

Interview with George Miles ([SA 10/587/1](#)), recorded in 1990

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Although I didn't know it at the time, they were training people to drive to be strike breakers in 1926. So anyway, I went down to uncle Tom's and he said, yes, he said, if you come down on Wednesday evening, he said, there are a lot of other young men coming down. And there were, there were about 20 of us all together. And there was a man in a white coat with a LGOC - London General Omnibus Company - and he'd got this cap on and his moustaches were pomade un guise, you know, rather like Kaiser Bill's. And he was in a white coat and he got a wand and he taught us how to drive.

One of the fellows said to me, why don't you come down to our club? So I said, well, I would like to. He said, It was jolly good. He said, plenty of girls, he said, and plenty of beer. So I went along to the club, which was in Broomhill Walk, Woodford. That's where Churchill's statue now stands, you may remember, on Woodford Green. And this club was called the Black Rat Club. And this club really became, was a centre for reactionary propoganda, if you can understand what I mean. I mean, there were people there who were obviously ex-military people and all sorts of people like that. And they talked to us and we had talks about the army and about what it was like in France in the war. And so I became a member of this organisation without realising it, which was called the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, OMS. And this was designed to be able to break the strike if it happened.

Well, what this meant was that in 1926, when the strike broke out, I, with all these other young men, started to drive these, drive the lorries. And we drove a lorry down to the docks. We got on at Woodford, and one of the policemen, who was J Division bloke, he got on with us. And we drove down towards where their division ended. I think it was Wanstead Flats. And there he said, well, this is where I get off. He said, a bloke from K Division will be along in a minute to see you all right. Well we waited for 10 minutes, 15 minutes, and no man from K Division turned up. Of course they wouldn't, would they? They knew what was ahead. And when we got down to the docks, oh, it was a sea of cloth caps. You'd never seen anything like it in your life. I mean, when they talk about a revolutionary situation - there was a revolutionary situation, all right. I mean, they were in control. Trams turned over. So anyway, we drove

on and they stopped us and turned us over. And I got a good hiding, got a smashing, you know, got a crack on the nose, one or two things like that.

And one of the chaps was a shop steward or a picket of some kind, because he'd got a National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers armband on. He said to me, come on, you silly little bastard. He said, get you out of this quick. So I then felt that discretion was the better part of valour. And I went along with him and he lived in Bidder Street, Canning Town, which was a pretty rough neighbourhood. And I went in there with him and I was a bit of a smart Alec. I went into his house and there were two portraits up on the mantelpiece of gentlemen with beards. And of course, the only gentlemen with beards that I knew were the apostles, you see? So I said to him, I said, It's rather funny. I said, you said you're Jewish and you've got a couple of Christian saints up there. And he said, yes, saint Marx and saint Engels [laughs]. Anyway, he gave me some books to read. He gave me *Wage, Labour and Capital* and *Value, Price and Profit*. And I was quite interested in economics because I'd read *Wealth of Nations* and I'd read Ricardo on rent and J.S. Mill because I was really interested in politics. So it was fairly easy for me to read Marx, you know. But anyway, the result of this was that my politics changed, you see. And so I left the Junior Imperial League pronto, and I wanted to join a revolutionary organisation, and there wasn't any in Woodford. So I went over to Walthamstow, and then it took me some time to find out, but eventually, I found that there was a Communist Party in Walthamstow because they were selling their papers and that. And so I asked if I could join, and they said yes, and they told me about the Young Communist League, and I joined the Young Communist League. And then they decided, I suppose because I was a nice, quietly dressed sort of bloke, that I could probably work in the Labour League of Youth, or the Labour Party or something like that. So I... so, therefore, I worked in the Labour Party.