



Interview with Derek Robinson

Interviewed by John Bloomfield

Derek, you've worked at the Austin for 38 years; what range of jobs have you done in that time?

Very few really; because I'm a qualified Tool Maker, it's only been in the area of the tool room doing a Tool Maker's job.

Is that an area of motor production that hasn't seen many changes in the last 3 or 4 decades?

It hasn't seen as much change as production has; it has seen some change with the introduction of taped controlled machines, and Swiss Milling Machines that mill Drop Forging Dies to a pattern as opposed to the old free-hand method of milling: to that extent there has been change but it has been nothing like as dramatic as we've seen out in production.

What have been the main changes there?

When I started in 1941, the whole of the factory machine shops were run on the basis of bell-divers, there was no independent motors on the machines. These were rapidly introduced after the war. It created a very much safer workplace than we had before. The first major changes took place again in the machine-shop area when we moved away from single purpose machinery to transfer and unit machines in the early fifties, where operations were linked together in a single machine. These machines were in fact designed and built at Longbridge.

Did these and other changes alter the speed of work on the tracks?

There was a greater speed when the Mini was introduced in 1959. The line rate that we had in the factory prior to 1959 was about 20 vehicles an hour. When they introduced the Mini it immediately shot up to 30 vehicles an hour. The final assembly they worked on a fixed station basis. In our trim areas, still working on tracks, they worked on a gang basis, the Glass gang or the Headlining gang and everyone was on piece work. The gang system was more beneficial to the workpeople than the fixed station system on the final assembly. It enabled a gang to bargain for the piece work price and in general terms they were able to achieve higher earnings. Whereas when it came down to an individual station then it very much depended upon the strength of the individual. You hadn't got the collective strength to use in the same way in the finishing areas.

Did this all change with measured day work?

Measured day work was the fundamental change in payment methods. The one feature that is perhaps important to understand on the piece work is that to a very great degree the individual or the group had a large measure of control over what they did and commensurate with their bargaining power they were able to exert pressures to bring about changes in price. That disappeared immediately with standard day work when the argument changed from money to men and that's perhaps as fundamental a change as it's possible to imagine. Now the concentration was not on losing men in order to push your earnings up but to man tracks to the highest conditions. To that degree it became a unifying force and we carried over from the piece work days the control that we had got into standard day work. We did this on the basis of inclusion in our agreements a measure of mutuality. Whilst on the surface it appeared not to be very great the facts are that it was sufficient for us to exercise the same sort of control. We were able to protect the worker at the point of production and in a track situation able to ensure that the track was manned to a reasonable level.

Does the general picture that many people have of the noise, pace and intensity work on car assembly tracks affect the stability of the workforce?

In my experience when the car industry enjoyed a privileged position in the wages scale, the turnover of labour was less. People were prepared to come into car factories and accept the pressures that were very different in a car factory to any other factory on the basis that they were earning the money. With the advent of standard day work and the decline in the relative wage position that took place in the car industry, we saw a basic change take place to where there was a high turnover of labour. People were not prepared to come into a car factory, working for average wages at a pace of work that was measurably higher than in plants outside doing different things.

Is it the same in the toolroom?

It's significant now, that with a wage of £87.00 being paid for a craftsman inside our plant, they can't attract craftsmen to work days and nights, and in some cases shift patterns which don't exist elsewhere, because outside many, many, many craftsmen are enjoying wages in excess of £100.00 per week. And when we go to the level of technicians, to the people responsible for the development and research work hitherto, because of the high level of wages, they were able to attract them but when the wages became ordinary or even mediocre then they couldn't attract them and indeed they were leaving the company, and that's a serious position.

In the 38 years that you have worked at the Austin, Longbridge the plants have been owned by several different private companies until the collapse in 1974-5 and the takeover by the government. Why do you think Leyland hasn't developed as successfully as its rivals over the post war period?

Principally because of lack of investment. If you look at the evidence the trade unions placed in front of the Ryder Committee this was emphasised time and time again. Indeed Ryder accepted the criticisms of the trade unions, drew the same conclusions and was most critical of the actions of the previous managing directors of the

company over many many years. Inside Longbridge we had some special developments that took place that will underline what I have just said.

Following the merger between Austin and Morris we did see some improvements in cohesiveness and the need to rationalise our products, and we did think at one time that we were going in the right direction.

When would this be?

The merger took place in 1953 between Austin and Morris but we were very quickly disillusioned because they embarked over a three year period of giving share holders two shares for every one they held. They did that for three consecutive years and paid dividends on the announced shareholding which meant that something like three-quarters of the profits that were generated in that period went straight into the pockets of the shareholders and there was very very little left for investment inside the company. They operated on a philosophy that the car industry wasn't going to get the profits whilst they could and they'd just milk the industry to the maximum degree possible. That left us in a completely uncompetitive position.

For example, it was a short sighted policy to think that you could continue to run transfer machines for 20 to 30 years, it's just not possible and that was the general philosophy all over Longbridge. We could point to machines that had been there 20, 30 and 40 years and it wasn't until some major investment took place in what we call the Cofton Hackett plant at Longbridge that any new plant machinery was brought into the factory. Strange as it might seem, that's now been with us for almost 10 years and today it's possibly one of the more modern machine shops in Longbridge and they are closing it down!

In 1974-75 when effectively Leyland collapsed as a private concern and was placed in government hands under Lord Ryder a report was produced outlining a new future for the company. How would you assess that report and did it lead to any changes in management attitude?

The attitude of the trade unions at the time to the Ryder report was a very critical one, critical because it did not extend the power and the influence of the trade unions in the way that the unions expected it to. In retrospect, when we look at it in the light of subsequent developments, it appears without doubt to be a most revolutionary document. One that we perhaps on the trade union side ought to have read very much more carefully and adopted a quite different attitude. The Ryder report was a deeply analytical document that condemned private ownership for all of the excesses that they'd committed and certainly placed the blame squarely on their shoulders for the lack of investment that had placed a major British industry at risk. I feel again in retrospect that the trade unions perhaps had greater expectations than could be realised at the time.

Could that also be true of the Left in general?

Yes because there were wide areas of disagreement particularly within the left. I think we tended to concentrate on one section of the Ryder report to the exclusion of all of the others. We concentrated on that part of the report dealing with industrial democracy. We ought to have looked at what the Ryder Committee saw as the future for British Leyland, that aimed to create a viable producer of motor vehicles across the full range.

The report clearly envisaged that Leyland could be a successful motor vehicle company. It planned considerable investment for the industry. It considered that Leyland could have a third of the domestic market share. As such that represented a much more expansionist and optimistic scenario than had been thought of by the previous people running Leyland. Did management accept this new attitude?

Without question, because when I look at Alex Park, who was put in

charge of Leyland, and people like Derek Whittaker, who was the supremo on the car side, and Geoffrey Whalen, who was the Industrial Relations Director, they accepted without question the philosophy outlined by Ryder. Within the terms of the recommendation of participation was an acceptance that there was need for an open style of management and in my view all of the people who were in the most responsible positions at that time accepted that philosophy without question. How it worked out in practice is something very, very, very different. I am aware of course that they have been blamed for a failure to bring about the needed improvements, I don't think that it was possible with the years of neglect that we had in Leyland and the high levels of investment required that we could bring about the changes needed in the short term.

One of the novel features of Ryder was its support for workers' participation in the management of this publically owned corporation. This issue still causes division and confusion in the trade union movement, indeed within the Left and the Communist Party. Now as a forthright supporter of participation what did you see and still see as its main advantages?

Its main advantage was that it opened up a different area of activity, it created the possibilities of becoming involved in the decision-making process to a certain degree. It would enable us to look objectively at some of the changes that were required outside of being in a bargaining position. As and when we took objective decisions about what sort of changes, we could refer than to the appropriate bargaining units so that whatever the improvements were, the trade unions would be able to bargain for what they could reasonably expect in turn for embracing these sort of changes.

It was the senior stewards who were involved in the participation. Do you feel there was any contradiction between them being involved in the participation and being involved in the bargaining process?

No not at all, why should there be? What participation enabled us to do was to examine objectively the effects and the impact of that new technology. It created a basis for us to determine to what degree we ought to have super technology; to what degree we ought to have



robots on our production lines; whether or not we could build in safeguards for the workers at the point of production, where they controlled the new technology rather than becoming subordinate to it. Within the sphere of participation we did indeed have the opportunities to look at all of these questions and were able to come to joint recommendations on the best way to do it.

How do you think it was seen on the shop-floor?

I think that this must be the weakest area in terms of understanding and again I think we must accept full responsibility for not being able to bring about the changes in attitude. I think there is an historical position as far as we're concerned in British trade unionism. We always reacted to management decisions and we've reacted to those managements decisions to the degree that they effect the workpeople at the point of production. In many cases, because of the nature of exploitation that's taken place on the basis of change, it's been resisted by the trade unions and I don't think this particular period has been any different. There was deep suspicion amongst the ordinary rank and file member and he hadn't grasped that within the field of participation it was possible to have a complementary method not something diametrically opposed to his concept of being able to bargain with the employer, but one that was complementary and indeed strengthened his ability to bargain. And it's to that degree that we failed and a lot of work needs to be done.

What lessons can be drawn from our experience? I think it's essential that the limitations placed on us by Ryder meant that we hadn't got the degree of influence and authority that we ought to have had. It to some degree gave us responsibility without authority and if there is any lesson to be learnt it's that one. If we are going to have to accept the responsibility then we've got to have the authority. That means that built into any future participation system is the right of trade union veto on plans. I think it is essential that the trade union view on areas and direction of investment is of paramount importance. In the Swedish system, if the trade unions say no on the area and direction of investment it cannot take place, and I feel that's the sort of control that we need here in Britain so that we've got a very positive input in the decision-making process. At the end of the day it is the level of investment, the direction that it will take, the degree that

it will improve the product, the degree that it will ensure the security of employment that is of paramount importance.

Now, clearly Leyland is a microcosm of the more general economic and manufacturing decline and the Ryder report came under heavy attack from its inception from wide sections of the press, the Tory Party and from sections of the right wing within the Labour Party and Labour government, Benn was removed as Minister of Industry; Varley took over; some of the projections were run down; and in 1977 Michael Edwardes was appointed chairman of the company. Would it be fair to say that the commitment to the Ryder Report ended there or that process had already begun?

I think without doubt that it ended there. The reason that you had the outcry from the media in particular is because they recognised the potential of the Ryder plan, that it would create a viable competitive, publicly owned motor industry and above everything else they didn't want a competitive viable publicly owned motor industry. They conspired on every possible occasion to denigrate Leyland in particular and unfortunately, sections of the labour movement joined in that denigration.

Has there been any noticeable difference in Edwardes approach since the election of the Tory government?

I think that Edwardes fully supports the monetarist policy of the Government. I think, indeed, that there is virtually open collusion between Edwardes and senior members of the Conservative government. I think that he's been given the remit to run Leyland to an uncompetitive position.

So what do you see as the main aspects of his plans for Leyland?

Eclipse and closure without any question at all.

Hiving off some of the more profitable specialist sections maybe?

That's a possibility, but even that is short lived, because neither Jaguar nor Rover can stand on their own in isolation; it is just not possible. They couldn't maintain the dealer network.

I know he sits on his seven to one majority as though it was the ten commandments from Mount Sinai but the facts are that it's a disastrous policy and we need to win the concept amongst wide sections of Leyland workers that they are supporting a policy for decline which certainly places at very grave risk the very future of the motor industry here in Britain.

- 1 **Leyland** 13,000 employees
Heavy commercial vehicles
South Works to close with loss of 400 jobs
- 2 **Aveling Marshall** 750 employees
Agricultural and industrial tractors
Closed, with 750 redundancies
- 3 **Aveling Barford** 2,250 employees
Dump trucks, road rollers
Possible sale
- 4 **Castle Bromwich** 6,700 employees
Car components
Work transferred to Cowley and Swindon, with jobs falling to 100 by 1982
- 4 **Longbridge** 17,600 employees
Mini, Allegro, to assemble Metro and new middle range car
- 4 **Rover Solihull** 9000 employees
Rover saloons, Range Rover, Land Rover
To assemble TR7
- 5 **Coventry Climax** 3000 employees
Fork-lift trucks
Possible sale
- 5 **Alvis** 2000 employees
Armoured vehicles
Possible sale
- 5 **Jaguar Coventry** 7,300 employees
Jaguar and Daimler

- 5 **Triumph Canley** 7000 employees
Dolomite, Spitfire, TR7
Car assembly to close, with loss of 6000 jobs
- 6 **Swindon Body** 3,700 employees
Car bodies pressing
700 extra jobs
- 7 **Abingdon** 7000 employees
MGB, Midget, Van Den Plas 1500
Car assembly to close with loss of 800 jobs
- 8 **Cowley** 6,800 employees
Marina, Maxi, Princess
To assemble new Honda and derivative of middle range car
- 8 **Cowley Body** 6,900 employees
Car bodies, paint and trim
- 9 **Prestcold** 3000 employees
Refrigeration equipment companies
Possible sale
- 10 **Park Royal** 630 employees
Double-decker buses
To be closed
- 11 **Seneffe** 3,100 employees
Mini, Allegro, from UK supplied components
Under review



These points were expressed in that now famous pamphlet which Edwardes has used as an excuse to try to sack you. One of the most common arguments is that there is no alternative. What in the view of the shop stewards combine committee is the alternative policy to fight around?

I think it's necessary to understand that we live and work in a capitalistic economy. Therefore whatever our socialist ideals are we need to start from that standpoint and that doesn't mean that we are no longer interested in creating a socialist economy, as a matter of fact the very opposite. What's needed inside Leyland is that we produce to the capacity that the company's able to produce. That level of production should be accompanied by an aggressive sales campaign at home and abroad. In order to protect our motor industry and particularly Leyland there is a need for selective import controls to operate whilst the product range is rationalised, new models are developed and brought to the point when we'll be able to stand on our own feet.

There is need to ensure that massive levels of investment take place in British Leyland and we are obviously talking in terms of several thousand million pounds, that's what's essential. Why is it essential? For every thousand pounds invested in the Leyland worker the Japanese industry have got £11,000 invested and that very simple comparison underlines all of our difficulties. Because what we need to fight for within this capitalistic economy is that we can save British Leyland, not save it for itself as such but in order that it continues to play that vital role in the British economy; it's the cornerstone of much of our manufacturing industry in Britain which also needs to be retained at the highest level possible. We need to bring about a halt in the massive decline in manufacturing that we're going through in

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Britain if we're going to be able to sustain the standard of living that we consider to be necessary; and certainly, amongst everything else, that would enable us, when we've won that final battle to establish a socialistic economy here in Britain, rapidly to bring about the sort of changes, lift the standard of living of all the people without having to go through the trauma that many of our socialist countries have had to go through from a non-industrialised base. Immense personal and human sacrifices — we can do it in a very much better way because of our historical development.

Now one of the problems that we face is the large vote that Edwardes gained for the proposal he's put forward. Why do you think that vote was so large?

The reason that large majority for Edwardes came about was twofold. The lack of unity on the part of the trade unions on the one hand and the collapse of the trade unions in face of the normal strategy of blackmail that Edwardes always employs. The AUEW used their inbuilt majority on the National Confed to collapse the resistance to Edwardes shown by other unions. Even in the early stages of the collapse they did say they would expect both the pro and anti arguments to be put to the workers in papers accompanying the ballot. Edwardes told them to get lost and only his was going to the workers. It was his ballot and he wasn't going to be even involved with the trade unions.

Now that's significant because it does mean that we've reached a new stage in relationships between managements and trade unions. If they can get away with completely ignoring national officials because

of weakness and indeed a supine attitude by many of the national trade union officials it means that they can completely cut across the interests of trade unions and negotiate not through them but directly with the mass of workers. They can hold many referendums on many things given this experience that we've gone through. Unless there is unity in a concerted resistance by the unions it can only lead to disaster which this vote has and certainly Edwardes thinks that he's won everything on the basis of that 7 to 1 majority.

Which brings us to the present dispute and the attempt by the Leyland management to sack you. Would you say some words about it and some of the implications of this style of management?

Without question the management have been very aggressive, naked almost. There is no case to answer as far as I'm concerned and the management haven't even tried to justify the reasons for the dismissal. It's a clear cut intention to bring about an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, to bring about an uneasiness amongst the average shop steward as to what his job prospects will be if he dares to oppose company policy. I think it's all part and parcel of the Conservative onslaught on the trade unions.

We've conducted our struggle not just around me as an individual, because as an individual I'm not that terribly important. It's the principles that are embodied; the fact that people are economically deprived because they dare to have thoughts of their own; because they dare to put down on paper alternative policies. It strikes at the very issue of free speech and the ability to hold a contrary point of view. But what I would say to shop stewards and convenors is 'Do not be afraid'. What we need to do is to generate a movement amongst trade unionists, trades councils, the Labour Party, the Communist Party, so that we can mobilise the people in support of the principles that we hold dear and we can force British Leyland management to climb down and to unconditionally reinstate me as the convenor and to withdraw the disciplinary measures taken against my colleagues. That's a possibility, that can happen.

Given the enthusiastic reception Edwardes got at the CBI Conference in Birmingham last autumn, obviously there are other bosses and managers around the country who are thinking of applying the same tactics.

Exactly, and then that means that the importance of trade union leadership has got to be looked at very much more closely because it's a short step from collapsing to Edwardes to collapsing to the Conservative legislation that's currently before Parliament.

We've seen Leyland very much as a microcosm of deindustrialisation and the economic decline of the country. Reversing that trend and indeed reversing the specific decline of Leyland is central to the alternative political strategy of the Left. In what ways do you think there can be a successful public campaign waged drawing in the Leyland workforce, the trade union movement, political parties, the wider community, Birmingham, the Midlands and wider around the Leyland question?

I think we ought to draw some confidence from the recent development and the tremendous response that we've seen in the Trade Union and Labour Movement to the disciplinary action taken against my three colleagues and my sacking. That sort of response on the very narrow question of victimisation is going to create the basis within the labour and trade union movement. In all of the areas that I've been into in this last couple of months, speaking to a wide variety of labour movement organisations, the degree of understanding is remarkable. They do understand that we're fighting for the very future of Britain and not just British Leyland in isolation, and that the



The biggest difficulty is to create a single outlook in a multi-plant company

combine's policy as the alternative to the present company's policy of contraction is a correct one. That's very, very gratifying.

Another important feature in this period that needs to be taken into consideration is the number of shop stewards organisations particularly on a combine level that have produced alternatives to their particular company's policies. I am thinking of course of Lucas Aerospace in particular and others and now ourselves. Now that means that there is an ability and a capability within the trade union movement today to be able to articulate not on an emotional basis but in a very practical way the stupid economics of what company policies are giving rise to and what the real alternatives are. Within this sort of framework we could develop a general strategy that will assist the left in moving forward in political terms. When we are able to marry all of these trends within the Labour Movement and unify them then that will be a major contribution to bringing about the changes in Britain.

You spoke there of the importance of some of the developments for the combine organisations and alternative plans. If we could just look at those, how easy is it to develop combine shop stewards organisations?

Relatively easy in a sense because there is an awareness amongst shop stewards that if they work in multi-plant companies there is a need for them to create a basis of inter-dependability and co-ordinating activities of common interest. It's easy in that sense. It's difficult in others. It depends largely on the leadership at plant level. Inside British Leyland, for instance, most of the plants have played a role in the combine committee. A minority of plants haven't done so and it's

principally stemmed from the attitude of the leadership and not necessarily the attitude of the members in that particular plant. Some people feel that they hadn't ought to be involved with other plants. It means that they are little fish in a big pond whereas they are big fish in a little pond and that's an unfortunate outlook to say the least. Although the strange thing here is that there's contradiction, because if plants get into difficulties and they don't belong to the combine, they very quickly come to the combine for help and assistance and of course it should be given unstintingly, whatever the reasons as to why they didn't participate before.

The biggest single difficulty is to create a single outlook in a multi-plant company so that there is no difference between the attitude for instance in Longbridge to Canley to Cowley or elsewhere and that's the single biggest problem. On some issues we've been able to do it and on other issues we've not been able to.

Can the combines develop in a way which fosters this unity by playing more of a role themselves as bodies which, for example, produce their own material?

Without question. We've had two attempts at producing our own newspaper for instance and met with very mixed response. Certainly that would be of immense value had we been able to produce a higher quality news paper on a regular basis for mass distribution within all of our plants. It would be of immense value. A company-owned newspaper doesn't do it in that sense, but certainly if we'd got the same facilities to produce a newspaper I think we would be able to change a lot of attitudes.

Do you think it would be valuable also for the shop stewards committees in the motor industry as a whole to get together.

At one time we did have what we called then the Big Five, which was the Ford, Vauxhall, Austin, Morris and Chrysler, and we did have this huge all-embracing committee, and very, very successful work was done by it, particularly in the free exchange of information of what was happening in the different major motor manufacturers. Attempts have been made in the last 12 months to come together yet again and I think it is of paramount importance that we do indeed create those links, that we do set up a National Organisation of the Motor and Ancillary Trade, because the issues that we're confronted with in Leyland we're not confronted with in isolation. All the other major multinational companies in this country are faced with similar problems of under investment in their particular plants and so on and a real danger of their particular factories being shut down and transferred elsewhere. Yes I would support such a move.

Since the war, clearly the development of the shop stewards movement has been tremendously important and from that they have now been officially recognised. From the developments in regard to combines. It would be fair to say that there is a hesitancy and indeed a resistance to the official recognition of combine shop stewards committees in parts of the trade union movement. For instance the B L combine is still not officially recognised. How do you think this problem can be tackled so that where as you have now got the shop stewards movement officially recognised you can get the combine movement similarly?

Fairly simply in reality, the TUC is flat in favour of the development of combine committees in multi-plant companies and produced booklets to this effect. Most unions pay lip-service to the need for combine committees. Whilst they may look upon combine committees as being practical in the limited union sense, for instance an AEU Combine or a TGWU combine or whatever, it's a fairly simple matter in reality that all of our unions could make provision

within their constitutions for the recognition and indeed the control of combine committees, if need be at Confed level, because that seems to me the most appropriate level. They could draw up model constitutions under which multi-union combine committees could function, be recognised and get the support of the Confed. It seems a fairly straight forward question to me and all that's required is a desire by the national leadership of the trade unions to bring it about.

It never has been, to the best of my experience, that combine committees are set up in opposition. We see them as complementary in exactly the same way as the shop stewards organisations are complementary to the union structure. Once upon a time there was no provision for shop stewards — until the early 20s for instance.

Following on from the question of developing unity across the car plants in Britain there is obviously the question of unity with workers on the continent. Now I know there have been some tentative moves in this regard. How important do you see the development of international cooperation between workers?

Very, very important indeed. Unfortunately with the structures that exist in our unions, contact with foreign trade unions usually takes place at the highest level of union organisation, meetings between national officials. The national unions can be most helpful in this if they wanted to be. They could create the basis for workshop representatives being able to come together and meet each other on a common basis within industries. I would certainly see the need for

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such sponsorship and I say that quite deliberately. I think it needs to be recognised that the resources of combine committees are fairly limited financially, and that in itself creates some difficulties to ensure that contact can be made and indeed regularly maintained.

Indeed this would be one of the benefits presumably of official recognition?

Of course, within the framework of an involvement within unions, we can set up such a basis of coming together. Why don't the metal worker unions in the EEC for instance organise a conference of factory representatives within the motor industry or within any industry for that matter to have the opportunity to exchange experiences, reach common understandings on common problems? It would be of immense value.

Derek, you've been a member of the Communist Party since 1951 and taken a keen interest in Marxism. How did this develop?

I am singularly fortunate in as much that I've always been prolific reader from a very early age. I owe that to the encouragement that was given to me by my mother in the 30s. Before I joined the Communist Party I did a Communist self study course. I've heard people since say that they've found that reading political theory, whether it be Marx's, Engels' or anything, very very difficult. Now I didn't find that. I took the trouble to gain a much wider knowledge of capitalist economics and the socialist alternative. I feel that much of our work certainly in the trade unions is very, very routine indeed and you need a level of political understanding to sustain that routine work.

Whatever the problems that I've been confronted with over the years, I've always examined them from a political standpoint not from

industrial standpoint in isolation. I've took that into consideration but always from a political standpoint and as a consequence I've found that I've got a very much deeper understanding of the motivations, it's enabled me to understand better the motivations of management. This need to ensure that ordinary people are able to understand political theory and apply it to concrete situations is absolutely essential.

So you see the development of worker intellectuals and a popular understanding of Marxism as being a major need for the Left and trade union movement?

I don't quite like the terminology worker intellectuals. All of us are intellectuals and all of us have got an intellect and what's important is how that intellect is developed. We need to accept that the academics have got a very important role to play. I think workers need to understand that because they work on a track in factory that doesn't make them inferior to the academics. In many ways they're very much richer because of the struggles they're involved in. I see it as a relationship that needs to be established and relationship that will be very fruitful.

How helpful has it been to have had a Communist party branch operating at Longbridge?

We couldn't have achieved the things we have without it. Factory Communist Party branches are political organisations with a responsibility to the factory and to the community that surrounds the factory. They need to stand candidates in municipal elections; they need to stand candidates in parliamentary elections; they need to be involved in community organisations. For instance I'm very much involved. I'm the chairman of the tenants' association on this small estate. There's a need for us to become involved in community problems as well as industrial problems.

As well as sales of the Star and party material, factory bulletins, etc.

Oh, absolutely. I take that for granted because that's what we do every day, in an organised way in the factory. We need to expand the sales of the *Morning Star* and publications like *Comment* and *Marxism Today*. This regular reading of party material, this introduction to a theoretical journal like *Marxism Today*, for instance, begins the development of an heightened awareness that will encourage non-party people to explore even more theoretical publications and introduce them to Marxist philosophers who are able to create even in modern society the theories and practices that are essential to bring about change. When we look at the tremendous discussion that is currently taking place about Eurocommunism and is it possible to win a Communist base in a different way for instance than it occurred in either Russia or China or elsewhere and can we by utilising institutions that we've built up in our different countries, our own philosophy, the *British Road to Socialism* is an indication that we believe in the strength of the working people to carry through such peaceful revolutions. In introducing this philosophy to wider and wider sections of people, certainly in factories, all of our journals will create a broader movement, a bigger understanding and above everything else an extension of our influence, of our membership. We ought to see that as a priority. Build this Party of ours so that it becomes a mass party. We ought to pose the question to people that they need to join the Communist Party to bring about the changes that we want to see that will bring about an entirely different social system from the one that we've got.

Thank

you

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