

them leaving the breakaway Union and rejoining the TGWU. This has been successful up to a point, but there are still a few such members remaining mistakenly "loyal" to the NPWU and refusing to leave it. The Bureau has recently reviewed the position and has come to the following decision which has been endorsed by the Secretariat and must be operated in all Groups and Branches.

(1) No members of the NPWU can be accepted into membership of the Party until they have definitely left that organisation and rejoined the TGWU.

(2) All existing Party members who are still in the NPWU must be informed either collectively or in a personal interview that membership of that organisation is no longer compatible with membership of the Party. . . . In no case can any comrade in the NPWU be retained in the Party after March 1st. . . . A statement of our case against the NPWU has already been circulated on two occasions to Groups. . . . To the arguments put forward there we should like to add the following:

1. While claiming to be non-political, it provides a base among transport workers for all kinds of anti-working class organisations and policies, and its political line is expressed by statements about "the imperialist war", envisaging the LPTB as the main enemy of the transport workers, aided and abetted by the TGWU and the Communists on the CBC.

2. It uses methods and issues statements calculated to deceive the workers in its attempts to win membership and still further to split the transport workers, and in no respect can it advance their interests either individually or collectively, even on small matters like disciplinary cases, etc.

3. Sections of the leadership of this Union are active members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

4. Sections of the membership act as agents for *Socialist Appeal* and other Trotskyist literature, while others claim to be anarcho-syndicalist.

We have set ourselves the objective of finally smashing this organisation before the end of 1943, and we ask your active co-operation in carrying through these instructions in respect of our Party membership and in organising an active campaign against the NPWU throughout the Passenger Transport industry in your area.

Such were, and still are, the methods of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

AFTER THE WAR

In March 1944, the South Wales miners came out on strike. The *Daily Worker* (11.3.44) admitted that the strikers had 'a powerful case', but instead of supporting them told them to go back to work. Under the heading 'GO BACK', the editorial contained the following: 'The miners know that the *Daily Worker* is their friend and that there is no ulterior motive interests lurking behind our columns. And our advice to the South Wales miners is: GO BACK TO WORK.'

On the political field, the Communist Party was equally reactionary. On June 7, 1943, Harry Pollitt spoke at a meeting in Newark in support of the Tory candidate; and, previously, the CP had supported Conservative candidates

at Rugby and Wallasey in April 1942, at Putney in May of the same year, and at Bristol in February 1943. In March 1944, Pollitt advocated a new National Government which would include representatives of all parties (including the CP) supporting the present coalition—even after the war! Indeed, from 1943 onwards, the Party concentrated mainly on building up for a strong electoral position. It virtually abandoned any form of factory organisation; but, at the same time, committed itself to a policy of working within the existing Trade Union structure. The Communist Party aimed primarily at getting control of the British Trade Union, Co-operative and Labour movement.

In May 1945, Germany surrendered. In July, the first general election since before the war was held.

Prior to the election, the Party advocated 'a Government of National Unity', of Tory (with its leader Churchill), Liberal, Labour, Common Wealth, Independent, Communist and, presumably, any one else who was around at the time! At the same time, the CP called on workers to vote Communist where there were Communist candidates (there were 25 of whom two were elected) and return Labour where there was no Communist standing. The Communist Party's industrial policy did not change for some considerable time. At the Party conference in November 1945, Pollitt said: 'You are either in favour of the Party line as set out in the report or of the line that mass strikes are the only way to realise the workers' ends. If you are in favour of strikes, I warn you that you are playing with fire. . . . You can get a coal strike in the coalfields tomorrow if you want it. But if you do, will it advance the working class movement of this country or the prospect of our nation remaining first rate in the family of the United Nations?' Could class collaboration go much further? It was, in fact, not until the beginning of 1948—about two-and-a-half years after the defeat of Germany—that the Communist Party finally abandoned its strike-breaking, pro-employer, pro-Nation, collaborationist policy. And this was only because of the Cold War between the Western Powers on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other.

Up until the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the British Communist Party had always been the official mouthpiece of the Kremlin in this country; it has always supported Soviet foreign policy at every turn; it has always been a defender of Russian state capitalism, which it has misnamed socialism. It has never been concerned with the interests of the workers. That is why, on occasions, it has supported the workers in their struggles and on others has violently opposed their attempts to improve their conditions and wages. Despite its rather weak condemnation of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia (but not forgetting its refusal recently to take part in a CND march against both NATO and the Warsaw Pact), it has not changed. If political expediency demanded, the Communist Party would, once again, condemn all strikes and resort to all forms of class collaboration. We should not forget its record. Nor should we let its members forget either.

PETER E. NEWELL.

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NO. 7



Mounted Police in action at the Elephant & Castle during 1926 General Strike

TOWARDS WORKERS' CONTROL

'Anarchists must recognise the usefulness and the importance of the workers' movement, must favour its development, and make it one of the levers for their actions, doing all they can so that it, in conjunction with all existing progressive forces, will culminate in a social revolution which leads to the suppression of classes and to complete freedom, equality, peace and solidarity among all human beings. But it would be a great and fatal illusion to believe, as many do, that the workers' movement can and must on its own, by its very nature, lead to such a revolution. On the contrary, all movements founded on material and immediate interests (and a mass working-class movement cannot be founded on anything else), if the ferment, the drive and the unremitting efforts of men of ideas struggling and making sacrifices for an ideal future are lacking, tend to adopt themselves to circumstances, foster a conservative spirit, and the fear of change in those who manage to improve conditions, and often end up by creating new privileged classes and serving to support and consolidate the system which one would want to destroy.'

THE ABOVE was written by Malatesta in October 1927 and refers to the situation existing in Italy at that time. However its description and analysis are applicable to this country in present-day circumstances.

It is certainly true that the present role of trade unions has created a privileged class of bureaucrats whose functions are to serve and consolidate the present economic system. Any change in this system will have to have the support of those who are at present organised within these unions. It is not a case of changing the leadership of the trade unions to one of men who believe in revolutionary action, but rather one of changing the outlook of the members.

At certain periods in the history of the trade union movement, some unions have adopted a revolutionary approach to their problems. In Britain during the years 1910-1922, railwaymen, miners and engineers formally adopted resolutions which either demanded a share in the control of their industry or the complete take-over under workers' control. These periods may be the exception rather than the rule but they nevertheless indicate the desire of workers, in certain situations, for revolutionary change.

NATIONALISATION, NO ANSWER

Many of the dreams for workers' control, like those put forward in the 'Miners' Next Step' for the taking over and running of the industry, have ended in disillusionment under nationalisation. Instead of giving the control of an industry

to the workers who are employed in it, nationalisation has made these industries larger, more rigid and more remote. Far from investing the ownership with the community, it has strengthened the State. Nationalisation is a political concept which has given the State industrial power and this, coupled with social and political power, gives the State enormous authority over all aspects of our lives. The idea that nationalisation was a step towards eventual workers' control has proved not only wrong but disastrous. Those industries that have been nationalised have also been those in decline and the resulting programme has meant that huge numbers of workers were made redundant. Rather than giving workers more control, nationalisation has made management more remote, more powerful and therefore more able to resist the demands made on them by the workers.

Man's desire for control over his own life runs very deep among his basic instincts. Nobody will admit that he or she enjoys being pushed around. Certain freedoms have been won and not given and these are more or less taken for granted. We have the freedom to change our political masters, we can express and generally propagate our ideas, but in present-day society industrial power is the most important thing. We spend nearly one-third of our lives at work creating wealth and power for a minority of employers and the State. During this time we have little or no say in the way the work is to be organised and carried out. We are hardly ever consulted or given any responsibility over the jobs we perform. When there is no work we are sacked and when there is an abundance we are expected to give up our leisure and work overtime. In return we receive a wage packet to enable us to procure the necessities to feed, clothe and shelter us and our families.

LITTLE OR NO SAY

The paradox is that those who actually produce the goods, distribute them and provide the necessary social services for the community have little or no say on how this is done, while those who cream off the wealth from the productive work have control over the work processes. Productive workers are the most important section of the community. Many workers perform useful jobs, such as bus conductors, but without the drivers and the mechanics to service the vehicles, the bus service would be non-existent. The position is that some of the most important workers who perform vital jobs are amongst the lowest paid in the country.

As producers and distributors of goods, workers are obviously in a strong position, but the average worker does not appreciate this. Most men are quite content with their present position as receivers of orders, but many also have a desire to gain some control over matters which affect them at work. Trade unions are organisations of such a collective desire for control and regulation of conditions, but some mistake this job organisation for workers' control. 'Workers' control exists wherever trade union practice, shop stewards' sanctions and collective power constrain employers.' (*Participation and Control*—Ken Coates and Tony Topham.) No one would deny that this control at job level is a desirable thing but it is not workers' control. However such job organisation has achieved a high degree of control which fosters responsibility and initiative.

Reg Wright describing a form of job organisation which operated in Coventry writes, 'The gang system sets men's minds free from many worries and enables them to concentrate completely on the job. It provides a natural frame of security, it gives confidence, shares money equally, uses all degrees of skill without distinction and enables jobs to be allocated to the man or woman best suited to them, the allocation frequently being made by the workers themselves. Change of jobs to avoid monotony is an easy matter. The "gaffer" is abolished and foremen are now technicians called in to advise, or to act in a breakdown or other emergency.'¹³ Such a system of control in a mass product conveyor belt factory is obviously advantageous to workers, but it nevertheless remains a work method which only alleviates the inhuman and humdrum drudgery of modern car factories. The gang system ended when Standards found themselves in financial trouble and were absorbed into the lorry empire of Leylands.

CONTROL OF THE UNIONS?

Workers' control is a term being used today to describe so many different situations and Ken Coates and Tony Topham would no doubt apply it to the gang system. But this was not workers' control but only a very good way of making a tedious job worthwhile. Some other advocates of workers' control stress that control of the unions as a first step is imperative. One such group or rather a potential political party is the *International Socialists*. Their aims have varied over the years from 'public ownership under full workers' control'¹⁴ to 'workers' power-democratic collective control of the working class over industry and society through a state of workers' councils and workers' control of production'.¹⁵ Both the prominence of 'public ownership' and, later, 'a state of workers' councils' does presuppose some form of state or state machinery. This acceptance of the state is also linked with the idea of a political party. One of their editorials stated: 'The urgent need is to develop a credible socialist alternative to the Tories and Labour. The Inter-

national Socialists are committed to building such an alternative party.' Their final advice was to 'Keep the Tories Out. Vote Labour and prepare to Fight.'¹⁶

This advice is basically the same as that proffered by the other 56 varieties of Trotskyist groups. It calls for support for a party which, if it were in power, would in fact become a new ruling class and would create new privileges for itself and subject the workers to the same basic alienation which is an integral part of capitalist production. Any form of State control of industry must inevitably mean that decisions which affect workers will be made by others who are not directly affected.

RUSSIAN EXAMPLE

Malatesta, writing of the State, said that 'should it survive, it would continually tend to reconstruct, *under one form or another* (my italics), a privileged and oppressing class'.¹⁷ There have been many examples to bear this out. Just such a situation arose at Kronstadt, 50 years ago, as well as during the preceding revolution of 1917. Emma Goldman had the following to say about these important events.

'The process of alienating the Russian masses from the Revolution had begun almost immediately after Lenin and his Party had ascended to power. Crass discrimination in rations and housing, suppression of every political right, continued persecution and arrests early became the order of the day. True, the purges undertaken at that time did not include party members, although Communists also helped to fill the prisons and concentration camps. A case in point is the first Labour Opposition whose rank and file were quickly eliminated and their leaders, Shlapnikov sent to the Caucasus for "a rest" and Alexandra Kollontay placed under house arrest. But all the other political opponents, among them Mensheviks, Social Revolutionists, Anarchists, many of the Liberal intelligentsia and workers as well as peasants, were given short shrift in the cellars of the Cheka, or exiled to slow death in the distant parts of Russia or Siberia. In other words, Stalin has not originated the theory or methods that have crushed the Russian Revolution or forged new chains for the Russian people.'

'I admit, the dictatorship under Stalin's rule has become monstrous. That does not, however, lessen the guilt of Leon Trotsky as one of the actors in the revolutionary drama of which Kronstadt was one of the bloodiest scenes.'¹⁸

A WORSE SUBJECTION

Certainly the Communist totalitarian state has provided a lesson and has proved the anarchist case against the capture of state power for revolutionary aims. This has given workers new and more powerful industrial masters. The Communist state has taken over more and more functions of society together with economic power. This means that the State not only controls the economy by various means such as outlawing strikes but because it has become the political and economic master, it condemns workers to a worse subjection than its counterparts in the West by the very fact that the means to improve conditions of work are denied by law. The State in Communist countries has become all powerful and embracing. It decides on the distribution of raw materials, the type and distribution of goods, investments and the appointments of managers of factories. In a 'workers' state' all is decided upon from above.

The Communist Party makes no pretence of allowing workers' control. Bert Ramelson, Industrial Organiser for the Communist Party, had this to say: 'While management have the responsibility to ensure safety and provide welfare, training and educational facilities, their enforcement and supervision is done by workers' elected representatives and committees. Thus, because of the absence of a fundamental clash of interest between workers and management in a socialist state there is a tremendous expansion of industrial democracy. Nevertheless it would be wrong to assume that all differences between management and workers disappear or that "workers' control" or "self management" exists or is theoretically possible, that is if by these phrases, is meant control over all aspects of production, e.g. including what to produce, pricing, investment, etc.'

'Management, even under socialism, will tend to show greater concern for output and unit costs and, at times, this could very well encroach on the workers' rights and interests (my italics). That is why trade unions are essential in socialist society and why basically their major function remains the

same as in a capitalist society—the safeguarding of the workers' interests and upholding them against all comers—including management and state.'¹⁹

Anarchists would claim that a fundamental clash of interests still remains in a Communist state for a workers' position remains virtually the same, as Bert Ramelson has admitted in the sentence emphasised. He lays great stress on the role of trade unions to defend workers' interests and yet it is these same organisations which are thoroughly integrated into the state machine. They are no longer independent and free organisations but a part of the totalitarian system and because of this Soviet workers are worse off than their Western counterparts. Revolts by workers in Communist states reinforce the anarchists' contention that a fundamental difference divides the workers and the state. The official trade unions have not taken the workers' side in these conflicts and in such situations the workers have created their own organisations against the system that has ruled and dominated them.

HUNGARY, POLAND AND FRANCE

In revolutionary situations organisations of workers' and peasants' councils, representing the interests and aspirations of the working class have emerged. Such occurrences are not peculiar to the distant past for Hungary, Poland and France have been recent examples. In all these countries the power of the state and the government was overwhelmed by the opposition of the people. Workers' and peasants' councils were organised and the official trade unions and the party officials were ignored. The committees formed at the places of work were linked with similar committees in other factories, while these in turn were linked with other industries on both a district and national basis. This sort of organisation, federated throughout the country, has often grown up very quickly, while the production of essential goods and the distribution of foodstuffs has continued.

During the Hungarian uprising in 1956 the *Observer* (25.11.56) commented: 'A fantastic aspect of the situation is that although the general strike is in being and there is no centrally organised industry, the workers are nevertheless taking it upon themselves to keep essential services going for purposes which they themselves determine and support. Workers' councils in industrial districts have undertaken the distribution of essential goods and food to the population, in order to keep them alive. The coal miners are making daily allocations of just sufficient coal to keep the power stations going and supply the hospitals in Budapest and other large towns. Railwaymen organise trains to go to approved destinations for approved purposes. It is self-help in a setting of Anarchy.'

The opposition to the Hungarian Communist State and the Soviet invaders was not just a negative one of strike action but took a revolutionary initiative in creating a basis for a new free society. There are many examples of this where workers and peasants find that the hold of the state over society has loosened. There is an almost natural inclination to seize this initiative and take over the means of production. For those who work on the land this is made easier by the fact that all the necessary requirements are at hand and workers have only to continue planting and harvesting after the landowners or bureaucrats have fled. Industry, on the other hand, has to rely on raw materials and factories to enable these to be turned into the finished product. When the State's power is weakened it has just had to accept the situation but when the authorities feel strong enough they legalise the situation. The State did this in Russia in 1917 and Spain in 1936. This legislation did not make workers' control and also succeeded in preventing any in existence from developing and spreading.

Where the factories and work places have been taken over, the workers have shown initiative and continued to produce, improvising to offset the lack of parts and materials. They have shown that they can run and control industry, even during the most difficult times. The failure to maintain this control and to consolidate the social revolution has not been a failure of an idea but rather because of the overall strength of opposition from those who eventually came to power and took over the state.

RIPE FOR WORKERS' CONTROL

In this country, workers' control is once again being discussed. It has been described as an idea 'looking for a movement',²⁰

and 'an idea on the wing'.²¹ That idea is vitally needed today when workers throughout industrial societies are facing inflation and increasing unemployment. The time was never so ripe for looking beyond the sterile reforms of the social democrats, turning away from political action and the equally useless support for one trade union leader or another.

An increasing number of strikes reflect that workers are no longer satisfied to be just wage slaves. Many strikes are protests against the alien conditions under which a worker performs his job for he is considered to be just a mere cog in an enlarging wheel. The strikes are taking on a non-monetary nature as workers are seeking a larger say in their conditions and greater control of their work places. Just such a movement for workers' control grew up in this country between 1910-1922.²² This movement was particularly strong among engineers and committees were formed in Sheffield, on the Clyde and in London. It not only had an industrial base but also extended to other matters affecting the working class. Although the committees were part of the engineers' union, they worked and organised on an unofficial basis. They not only sought greater control over their conditions at work but they also advocated the overthrow of the capitalist wage system. They declared their faith in revolution and workers' control of production and distribution.

A movement like this, built on the shop floor, is needed today and can grow from the organisations of shop stewards which exist throughout industry. The increasing number of stewards is a sign of the desire to organise and control some aspect of work conditions. It is a revolt against being continually told what to do by those in authority. It expresses a determination not to be dictated to about the way a job should be done and the conditions under which it should be performed. Organisations at this level are the main weapon in the struggle against the employers for it is the unofficial strike that is hurting and damaging them the most. The trade unions have a far too big stake in the present system of capitalist exploitation for their leaders to ever want to overthrow it. This can and will be done by the active participation of the working class.

CHANCES TODAY

What are the chances of such a movement developing out of the existing shop stewards' organisations? Unfortunately many stewards are members of political parties and see industrial action taking second place to political action and the capture of the State. Indeed it was this change of attitude after the First World War and the Bolshevik seizure of power that led shop stewards away from industrial action and workers' control and along the political path.

However there are certain parallels between the second decade of this century and today that give the idea of workers' control a chance of getting off the ground. The emphasis is moving away from the political representatives in Parliament towards industrial action. Workers are realising that they can only defend the conditions by their own efforts. Wage increases over and above the rates set by national union agreements are gained by unofficial action and the centre of activity for trade union affairs is fast becoming the place of work. In recent years the number of stoppages reported has risen from 1,220 in 1961 to 2,350 in 1968 with further increases in the last two years. They include industries where unions have not called out members on official strike since 1926 and unions like the National Union of Railwaymen who have only had one official strike of one day, on October 3, 1962, since that year.

Obviously this shift towards direct action has meant an increased number of shop stewards. They are the direct representatives of the men on the shop floor, delegated to carry out a job of work. They can be and are recalled if they do not fulfil that function. The Donovan Report estimated that there were 175,000 shop stewards in Britain and from the increasing number of strikes, it appears that more of them are taking an active and positive part.

There has also been a general disillusionment with all political parties who profess to support the aspirations of the working class. They particularly felt the effects of the Wilson Government's incomes policy on their living standards. We are now reaching a similar situation where increased wages are being swallowed up by higher retail prices and rents. At present there seems to be no end to inflation and the outlawing of unofficial strikes, together with the cuts in social services, will further depress living standards. The increase

in the number of unemployed could cause further disillusionment with political parties and governments in general who have failed to solve the present economic recession.

We are still being told that the strike weapon is outmoded. Trade union leaders like Jack Peel of the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers, have attacked strike action for political ends. He said that the battle against the Industrial Relations Bill 'will be won by using our heads and getting public opinion behind us, winning the next election and repealing the Act'. Despite these leaders, workers are turning to industrial action rather than relying on the politicians of the Labour Party or seeking out the aid of other political parties. Because of this the workers will become more aware of their strength and look beyond the present-day struggles towards workers' control.

CONTROL, FROM THE BOTTOM UPWARDS

In common with the rest of society, industry is at present organised from the top down. Workers' control is a revolutionary principle which would give workers the responsibility for the organisation and control of their industries from the bottom upwards. In the past they have proved their ability to take such a step and make a success of it and that they do not need the State, the employers and governments. When these forces are weak workers naturally turn to workers' control. It is a desire for responsibility and control over their lives.

Obviously such a revolutionary desire for change would be opposed by the authorities and the government would take action on behalf of the employers to protect their ruling position in society. This would mean the use of troops and

the full force of the State being turned against a revolutionary movement for workers' control, for such a movement would mean an end to the power of the employers and their profits and privileges. It would mean an end to the wage system. The production of goods and the growing of food for needs would be the way of life, with the decisions regarding this being taken by people at their place of work or in their communities.

The capitalist society treats people as mere units of production. It creates shortages and wastage, pollutes our earth and makes war. Anarchists want an end to this insane society. Instead we want workers to have dignity at work with industry being run and controlled by the people at their work places for the benefit and welfare of the community.

P. TURNER.

¹Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, by V. Richards, pp. 113-114.

²'Miners' Next Step'. A pamphlet written by the South Wales miners in 1912.

³*Anarchy* 2, 'Workers' Control', p. 50.

⁴*Labour Worker*, June, 1967.

⁵*Socialist Worker*, June 13, 1970.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Anarchy*, by Errico Malatesta, p. 22. Freedom Press.

⁸*Trotsky Protests Too Much*, by Emma Goldman, p. 3.

⁹*The Debate on Workers' Control*, pp. 14-15. Institute for Workers' Control.

¹⁰*Anarchy* 2, 'Workers' Control', April, 1961.

¹¹*Anarchy* 80, 'Workers' Control', October, 1967.

¹²See *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers' Control* 1910-1922, by Branko Pribicevic.

HISTORY OF WORKERS' CONTROL

THE FOLLOWING TWO ESSAYS contain précis and comment taken from a lecture given by Geoff Brown to a school on the history of Workers' Control in Britain entitled 'Syndicalism and Industrial Unionism before the First World War'. This was one of four lectures delivered as part of the school held on Sunday, September 20, 1970, in the John Marshall Hall, Blackfriars Road, London, S.E.1, organised jointly by the London Co-operative Society Political Committee, London and Home Counties Workers' Control Group and 'Voice of the Unions'.

These two essays are published by the Provisional National

Committee in the belief that this lecture is not solely of academic interest to members of the SWF and sympathisers but also because of the controversial points raised by the lecture for contemporary Syndicalists.

The National Committee of the SWF expresses its acknowledgement of thanks to the organisers of the school for presenting an opportunity for discussion on this interesting and vital aspect of British Labour history.

DAVID PICKETT,
Secretary Provisional Committee,
Syndicalist Workers' Federation.

Syndicalism and the Trade Unions

IN STUDYING the history of Syndicalism and the development of Industrial Unionism we must go back to the period just before World War I. This period between the years 1910 and 1914 is referred to in the textbooks of history as the period of 'Labour Unrest'. Perhaps the most outstanding figure of this time was Tom Mann, who more than anyone else was to have a profound influence on the subsequent development of the Labour movement and trade unionism in this country. Newspapers at this time carried articles headed 'A threat to the State' and in his memoirs J. R. Clyne wrote of the period that 'Civil war seems at times to be very near'.

At this time labour unrest was paralleled by the militancy of the suffragette movement and the Irish question. In 1911 a massive dock strike took place which spread very rapidly culminating in confrontations at Hull, Liverpool and other places. The loss of working days in 1909 due to strike action had been 2½ million, this rose rapidly in the years that followed up to 41 million. Mass strikes occurred in all industries throughout the country, yet of these only 20% were fought on wage issues.

It was at this time due much to the efforts of the Syndicalists that the National Union of Railwaymen was formed and we see the beginning of the Transport Workers' Federation, the Amalgamated Engineers Union, etc. There was a general movement towards amalgamation and consolidation of what had hitherto existed as small isolated craft unions. It was a period of massive union growth, in 1910 2½ million workers were organised and by 1920 over 8 million workers were union members.

In 1898 there had been the formation of the Workers' Union, organising mainly unskilled and semi-skilled workers, this organisation was later to merge into the Transport and General Workers' Union. This was a time when there was constant failure of wages to keep pace with prices, mass poverty existed regardless of the boon of British industry and its exports. At this time a large number of workers were disillusioned with parliamentary labourism. There arose a new concept of the role of trade unions, new ideas had been introduced into this country from France and the United States.

In this country the Socialist Labour Party had split from the Social Democratic Federation but had been ineffectual in alleviating the social conditions of the working class. Tom Mann in the development of his Industrial Syndicalist ideas had been influenced by James Connolly who spent some years in America and had brought back the ideas of the Industrial Workers of the World which was at that time fighting some of the greatest labour battles in American history. Such men as Eugene Debs and Daniel de Leon had a profound effect on Mann. Industrial Unionism became an integral part of the policy of the Socialist Labour Party and a movement was launched called 'The Advocates of Industrial Unionism'. It adopted the principles from the preamble of the IWW beginning 'The working class and employing class have nothing in common...'

DETROIT AND CHICAGO

In America a split occurred in the IWW between the De Leonist group based on Detroit and the majority of

the IWW based in Chicago. The split was fundamentally on the issue of whether the means to workers' emancipation was to be political and industrial or solely an industrial approach.

In 1909 the Industrial Workers of Great Britain was formed but as an organisation was not very successful. At this time revolutionary Industrial Unionist ideas were being propagated through a newspaper called *The Socialist*. The failure of the Industrial Workers of Great Britain had been partly due to its sectarian attitude and attacks on craft unionism which alienated many of their militant members.

Tom Mann had returned from Australia where he had been active as a Labour organiser, he was already known in this country as a Labour leader and prior to his return there had been articles in the Socialist Labour Party press denouncing him. While in Australia he had become very critical of Australian Labourism and on his return declared his policy for Industrial Syndicalism. The French CGT was at this time actively engaged in industrial insurrectionist activity. It had two structures, there was a federation of craft unions and the industrial federations organised as Labour Exchanges and known as 'Bourses du Travail'. The movement in this country was working through the Trades Councils and was encouraging union amalgamation. It was pointing out that craft unions though useful at an earlier stage of capitalist development were outmoded in a modern industrial society and were unable to combat the ever-growing concentration of capital.

A choice of action had to be made between a policy known as boring from within, that is infiltrating the existing union structure and diffusing it with Syndicalism or dual unionism, a policy of building Industrial Unions separate from existing unions. Mann wrote to Eugene Debs on this issue and decided on the former policy. In 1910 he helped to organise what was to be known as the Industrial Syndicalist Education League, which believed that fundamental changes would come by infusing the rank and file of the trade

Bore from Within or Create New Unions

A Question of Tactics

SPEAKING TO A SCHOOL on the history of Workers' Control on Sunday, September 20, Geoff Brown outlined the history of Syndicalism in Britain in the period leading up to the First World War. His outline was of such interest that we think it of sufficient importance to present you with a précis of his lecture. As contemporary Syndicalists we believe that his lecture holds more than historical interest as the questions confronting the Syndicalists of that period are the same as those that confront us today—namely that of tactics. Should we bore from within the existing trade union structure, encouraging and fostering greater rank and file control, or should we attempt to build an entirely new Syndicalist Union outside of the existing framework?

Geoff Brown laid great stress on the work of Tom Mann whom he described as the most outstanding revolutionary of his period. A period which he notes was marked by severe social tensions—labour unrest, constitutional crises between the House of Commons and the House of Lords, the problem of Ulster in the greater problem of John Bull's other island and the suffragette movement all of which threatened the State and British bourgeois liberal Imperialism. One Town Councillor of the time is quoted in a book by Sir George Asquith as saying that he had not seen the likes in the Paris Commune of which he was witness. Strikes rose from 2½ million in 1909 through 10 million in 1910 and 1911 to 41 million in 1912 and then 10 million in both 1913 and 1914. 20% of these strikes were for wages; 80% were for other more basic issues such as Union recognition.

Prior to Tom Mann's return to Britain from Australia in May 1910 there were several attempts to form Industrial or Syndicalist Unions. The Socialist Labour Party was largely Glasgow-based and much influenced by James Connolly (later executed for his part in the Rising in Dublin in April 1916). The Socialist Labour Party combined a revolutionary political party with Industrial Unionism and thus mirrored its American counterpart. An organisation called 'The British Advocates of Industrial Unionism' was a creation of elements inside the SLP and contained much IWW terminology. When the split occurred in Britain between what in the US became

union movement with Syndicalist ideas. This organisation had a five-level membership all of which were engaged in propagandist activity of one sort or another. In the development of British Syndicalism there was thus a marked difference from the IWW who had totally rejected the craft unionism of the American Federation of Labour and had built a parallel structure on an industrial basis. Eugene Debs had advised working within the existing union framework and Tom Mann saw the danger of alienating workers by forming separate unions. It was on this issue that later, in America, one of the Labour leaders, Foster, broke away from the IWW with a group of Communists.

While Tom Mann was serving a sentence in Strangeways Prison for his activities, his wife wrote an article to the *Daily Herald* in answer to a criticism of her husband's point of view. She pointed out that there was no difference between Syndicalism and Socialism in essence and aim of emancipating the working class from the bondage of capitalism, and that the Syndicalist concept was for each industry to be self-governing, each Industrial Union building a State within the State.

After Tom Mann's release from prison, he became more anti-parliamentarian than he had been before, convinced that the road to emancipation could not be achieved through the State machine. In 1912 there was a conference called for the amalgamation committees in which Mining, Transport, Engineering and Railways were represented. It was during this time that the Syndicalists in South Wales published *The Miners' Next Step*.

1914 brought the outbreak of World War I after which, due to subsequent developments of the Russian Revolution in 1917, workers were fragmented into various leftist political parties and Syndicalism as a mass movement declined. It had nevertheless left its imprint on the British Labour movement culminating in the militancy of the 1926 General Strike.

BOB MANDER.

the SLP and the IWW it was found that the politicals greatly outnumbered the anti-politicals. The former launched the 'Industrial Workers of Great Britain'. Their failure Geoff Brown pointed out was due to their extreme sectarianism and their attempts to form a rival union to the existing trade union movement, already very well established.

OPPOSED DUAL UNIONISM

In May 1910 Tom Mann returned from Australia much disillusioned with political action in its narrow parliamentary sense. His position at first was uncertain, he joined the Social Democratic Federation and was castigated by the Socialist Labour Party. Mann almost instantly struck up a close relationship with the hitherto unknown Guy Bowman and evolved a cross between French Syndicalism and American Industrial Unionism termed Industrial Syndicalism. Mann was very influenced by the Syndicalist organisation of the French CGT and they aimed to concentrate their work through the Trades Councils which would perhaps play a role in Britain comparable to the 'Bourses du Travail' in the French CGT. They supported the amalgamation of existing unions into Federations that laid the basis for some of Britain's large unions of today. They favoured a policy of 'boring from within' the existing union structure and opposed dual unionism.

They founded the Industrial Syndicalist Education League and published a paper *The Industrial Syndicalist*. This was purely an educational body and was divided into five categories of members all involved in some facet of propaganda. They believed that big changes would come from rank and file pressure. The issue of tactics became a major one, Mann corresponded with Eugene Debs who agreed with him that in the British situation he was right to oppose the creation of rival unions. It was said that such a policy would not go down well in Britain. Thus, and with a quote from a letter written by Mann's wife defending his position while he was in prison, did the lecture come to a close.

COMMENT ON THE LECTURE

You will appreciate why we have considered it of sufficient

interest and importance to produce these short notes from the lecture. The ideas of the time are, as I have said, of relevance today. They are of particular relevance to us in the SWF as contemporary Syndicalists. And I pose the question, should we or should we not try to create a separate union to the existing union movement or should we 'bore from within'? My experience in Britain is such that the latter is the course most practical and most useful for us to take. I have in fact witnessed a number of premature attempts to go outside the existing union structure, some were large such as the May Day Committee and Mutual Aid, others small such as the National Rank and File Movement. All of them ended in failure and frustration. There are, on reflection and looking from hindsight, clear reasons for this. First, Britain is not under-unionised, 44% of the labour force is organised in a trade union movement big enough to encompass Jack Jones, Hugh Scanlon and the Institute for Workers' Control as well as the Municipal and General Workers and unfortunate events at Pilkingtons. The moral here is in brief that there is room for improvement. The British trade union bureaucracy (to swear at them if one wishes) has well over 100 years of experience and is the oldest and possibly the most mature bureaucracy in the world. It is opportunist enough to respond to rank and

COMMUNIST SCABS—Lest we forget

THE GOVERNMENT, much of the Press, and a number of employers of the ilk of Lord 'Alf' Robens are accusing the Communists of fomenting industrial strife. All would be well in affluent Albion if it were not for the machinations of these 'politically-motivated' men. Like the Fascists, such people as Lord Robens and Edward Heath see a Communist Conspiracy behind every strike or industrial action.

Such accusations are, in fact, so much nonsense. The British Communist Party has a card-carrying membership of around 30,000, of whom about 6,000 work in industry. Hundreds of Communists have, through years of intrigue, the manipulation of Union voting and, of course, hard grind, achieved positions of power and influence within the Trade Union movement; but as more than one newspaper has recently pointed out, the vast majority of active militants in industry today are anti-Communist, anti-Stalinist—they are Trotskyists of various denominations, International Socialists and, in some cases, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists. No one denies, however, that within their limitations the Communists are at the present moment supporting the struggles of workers in their battles with the employers and the State, even if some of them (in the mining industry) have recently been caught with their pants down. But Communists are not militant 'by nature', or from principle. There have been times when the British Communist Party was even more reactionary, more 'class-collaborationist' and anti-working class than the Tories. This should not be forgotten.

THE WAR

The war between Britain and Germany began on September 3, 1939. On September 2, the Communist Party's forerunner of the *Morning Star*, the *Daily Worker*, declared: 'We are in support of all necessary measures to secure the victory of democracy over Fascism.' And on September 4, the *Worker* announced: 'The war is here. It is a war that CAN and MUST be won.' Meanwhile, Harry Pollitt, the Party's general secretary, hastily wrote a pamphlet called *How To Win The War* (price one penny). This appeared on CP bookstalls towards the end of the month. It was dated September 14. Pollitt wrote: 'The CP supports this war, believing it to be a just war which should be supported by the whole working class, and all friends of democracy in Britain.' However, fate—or perhaps we should say history—had played a dirty trick on Harry Pollitt and the 'comrades' in King Street. The Russian Government had, for some time, been seeing things somewhat differently. They did not see Fascism and Nazism as the enemy. On August 23, they had signed a Pact of Friendship and Non-Aggression with Nazi Germany; and Stalin, proposing a toast to Hitler, said: 'I know how much the German nation loves its Fuehrer; I therefore should like to drink to his health.'

The Communist International and almost all the other Communist Parties had changed their 'line', so rather belatedly the

file pressure that changes a Bevin and Deakin for a Cousins and Jones or a Carron for a Scanlon. Equally it can be ruthless enough to crush the Pilkington breakaways when it knows it is strong enough to do so.

This, comrades, is the moral from Geoff Brown's lecture. The wrongs of British trade unionism have been outlined in Tom Brown's pamphlet entitled 'What's wrong with the Unions'. This pamphlet, written at an earlier period in different conditions, is basically still very true and there have been changes in the details as mentioned above since it was published in the 'fifties due to rank and file pressure.

It is my firm conviction that when the SWF is reorganised and revived it can play a role inside the British Labour Movement as great as and hopefully greater than and more long-lasting than the Industrial Syndicalist Education League. We must support and actively encourage rank and file activity inside the present trade union movement. We must work to make the 44% of workers who are organised into more than card-carrying trade unionists. We must work to make them into class conscious, active and participating trade unionists. When that situation arises we can then, to quote James Connolly, 'seize the broad Earth as our own'.

DAVID PICKETT.

British Party was forced to do the same. Pollitt was sacked from his position of general secretary, but was reinstated later. On October 4, the *Daily Worker* stated: 'We are against the continuation of the war. We demand a negotiated peace.' And by November 1, the Party had printed 50,000 copies of *Why This War?* by R. Palme Dutt (price one penny). In it Dutt quotes the Communist Party's Manifesto of October 7. 'This is not a war for democracy against Fascism. . . . This war will bring only great suffering and boundless misery to millions of working-class homes.' He then wrote: 'The continuance of this war is not in the interests of the common people of this country or of any of the countries at war. It is in the interests of the handful of sharks and vultures who are drawing millions of profits out of the necessities of the people and out of the lavish orgy of State war finance. . . . The interests of the people demand the speediest termination of this war.' Dutt welcomed 'the spread of the strike movement, of the tenants' movement . . . to end the war. The Communist Party, he said, calls for an end to the industrial truce, and for the immediate increase in wages. A year-and-a-half later Dutt wrote in the April, 1941, *Labour Monthly*: 'The class struggle, so far from being ended with the political truce, rages with unabated fury, but in a one-sided form, being waged with ruthless energy by the exploiters, while the workers' organisations are disarmed by their own leaders.' The CP called for the waging of the class struggle and the establishment of a 'Peoples' Government'.

. . . AND RUSSIA

And then the impossible happened. On June 21, 1941, *World News and Views*, an official Communist publication, published a statement by the Soviet news agency denying the 'obviously nonsensical' rumours that German troops were massing on the Russian border. Had not Nazi Germany a Pact of Friendship and Non-Aggression with the Soviet Union? But the next day, the German army swept across the frontier. The German invasion had begun.

On July 8, Pollitt, who had now been reinstated as general secretary, declared that 'In supporting the Churchill Government we do it without any reservations'. And by October, *World News and Views* remarked: 'If a man doesn't pull his weight in war production then, whether he is a labourer or an engineer, he should be put in the army.' Of the situation Henry Pelling in his *The British Communist Party, A Historical Profile*, remarks:—

'Indeed, by now the "blimps" and the Communists were making common cause in the most remarkable way. Retired generals and civic dignitaries of strong Conservative views appeared on platforms for friendship with the USSR. Portraits of Churchill and Stalin were carried side by side in demonstrations. The Communist Party at once began a campaign for a "Second Front in the West", in order to relieve the

pressure on the Red Army.'

On the industrial front, however, the CP did not have it all its own way. There were still some workers who had taken their 'line' about a class struggle seriously. There were also numbers of ILPers, Socialists, Trotskyists and anarchists who, for various reasons, had consistently opposed the war from its beginning. Obviously, they would be a thorn in the side of all patriotic (Russian and British in that order) Communists. They, therefore, had to be discredited—and by any means if necessary. Any active Trade Unionist who objected to Communist demands for longer hours of work, increased productivity, greater and greater effort and no improvement in wages or working conditions was likely to be dubbed a Trotskyist agent of Hitler. Naturally, anarchists were the first to be accused of being Hitler's agents by the Communist Party. In August, 1942, the CP published a pamphlet by William Wainwright entitled *Clear Out Hitler's Agents!* Under the headline 'Clear Them Out!', it begins:—

'There is a group of people in Britain masquerading as socialists in order to cover up their Fascist activities. The members of this group are very active. And dangerous. They go among the factories, shipyards and coalfields, in the Labour, Trade Union and Co-operative organisations. They try to mislead the workers with cunning deception and lies. They hide their black aims with "red" talk. They sow doubt, suspicion and confusion, retard production and try to undermine the people's will to victory. They are called Trotskyists.'

Such people, says Wainwright, are a greater menace than German paratroops. He then tells his readers that they must train themselves to round up these cunning enemies of Britain. 'This book is a simple training manual.' After a lot of blood-curdling lies about Fenner Brockway, Jimmy Maxton and the ILP, Wainwright says that 'they' (the ILP, which he claims is riddled with Trotskyists) 'use the trick of waving a red flag. They talk about the boss's profits. They try to take the heart out of the workers. "Why slave when you are, only piling up money for the boss?" they say. They want you to go slow, not to give your best work, to be misled by their talk of strikes and the boss's profits into sabotaging our troops and the Red Army.' Not only that, but these evil people say they want socialism 'now'—another Nazi slogan! Wainwright concludes his pamphlet with these immortal words: 'The real Trotskyist is a bitter enemy of Stalin and the other trusted leaders of the Soviet Union. That's his fingerprint, whatever else he may say. And that's how you can spot him.'

CLASS COLLABORATIONISTS

In the factories, mills and mines the Communists' became the worst scabs and blacklegs that the British worker had ever had the misfortune to meet. This was particularly so in the coalmines. On April 22, 1942, the Party published *Miners' Plan For Victory* by Abe Moffat, a member of the executive committee of the Scottish Miners' Union, a member of the Board of Management of the Cowdenbeath Co-operative Society and a Workmen's Inspector in a number of pits. He was, of course, a leading member of the Communist Party. Moffat's main theme was increased production. He wrote:—

'Amongst certain sections of the miners at the moment there are doubts as to the correctness of a policy of increased production. These miners look back on past years and remember the terrible conditions that prevailed in the coalfields. They fear that owners are unscrupulous enough to take advantage of increased production to smash price lists and worsen conditions. They see certain coal owners and managers making obstacles to increased production. . . . It is true that the attitude of the coal owners is often unsatisfactory, but that is no reason why we should play their game. If they want to retard production and sabotage the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union agreement, it's our policy to stop them, not help them! To carry out such a policy is to lead to disaster. It is desertion of our lads in the armed forces who are called upon to pay the greatest sacrifice of all. It is a complete failure to recognise our duty to our comrades in the Soviet Union who are fighting the greatest battle in the history of mankind.' (Emphasis his.)

Therefore, said Abe Moffat, the miners should 'try to develop a real spirit of co-operation between men and management'. Moreover, 'Absenteeism still remains a serious problem. It must be reduced to the absolute minimum.' Not only

that, but all coal owners who 'deliberately impede production', wrote Moffat, should be put in prison—'We should demand imprisonment of such coal owners'. But within a few months, there were a number of strikes in Scottish coalmines, mainly in Mr. Moffat's own area. They were, of course, unofficial. At the Blairhall colliery, 24 miners were fined £5 each with the option of 30 days in jail, for having taken part in an 'illegal' strike. They were allowed one month to pay what was quite a considerable sum at that time. Only half-a-dozen paid; so the rest were taken into custody. The following day, all the miners at the colliery refused to go down the pits. By the afternoon, the strike spread to neighbouring collieries. In the end, the miners were set free. But what did the Communist secretary of the Fife, Clackmannan and Kinross Miners' Union, Mr. James Cook, have to say?

' . . . they are taking action against the law of the country, and the consequences, so far as they are concerned, individually and collectively, may be—and probably will be—much more serious than they realise at the moment. Whether we like it or not, the law of the country must be upheld and respected, and it will be a bad day for all of us when irresponsible conduct such as your members have been guilty of today, is able to set at defiance law and order in this country. I hope this folly of which your members have been guilty will proceed no further, and that they will immediately return to work and try to make amends for the loss they are inflicting on the nation.'

At about the same time, Tyneside shipyard workers went on strike. When they returned in the middle of October, the first thing they did was to kick out their Communist shop stewards, who were amongst the few workers in the yard who had blacklegged.

PARTY INTERFERENCE

It is, of course, the practice of all politicians, would-be politicians and political parties to interfere in matters that do not concern them, and to attempt to dictate to workers where they shall work or not work, or whether they should belong to such-and-such Trade Union or not. And the Communists are no different from the rest. They are, generally, just that more crude than, say, the Tories or the Labourites. One particularly obnoxious example came to light in October 1942, when the *London District Bulletin*, published by the London District Committee of the Communist Party, reported the following:—

'In the machine shop of a Fleet Street newspaper, a Trotskyite came to seek work. One of our comrades spotted him and immediately got to work to let the other printers know what this man is, a Fascist doing Hitler's work in the working class. The Trotskyite is now out of the shop.'

But an even more despicable and deliberate act of interference in Trade Union affairs by the Communist Party was when it set out to destroy the National Passenger Workers' Union. Before the last war, London's busmen largely belonged to the TGWU, which in those far-off days was as much a scab Union as the MGWU is today. And many of London's busmen—the 'cream' of the working-class!—were far from satisfied with their Union. So, during the 30s, a Busmen's Rank and File Movement started to campaign against the rather remote leadership. During this campaign, a leading Communist by the name of Bert Papworth came into prominence. Unfortunately for the TGWU, and the Communists who were more concerned with getting control of the Union than with the busmen's grievances, a breakaway Union was formed in 1937. It was called the National Passenger Workers' Union. It was quite successful in London, but had very little influence elsewhere in the country. A number of its leading members were said to be prominent members of the then fairly active SPGB. The NPWU remained in existence for some years—until the Communist Party was strong enough to smash it. Extracts from the following confidential circular will give the reader some idea of CP methods.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN, LONDON DISTRICT COMMITTEE,

To Branch Secretaries & Transport Group Leaders:
re: National Passenger Workers' Union.

'Within the last twelve months a certain number of members of the NPWU have applied for membership of the Party, and have been accepted, and in some cases some attempt has been made to convince these comrades of the necessity of