the local Unionists.

On February 21 of that year a meeting of the District Committee of the T. & G.W.U. was held. A resolution was passed to the effect that:

“This Committee is of the opinion that it is both unfair to the workers and to good employers that contracts should be given to firms because they tender figures below those of employers observing Trade Union conditions for their employees.

“The Committee wish to draw the attention of the States to the fact that the British Government and practically all Dominion Governments have for many years insisted upon a ‘fair wage’ clause in all contracts. A majority of the Municipalities on the mainland also have adopted the aforementioned clause.”

This resolution was delivered to the States and followed up with a request to be able to put the case before a States meeting. The Committee of Public Works listened to Hyman's explanation of what he considered was necessary and in the beginning of September a resolution was carried through the States to the effect that in all subsequent contracts for public works the following “fair wages clause” would be included:

“The Contractor, in the execution of this Contract, is expected to pay rates of wages and observe hours of labour not less favourable than those which in practice prevail amongst good local employers.

“The Contractor shall also be held responsible for the observance of the provisions of this clause by any sub-contractor directly employed by him.”

On that same evening of February 21, 1939, another resolution had been passed and sent to the States' Social Insurance Committee. It was to the effect that:

“The States Social Assurance Committee be requested to consider seriously the urgent necessity for the appointment of a Workshop and Factory Inspector for the purpose of ensuring that reasonable precautions are taken by all employers of labour in Jersey to eliminate the risk of injury during the course of employment.

“That the said Inspector should have the power to enter into all places of employment for the purpose of satisfying himself that all gear, plant and structural work is such as to be reasonably safe for the use of employees. Further, that sufficient and satisfactory fire appliances, protection of traps in lofts and unencumbered emergency exits are installed wherever desirable.”

For over a year Hyman followed up this resolution with appeals and explanations to the States Committees concerned. He drafted a local Factory Act which he laid before the States for their comments. At first it looked as though some type of Factory Act would go through even though it did not come up to the standard that the T. & G.W.U. desired. However, the war intervened and the scheme was dropped.

The foregoing shows the work accomplished by Hyman in less than three years as local organiser. In fact, in August, 1939, it looked as though the dark age of Jersey Unionism had definitely been left behind.

And yet earlier in the year a disquieting sign showed that Union solidarity was still a new untried thing and that back-sliding was to be expected.

In spite of the growing enthusiasm of Jersey workers in Union affairs, it was still possible for a number of workers to be recruited in the island in January, 1939 for shipment to Guernsey

to break a strike. The firm concerned advertised in Jersey for 50 volunteer strike breakers. On the first day they received applications from over 40 men. This in spite of the fact that the men *knew* that they were being recruited for strike breaking. This, we must hope, will be the last occasion on which Jersey-men can be found to shame themselves to that extent!

CHAPTER V

THE WAR YEARS

September, 1939. War!

The number of Trade Unionists in the island at this time was in the neighbourhood of 3,000. The following table shows the comparative percentages of Unionists in the island at various stages of local Union history:—

| Date | Approximate number of Unionists | | | | As percentage of registered workers |
|------------|------------------------------------|----|----|----|--|
| 1922 | 6,000 | .. | .. | .. | 35 per cent |
| 1932 | 350 | .. | .. | .. | 2 per cent |
| 1937 | 500 | .. | .. | .. | 3 per cent |
| 1940 | 3,000 | .. | .. | .. | 17 per cent |

This table gives an idea of the work that Hyman had put in during the three years of his service. It shows clearly the reawakening of interest of the Jersey workers in Union affairs.

At a special emergency meeting of the T. & G.W.U. District Council, held during the first week of the war, the following resolution was suggested and passed at a mass meeting held two days later:—

“This mass meeting of workers, members of the Transport and General Workers’ Union, pledges itself to the fullest possible co-operation with the Authorities during the present National Emergency.

“The meeting is of the opinion that representative organisations should be allowed to ensure that their opinions, desires, rights and privileges were made known to, and safeguarded by, the Committee of Island Defence by a direct system of co-option to the said Committee.

“Furthermore, this mass meeting of members of the Transport and General Workers’ Union desires to record the fact that, while the membership will gladly comply with any industrial legislation that the Authorities may, from time to time find necessary to introduce in the interests of the Island of Jersey, this meeting will not agree to any action that would in any way jeopardise the standard of wages and working conditions built up through the efforts of the Union over the past twenty years.”

A copy of this resolution was sent to the States Assembly. It shows clearly the position of the local T. & G.W.U. District at this time. Under the influence of their semi-bourgeois upbringing, the local workers, while staunch Unionists in many cases, were certainly not revolutionaries.

In return for this offer of collaboration the Union was offered and accepted two seats out of twelve on the newly-formed Food Control Council, whose members were appointed by the Island Defence Committee.

During the period September, 1939, to June, 1940, Hyman continued the work of consolidating and advancing the organisation of the T. & G.W.U. He met with much success, particularly in the distributive trades, where, amongst other victories, he scored a large success in enrolling almost all the drivers employed by Orviss Ltd., one of the largest wholesale and retail provision stores.

Other good work was done amongst Public Utility workers and a commencement was made on the organisation of States employees. In the case of the Utilities, the bugbear has always been the comparative backwardness of organisation in the Electricity Co. While the Gas and Water workers had solid Union Branches they were held back by conditions in that service.

The amelioration of working conditions was not forgotten. The T. & G.W.U. applied for increases in pay in a number of trades and obtained a war bonus ranging from 3/- to 4/6 in many cases. In addition to this, the Building Trades agreement, which was normally signed in September for a year’s working, was signed for a three-month period, with a guarantee of review at the end of that and further three months’ intervals for adjustment according to living costs. The J.P.M.A. agreement, when

signed in April, 1940, brought storemen's wages up to £2 13s. 6d. per week, with a further increase guaranteed for any rise in the cost of living.

So in June, 1940, it could be said without fear of contradiction, that under Hyman's leadership the T. & G.W.U. had pulled through an almost fatal crisis and that while it had not yet fully recovered its power of the early twenties, it was well on the way to doing so.

Then came the collapse of France with the accompanying German occupation of her northern and western areas. The British Government decided that the Channel Islands were impossible to defend, and the withdrawal of British Forces followed. Conditions became chaotic for a few days, many islanders evacuated, most of the others were unsure whether to follow suit or not. In this chaos Hyman was recalled to England. He left the local District Committee with full power to carry on.

This Committee was left with a strong organisation behind it. There was a militant rank-and-file movement urging the pursuance of a stronger line, and there was growing up a sense of solidarity amongst the local workers. Hyman had created the precedent of obtaining seats on State Control Committees for Union representatives. In fact the Union was in a fairly powerful position.

In a reorganisation of the States Executive Committees, which took place at this time, a Department of Labour was set up to handle the growing problem of unemployment by the institution of public works schemes. Two seats on the Departmental Committee were offered to and accepted by the T. & G.W.U.

But this did not last long. The German forces reached the shores of Normandy and Brittany. The islands were subjected to a bombing attack, followed by frequent flights of enemy planes on reconnaissance (or perhaps merely exhibiting their might), the climax of which was the dropping of an ultimatum to the local Government to surrender. This demand was complied with, and the Germans occupied the Islands on July 1, 1940.

While this was going on, the District Committee of the Union, without calling any meeting to explain its action, dissolved itself. This was done informally, the Committee merely suspending all Union business indefinitely.

At this the more militant section of the members called the Committee to order in a letter signed by a number of them pointing out that such an action was against Union rules and quoting the Rule in question:

“The Union may be dissolved at any time by THE CONSENT OF FIVE-SIXTHS OF THE MEMBERS voting at meetings duly summoned for that purpose.”

The letter went on to point out that no such meetings had been held and called for the holding of meetings to hear the view of the rank and file members.

The answer of the District Committee was:—

“At a meeting of the District Committee held on Monday, September 2, 1940, the position was fully reviewed, and after a lengthy discussion, the following proposition was put forward by Brother Florence: We, the District Committee, have decided that the activities of the T. & G.W.U. will remain in abeyance until such time as we can get into contact with Area Office.

“Only one member voted against, Brother Tucker.”

The group who were in favour that Union activities should be continued while still possible replied:—

“Your present action can only be construed as an evasion of responsibility when the situation demands that each and every one of us should be prepared to tackle greater responsibilities than ever. You have a duty to fellow Unionists and that is to maintain determinedly the Union and struggle for its objectives no matter how difficult the situation with which we are confronted.”

In spite of this protest nothing was done by the Committee, proving their failure in leadership. In October the German authorities issued an Order dissolving all societies, including Trade Unions; but the local Union had already dissolved itself!

As soon as the local employers saw that the T. & G.W.U. was defunct, they began a vicious attack on the workers' standard of living. By the end of 1940 wages had been cut in practically every branch of industry. These cuts varied from the suspension of war bonuses to drastic cuts of up to 40 per cent of existing wages. By the beginning of 1941 this began to produce unrest,

shown by the chalking up on walls of slogans such as: "Workers' wages must keep pace with prices," and "The workers need food—search the houses of rich hoarders."

Soon a number of workers began to drift into the employ of the Germans, who offered wage rates 30 per cent higher than the local employers. Although this was a political fault, one must realise that to the average worker the offer of higher wage rates at a time of rising costs of living was not to be turned down lightly. And it has to be recorded also that the States' Labour Department, far from discouraging this drift, actually drafted men into the employ of the enemy both in the island and for military work in Alderney.

2.

Just as the period since 1937 has seen a revival in Trade Union activity, so on the Political Front the Jersey workers have experienced a re-awakening. It is unfortunate that the political upsurge did not gather momentum as early as the industrial revival.

Although in the late thirties there were attempts to revive the almost defunct Labour Party, and an effort on the part of a small group to found a more militant Socialist Party, it was not until 1939 that anything on these lines materialised. Then was established Jersey's first Communist Party Branch. Its first concern was to swing the local T. & G.W.U. on to a more militant line. In spite of its efforts, no practical result had been achieved by June, 1940, although as usual the Communist Party was building up an influence far in excess of its numerical strength. It was the Communist Party that led the militant section that called the Committee of the T. & G.W.U. to order in July of that year.

With the dissolution of the Union and the absence of any mass workers' organisation, the handful of Communists—most of them new and inexperienced members—faced a difficult future. For a time all organised work was abandoned, the members merely keeping in touch with each other in case opportunities for action presented themselves.

The year 1941 dragged on in the face of a growing dis-

content, vague and unco-ordinated at first, on the part of the workers, small traders and professional classes. The local authorities were felt to be evading responsibility to the masses of the people. Much was heard about "equality of sacrifice" and other high-sounding phrases, but the opposite seemed to be the practice. To mention but two instances. Contrary to all precedent in taxation, the States passed an Act by which earnings were taxed 2/- in the pound over and above the local flat rate Income Tax of 4/- in the pound. No attempt was made to impose a super tax on any other type of income. Then a little later an amendment to the Rating Law was put into effect. This abolished the method of rating by which two rates were levied, i.e., one on property owners, and another on occupiers of property, and imposed the whole burden on the occupier. Thus, without going any further into the Administration's Acts during the occupation, it can be seen how the emergency was used to shift the burden of taxation from the property and estate owner to the wage and salary earner.

The presence of the Nazis and their dislike of anything touching on Democracy caused difficulties to be put in the way of the normal functioning of what democratic institutions Jersey possessed. No elections were permitted and the States was replaced by a Council who ruled by Decree. This resulted in high-handed action by a few Councillors in a fashion distasteful to the majority of the people.

As a result small groups and factions were born in widely differing sections of the population, whose object was to give Jersey a larger measure of democratic control over its Administration as soon as the war finished.

One of these groups, styling itself the Jersey People's Progressive Party, issued a programme of suggested reforms. A copy of this reached a couple of people who realised that while many of the suggestions were fantastic, nevertheless the fundamental idea of a wide People's Front was a necessity for the island. They got in touch with one of the underground organisers of this P.P.P., and made various suggestions. The result was a meeting of four people: A. L. Robson, D. J. Querée, A. Jehan and N. S. Le Brocq, to discuss the formation of such a Front. Thus was born in the winter of 1942-43 the Jersey Democratic Movement.

For the first year of its existence this J.D.M. did little except lay down a programmatic basis for future action. Numerous meetings of the small but ever-widening group were held and after much discussion the foundations for a concerted drive for post-war constitutional and social reform were laid.

Towards the end of 1943 the J.D.M. launched out in an illegal leaflet campaign. First came a summary of its programme:—

“ 1. A plebiscite will be held to decide for or against incorporation as an English County.

Should this result in a decision against incorporation, then we advocate the following :

2. Reconstruction of States Assembly

- (a) Sole members to be deputies, each elected for three years, in the proportion of one for each 1,500 inhabitants. Property qualifications abolished for both candidates and electors.
- (b) A Council or Cabinet will be appointed, each member of which shall be in charge of a States' Department.
- (c) Deputies to receive adequate remuneration.
- (d) Electorate shall have power of recall over deputies when two-thirds of the voting register shall demand their resignation.
- (e) Electorate to include all males and females over the age of 21, with the exception of (1) Foreigners; and (2) Citizens of the British Commonwealth with a local residence of less than one year.
- (f) Voting to be by the preferential method.
- (g) The Assembly shall be the only legislative body in the Island. Judicial power shall be vested in the Royal Court which shall be independent of the Assembly. The title of Bailiff shall be reserved for the Chief Magistrate.
- (h) A Permanent Committee of Constables shall be formed to watch over parochial affairs.

3. Political Measures

- (a) Nationalisation of gas, water and electric services and passenger transport, compensation to shareholders to take form of interest bearing State Bonds, redeemable within a stated period.

- (b) One uniform tax system to be introduced, to include a graduated income tax and death or estate duties.

4. Legal Measures

- (a) A modern, equitable Divorce Law shall be introduced.
- (b) All seignorial and rectoral rights, dues, tithes, and other feudal privileges shall be abolished.
- (c) All Rentes shall be commuted.
- (d) All obsolete laws, as also all anomalies of legal procedure shall be overhauled, remodelled, etc., in accordance with progressive, democratic thought and practice.
- (e) An augmented paid Police Force shall act over the whole island.

5. Social Measures.

- (a) The economic rights of orphans, invalids, widows and the aged will be fully provided for.
- (b) Health Insurance to be on a compulsory, contributory basis between States, employer and employee, and to include Maternity Benefits.
- (c) Slum Clearance and extension of State Building Schemes to be continued until the whole population is adequately housed, coupled with a more rigorous State supervision of building.
- (d) Compulsory free education to the age of 16, with family allowances to obviate any consequent economic distress.
- (e) Technical Schools and Adult Education Schemes to be created with facilities for all to enter who wish to participate.

6. Industrial and Economic Measures.

- (a) A maximum working week of 44 hours (48 hours for agricultural workers) with a fortnight's paid holiday each year, will be established, together with payment for all recognised public and bank holidays.
- (b) Recognition of the principle of "Equal pay for equal work" will be enforced.

- (c) A minimum wage based on a health and cost-of-living table will be fixed for all types of work.
- (d) Adequate unemployment allowances will be made.
- (e) Abolition of child labour will be enforced.
- (f) A genuine Workers' Compensation Bill will be introduced and the installation of efficient safety devices will be insisted upon.
- (g) A Rent Restriction Bill will be proposed.

7. Farming and Rural Measures.

- (a) Rentals shall be based on assessed land values, viz., on the average annual return for the last five years.
- (b) There shall be security of tenure, and compensation for improvement made to land.
- (c) We advocate the extension of the principle of Co-operation throughout every phase of agriculture. Farmers should cut out middlemen by acting as own merchants and agents, through Co-operative Dairies, etc., or similar organisations.
- (d) Cold Storage facilities would be expanded.
- (e) Producers' and Consumers' Councils would arrange equitable prices and act as general advisory boards on all marketing problems.

8. Tourism.

Full encouragement will be afforded all those concerned in the island's welfare as a holiday resort.

9. Financial Policy.

In addition to those sources of revenue mentioned above, viz., graduated Income Tax and Death Duties, we propose increased taxation in certain other cases, e.g., wines, spirits, beers, tobacco, petrol, etc."

Then followed frequent leaflets on subjects ranging from Food and Fuel Hoarding to suggestions for Co-operative Farming, Social Security and Constitutional Changes. Soon the name

"Jersey Democratic Movement" became known all over the Island. The Committee acted as the hub of an ever-widening system of information and comment, thereby keeping in touch both with any incompetence on the part of the Island authorities and with public opinion. By the middle of 1944 the J. D. M. had become a definite power in the Island in spite of its cloak of secrecy. It had succeeded in drawing into a common front all those vague movements of disquiet which had sprung into existence during the first two years of occupation.

Most islanders realised that the governmental machinery of their Island needed overhauling. Those who wished to act as apologists for the *status quo* could not attack the J.D.M. on those grounds. Instead they based their criticism on the fact that the J.D.M. had come into being during the occupation. This movement, they said, has brought our administration under fire in the face of the enemy, and is therefore unpatriotic and treacherous. What these apologists forget is that it was not the J.D.M. which produced the unrest and dissatisfaction with the existing Island Government; but on the other hand it was this very discontent, caused in its turn by undemocratic practices, that produced the J.D.M. In brief, it was not the work of a handful of treacherous agitators that produced the agitation. It was current injustices that transformed otherwise quiet citizens into agitators for their removal.

In 1943, after the birth of the J.D.M. and the entry into it of the Communists, the local Branch of the Communist Party was reorganised on the basis of support for this movement. Its members soon came to play an ever-increasing part in all local underground affairs, both political and, when there was a move to revive the Union illegally, industrial.

When D-Day brought hopes of liberation to the islanders, the Communist Party discussed the possibility of helping the liberating forces. In the monthly Party circular for June, 1944, members were told: "In the event of the Allied Forces making a landing, it will be the duty of all Party members to give whatever assistance they can to the landing force. Naturally it is extremely difficult to lay plans for this event. Circumstances alone can determine the nature of this assistance, but wherever opportunity offers, or can be created, we must be ready to help."

It soon became obvious that the tide of war had passed us by. The Communist Party then went back to what had been discussed before: the possibility of a local rising. This had always been rejected because of its hopeless nature in the Island's peculiar position. Jersey had a German garrison of roughly 15,000 troops in an area of only 36 square miles, with a civilian population of about 40,000. From this it will be realised that resistance movements would have been but foolish. Now, however, the Branch discussed the possibility of a combined action between civilians, foreign slave workers and disaffected troops. It was pointed out that there were rumours of the existence of an appreciable number of anti-Nazis amongst the garrison troops. The matter was left for members to contact trustworthy workers in German employ with a view to finding more about possible help from these troops.

A few weeks later a report came back that a German soldier working in the local German soap and leather works was a likely contact and had expressed the wish to meet local people interested in a rising. It was realised that this might be a trap; but the value of such a contact overruled the danger involved, and two Party members, Les. Huelin and N. S. Le Brocq, arranged to meet this soldier. The first meeting, naturally, was taken up to a large extent with mutual inspection and the dispelling of any doubts as to each other's trustworthiness. Paul Muelbach, the soldier, made a good impression from the start. His father had been Secretary of the Socialist Workers' Union of Coblenz, Rhine. This man, Ch. Muelbach, had been interned by the Nazis in Dachau and had died in 1934.

The meeting was followed by others. Paul Muelbach already had the rudiments of an organisation ready for mutiny. The help that he asked of the local Communist Party, and which was quickly forthcoming, was the printing of leaflets in German, help in contacting foreign workers and the preparing of quarters for him when the time came for him to desert and plan the final stages.

So in the autumn of 1944 the Nazi Kommandantur were disturbed by the appearance of cyclostyled leaflets in German calling on the garrison to prepare for mutiny. First, "Comrades, . . . even the dullest are beginning to realise that Hitler's promises are nothing but a swindle . . . a great part of

the island garrison is already preparing for a mutiny against our oppressors . . . join with us and hold yourself in readiness, the day is coming . . . soon you will hear further." Then, "Comrades, Hitler's war is drawing to its end . . . the day of reckoning is coming nearer. . . . No Nazi must leave this island alive. To the gallows with all war criminals!" And in the early months of 1945: "Comrades, in Germany are occurring the death-throes of the Hitler régime . . . note the following: When the signal for mutiny is given, tie a white rag on your left arm and follow the orders of your known and trusted men. . . . Down with the Nazi slavery!"

In March it was felt that preparations were forward enough for the final drive. Muelbach duly deserted and carried on intensified organising from his hideout. Then the date was fixed. It was estimated from B.B.C. war commentaries that Berlin would fall near the beginning of May, and this, imminent on International Labour Day, were reasons enough for hoping that their significance would bring in the waverers.

Meanwhile, Spanish slave workers were kept in touch and contact was made with Russian and Polish conscripts amongst the garrison forces. The former were notified of events through leaflets handwritten by an escaped Russian slave worker.

May Day dawned with the local conspirators expectant. It was only later that day that they discovered that the affair had been sabotaged. The Germans had relied on a small group of disaffected officers to lead the actual mutiny, and one of these, a Captain Haubbenreisser, had the job of giving the awaited signal. He, on the previous evening, had suddenly realised the significance of the day chosen, and being a staunch Catholic, refused to carry out his share. His advice was that the whole thing be postponed for a week. This had ultimately to be agreed upon and the 9th of May chosen as the new date.

During the next week rumour followed rumour about the final surrender of the Nazis. In Jersey it was decided that as the Nazis seemed to have decided to surrender in Germany on the 7th or 8th, and the local chiefs had been heard to favour continuing the local struggle, the mutiny would take place as soon as the Headquarters surrender was announced if the local chiefs did not comply.

When the 8th of May arrived, and with it news of surrender, the local Commandants at first seemed loth to follow suit, but later in the day they made up their minds and reluctantly surrendered.

Jersey was liberated!

On the following day Paul Muelbach surrendered himself to the British troops. Later he left the island under escort for interrogation on the mainland. Before he went, he left as a souvenir a letter to the Communist Party Branch. In it he states:

"Since I arrived in Jersey in April, 1944, I have tried consistently to make contact with the civil population, in order to carry on underground activity against the Nazis, as I had already done in France with the support of the 'Maquis.' . . . Finally I found the right men. They were men of the working class: Communists. There is no need to say much about our work, except that it was through our efforts that the fighting spirit of the German soldiers here was destroyed long ago.

"I cannot express what I owe to these men. We have shown an example of international solidarity only possible amongst Socialists, and as it should exist amongst all Socialist and Communist Party members throughout the world."

3

While this had been happening, there had been a revival, also, of Trade Union activity. The workers had begun to re-organise their Union illegally. On August 26, 1944, a meeting was called by Les. Huelin on the basis of the protest against dissolution in 1940. Members of the gas workers, building trades, storemen, dockers, waterworkers and general workers' branches of the T. & G.W.U. were present. It was decided to set up a provisional organisation to revive Union activity. A Provisional Organising Committee was set up of pre-war unionists from each branch and a leaflet issued stating that "the Committee recognises that it has no delegated authority and is prepared to terminate its existence as soon as the workers' chosen representatives are elected to the various offices in the

Union." The leaflet went on to formulate the programme for which the P.O.C. stood. This was almost identical with the Industrial Section of the J.D.M. programme printed above.

This P.O.C. was soon busy reorganising Union membership, and members were indeed recruited in ever-increasing numbers. To give but one example, for the first time since the great drive of the early twenties, success was achieved in drawing into the ranks of the organised workers a large number of shop assistants and the basis thus laid for pressing their claims in the post-war period.

In October, 1944, appeared the first number of *Worker's Review*, the organ of the P.O.C. This cyclostyled monthly proclaimed as its aim the intention of airing all bona-fide grievances and exposing all industrial injustices; in short, to make the *Review* the mouthpiece of Jersey's workers. And this it did right up till after the dissolution of the P.O.C. after liberation.

During its life, the *Worker's Review* drew attention to bad working conditions amongst gas workers, shop assistants, farm labourers, relief workers, electricity employees and dairy workers. From the attitude adopted by the States Departments and employers towards the *Worker's Review*, its shafts went home.

Towards the end of the occupation the P.O.C. carried on negotiations with the States Labour Department in connection with reducing working hours because of the food shortage. Some success was achieved on various occasions after meetings between members of the P.O.C. and officials of the Department. This was important, apart from the recognition of the Committee thus obtained, because the conditions operating for the 3,000-odd workers employed by the Department acted as a precedent for claims against private employers.

In November, 1944, Electricity Company employees formed a Works Committee and presented the management with a list of demands. These included the institution of a working week of 41½ hours; minimum pay of £3 10s. for unskilled workers and £4 5s. for skilled men; two weeks' paid holiday each year and the provision of tool and cycle allowances.

After much discussion these demands were accepted by the Electricity Company. The P.O.C. got in touch with this

Works Committee during this campaign, offered their support, and suggested that one or more representatives of the electricity workers should sit on the P.O.C. This was left in abeyance, as it was the wish of the electrical workers to join the E.T.U. after liberation. Close contact was maintained, however, between the two bodies.

On liberation, the P.O.C. submitted a report to the T. & G.W.U. Area Office at Southampton, and commenced a concerted drive to rebuild the Union position as a mass legal organisation. Members were enrolled in hundreds. At the first rally held in a local hall and attended by four or five hundred workers, the policy of the P.O.C. was endorsed, and when this Committee offered its resignation and suggested the election of a properly constituted District Committee, it was re-elected *en bloc* by a unanimous vote, and asked to carry on until the arrival of a Union official from England.

At this juncture the defunct District Committee, which had dissolved itself in 1940, woke up and published a statement to the effect that the P.O.C. had no authority and was not to be recognised.

This commenced a period of bewilderment, during which both Committees were organising membership in the name of the T. & G.W.U. and which was ended by the P.O.C. calling a further meeting of Unionists and, after pointing out that they could do nothing in the way of negotiating with employers under the circumstances as the latter would not recognise them, urging all their supporters to register with the old District Committee rather than perpetuate a split that could only develop to the detriment of the local workers. So, with a graceful exit by the P.O.C., ended a situation that in less unselfish hands might have resulted in disaster.

Postscript

And so Jersey's working class faces the future. Behind it lies a century of struggle. A century containing much success, but also much disappointment and bitterness. What of the future?

Just as after the first World War, the island witnessed a great upsurge of class struggle, precipitated by the ever-worsening conditions of the local workers, so now Jersey, liberated from the Nazi Occupation, prepares itself for the further liberation from its paternalist and semi-feudal system of government.

The local Unions, after a vigorous campaign of self-reconstruction, can now claim a greater membership than ever before. Local wage rates, kept at somewhat less than the pre-war figure throughout the Occupation, despite the rapid rise in the cost of living, have now been raised 60 or 70 per cent through Union action. Union meetings are well attended and there is every hope of a sustained drive for decent working and living conditions.

The J.D.M. has blossomed out into the largest political force that the history of the island records, with its membership figures of about 4,000. It has succeeded in drawing the average Jerseyman out of his traditional political apathy to poll the unprecedented figure for a local working-class organisation of 42 per cent of the town votes, and 23 per cent of the country votes recorded at the recent elections. This was achieved in the face of the campaign of vilification and misrepresentation that local working-class political bodies have always faced. Indeed, the *Evening Post* having printed Goebbels's propaganda throughout the Occupation, conducted an anti-J.D.M. election campaign in the late Doktor's best style.

The local Communist Party branch has now a solid footing in the Island, though chiefly as an educational force. It has come to stay and its numbers steadily increase. That its influence is felt is shown by the frequent tirades in the Press against its continued existence.

Moves are afoot to ensure the continuance of working-class political solidarity by an affiliation of the J.D.M. to a Union-sponsored attempt to revive the Jersey Labour Party. The work of the J.D.M. during the last three years will mean that the Labour movement in Jersey can go ahead in an all-out offensive for political power. Already it is obvious that the powers-that-be are on the defensive for the first time in their lives.

However, one must remember that the situation was also very encouraging in the early twenties. Then through bad strategy and a failure to keep the workers from descending into their recent apathy, all headway was lost and has had to be rebuilt laboriously foot by foot. This must not happen again.

It is a heavy responsibility that rests on all those holding any position in a local workers' organisation. Only if they can learn from past errors and steer clear of the obstacles that local reaction will surely place in their path, will Jersey's working-class movement grow to invincible strength on the firm foundations which have indeed been laid.

The responsibility, however, rests not only on the leaders, the rank and file, too, must realise that if they will not help themselves no one else can help them. The feeling is still all too prevalent that there is no need for the rank and file workers to do any more than to attend an occasional meeting and clap the speeches of their leaders. Far more active support than this is necessary if we are to build up a really effective democratic workers' movement.

The foundations have been laid. Now is the time to build on them. Jersey is at last on the threshold of Democracy—we must go forward!

Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is arranged in several paragraphs, but the words are too light to transcribe accurately.

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or keep in touch if transferred:

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Carlisle.

Devon and Cornwall:

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Plymouth.
Plymouth 273911

East Anglia:

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Museum Street,
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Southampton 2692

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