



The IRO site at Bootle.

Why union and firm are in one bed

THE LONGEST strike in Britain has made the Inland Revenue Office site in Bootle famous.

The electricians on the site went back to work in August last year after three-and-a-half years on unofficial strike.

Now they are out again over the sacking of their acting shop steward, John Byrne. But the underlying causes of this dispute are exactly the same as before.

For the IRO dispute, although famous, has been widely misunderstood.

The nine electricians are NOT just being bloody-minded; the strike is NOT a Communist plot, and the contractors and the union are NOT acting stupidly by failing to end it.

McAlpines (the contractors) and the EEP TU (the electricians' union) both know exactly what they are doing. And, perfectly logically from their point of view, they both want to see the Bootle electricians defeated.

The latest strike, like the earlier one, is more of a strike against the union than against the employer.

The 3½-year strike started when the electricians found they were earning less than labourers on the site.

The electricians were tied by national agreements negotiated by the EEP TU through the half-union, half-management Joint Industry Board.

These agreements are so tight they cover everything down to boot money, and strict procedures ensure they cannot be changed at local level.

The 3½-year strike boiled down to

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whether the electricians had the right to reach a separate agreement outside the national agreement — an issue with frightening implications for both the union and employers.

But by August 1974 McAlpines had big trouble with an idle site and mounting penalty clauses in their contract. They were forced to reach a local settlement with the men.

This gave the electricians £14 a week above the national rate and insurance and other benefits "they were not entitled to". The EEP TU refused to recognise the agreement or have anything to do with the site when the men returned.

The latest strike began in June after John Byrne, the acting shop steward, was sacked for carrying out stewards' duties. As a Communist, he is barred from actually holding union office, but McAlpines had previously accepted him as the men's representative.

There have been suggestions (not just from the strikers) that the company only intended the settlement to be temporary — until a new contract with the government was secure.

(After the settlement McAlpines succeeded in getting a new £5.9m contract and avoiding massive pen-

alty clauses in the original.) Whatever the truth of that, there's no doubt that both McAlpines and the EEP TU desperately want standard agreements reimposed.

"We must have some machinery to settle disputes," was how McAlpine's Commercial Manager, Edward Allen put it.

Stan Simpson, EEP TU area official: "If anything was done here which would step on JIB corns then every electrician would say 'We want the same' and all our agreements would be destroyed."

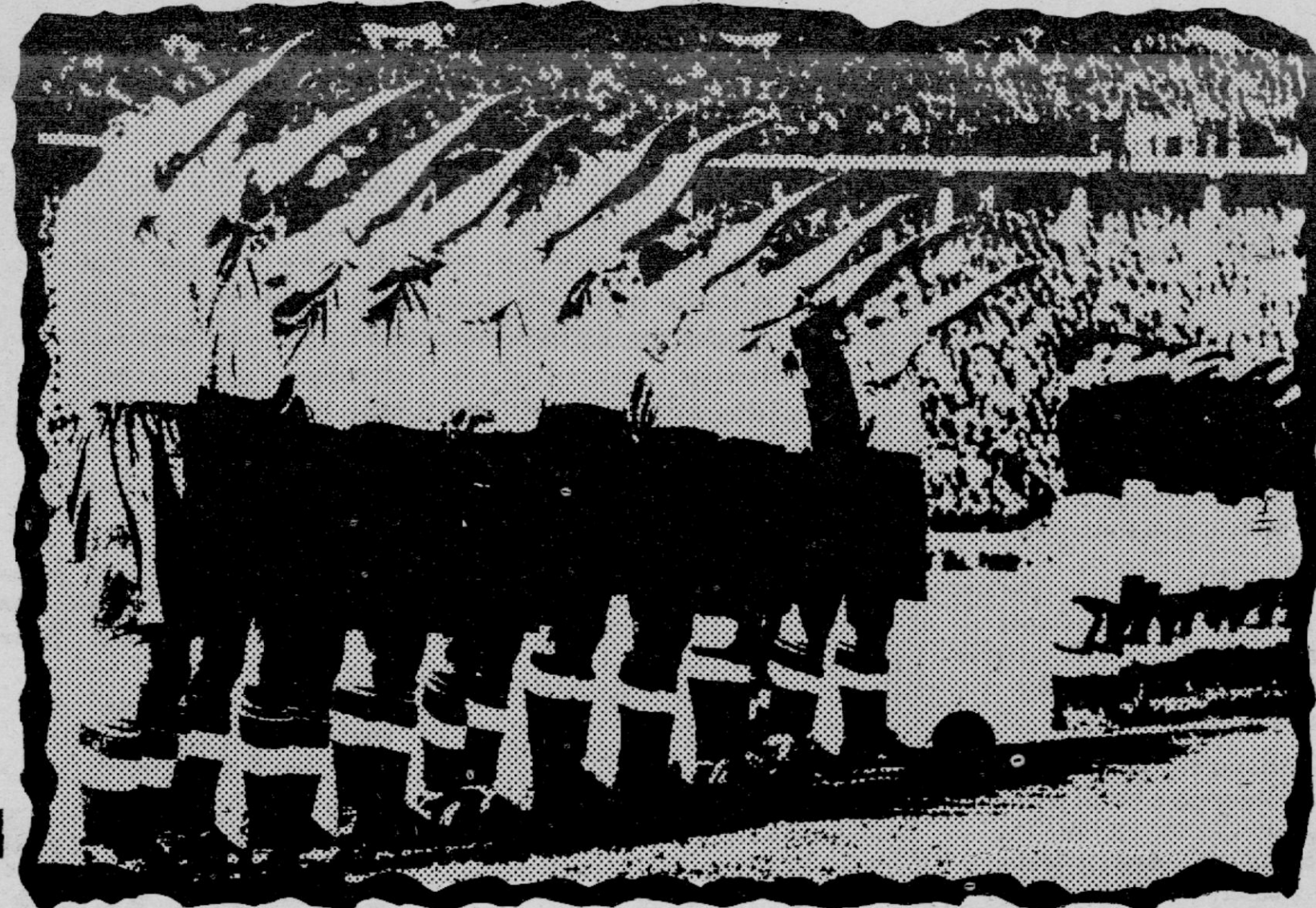
And that's the key. If the union are seen to legitimate the 3½-year strike or to authorise another local agreement, "There'd be hell all round." (Stan Simpson).

Whatever the cost in lost jobs, the EEP TU can't afford to get involved until the Bootle men toe the line.

If the men from the Inland Revenue Office win, a series of unofficial strikes for similar benefits could wreck the cosy relationship between the union and employers at national level.

And that's something both McAlpines and the EEP TU will fight very hard to prevent.

ALL IN THE GAME...



Right: Nazi salutes from the England team at an international with Germany in the 1930s.

Nobles feared the boot



ABOVE: Mob football played in Crowe Street, London, in 1721. BOTTOM RIGHT: 1868 engraving shows a later development of the game. Hacking, pushing and shoving are still allowed, but the playing area is limited, and there are clearly defined goals, each manned by a specialist player. BELOW: Public school discipline produced teams like this... Harrow School XI of 1867.

Various forms of football have been widely played in England since at least the 12th Century. Before the 19th Century the game was very rough and loosely organised, with no official rules. Most forms involved the carrying or kicking of a ball by two opposing teams from one side of a town to another, or across a parish boundary. Such games were often played on public holidays.

Up to 500 people took part during the day's game and damage to property and serious injury were frequent. Some deaths are even recorded:

"In 1796 John Snape was an unfortunate victim to this custom of playing football at Shrove Tide, a custom which is... disgraceful to humanity and civilisation, subversive of good order and government, and destructive of the morals, properties and very lives of our inhabitants."

The sensitivity, in pre-industrial society, of the ruling nobility to large, uncontrollable crowds of workers and apprentices was reflected in their persistent efforts to ban the game.

It was passed on five occasions between 1314 and 1410 alone, but people took any notice. (The game was banned in Liverpool in 1555.)

These persistent attempts to suppress football were due partly to the fact that the game's popularity was interfering with military training.

In 1365 Edward III had a proclamation made:

"That every able-bodied man shall in his sports use bows and arrows... forbidding them under pain of imprisonment to meddle in the hurling of stones, loggatts and quoits, hand-

By Andy Wiggans

ball, football... or other games of no value."

The reason given was that: "The people indulge in the games aforesaid and in other dishonest and unthrifty or idle games, whereby the realm is like to be without archers."

More important, the crowds who gathered to play football were not controlled. There was no effective state-controlled police force to maintain the public order (i.e. to look after the interests of the nobility). This was only possible later when the rural workers surged into the towns during the industrial revolution.

The anxiety of the ruling nobility was not unfounded. Following parliamentary approval for the enclosure of 2,000 acres, much of it common land, in Northamptonshire in July 1765, the Northampton Mercury advertised a match to be played on the enclosed land.

A large crowd gathered, but not to play football. Instead they tore down the enclosure fences and burned them in front of the powerless Dragons.

The dislocation brought about by the industrial revolution and the growth of towns made social control

much easier and drastically changed the traditional forms of football.

The lack of clear, open spaces and the sheer exhaustion of long hours of factory work meant that people had both less opportunity and less time and energy to play football.

Paradoxically, at this time the game was flourishing in the Public Schools, and it was from here that the game of football as we know it today emerged.

Before 1840 Public School football had been just as unruly and dangerous as the game played by apprentices.

At Winchester between 1770 and 1818 there were six rebellions by players against their masters' authority, the last of which was so serious that the militia had to be called in.

However, the new middle class of entrepreneurs created by the industrial revolution demanded that Public Schools should no longer be the preserve of the sons of the landed gentry.

The middle class expected Public Schools to encourage values such as leadership, self-restraint and competitiveness needed for the maintenance and development of the new social order.

One of the important by-products of the imposition of these values was that prefects were encouraged to write down the rules of football, explaining the techniques of play as well as defining the legitimate forms of physical contact.

Thus between 1845 and 1862 each of the major public schools drew up their own rules for playing football.

The following rules produced at Rugby School in 1845 illustrate the brutal physical nature of the game at this time:

(i) No hacking with the heel or above the knee is fair.

(ii) No player may wear projecting nails or iron plates on the soles or heels of his shoes or boots.

The disparity which existed in the rules from one school to another made competitive matches difficult to arrange.

A meeting was therefore called in London in 1863 where representatives of eleven London clubs and one Public School (Charterhouse) met to establish a Football Association which would unify the rules and act as the ruling body responsible for the game's administration.

Goals produce the goods faster

WORK-HUNGRY Wear-side is making a new name for itself... work-hard Wear-side. For with the football team's tremendous Cup run, town-folk have never worked so hard—and have never been so happy doing it. This is the view of the

Sunday Sun, 29 April 1973

INDUSTRIAL strife has been booted out of the shipyards and factories on soccer-crazy Wear-side.

Delighted bosses and union leaders say it's all because Sunderland won the FA Cup at Wembley five weeks ago.

Production is zooming. Disputes are dwindling. And factory trouble-shooters are left kicking their heels.

Cheerful

Pay talks were once gloomy affairs. Now the men often break off with an occasional smile and joke.

And talk invariably turns to Sunderland's football success.

"Everyone is cheerful," said George Raynor, a union official who repre-

The Sun, 11 June 1973

FA play ball with army

DURING the First World War the FA bureaucracy played a large part in recruiting volunteers as soldiers.

Football by this time was firmly entrenched as the main working class pursuit, and the FA — with its strong and substantial links with both professional and amateur clubs throughout the country — was able to provide the state with a swift and acceptable entry into working class areas for its recruitment drives.

The FA agreed with the War Office that the clubs "be requested to place their grounds at the disposal of the War Office... for use as drill grounds... where football matches are played arrangements [are] to be made for well-known public men to address the players and spectators, urging men who are physically fit, and otherwise able, to enlist at once."

By the end of 1914 an estimated 500,000 men had done so.

Similarly in World War II the equipment available in-grounds and the space itself was used for military

The Rt. Hon. LORD WESTWOOD, J.P., F.C.I.S., is Vice-President of the F.A. and President of the Football League. Besides being Chairman of Newcastle United F.C. Co. Ltd., he is chairman of nine other companies and a director of 18 more, including Pocket Money Toys Ltd.

training. Many professional footballers became army physical training instructors.

The ban imposed on organised football at the outbreak of war was soon lifted as the government realised that the game was of clear value in boosting morale.

The magazine Mass Observation reported in 1940 that "sports like football have an absolute major effect on the morale of people, and one Saturday afternoon of league matches could probably do more to affect people's spirits than the recent £50,000 poster campaign urging cheerfulness."

Substantial amounts of money were raised by the FA in aid of war charities such as the Red Cross.

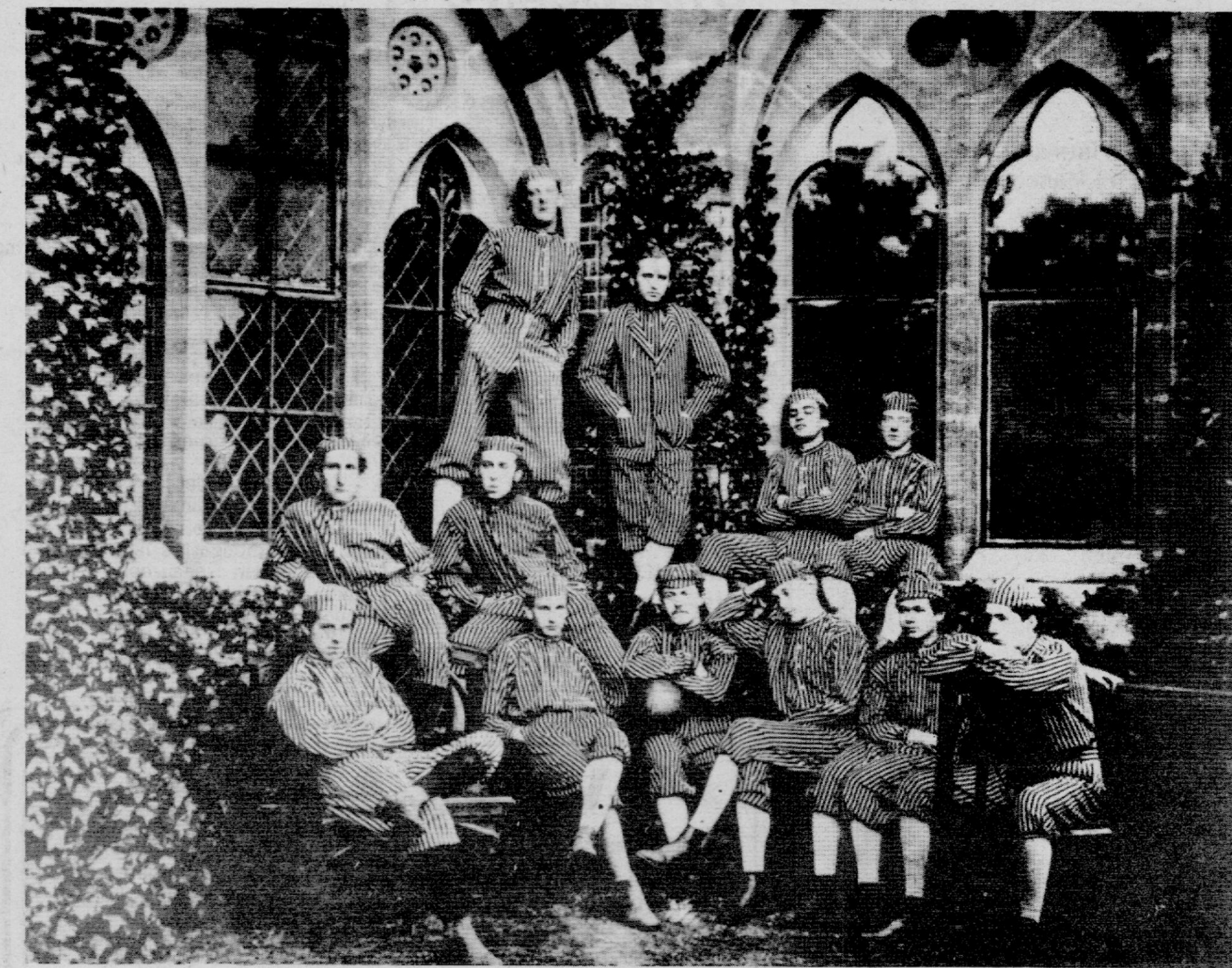
Foreign Office files which have recently been made available show that the FA were given firm instructions which countries they should visit. It was considered particularly important that the touring national side should perform well in politically sensitive areas.

● A swift glance at the list of honorary vice-presidents of the FA Council — one duke, two earls, two knights, one lord, one field marshal, one admiral, one general, one air marshal — gives some indication of the historical roots of the FA.

In this situation it's not surprising that no present professional player, manager or referee sits on either the executive or the disciplinary committee.



Next month:
How football became big business



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Last post

THE POST OFFICE are not at all worried that the fantastic increase in postal charges will cut down their business.

Liverpool Postmaster H.E. Irwin admitted recently that only a quarter of their work was straightforward mailing.

The rest is done on an agency basis, mainly for government departments.

Mr Irwin also has an interesting reason for closing down a number of sub-post offices recently. "The sub-postmasters," he says, "have retired."

It looks like every post office in Liverpool is doomed to close some time within the next 65 years.