

THE LANGUAGE AND IMAGES OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

MODERATES AND MILITANTS'

Keith Harper writes in 'The Guardian': From today the club for banning the use of the words "moderate" and "militant" has been formed and I am the first member. These are examples of trite terminology in trade union politics they take some beating. They are frequently bandied about in the press and elsewhere as convenient shorthand terms to describe what are generally held to be the goodies and baddies in the trade union movement.

"Joe Bloggs, militant leader of the lathe turners' union" immediately conjures up a picture of a mean-faced unsmiling son of toil with no time for his family, who spends his waking hours plotting and agitating for the great Socialist millenium when he hopes to be king.

You can say the same thing about a moderate." This is a man who is wise and resourceful, likes his drink — but we forgive him that don't we? — is constantly under attack from the Left, and can be relied upon to have the back-door ear of Downing Street whenever a national disaster approaches. He is on all official cocktail party lists, and he rings his wife once a day when he is away at a conference.

A little exaggerated perhaps, yet the fact is that these two words are extremely misleading and often bear no relation to the views of the individual concerned. What is more they can be and have been used to devastating effect in union elections to favour candidates of the Right and discredit those of the Left.

Simply labelling a man as a "moderate" does not necessarily make him a more intelligent or a more capable trade union official than a so-called "militant." Indeed, the "vote for your moderate" movement which has been stirred up in a number of union elections over the past few years has come about without any recourse to the record of the candidate.

In this manner people as thick as bacon sandwiches from a transport cafe have found their way into jobs to the exclusion of others with Labour Party cards, whose

only crime is that they have had the support of the broad Left because they happen to be more progressive.

I should point out that I am not arguing that all "moderates" are illiterates and "militants" intellectual giants with the only genuine feel for the working man. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What I am saying is that it is sometimes far more difficult to put a label round the neck of a trade union leader than it is conveniently to refer to a politician as a Conservative, Socialist, or Liberal, although even that produces greater problems these days.

"Militant" and "moderate" are slipshod words which invariably mask a person's real views. Better surely to let people make up their own minds. The books are open and club membership is free. ©

EDUCATIONAL FORUM

TRADE UNION TRAINING FELLOWSHIPS

Last year Mobil Oil New Zealand Limited, in association with the Vocational Training Council, established the Mobil Trade Union Training Fellowships. The Fellowships are designed to provide New Zealand trade union members with an opportunity to expand their knowledge and understanding of industrial relations matters and to enhance trade union skills and practices in administration and organisation.

Fellowships are offered to trade union members to undertake at any tertiary educational institution, or other approved organisation providing education or training, a recognised course of studies or some form of research programme, including work experience.

In 1976 four New Zealand trade unionists were granted training fellowships worth a total of \$5000 under the scheme:

- ◆ The assistant secretary of the Wellington branch of the Engineers' Union, Mr R. S. C. Grimwood was granted \$2325 for overseas travel to study worker participation and job enrichment in Britain, Sweden and Germany, with particular emphasis on training and education.
- ◆ The resident industrial officer of the Hamilton branch of the Auckland Clerical