



# THE OBSERVER

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## Unions postpone strike

by DAVID HAWORTH, our Industrial Reporter

THE national engineering strike which was due to start at midnight tonight has been suspended by the rank-and-file committee of the Amalgamated Engineering and Foundry Workers' Union.

After a day of fierce argument and recrimination they decided by a narrow majority to put off the decision whether to strike until Monday, 4 November.

In the first of two votes the AEF national committee declared against the earlier recommendation by Mr Hugh Scanlon the union's president, that the strike should start tomorrow.

In the second vote (29-23) they agreed to meet again in two weeks' time. After the AEF decision the 29-strong Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions endorsed the strike postponement decision. But they will question whether to continue formal negotiations with the employers or bargain in future with individual firms.

Mr Scanlon was grim-faced after the 1½-hour meeting during which there was a lot of shouting with cries of 'shut up' and 'sit down'.

The postponement has brought great relief to Government Ministers and officials. They now hold out hopes that there could be an amicable settlement between now and 4 November when the AEF national committee meets again.

Mrs Barbara Castle, Secretary for Em-

ployment and Productivity, said 'It's a triumph for common sense and the national interest.' The trade unions' attitude to the employers' offer was 'very confused' and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions wanted more time to consider it.

The executives of the 29 unions within the confederation will meet next Friday to consider their next tactics.

The rank-and-file decision is a severe setback for Mr Scanlon and his more militant pro-strike supporters who had almost convinced themselves that some 3,500,000 workers would be idle from tomorrow morning. Mr Scanlon, the man who refused to take a strike ballot among his members, has now been repudiated by the rank-and-file representatives at the first opportunity they had to give their verdict since the original strike decision of 31 August.

The Amalgamated Engineering and Foundry Workers' Union national committee meeting in Transport House, London, had taken a gloomy view of the settlement proposals thrashed out during last week's marathon negotiating sessions.

Mr Scanlon outlined to the committee large concessions he had made to the employers in restrictive practices, hours of work and training in return for higher minimum rates and longer holidays.

The employers said they had made their 'final offer'; but many union delegates

felt there were too many 'strings' attached to it for them to be able to sell the deal to their shop floor members.

Furthermore, the talks had broken down the previous evening on the question of women's pay. Agreement had been near when a woman on the union negotiating team accused her colleagues of 'selling the women by giving skilled workers more money at their expense.'

Mrs Castle was furious that this crucial issue had not been brought into the negotiations much earlier in the week. The employers made it abundantly clear that there was no more money 'in the kitty' to give women workers £13 or £14 a week after three years (compared with £15 for unskilled men and £19 for skilled men).

The union delegates have still to decide whether they are prepared to stage a national strike which the Prime Minister has said could be 'disastrous' on behalf of women workers.

Seven women, representing the industry's 500,000 women workers, said yesterday they would be in favour of a national strike—although they were suspicious that their male colleagues, despite good intentions, would not want to strike on their behalf alone. These fears have now been confirmed.

Mrs Castle said there was never any question of achieving equal pay at one blow in these negotiations. It was merely a question of narrowing the differentials



Mr Scanlon holds a last-minute kerbside conference.

DAVID NEWELL SMITH

between rates for men and women. 'It was, and still is, open to the trade unions to get differentials more favourable to women in this package deal.' The employers, Mrs Castle said, had offered to set up a committee to examine how, by job evaluation schemes to measure women's pay. 'The real answer on equal pay is to get away from the 'over-manning' of machines and production lines.'

It has emerged that the AEF has agreed 'unreservedly' that production and manpower in the industry should be deployed and used more efficiently. This is regarded as a substantial victory for the employers who had previously always been told by Mr Scanlon that there could be no discussions on productivity until the basic pay questions were settled.

Just how this union undertaking to co-operate in the removal of restrictive

practices is to be organised remained unclear last night. Nevertheless the promise is a firm one. The union pledges not to resist in principle the introduction of shift working, the planned use of working hours and to co-operate in dropping restrictive practices such as the over-manning of machines and production lines.

On training, the union has also agreed to a revision of the present age limits for apprentices and a redefinition of the craftsman's status. In return, the employers have conceded on 'mutuality'—that is, the system of negotiating wage rates over and above rates decided by work measurement methods. They have always regarded this as an inflationary element in their wage costs but backed down after it looked as though the talks would be abandoned over this issue.

## Police will appease marchers

by ERIC CLARK



LONDON POLICE want it to be known that they have decided on a policy of appeasement at next Sunday's anti-Vietnam war demonstration.

If demonstrators stage a sit-down in Whitehall, police will let them, adopting a patient, standing-by attitude. If protesters surge across the whole width of the roads, police will divert traffic rather than try to force the marchers back.

Under no circumstances will they use tear gas, fire-hoses or erect barriers to cordon off buildings.

The key to police tactics will be to react to much of what happens, and to be seen to be doing so. Their aim is to show that they are in agreement with the demonstrators' right to protest, are actively helping to see that their organisation works, and will be force only when nothing else is possible.

Nearly 7,000 police will be out, but will be kept out of sight as much as possible. All are from the Metropolitan Police area: none is being drafted in from outside, and no troops will be used.

Many of the police on duty have recently been given special crowd-control training at Hendon—but only in 'traditional' police methods, such as interlocking arms to face crowds.

Police horses will be used, even though the plan is to keep them hidden unless they are needed.

Up to 30,000 demonstrators are expected on the march. The route leads along the embankment, Fleet Street, Whitehall, Victoria, and Hyde Park, where there will be a sit-down.

Key buildings on the route will be guarded in case demonstrators try to occupy them. The buildings include: the *Times*, the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Telegraph*, Australia House, Rhodesia House, and Scotland Yard.

Less obvious targets for demonstrators will not have a special police guard. Senior officers believe that this would only make them more obvious.

Owners of these buildings have, however, been advised to lock doors and to have staff on duty inside, in case fire bombs are thrown.

## Command HQ

A second march of more militant Marxists will split off at Trafalgar Square. The target is the American Embassy. Up to 6,000 are expected on this march. Even though it may be more militant, police have one thing on their side: Grosvenor Square is ideal territory in which to 'box off' demonstrators if they become violent.

With demonstrators travelling from all over Britain, buses and coaches will be stopped and searched for weapons. But police expect to find none. If any are being brought to London, they would be carried in private cars or vans separately.

The most likely time for violence will be in the early morning after the Pearly Hall when some demonstrators break off into small groups. Police will be placed at likely trouble spots throughout London—like American-owned hotels—but senior officers know that it is impossible to plan this stage of the day with precision.

Scotland Yard's officer in charge of demonstrations, Commander John Taylor, will be in command on the streets with the marchers. But, additionally, for the first time there will be a command head-quarters in Salford Yard. The Commissioner, Sir John Waldron, is expected to stay at the Yard all day.

All the Yard's plans are meant to prevent violence, even at the cost of great provocation. This, they believe, is of vital long-term importance: a violent demonstration could, many officers believe, be the start of a whole new sequence of similar events.

Roland Huntford reports from *Star* that Vietcong representatives who have opened an information centre here are working with the liaison committee of the Stockholm Vietnam Conference, an international body co-ordinating protest activities in Western Europe. The conference disclaims all connection with the London demonstration. From this, it would appear that Tariq Ali and the demonstration does not have the approval of Hanoi or the Vietcong.

## Hopes rise for cease-fire in Vietnam

from ANTHONY HOWARD: Washington, 19 October

THE United States appeared today to be on the brink of announcing a total bombing halt over North Vietnam—and it is also thought possible here that a total cease-fire may now be in sight.

Although hopes for a bombing pause, which were raised early this morning by a news agency report from Saigon that North Vietnam had already agreed to begin substantive peace negotiations, were quickly dashed, the message goes on to be within foundation: every public and private sign in this capital indicated that the long-awaited breakthrough in the Paris talks may now only be a matter of days, if not hours.

One particularly encouraging sign was seen in the Pentagon's estimate known to have been passed to the White House—that 30,000 to 40,000 North Vietnamese troops (or elements of five regular divisions) have been withdrawn from South Vietnam in the last few weeks.

This official admission was generally taken as lending a special meaning to the Administration's reiterated position that there has been no word from Hanoi in reply to the package offer that it is now admitted, President Johnson has made to stop the bombing. At least some Administration officials are ready to concede that Hanoi's answer could come by *de facto* actions as much as by public statements.

No Government source was pre-

pared even privately to confirm that a cease-fire is what the 'diplomatic fluff' of the past few days has really been about. But recent comings and goings—indeed, Cyrus Vance's visit here and the arrival of the US team in Hanoi—have added to the sudden sight of Hanoi this morning.

The only man to have referred directly to the prospect of a cease-fire remains Senator Edmund Muskie, the Democratic Party's Vice-Presidential candidate in the election, but he, too, has been silent on the subject.

The only man to have done so well in the race for the White House is Mr Richard Nixon, the Republican candidate for the Presidency, for him to announce yesterday that the Vietnam war was one which 'we all trust can be brought to a conclusion, an honourable conclusion, before the next President takes office.'

State Department officials believe it was immaculate timing by Mr Johnson to let it be known 10 days ago that he had finally abandoned his hope of a settlement before he left office.

They believe that Hanoi had become convinced that Mr Nixon would not be able to fulfil his promise to end the bombing. This is stated to Mr Johnson. This is stated to Mr Johnson that he still had the time and power to solve the Vietnam problem peacefully.

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