

SKILLED TIMEWORKERS' RATES IN THE SHIPBUILDING
AND SHIPREPAIRING INDUSTRIES SINCE 1913

The following is an outline of changes in the basic wage-rates of skilled workers in the British shipbuilding and shiprepairing industries since 1913. This material is obviously not original, yet it is sometimes difficult to find in a convenient form. A national uniform wage-rate for shipbuilding was negotiated for the first time in 1930, and the rates quoted before this date refer to the Tyne district.

Wage structures in British industry are notoriously complex and those found in the shipbuilding and shiprepairing industries are no exception. Therefore the basic wage-rates given here comprise only one element in the total wages system. For example, nationally-agreed rates give no indication of piecework earnings, and some shipbuilding trades were pieceworking and others timeworking. The pieceworking trades comprised platers, riveters, caulkers, welders and drillers - broadly the ironworking trades. The time-workers included shipwrights, joiners, electricians, painters and other finishing trades. After 1939 various kinds of payments-by-results systems were introduced for trades which had previously been timeworking trades, until by 1950 over 80% of the skilled workers in shipbuilding were on piecework or some form of incentive bonus. (See Knowles and Robertson "Earnings in Shipbuilding" Oxford Institute of Statistics Bulletin, December 1951). In addition to piecework there were "lieu" rates. Very often work done by pieceworking trades could not be accurately priced, say, because the work was scattered over the ship. In these circumstances traditional pieceworking trades were paid "lieu" rates, an enhanced hourly rate for the job, which was expected to be done at piecework speed. The negotiation of lieu rates was usually done at district level, and in 1945 in the Tyne district alone there were over 1,000 lieu rates. Many special allowances and extra payments were also paid to men on certain jobs, and for the most part these special payments, usually given to compensate workers for doing dangerous or unpleasant jobs, were the subject of district or yard negotiation. Therefore the basic wage-rates given here are only a very rough guide to earnings in shipbuilding and shiprepairing, although they do indicate broad trends in wage movements in these industries.

The War Bonuses quoted here were first introduced in shipbuilding and shiprepairing in April 1917. They were authorised by the Government's Committee on Production and were awarded to meet rises in the cost of living. The bonuses were regarded as a temporary measure to meet special war-time conditions, yet were retained after the war and war bonuses were actually increased during the post-war boom. When depression hit shipbuilding in 1920 war bonus was phased out and finally abolished in January 1923, but when a temporary improvement in trade conditions made a wage increase possible this usually took the form of an increase in bonus rather than an increase in the basic rate. Indeed the only increase in the basic rate in the period 1921-50 was an increase of 1/6d. in 1930. These bonus payments were finally consolidated into the basic rate in 1950 to form a new inclusive uniform plain time rate.

Yet another bonus payment was in operation from 1917-22. In October 1917 the Ministry of Munitions authorised the payment to skilled timeworkers in shipbuilding and shiprepairing a bonus of 12½% payable on total earnings, including overtime and other allowances. This represented a substantial wage increase and it was granted in an attempt to restore the wage differential between skilled and unskilled time workers. However, under pressure from the general workers' unions the increase was extended to semi-skilled and unskilled workers in November 1917. This bonus payment was phased out by employers over the period November - January 1921-22.

A. Potts

THE SKILLED TIMEWORKERS' RATE IN THE SHIPBUILDING
AND SHIPREPAIRING INDUSTRY SINCE 1913

| | | | Basic Rate | Bonus or War Bonus | Total |
|------------------|---------|--|------------|-----------------------|-------|
| | 1913 | (53 hour week) | 41/6 | - | 41/6 |
| 3rd March | 1915 | 4/- Advance Basic Rate | 45/6 | - | 45/6 |
| 30th August | 1916 | 3/- " " " | 48/6 | - | 48/6 |
| 1st April | 1917 | 5/- " War Bonus | 48/6 | 5/- | 53/6 |
| 1st August | 1917 | 3/- " " " | 48/6 | 8/- | 56/6 |
| 17th October | 1917 | 12½% Special Advance to Timeworkers on their total earnings. | | | |
| 5th December | 1917 | 5/- Advance War Bonus | 48/6 | 13/- | 61/6 |
| 31st July | 1918 | 3/6 " " " | 48/6 | 16/6 | 65/- |
| 27th November | 1918 | 5/- " " " | 48/6 | 21/6 | 70/- |
| 1st January | 1919 | Introduction of 47 hour week | | | |
| 26th November | 1919 | 5/- Advance War Bonus | 48/6 | 26/6 | 75/- |
| 31st March | 1920 | 3/- " Basic Rate | 51/6 | 26/6 | 78/- |
| 2nd June | 1920 | 3/- " " " | 54/6 | 26/6 | 81/- |
| 4th May | 1921 | 3/- Deduction Basic Rate | 51/6 | 26/6 | 78/- |
| 1st June | 1921 | 3/- " " " | 48/6 | 26/6 | 75/- |
| Nov., Dec., Jan. | 1921-22 | 12½% special advance to Timeworkers withdrawn. | | | |
| 29th March | 1922 | 10/6 Deduction War Bonus | 48/6 | 16/- | 64/6 |
| 17th May | 1922 | 3/- " " " | 48/6 | 13/- | 61/6 |
| 1st June | 1922 | 3/- " " " | 48/6 | 10/- | 58/6 |
| 1st November | 1922 | 2/6 " " " | 48/6 | 7/6 | 56/- |
| 22nd November | 1922 | 2/6 " " " | 48/6 | 5/- | 53/6 |
| 13th December | 1922 | 2/6 " " " | 48/6 | 2/6 | 51/6 |
| 3rd January | 1923 | 2/6 " " " | 48/6 | - | 48/6 |
| 18th June | 1924 | 3/- Advance Bonus | 48/6 | 3/- | 51/6 |
| 24th September | 1924 | 4/- " " " | 48/6 | 7/- | 55/6 |
| 1st July | 1928 | 1/6 " " " | 48/6 | 8/6 | 57/- |
| 1st September | 1928 | 1/6 " " " | 48/6 | 10/- | 58/6 |
| 1st January | 1930 | 1/6 (National Uniform Wage) | 50/- | 10/- | 60/- |
| 1st April | 1936 | 2/- " Bonus | 50/- | 12/- | 62/- |
| 3rd February | 1937 | 2/- " " " | 50/- | 14/- | 64/- |
| 7th July | 1937 | 2/- " " " | 50/- | 16/- | 66/- |
| 16th February | 1938 | 2/- " " " | 50/- | 18/- | 68/- |

| | | | Basic Rate | Bonus or War Bonus | Total |
|-----------------------|------|---|------------|-----------------------|-------|
| 6th September | 1939 | 2/- Advance Bonus | 50/- | 20/- | 70/- |
| 21st February | 1940 | 5/- " War Bonus | 50/- | 25/- | 75/- |
| 22nd January | 1941 | 3/6 " " " | 50/- | 28/6 | 78/6 |
| 17th December | 1941 | 5/- " " " | 50/- | 33/6 | 83/6 |
| 4th January | 1943 | 6/- " " " | 50/- | 39/6 | 89/6 |
| 3rd April | 1944 | 4/- " " " | 50/- | 43/6 | 93/6 |
| 7th May | 1945 | 4/6 " " " | 50/- | 48/- | 98/- |
| 15th April | 1946 | 6/- " " " | 50/- | 54/- | 104/- |
| 3rd March | 1947 | Introduction of 44 hour week. | | | |
| 11th October | 1948 | 5/- Advance War Bonus | 50/- | 59/- | 109/- |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | <u>New Work</u> | |
| 20th November | 1950 | National Wages Settlement - New Inclusive National Uniform Plain Time Rate | | 120/- | |
| 23rd November | 1951 | Advance 11/- | | 131/- | |
| 7th November | 1952 | " 7/6 | | 138/6 | |
| 1st April | 1954 | " 8/6 | | 147/- | |
| 15th March | 1955 | " 11/- | | 158/- | |
| 7th March | 1956 | " 12/6 | | 170/6 | |
| 27th May | 1957 | " 11/- | | 181/6 | |
| 6th October | 1958 | " 7/4 | | 188/10 | |
| 28th March | 1960 | Introduction of 42 hour week | | | |
| 9th January | 1961 | Advance 8/6 | | 197/4 | |
| 9th July | 1962 | " 6/- | | 203/4 | |
| 16th December | 1963 | " 8/- | | 211/4 | |
| 30th November | 1964 | Introduction of 41 hour week | | | |
| 5th July | 1965 | " of 40 hour week | | | |
| 25th November | 1965 | <u>National Long Term Agreement</u> | | | |
| 7th March | 1966 | Time Rate increased by 5/- under Long Term Agreement | | 216/4 | |
| 3rd July | 1967 | Time Rate increased by 5/- under Long Term Agreement | | 221/4 | |
| 1st January | 1968 | Minimum earnings became Time Rate under Long Term Agreement | | 257/4 | |
| 19th December | 1968 | <u>National Long Term Agreement</u> | | | |
| | (1) | From 16th Dec., 1968 to 19th Jan., 1969 Time Rate increased by 6/- under Long Term Agreement | | 263/4 | |
| | (2) | From 20th Jan., 1969 to 30th Nov., 1969 Minimum earnings became Time Rate under Long Term Agreement | | 300/- | |
| 1st December 1969 | (3) | General Wage Advance of 6/- and adjustment in Plain Time Rate under Long Term Agreement | | 325/- | |
| 7th December 1970= | (4) | Minimum earnings became Time Rate under Long Term Agreement | | 350/- | |

The above are New Work rates: for Shiprepair Rate add 3/- to basic rate.

BOOK REVIEWS

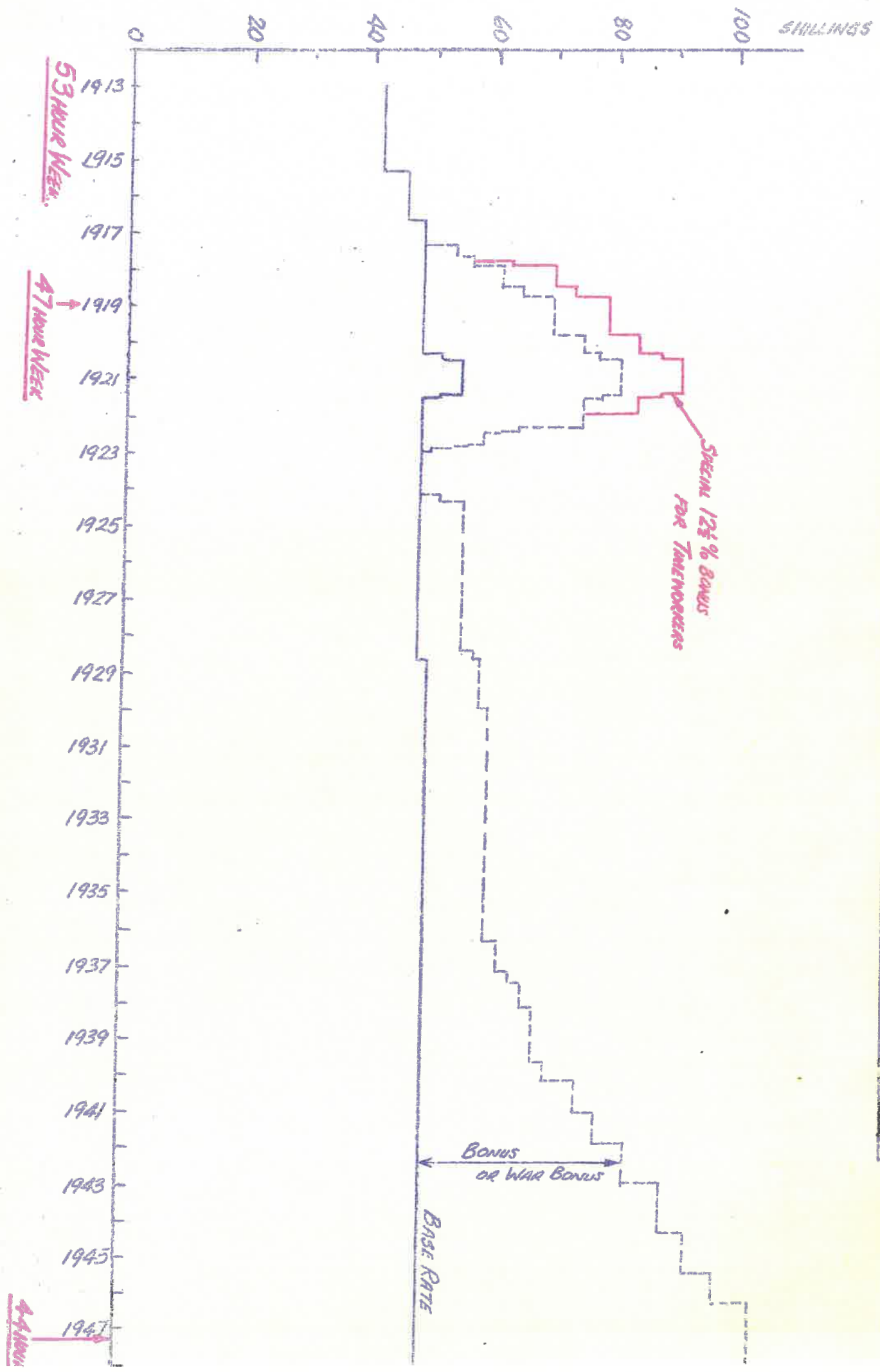
The General Strike in the North East by Anthony Mason (University of Hull publications, 1970). pp. 116. £2.00.

Students of modern British history have little difficulty in enumerating the causes and consequences of the general strike of 1926, but they do not find it easy to describe what was really going on during the nine days of the actual strike and the few days of confusion and bewilderment which followed its calling-off. The reasons for this ignorance are obvious: given the unprecedented nature of the basic situation, no-one at the time can have had a complete picture of what was happening even in a particular region, let alone in the country at large; and given that many of the leading activists of the day are no longer with us and that those still alive may see the events of the strike very differently in retrospect, it is clear that a definitive story can never be told. Regional studies, based on what can still be ascertained at a local level, offer the only prospect of further discoveries, and Anthony Mason's study of the strike in the north east therefore deserves a warm welcome from labour historians in general, as well as from local historians of this area in particular, since it is the first substantial attempt at a local survey for any part of the country.

The general strike in the north east is particularly worth a close study, not only because the basic issue of the miners' strike was of direct relevance in the area, but because, as Mr. Mason tells us, "the strikers ambitiously attempted directly to counter the Government (emergency) organisation, establishing their own central strike committee for the area in Newcastle." Essentially, Mr. Mason offers us a study of the massive and novel problems of organising (and combatting) a general strike; having examined the organisations which the situation threw up on both sides, he then discusses the effectiveness of the strike, and concludes with a brief survey of the confused situation which developed immediately it became known that the strike had been called off.

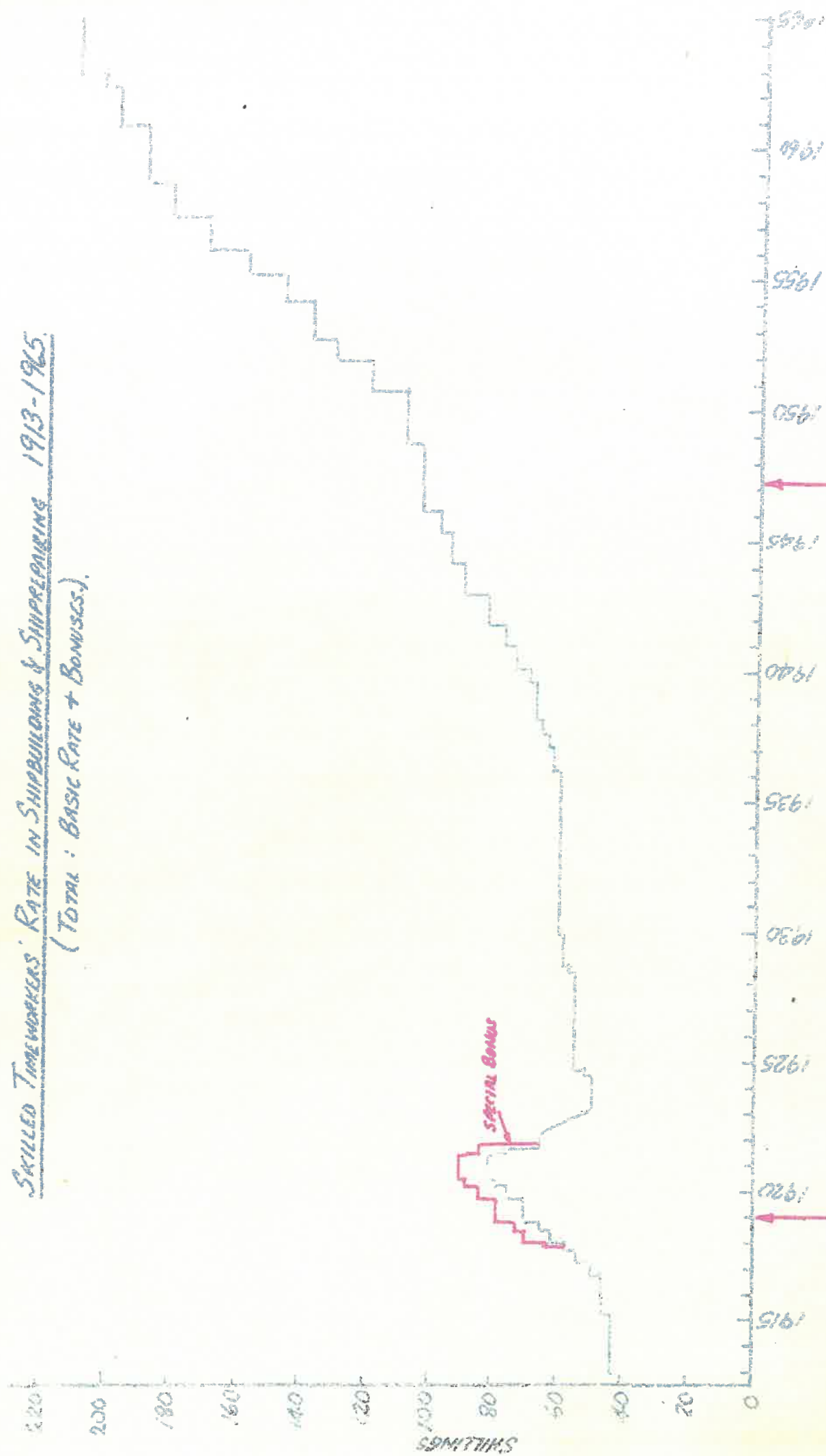
In producing this study, the author has used a wide range of materials: he was able to call on surviving participants, especially the Lawther brothers and Mr. Page Arnot; he has made full use of both trade union and government archives; and he has relied judiciously on the local press (the book includes reproductions of some numbers of the two strikers' newspapers, the Northern Light and the Workers' Chronicle). Inevitably, one regrets that certain questions remain unanswered: why, for example, were the good people of Chopwell so much more active and determined than anyone else; and what exactly was the role of the infant British communist party, some of whose members flit mysteriously through these pages? Also, it is necessary to challenge one of Mr. Mason's opening remarks that the unions failed "to improve their position very significantly in the relatively good days of 1919-20" (p.3): surely, many unions did gain significantly - especially in terms of shorter hours - in those twilight days when war-weariness and euphoria were strangely mixed, and a good deal of the bitterness in industrial relations up to the general strike derived precisely from the fact that union leaders were conscious that much had been gained, and that much had to be defended, if the 'pre-war world', with all its horrors (real and imagined), was to be avoided. But in the main, although the evidence is limited, it is unlikely that Mr. Mason's conclusions about the events of May 1926 will be seriously challenged: of particular value is his reminder that the stereotype of strikers playing football with policemen is highly misleading; while it lasted, the general strike was a serious and bitter affair, and in the north east, at any rate, it was accompanied by violence

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(TOTAL: BASIC RATE + BONUSES.)



53 HOUR WEEK.

47 HOUR WEEK.

44 HOUR WEEK.

and disorder. Mr. Mason, indeed, has done as much as can be done at a virtually impossible task, and deserves our thanks. But a critic is surely justified in complaining about the high price of acquiring the fruits of his labours: even in these inflationary times, £2.00 is a lot to pay for an extended paper-bound essay of 100 pages, and at this price the book is far beyond the reach of many stalwarts of the labour movement who might have been interested in owning it.

Duncan Bythell

Dan Smith An Autobiography (Oriel Press Ltd. Newcastle upon Tyne, 1970)
pp. 151. price £1.75 net.

This is a teasing and tantalising book, it is also a compelling book. It is teasing and tantalising because it moves uneasily in that no-man's land between "Memories" and "Autobiographies" where no paths are charted, and because it abounds in short, flat, descriptive sentences on persons or issues where some more penetrating analytical development would have illuminated for the reader not only the issue but also Dan Smith himself at the centre of its involvement.

Consider, for example, the description he gives of his early skirmishes and campaigns as a newly-elected Councillor on Newcastle City Council. He quotes from his maiden speech in the Council Chamber (p.34): "I'm not interested in platitudes. I've come here to do a job and I don't feel that the Newcastle City Council has much to be proud of. It is a hundred years since it did anything and I mean to change that". Later, (p.35) he describes his continuing sense of frustration and the encouragement to soldier on which he consistently obtained from Joe Eagles (newly appointed as secretary to the Newcastle Labour Party): "If it had not been for him" he writes "I would not have had the guts to battle through the council and through my own group because it is no secret that I was not only being shot at from the front, but from the back as well". No wonder opening shots of this nature, in a far from maidenly speech, as conventions go, got him off, as he himself records, "to a bad start". But if, to him, and maybe to others at the time, it was "no secret" that he was being subjected to attack both back and front, it may well be very much of a secret to others and they may well feel cheated, as indeed the reviewer does, not to be told more. Equally the reader may feel a sense of deep deprivation at not being told more about Joe Eagles and his relationship not only with the author but also with other members of the Party. If we were told more we might not only be assisted in our understanding of Dan Smith but also of Joe Eagles and the almost jungle-like situation which seems to exist. But was Dan Smith so dependent upon combining "cracking up" (p.35) by other people as his words might seem to imply? It may be doubted. Supporting evidence for such a doubt is possibly to be found in the account he gives of his first meeting of the Northern Economic Planning Council in his capacity as newly-appointed Chairman:- "I remember one member of the Council" he writes, (p.91), "a well-known figure locally, who was quite determined at that first meeting that he should have been Chairman and who was going to make it difficult for me if he could. I steeled myself, turned to him, and said, "Look, if we're all going to be chairman at this meeting we're not going to get very far. While many of you may have views as to whether I should have been the chairman, I am appointed and if we've

got a job to do we can only do it if we work efficiently. That is how I intend to work". Thereafter, and without any qualifications at all, these meetings were the most efficient that I have ever had the privilege to chair". A touch of persecution complex?; possibly so, but surely the qualities which shine forth from this incident are those of unadorned forthrightness and unflappable dedication to the efficient performance of a job. And that job was one towards which the pages of this book shown Dan Smith to be consistently moving from the moment when he agreed, in May 1950, to stand as a labour candidate in the Walker Ward in the Municipal election, to the moment when, in March 1969, he was able to announce the formation of a Regional Science Committee. From being an early rebel against conventional ideas - internationalist, pacifist, Trotskyite Socialist - he had concentrated his powers and his convictions upon the narrow point of Local Government, and, having found his natural field of battle in this sphere, had widened it successively through City, conurbation (Tyneside), to Region. If "Regionalism" is a valid and viable concept then Dan Smith will have to be numbered amongst its founding fathers. And if "Regionalism", as an abstract concept, should be found not to be valid, even so, Dan Smith will have to be numbered amongst those who, in times of economic decline and overall distress saw a vision for the North East, cast in regional terms, and set about its fulfilment with a dogged, almost remorseless determination, which seemingly paradoxically, made him a national figure. It is from this that the book derives its compelling character.

As art forms, autobiographies are perhaps the most difficult to master: they must recall the times and circumstances in which the author has played out his part, and they must, at the same time, reveal his innermost thoughts and leanings. The author seems to sense that there is something lacking in his account of himself. His intimations on this point occur in his final chapter. After attempting to describe what it is that, so to say "has made him tick", ("the desire to serve, the challenge presented by problems, and my interest in people") (p.150), he ends with the cryptic confession that one element of his make-up which he had lost was "the sensitive part of me which wanted to be understood. Not thanked, or revered, or liked. Just understood". "Some day" he writes in his last sentence, "I will have to write a book about it". (p.151).

It is to be hoped he will; for there is much to be said, by way of description, let alone analysis, which this book does not manage to say. But even if he does it may still be thought that there will remain a need for objective analysis by another mind, for the issues raised by his "Autobiography" are of wide and general significance. Amongst them is the question of the price that seemingly has to be paid for success in public life, and, secondly, the apparently established fact that the route to national, perhaps even European, recognition is not necessarily via Westminster.

Edward Allan.

Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham by Maurice Milne (Frank Graham Newcastle). pp. 236. £3.00.

Maurice Milne's Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham is a welcome addition to the history of the provincial press. As a field of research the provincial press has been sadly neglected, and yet its importance for the historian concerned not merely with the shaping of public opinion but also with the cultural concerns of the community, can hardly be overestimated. Nevertheless of recent work in this area only that of G. A. Cranfield and Dr. Donald Read comes to mind.* Mr. Milne's book is all the more welcome as it deals with the years 1855-1906 - again a much neglected period.

Mr. Milne's task, with around one hundred newspapers and magazines appearing at one time or another in the North East in these fifty years, was considerable - and all the more so if his book was not to become a mere chronicle of the rise and fall of a succession of newspapers. Thus he has attempted to look at the two functions of a newspaper: as a "commercial enterprise" and as "a vehicle of opinion", and this has involved an investigation not only of the quality of local journalism but also a consideration of ownership and political management. Not surprisingly therefore papers like Cowen's Newcastle Daily Chronicle figure prominently in this book; certainly "a vehicle of opinion" it was also a highly successful "commercial enterprise". Indeed the sections on the Chronicle - especially those on its "radical years" (1869-1872), and on the relationship between Cowen and James Annand over the Eastern Question in 1876-7 - are among the best in the book. But other, and perhaps in their way no less significant newspapers, are not forgotten: Stead's Northern Echo, Joicey's Newcastle Daily Leader, or the extremely enterprising North and South Shields Gazette and Northumberland and Durham Advertiser founded in 1849 before the repeal of the "tax on knowledge", and from 1855 the earliest halfpenny evening newspaper in England. Or the even more interesting case of the Newcastle Evening News, which founded in 1893 took up the cause of the class struggle only to be "silenced" by a mysterious "take-over" in 1894, and thence subsequently espoused the more respectable cause of the "Lib-Labs".

Mr. Milne's main aim, however, is to examine the complex problem of the newspaper as a vehicle of opinion, and in particular, party political opinion. Thus all the "great" political events - the Bulgarian Horrors, Home Rule, Tarrif Reform - are examined for the light they throw on the party political standpoint of the local press. Clearly it is important to know which side of the party fence the Newcastle Journal or the Sunderland Echo sat on the question of Tarrif Reform, but Mr. Milne is far more interesting when dealing with where the local press stood on such issues as crime and punishment, or industrial relations - topics which in their way are equally as informative as to the type of public attitudes the press was attempting to create. Did the press in the North East, however, succeed in influencing public opinion on these issues? Certainly it would be interesting to know how (if at all) readers of the Chronicle reacted to their newspaper's support to the engineers' strike of 1892. It is not enough to know that the Chronicle had become reactionary in its old age. Did the readers of the Chronicle support the men of 1871, but not those of 1892? Had the readership of the paper changed in the intervening twenty years anyway, so that in 1892 it simply confirmed the existing prejudices of its public?

* G. A. Cranfield, The Development of the Provincial Newspaper, 1700-1760. (1962)
D. Read, Press and People 1790-1850: Opinion in Three English Cities. (1961)