

# WAR *For Anarchism* COMMENTARY

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TWOPENCE

## RAILWAY WORKERS STRIKE

### *A demonstration of working class solidarity*

ONE OF THE most encouraging features of the industrial field during the past few months has been the number of strikes in which the workers are taking direct action not to gain any immediate material benefit for themselves, but in solidarity with other workers in their industry or at their place of work who they consider have been unjustly treated by the bosses.

Of this nature is the Sunday strike now in progress among locomotive drivers, firemen and cleaners at the Stratford Locomotive of the L.N.E.R. A full report of the strike is given on Page 16; but the main issue of the strike is the dismissal by the Railway Company of a fireman who has been connected with the anarchist movement for some time and who was imprisoned last autumn for 'endeavouring to cause disaffection among H.M. Forces.'

The significant fact about this strike is that it is in no way either a wage strike in the old trade union tradition, nor is it a political strike in any sense of the word. Hardly any of the men who are at present on strike have any sympathy for anarchist views, at least on a theoretical plane, and a number have expressed in strong terms their disapproval of the revolutionary attitude adopted by Owen, the fireman in question. The only political element in the strike has been introduced, not by the strikers, but by the Communist Party, who have endeavoured to make capital out of Owen's views of opposition to the war to the extent of accusing him of being pro-Fascist and of making the statement that the strike has been engineered, or at least influenced by 'pro-Fascists' and 'leading Trotskyists'.

In fact the strike has arisen from the spontaneous feelings of solidarity of the Stratford railway workers for a fellow worker who they consider has

been victimised, and it is being carried on in spite of rather than because of the political aspect of Owen's case, of which the capitalist press and the Communists have made such great play. It both arises from and demonstrates that unity, based on the identity of class interests, which binds all workers together behind the facades of political parties and reformist trade unions. It is based on a purely class issue and the workers who are taking part in it are in fact, although they may be theoretically opposed to anarchism, fighting a skirmish in the class war according to the anarchist tactic of direct action, and showing once again that basic unity which always arises among workers when they realise their interests are endangered.

The attitude of the Communist Party towards Owen, described in the report, is particularly interesting, and at the same time nauseating, when one compares it with the statements they themselves made before the entry of Russia into the war. At that period the Communist Party were themselves making the very statements for which they are now accusing Owen of being pro-Fascist.

It is, indeed, ironic that the very C.P. member who is responsible for the distribution of the manifestos against the strike and Owen, sold Owen a pamphlet in 1940 entitled "The Men Behind the War", a C.P. publication by James Johnson. Two passages are of interest—"The workers of Britain have no interest in this war. They will not allow themselves to be tricked into accepting 'sacrifices' for the benefit of the millionaires behind the war." "The C.P. says that this war is run in the interests of finance-capital." Now the C.P. says we must have *more* sacrifices. Who is doing the tricking?

On 26th November 1940 the *Daily Worker* re-

ported politician Gallacher's speech at some length. He said "That (the 1914/18 war) was one of the most imperialistic wars one could conceive. The Prime Minister was right in saying this war was a continuation of the last". We also find Mr. Gallacher, in the same speech, advocating revolution in this country—in the middle of this "war against fascism". He said that if other M.P.s wanted revolutions in various European countries he was favourable, but, he continued, "then I am going to advocate that a revolution would be a good thing in this country". During the same relatively stable period of Communist equilibrium, Palme Dutt, the crack C.P. journalist, remarked, "This is an imperialist war like the war of 1914. It is a sordid exploiter's war of rival millionaire groups using the workers as their pawns. It is a war to which no worker in any country can give support."

Times change. In 1940 Communist writers and M.P.s. can attack the war and advocate revolution, but in 1943 railway workers who strike against victimisation are branded as "pro-fascists". It is not surprising that the Communists have become well-hated by the Stratford railway workers, who now refer to them as "Red Rats".

It is needless to say that the capitalist press has been hardly less virulent than the Communists in its attacks on the strikers and its misrepresentation of the facts of the case. Nowhere in the pages of the daily or Sunday newspapers, whether they are Leftish liberal or Blimpish right, do we find any attempt to consider in a fair and objective manner the merits of the case on which Owen was sentenced, and to ascertain whether his disagreement with the present social order made him any less efficient a fireman. Obviously it is just in the eyes of these gentry that, after the State has punished him with imprisonment for an act which represented a threat to its security, the punishment should be continued by the employer whom he has served for twenty-five years depriving him of his livelihood. This injustice is evident, however, to the workers whether they agree with Owen's original act or not, and they are fighting no political issue but merely an issue of class solidarity to gain back a comrade's livelihood for him. Of this, however, one would gain nothing from the daily press.

Yet the railway industry is one in which news naturally travels fast from one end of the country to the other, and we can be sure that the Stratford men have passed on *their* story over quite a large section of the L.N.E.R. to counteract the press propaganda. To those railwaymen who have heard the true facts, this case represents a definite challenge on the part of authority, which they cannot afford to ignore. On the maintenance and spread of the strike depends its success, and success in this issue would mean a

degree of weakening of the position of the workers' enemy in the class struggle. If the railway workers wish to maintain the few of their rights which remain, they should throw over their obsolete and time-serving trade unions and use their millions invested in gilt-edged stock for the prosecution of the class struggle.

Naturally, the strike does not receive the support of the Union Executives, although the local branches of both unions are actively working in it. This has become a common feature in strikes since the war started. Strikers are not only condemned by their trade union leaders as slackers, Hitler's agents, etc., but they have to rely on the solidarity of their comrades for the means to live. (And the generosity of these workers is often lavish—£72 was collected for Owen among his workmates.) Meanwhile their trade union leaders support government loans with the workers' money and from the interest they have assured draw their fat salary cheques at the end of each month.

The Stratford strike, as we have already remarked, is by no means the only one of its kind at the present time. Sympathetic strikes to assist unjustly treated men are in progress all over the country. Here are two other reports.

When 250 Tyneside engineers went on strike at the end of last month, they were supported by their comrades during the whole time the strike lasted. Thousands of Tyneside engineers and shipyard workers contributed one or two shillings a week so as to enable their fellow workers to live decently.

Again, direct action succeeded at the beginning of March, when eleven hundred miners at Bowhill Colliery, Lanarkshire, went on strike on behalf of 42 strippers who had been dismissed for using ca'canny methods in protest against the reduction in the rates. Some of the miners were called up for medical examination for the services. The opposition and threats of the Fife miners throughout the coalfields forced the Labour Exchange to withdraw these notices, and in this way the direct action of the workers saved the Fife miners from victimisation.

The number of strikes of this nature, often very small and often effective in forcing the hand of the employer, shows that the workers in all parts of the country are at last beginning, on the industrial field at least, to throw aside the leadership of effete and corrupt trade unions and political parties, and act directly in their own interests and those of their fellow workers. Even where they do not call themselves anarchists, where the very word anarchist has only a distorted meaning for them, they are acting in an anarchist way, and thus preparing themselves for the social revolution by practical experience in the class struggle.

# ANARCHIST COMMENTARY

CHURCHILL'S SPEECH has been received with a certain amount of bitterness in left wing "circles". It was the first time he spoke about post-war Britain but this did not prevent him throwing all the fancy blue prints of our post-war planners on a rubbish heap with the greatest unconcern. After the Prime Minister's speech the labour leaders can hardly make the people believe that he is prepared to obtain concessions from the capitalist class and build a new society on a more equitable basis. For once, the journalists of the labour yellow press had to fulfil the painful task to criticise the great leader of the British People. The *Daily Herald* regretfully pointed out that the only clear point in the speech is that Churchill intends to remain in power after this war: "What he has certainly done is to give the country unmistakable notice that he intends to be in the ring, seeking fresh laurels, when the war is over." (*Daily Herald*, 23/3/43).

Churchill has been considered, up to now, as the man who was going to lead this country to victory. His dictatorial manners were accepted because of his "indispensability" but as a temporary necessity. But the "democratic dictator" makes it clear that he has come to stay and this creates an embarrassing situation for all the left-wing politicians who have given him their support. If at least he had taken the trouble to camouflage his plans under leftish slogans instead of coming out in his true tory colours without the slightest consideration for those who served him so well!

The speech openly admits the imperialist nature of the war. Once Hitler is crushed we shall set about reconquering our possessions in the Pacific, there are no Poles or Jews there and Churchill does not pretend that we shall fight to liberate the Burmese people!

At home he plans to have a National Government "representative of the three Parties of the State" but in case the Labour Party for example, would refuse to join it, good boys like Morrison and Bevin could follow in McDonald's steps and join "a National Government comprising the best

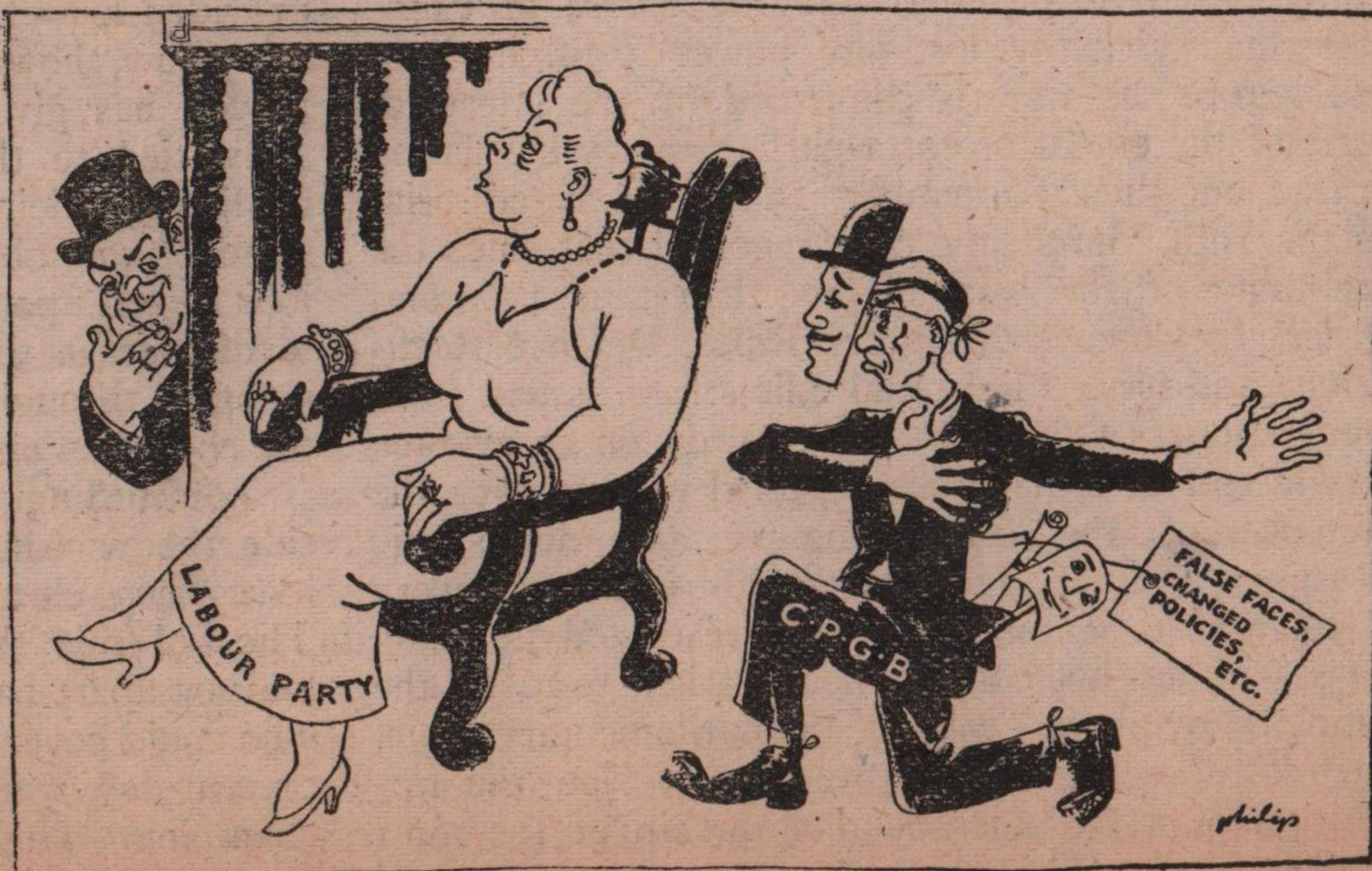
men in all parties who are willing to serve".

In exchange the Government will see that there is no unemployment (how is not indicated), that babies get milk and landworkers television sets (land girls getting 45/- a week may start saving up now). The State will see that people who have bought savings certificates will not lose a penny . . . If Churchill had had to get himself into Parliament he wouldn't have made a better speech. Lloyd George described that kind of speech in 1915 when there was also the tendency to see Peace in pink colours:

"Wages must go up, profits must also improve, but prices at all costs must be kept down. No man must be called to serve the State unless he wants to; even then he has only to be called upon to do exactly what he would like to do . . . Freedom implies the right for you to enjoy and others to defend!"

It required the peculiar minds of the Editors of the *Daily Worker* to see in the speech a threat to Tory's interests. Capitalists must neglect to read it as Financial Editors reported that: "Cheered by the Prime Minister's speech Stock Markets today well maintained the improvement shown at the end of last week".

**BEVIN—WORKERS' CHAMPION"** A WORKER in a Scottish factory was injured while at work. Lighter work was found for him, but he was then sacked "for misconduct". The Local Appeal Board found that he had been wrongfully dismissed, and the National Service Officer directed the firm to reinstate him. They refused to do so. The Ministry



SPURNED WOOPER.

of Labour took no action against the firm, but instead, directed him to another job. This proved too heavy for him so he demanded reinstatement with the firm which had wrongfully dismissed him. The Ministry of Labour, who had previously ordered the firm to re-employ him, but had done nothing to ensure that their orders were carried out, then refused the worker any further rights.

The excuse? That he had left the second job "of his own accord"—although he had actually been forced to give up the job because of the injuries received at his previous job! His union, the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, is going to fight the case. We hope that Paterson, the worker concerned will appeal to the solidarity of his fellow workers to support him by direct action. The "protection" he has received from Bevin, "the Workers' Champion" is not likely to impress him much.



The case of a skilled fitter who was prevented from getting work for four months by the Labour Exchange offers another example of the way workers can be arbitrarily victimised by Mr. Bevin's stooges. Sheriff, a Coventry worker, refused to be billeted with three other men in the same room and having to share a bed with one of them. As a result the Labour Exchange withheld his cards and he was unable to get work for four months. When he was summoned for failing to comply with a direction to take up work with an aircraft firm the Chairman of the magistrates condemned the Labour Exchange for their inefficiency but nevertheless imposed a 20/- fine on Sheriff. That the Labour Exchange should have prevented the man from getting work for four months is obviously not considered an offence!

## THE BUREAUCRATIC EMPIRE

THE recent speech of Beaverbrook in the House of Lords, when he declared that the House of Commons had virtually lost any power it might have had before the war, is confirmed by the latest reports of the extent of extra-parliamentary legislation carried out since September, 1939. In an editorial on the 19th March, the *Star* reported that since the beginning of the war no less than nine thousand Orders in Council, Statutory Rules, Defence Regulations and other ministerial edicts have issued from the Stationery Office. In other words, on an average fifty laws a week have been applied without even the pretence of the functioning of the democratic machinery. Every facet of the life of almost every person in the country has been restricted in many ways without his consent being asked even in the remotely symbolic way of a parliamentary vote. Each of these decrees represents, in fact, the imposition of a bureaucratic dictatorship of the most ruthless kind. That the laws are too numerous and

too ridiculous to be observed does not detract from the intentions of their makers. There is little wonder that even supporters of the government and the war like the leader writers of the *Star* should be moved by the evident difference between democracy in theory and democracy in practice.

We, however, have had no illusions concerning democracy and regard this as merely further evidence of its impracticability. That all the affairs of a complex community of forty-five million people can be managed by a few hundred chattering non-entities in parliament is surely an idea fit only for Bedlam at the full moon. A government has no alternative but to use extra-parliamentary means of legislation. Any attempt of the people to manage their affairs by representatives must end in power to the bureaucrats. The only alternative is for the people to manage their own affairs, at the place of work and where they live, in the syndicate and the commune. In this way and not through the mirages of democratic control will they gain their freedom.

## MARATHON TRAMPS

IN the less conscripted days before the war the poor man who did not want a humdrum job, or whom the capitalists would not give a job of any kind, had the alternatives of either starving at home on the dole or the parish relief or bumming round the country to scrape what he could out of casual jobs and the stingy charity of the lady at the door. The confirmed idlers have always been a minority among tramps; in the great depression the vast majority of the men on the road were migrant workers who were sick of sticking round home with nothing to do and little more to eat, and who were eager to take any work that came their way.

Tramps were not discouraged in those days. They took a little off the rates, and the state accordingly made some kind of provision for them. The casual wards were no fine hotels, but at least they provided a roof at the end of each day's journey.

Now, however, the idea of a pool of unemployed has given way to the idea of a nation of serfs, tied to the factory in the same way as the mediæval villein was tied to the baron's land. Instead of scrambling for jobs, the workers now have jobs forced upon them, and everything must be done to discourage the man who does not see the fun of going in through the same factory gate every day to the end of an endless war.

Accordingly, all over the country we see outside the workhouses notices that the casual wards have been closed down—for an indefinite period. The old rule that casual wards should be a day's journey apart has gone by the board, and the tramp who could cover in a day's walk the distance between present-day wards would have to be a Marathon champion. However, it's probably good practice for route marches!

# CLYDESIDE INVASION

## Daily Worker Fears Militant Glasgow

THERE DESCENDED upon the Clydeside last week a strong man from the staff of the *Daily Worker*. The *Daily Worker* is not convinced that the Clydeside worker is being exploited to a sufficient degree; so in order to alter this condition of things, it sent down Jack Owen, well known C.P. boss, to psycho-analyse the Clydeside worker and to prescribe and administer the corrective treatment for the ailment commonly known as discontent. Jack Owen is a turner who has forsaken his lathe, and in preference to turning a crankshaft, he now turns the handle of a barrel organ which monotonously grinds out the Communist Party theme-song-of the day—Increased Production.

In the *Daily Worker* of March 17th, he declares (or should one say, laments) that "pervading the every thought of the Scottish worker is the age long struggle." And he goes on, "They suffered on the Clyde in the days of the engineering depression. *That suffering is now, mistakenly, used as a guide to action to-day.*"

### SCARED OF ANARCHISM

He professes a sympathetic approach—so also does the undertaker. The guile of the politician is immediately apparent in his correct characterization of the Clydeside worker—"heroic fighters for their class, *possessing a vitality invaluable to us, if we can guide it into the correct channels*". But he betrays the fears which made the C.P. send him up to Glasgow, when he says, "In such soil the fungoid growth of Anarchism, I.L.P.ism and all such theories of the mentally inert find root to grow."

The attitude of hostility and suspicion to the boss-class, which Owen depicts as his "problem"—"It can and must be dealt with," he declares—is as natural to the class struggle as sunshine in summer, and the Communist Party, when they ordered the suspension of the class struggle, should have remembered the old story about King Canute. Besides examples of fine skill and craftsmanship, the Clyde has produced men like John McLean; and in the atmosphere of Political Dictatorship, such as prevails to-day, with all its trappings, regional Gauleiters, total negation of representation, total conscription of labour, with their resultant starvation wages, the Clydeside worker is taking to Anarchism, the road to freedom, just like water fills the hollows of a plain. If Owen and other Communist clack-talkers cannot (or do not choose to) distinguish between "fungoid growths" and the healthy growth of the

revolutionary struggle, the Glasgow workers can, and they also have a wonderful capacity for smelling out renegades.

No doubt it will be painful to remind Owen (and some Clydeside M.P.'s) of the Clyde Workers' Committee, but the very fact that such a movement, only on a much higher revolutionary plane, is to-day slowly taking shape, even though it has not yet taken a concrete general expression, is undoubtedly the reason for his unwholesome presence on the Clyde.

### THE BOSSES' MAN

Howling to high heaven for unity, Owen proceeds forthwith, using the disruptive tactics of the C.P. to try to split the class unity of the workers by pointing out that "there is a tendency, easily explainable, for the semi-skilled man to draw, through the medium of bonus, a much higher wage than the skilled engineer". So far as his constructive proposals go, as a solution of course to *his* problem, he quotes an instance in John Brown's yard of nine men contracting to do a job in the same time and for the same price as eleven men previously did. Perhaps this is Stakhanovism; if so the workers are painfully acquainted with this method here, and know it generally as payment by result. The result always being an intensification of labour and an exhausting fight in a debilitated conditions for payment.

Note that he never once suggests that the boss should disgorge some of his enormous profits, only that the worker should work harder and longer for the same cost to the owning class.

This is employer craft, and the worker can nowhere any longer be fooled by it, neither is he fooled by sleight-of-hand adjustments to wages which he is told will be "worth £1 a week after the war". It is strangely reminiscent of "Pie in the Sky". The Clydeside worker is beginning to recognize Fascism as a Hydra-headed monster which grows nine heads for every one lopped off, and to-day is in the birth throes of organizing as a class for the total kill. The preliminary skirmishes are already being fought, and he will forge his necessary new weapons in the struggle itself.

### REVOLUTIONARY SYNDICALISM

Yes, the undergrowth is already being cleared and so also will the overhead foliage which obscures the workers' clarity of vision. The Craft Unions to-day stand clearly exposed as being unable to act

for the working class; the Communist Party will bite the dust singing its swan song of increased production. In the not-very-distant future the workers will organize as a class in their Industrial Syndicates, and emulate their Spanish comrades who knew how to fight Fascism—by the method of the Social Revolution. Although there are many barriers still to overcome and a difficult path as yet to tread, the sings of awakening are unmistakable (as Jack Owen) and the Clydeside worker will remain loyal to his tradition of class solidarity and be in the vanguard of the struggle to abolish the class-rule of authority once and for all.

CLYDESIDE WORKER.

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## BEVIN'S LAST RECRUIT

"Cannon which the King helped to make at a war factory near London are in use on a number of R.A.F. planes.

But the story that the King is doing regular part-time work at the factory on two nights a week is wrong. These are the true facts, writes a *Sunday Express* representative:

Nearly a year ago the King was paying a visit to a factory when the manager suggested, half in a joke, that he should try his hand at one of the precision lathes.

The King said he would try to come along when he had time to spare.

Four or five times since then the King has looked in at the factory and worked the lathe for short periods.

The King is not likely to do any more of this work." This latest development in sovereign activities will doubtless come as refreshing news to the thousands of jaded workers, who on their erstwhile day of rest, turn to the Beaverbrook Press for consolation, as their forefathers thumbed the Authorised Version.

It should dissipate the inferiority complex which the home frontiersmen have been suffering from, due to His Majesty's frequent appearances in the various guises of Field Marshal, Admiral of the Fleet and Air Marshal. All that should be required to send the dungaree donners cock-a-hoop is an action photo of the King at the point of production, suitably begrimed of course.

Though possibly too much to expect, if a connection could be worked out between His Majesty's zeal and an increase in the supply of armaments to the U.S.S.R., it would be topical and should elicit a few fraternal telegrams from Stakhanov and his fellow automatons.

The final sentence in the report, while being in the nature of a disappointment to Bevin's boys, is quite understandable in view of the numerous questions volleying forth from the Forces as to which front the King is really on: Fighting, Home—or does Comrade Pollitt whisper Second?

Though perhaps no direct moral can be drawn from the incident, it should serve at least to make it quite plain to factory managers not to jest with Royalty. Heaven help us if some blundering executive drops a hint to the Queen about the shortage of staff in the British Restaurants!

R. McC.

### **MAY DAY RALLIES**

**SATURDAY, MAY 1st.**

Meeting in Hyde Park.  
Speakers on the Anarchist Platform  
from 3 p.m. until dusk.

**CHURCH STREET, KINGSTON,**  
Meeting at 6 p.m.

# The Lunacy of the Law

A JURY SUCCESSFULLY defied legal tradition recently when they found a 20-year old boy, Derek Lees-Smith, "guilty, but insane", on a charge of murdering his mother. The judge in summing up explained the legal position on insanity in cases of murder as laid down by a committee of fourteen judges to a number of hypothetical questions put to them by the House of Lords just 100 years ago after the M'Naughton case in 1843. These so-called M'Naughton Rules form the basis of the completely obsolete legal position on insanity and criminal responsibility. They lay it down that "it must be clearly proved that at the time of committing the act the party accused was labouring under such a defect of reason from disease of the mind as not to know the nature and quality of the act he was doing, or, if he did know it, that he did not know he was doing what was wrong". Such a definition is of course far too narrow in the light of modern knowledge of insanity.

Lees-Smith was clearly shown to have been perfectly aware of what he was doing and also that it was wrong. Yet the jury brought in a verdict of "Guilty, but insane".

The *News Chronicle* states that the jury made legal history by this decision by which "they had rejected rules which have guided Courts for a century". The impression thus given that their decision will alter the law is however entirely misleading, since juries and even judges have set aside the M'Naughton Rules before. In 1885, for instance, a lunatic named Ware, who was confined in an asylum, killed one of his fellow-prisoners with an iron bar. Mr. Justice Hawkins declared that "it would be impossible to say that Ware did not know that he had killed a man, because he said himself that he had, and it would be impossible for anybody to urge that he did not know it was wrong, for he wanted a promise that he would not be punished, *although no man in his senses would suppose that any jury would find Ware responsible for what he had done.*"

These instances merely serve as indications that the law is an ass, but it manages to survive all the same. Incidentally, it is characteristic of the bourgeois press that they should lay far more emphasis on the use of the electro-encephalograph in this case, than in the jury's rejection of the judge's direction regarding the M'Naughton Rules.

(Of course the verdict "Guilty, but insane" is itself ridiculous, since if a man is insane, he cannot be responsible, and hence cannot be regarded as guilty. The story goes that the verdict used to be "Not Guilty, because insane", which is more rational.

But when this verdict was brought in in the case of one of the people who tried to assassinate Queen Victoria, the Good Queen exclaimed, "What do they mean, 'Not Guilty!' Why, I saw him do it!" So the terminology was changed!)

## LAW-PROTECTED INFORMERS

The case of the very first person sent to prison under Defence Regulation 33B. also exhibits the sordid and degrading nature of the Law's method of "regulating" human conduct. A young woman appeared in court with her soldier husband and pleaded "Guilty" to the charge of having failed to present herself for compulsory examination. She stated that she had promised to go to the clinic with her husband the following evening. She received a sentence of two month's imprisonment.

The fact that she was charged under regulation 33B indicates that she had been denounced by two people suffering from Venereal Disease as being the person who had communicated the disease to them. But the Act ensures that the identity of these informers should be treated as a secret by the medical officer and other officials concerned. In evidence the Deputy Medical Officer said that he had no *direct* evidence that she was in fact suffering from the disease.

The January issue of *War Commentary* carried an article denouncing Regulation 33B as ineffective in the fight against V.D. This case exhibits another aspect of its inadequacies—the essential cruelty and brutality inherent in the law. This woman is denounced by two persons who enjoy the protection of the law so that even their identity is not known. She is denied the opportunity of facing her accusers in court. Meanwhile although there is no direct evidence showing whether she has V.D. or not, she, a married woman moreover, has to face a public charge relating to V.D., and on top of that is sent to prison!

There is no question of misapplication of the law, for the case seems to have been conducted in perfect accordance with the Regulation. The cruelty and beastliness of the whole affair of an unfortunate woman pilloried on information received, is simply part of the legal method of "dealing with" Venereal Diseases. It is only one blatant instance of the essential filthiness and inhumanity of the Law itself.

## SOMETHING TO HIDE

A final point on the law. Mrs. Van der Elst, the agitator against capital punishment, has been summoned under the Official Secrets Act for receiving medical reports on people who have been hanged for murder. If hanging is such a humane and painless method of judicial murder why are medical reports on it regarded as Official Secrets? Obviously one only has secrets when there is something to hide.

J. H.

## FUEL PROBLEM SOLVED

"The best 'heating apparatus' for any church is a crowded congregation, giving off not only bodily heat, but fervent spiritual heat.

This is the reply of the rector of St. Saviour's, Bath (Rev. G. A. Hutchison), to grumblers who complain that churches are cold because of the need for fuel saving.

He believes that each in the ecstasy and zeal of worship, like a living coal, kindles his neighbour until the whole congregation is so fired as to be completely oblivious of their bodily comfort or discomfort.

"I sometimes feel we rely too much on hot water-pipes for our church heating," he writes in his parish magazine.

*Daily Mirror, 11/2/43.*

## LABOUR AND VANSITTARTISM

"The Government's attitude to Lord Vansittart is like its attitude to Sir William Beveridge—uncertain to negative. Some Labour M.P.s, led by Mr. James Walker, are as enthusiastic for Vansittart as others are for Beveridge, and the Fight for Freedom group, organised by Mr. Walter Loeb and Mr. Walker, includes prominent trade unionists among its supporters.

The National Executive, however, have expressed, firmly although informally, a view upon "The Loeber Party." It is that Labour leaders should not be associated publicly and prominently with the Vansittartites."

Labour leaders can do their dirty work of stirring up racial hatred as long as they do it in the dark. Vansittart and his reactionary followers have at least the courage of their own opinions!

## C.P. FOURTH CHANGE AHEAD?

"World War number Three will be certain if we allow Prussia to rearm, and it will be probable if we double-cross Russia, declared the United States Vice-President, Mr. Henry Wallace, yesterday.

"Unless the Western democracies and Russia come to a satisfactory understanding before this war ends, I very much fear that World War No. 3 will be inevitable. Without a close and trusting understanding between Russia and the United States, there is grave probability of Russia and Germany sooner or later making common cause'."

*Daily Mirror, 9/3/43.*

## OUR FRIEND FRANCO

"The amount of petroleum products available to Spain is 'considerably higher, per head, than the distribution to people on the Atlantic seaboard of the United States itself.'

This was announced by the U.S. Ambassador to Spain, Mr. Carlton Hayes in an address to the American Chamber of Commerce in Barcelona.

"The U.S.A. is ready to continue, and extend, any help it can give to Spain, which is doing much, with success, to develop a peace economy that will carry her safely into world peace,' he said."

## NO GRATITUDE

"Miss Thompson said that the United States should immediately conclude a mutual assistance pact with Britain, Russia and China.

"If antagonism and rivalry continue to grow,' she said, 'Britain will move closer and closer to Russia. We (America) would stand a good chance of ending up the most unpopular country in the world'."

*Daily Mirror, 11/3/43.*

Pawnbrokers have never been popular, Uncle Sam!

## JUSTICE?

"While under detention, Pte. Robert Kirk (40), of the King's Regt., was granted compassionate leave to visit his wife, who was ill at Fulham. He failed to return to detention barracks at Aldershot when the leave ended.

A court-martial has sentenced him to 20 months' detention for being absent without leave for a week."

*Evening News, 12/2/43.*

When Lieut.-Col. ("Hi-de-hi") Gates breaks for months on end the King's Regulations and is adjudged "unfit to command men" he is given a staff appointment at the War Office. He gets very annoyed if M.P.'s ask questions about him in the House. "Yapping dogs" he calls them but Pte. Kirk had better keep his mouth shut.

# Through

## STARVING M.P.s.

"Most vigorous and original of Mr. Shinwell's chapters is headed Parliament and Democracy. He regards M.P.'s salaries as too low, and reveals that one M.P. who collapsed in the House was suffering from prolonged under-feeding."

*Evening Citizen, 17/3/43.*

If M.P.'s starve on £600 a year Mr. Shinwell should feel a great deal of sympathy for old age pensioners.

## PROTECTING THE INDIANS

"One person was killed and one injured when police opened fire in two places on a procession in Ahmedabad.

Police fired at another place where stone throwing occurred. One person was injured and he died later in hospital. Fourteen people were arrested."

*Evening Standard, 10/3/43.*

## MODEL SPEECH

"Mr. C. R. Attlee, Deputy Prime Minister, at Keighley:

I always comfort myself, when critics think we ought to be doing much better, by thinking that it was possible to have done much worse. I think you were lucky not to know everything in 1940.

Now we can say that the tide is flowing steadily with us. That does not mean there will not be occasional setbacks. But we can look with sober confidence to the future.

Rommel is making dashes while our forces are moving up against him. I am not going to prophesy, but I have reasonable confidence that events in North Africa are going to move all right.

We have still a very severe fight in the Battle of the Atlantic, and no one should imagine that the battle has been won. But the Government mind is constantly on this question, which is really of the Battle of the Seven Seas."

*Sunday Times, 14/3/43.*

Every would-be politician should learn this summary of Major Attlee's speech by heart, it is a model cautiousness, of how to make a speech by saying nothing.



## MYSTERIOUS CRIMINALS

"When asked whether arrangements could be made for M.P.'s to inspect the list of war criminals, Mr. Churchill, in the Commons said:

'This matter concerns all the other Governments participating in the United Nations' commission to whom the available information is to be submitted. The answer, therefore, is in the negative.'

He was not sure whether the compiling of the list in Britain was in the hands of the Foreign Office or had been devolved upon special authority.

Mr. Austin Hopkinson (Nat.): *Can we have a list of the home-grown war criminals?*

There was no further reply."

*Evening Citizen, 17/3/43.*

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# the Press

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## COMMUNIST SABOTEURS

"Dominating the minds of most party managers just now is the issue of the electoral truce. The latest organisation to find itself involved in difficulties with its members over the subject is the Communist Party.

In at least three recent by-elections rank-and-file members of the party are said to have defied their leaders' advice to support Government candidates. Instead they gave active help to candidates sponsored by Common Wealth, the new organisation sponsored by Sir Richard Acland and Mr. Tom Wintringham.

At Watford members of the Communist Party are stated to have manned the committee-rooms of Common Wealth, while at North Midlothian a local branch of the Communists formed themselves into an election committee to back Mr. Wintringham. They are said to have persisted in spite of a visit from an Edinburgh organiser. If these facts represent the present temper of Communists, they are a significant occurrence in a body so highly disciplined as the Communist Party."

*Observer, 14/3/43.*

What is the Central Committee of the C.P. thinking about? These people disobey orders and they are just "visited" by an Edinburgh organiser. In Russia they would be shot!

## WAR OFFICE GENEROSITY

"The War Office and the Air Ministry, following the lead given by the Admiralty last week, to-day informed Mr. George Chandley, of Manchester, secretary of the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association, that men in the Army and Royal Air Force who lose a limb from any cause not directly attributable to service duty will be provided with two artificial limbs and the cost of maintenance and repairs free of charge.

Hitherto they have only been provided with one artificial limb."

*Evening Times, 18/3/43.*

## FLASH BACK—1939

Molotov in speech to Supreme Soviet on Russo-German non-aggression pact:

"Is it really difficult to understand that the U.S.S.R. is pursuing and will continue to pursue its own independent policy based on the interest of the people of the U.S.S.R., and only their interests? If these gentlemen (some leaders of the Socialist Parties in France and Great Britain) have such an uncontrollable desire to fight, let them do their own fighting without the Soviet Union. We would see what fighting stuff they are made of."

## "NOT GUILTY"

"Four police constables were at Liverpool yesterday found not guilty of inflicting grievous bodily harm on Gunner Edward Sidney Jones and they were discharged.

Jones alleged that when the four policemen arrested him as an Army absentee they 'beat him up.' He was in hospital for some time with a head injury."

*News Chronicle, 20/3/43.*

## NOT A DIRTY HUN

"Registering for service, a 19-year-old American gave the following answers, says Associated Press:

'Job for which you are best fitted?'

Answer: 'Shooting Japs.'

'Job for which you are next best fitted?'

'Shooting Germans.'

'Duties or job for which you are next best fitted?'

'Shooting Italians.'" *Evening Standard, 15/3/43.*

## OUR "MISSION"

... There are many peoples in the deserts, in the mountains, in the remote Arctic, whom we British should call inferior, whom we should claim to rule for their good and hope to lead on to a higher civilization...

*Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Trevelyan,  
(Anglo-Soviet Journal, London).*

## DOCTORS AND RED TAPE

"The recent demand in Glasgow for a 'night rota pool' of doctors has been widely discussed on Clydeside. Welcoming such a plan, a busy East End practitioner told me that doctors have more forms to fill up than farmers—and less time to do so!

In one day, he said, he filled up certificates for milk, eggs, brandy, clothing for expectant mothers, surgical appliances, war-work absentees, fire-watching exemption, conveyance for an invalid, extra coal rations, extra leave for Servicemen, pensions and allowances, and hot-water bottles!

'I have 2,200 N.H.I. panel patients,' he said, 'but one-third of my working day is occupied by filling Government forms and certificates. It will be understood how much time I have for my primary duty of attending to patients who are seriously ill.'

*Reynolds News, 7/3/43.*

## NOT PRACTICABLE

"Mr. Banfield had asked the Minister of Labour whether he was aware that a worker compulsorily transferred from a civilian job to war work had no statutory right to reinstatement in his old job when the war ends, and whether he would take legislative steps to give those workers such a right.

Mr. Bevin replied that this matter had been considered on a number of occasions, and the conclusion reached that it would not be practicable to make legislative provisions on the lines suggested."

*Evening Times, 18/3/43.*

## A Controversy

# MARXISM v. ANARCHISM

IT IS WITH a sense of great gratitude that I accept the hospitality of a paper not always open to a follower of Marx. As there is no Marxist paper in this country which would publish a nonconformist article on such a delicate subject, every act of Socialist Solidarity is thankfully accepted.

The purpose of my article is to prove that Marx a century ago was a kind of *Aqua Fortis* for the Anarchist Movement, which enabled the theory of Anarchism to crystallize into a kind of organization—I apologize for using this tabu-word—namely in the First International. Karl Marx has been, in my opinion, a kind of anti-thesis which enabled the vague ideas of Anarchism, represented in the writings of Pierre Proudhon, Michail Bakunin, John Most, to take shape and to find a synthesis in the different Anarchist groups and movements. This was by no means a simple or pleasant development; on the contrary: the discussion was heated and personal, and no Marxist can deny the fact that Marx did not behave like an innocent angel. Political life does not take place in heaven and where there is something to plane, shavings always whirl around.

The main difference between Marxism and Anarchism is the fact that Marxism is decided on using the state, in the hands of the proletariat, to suppress the former ruling classes while Anarchism denies the possibility of doing this. The other axiom of Marxism is the postulate of the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" as an unavoidable step towards the classless society while Anarchism demands the instant dissolution and destruction of any kind of state in order to prevent any possibility of a new dictatorship. The aim of both is the same: the classless society; the ways and means to get it are irreconcilably different.

"The political movement of the working class has as its object the conquest of political power for the working class, and for this it is naturally necessary that a previous organisation of the working class, itself arising from the economic struggles, should have been developed up to a certain point.

"On the other hand, however, every movement in which the working class comes out as a class against the ruling classes and attempts to force them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt in a particular factory or even a particular industry to force a shorter working day out of the capitalists by strikes is a purely economic movement. On the other hand, the movement to force an eight-hour day law is a political movement. And in this way, out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say a movement of the class, with the object of achieving its interests in a general form, in a form possessing a general social force of compulsion. If these movements presuppose a certain degree of previous organisation, they are themselves equally a means of the development of this organisation.

"Where the working class is not yet far enough advanced in its organisation to undertake a decisive campaign against the collective power, *i.e.* the political power of the ruling classes, it must at any rate be trained for this by continual agitation against and a hostile attitude towards the policy of the ruling classes."

(Karl Marx: letter to Bolte: 23rd Nov. 1871)

To put the theory of Marxism in a nutshell there are three points: All history is a history of class-wars; the economic basis of production determines the conscience of Man; Workers of the world, unite! these three sentences, Dialectics, Materialism, Internationalism, are the three pillars on which the edifice of Marxism stands. If I am allowed to compare these postulates of Marxism with the corresponding ideas of Anarchism I should like to name Anti-Authoritarianism, Collectivism, Solidarity. Therefore I see and foresee in the field of the fight against Capitalism, Imperialism, Nationalism a possibility of a fighting-community, which enabled the Comrades of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. to rank with the P.O.U.M. and other socialist organisations before the invasion of the G.P.U. The dead comrades on the Spanish battlefields are for me, and I hope for others, a noble legacy and encouragement for the needs of the future.

Particularly on the front of the coming "green" revolution the common aims are greater than the historic discrepancy. No other than Marx himself stressed in his letters to Nikolaion and Annenkov the importance of the "Mir" and one year before his death he wrote in the preface to the Russian edition of the "Communist Manifesto" on January 21st, 1882, these prophetic words:

"The question is now whether the Russian village commune—a form of primitive collective communal property which has indeed already been to a large extent destroyed—can pass immediately into the highest communist form of landed property; or whether, on the contrary, it must go through from the beginning the same process of disintegration as that which has determined the historical development of the West. The only possible answer to this question to-day is as follows: If the Russian revolution becomes the signal for the workers' revolution in the West, so that the one supplements the other, then the present form of land ownership in Russia may be the starting-point of an historical development."

To prove the possibility of some better understanding between Anarchism and Marxism I will quote two passages of the greatest pupils of Marx, Engels and Lenin:

"The free people's state is transformed into the free state. Taken in its grammatical sense a free state is one where the state is free in relation to its citizens and is therefore a state with a despotic government. The whole talk about the state should be dropped, especially since the Commune, which was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. The "people's state" has been thrown in our faces by the anarchists too long, although Marx's book against Proudhon, "The Poverty of Philosophy", and later the "Communist Manifesto" directly declare that with the introduction of the socialist order of society the state will dissolve of itself and disappear. As, therefore, the "state" is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, in order to hold down one's adversaries by force, it is pure nonsense to talk of a "free people's state"; so long as the proletariat still *uses* the state, it does not use it in the interest of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist. We would therefore propose to replace the word "state" everywhere by the word "Community", a good old word which can very well represent the French Commune."

(Engels: Letter to Bebel, 18th March, 1875)

And Lenin wrote of this in his preliminary studies for "State and Revolution":

"This is probably the most striking and certainly the sharpest passage, against the state, so to speak, in Marx and Engels.

1. It is necessary to drop the whole talk about the state.
2. The Commune was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. (But what then? A transitional form from the state to no state, clearly!)
3. The anarchists have thrown in our faces the People's State long enough. (Marx and Engels, it is clear, were ashamed of this obvious error on the part of their German friends; but they thought that it was an incomparably less serious error than the error made by the anarchists).
4. The state "will decompose of itself and disappear with the introduction of the socialist order of society".
5. The state is a transitional institution, which is needed in the struggle in the revolution . . . needed by the proletariat, of course.
6. The state is needed not for freedom, but to crush the adversaries of the proletariat.
7. When there is freedom then there will be no state. Democracy excludes freedom. The dialectic process is: from absolutism to bourgeois democracy, from bourgeois democracy to proletarian, from proletarian to none at all.
8. We (Engels and Marx) would suggest speaking everywhere instead of the "state" of the "community". From this is clear how the opportunists and Kautsky have defiled Marx and Engels. The opportunists have not understood a single one of these eight most fertile ideas!"

But also in the other direction is a kind of rapprochement visible which may lead to a better understanding. Perhaps it may be a little premature and for orthodox Anarchism—if there is any thing of that kind—painful, but the collaboration of the Spanish Anarchists with the Negrin-Government indicates a turn of anarchist policy. Even admitted that this was an error, it was an error

which led to an approach to reality. And on the other hand the revision of anarchist policy by the venerable veteran Rudolph Rocker in taking part in the present struggle by joining the camp of democracy—even if it is wrong—is a symbol of the need of re-orientation of the anarchist doctrine.

Anarchism produced some of the greatest men in the history of Socialism and the war against the three great insanities: autocracy, bureaucracy, democracy. Men of theory like Bakunin, Proudhon, Kropotkin, Godwin, Stirner, Malatesta, Nettlau, Ferrer, Landauer, Tolstoi,—and men of action like Sacco, Vanzetti, Mühsam, Berkman, Durruti, Reinsdorf, Peukert, Mooney, Parsons, Most, are stars in the night of human misery and humiliation. They have left us an inheritance which stimulates us to further sacrifices and more activity. And they are our common cause, neither you nor we will ever forget them.

We are living in an age of decay of the old powers of physical and spiritual reaction. We, the Anarchists and the Marxists have been the victims of great defeats. We both are still going on and fighting on. We stand in different camps. But we fight the same way, the same enemy, for the same aim. Marx regretted many times the slanders he used against men of personal and political integrity like Bakunin, Proudhon, Most, Weitling, and others. The officials of Marxism, to-day sterile renegades of reformism or spokesmen of a foreign country which abandoned proletarian solidarity for military alliances, have forgotten a lot and have learned only a trifle. There is still a sea of blood between us and none will ever forget Kronstadt or Makhno or Spain.

It is no good to call for unity where unity would be only a phrase. But there are also examples of a comradeship for some steps to go together. The Commune of Paris and Petrograd, of Barcelona and Canton, barricades in five continents where workers of any creed and skin stand shoulder to shoulder against the common foe, the unforgettable union of black and red flags in the days of Sacco-Vanzetti,—let it be a living memorial in our hearts for the days to come, days of adversity, days of fight and for the final struggle!

FRIGO.

## ***Wherein Lies the Strength of Revolutions?***

WE WELCOME THE foregoing article by Frigo since it deals with an issue which is of considerable importance at all times, and of profound importance in revolutionary situations: the question of whether there is common ground on which revolutionary socialists and anarchists can combine? It is a question that should be discussed without animosity or bitterness, and we shall reply in the same friendly spirit with which the author presents his case.

Of course it is obvious that unity in the face of the class enemy is of the first importance. But it must be unity to pursue the right course—common action which will lead inevitably to defeat is clearly of no more value than divided action. Indeed, in Spain, it proved worse.

Anarchists hold as a fundamental belief that the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the workers themselves. They have never therefore stood aloof from the struggle but have placed themselves always in the ranks of the working-class, whether the workers have been anarchists or socialists or animated by merely liberal aspirations. But although they have always fought together with the workers, anarchists have by no means

always been accepted by the socialist leaders. Indeed, ever since the followers of Marx adopted Parliamentary action, and relied on constitutional methods, they have looked with hostility on the direct action of the anarchists. Not only were anarchists excluded from the Congresses of the Second International: the socialists also repudiated and even attacked anarchist militants who were being prosecuted by the capitalist legal machinery for acts of hostility towards the bourgeois state. This is not the place to chronicle such repudiations and denials of solidarity in the face of the common enemy. W. Tcherkesoff published a formidable indictment of socialist sectarianism in his book "Pages of Socialist History".

But it is worth pointing out that the Comintern also refused to co-operate on equal terms with any other revolutionary body. The price of admission to the Third International was unqualified adherence to the famous 21 points laid down by Lenin and his collaborators in Moscow.

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Past history, although it puts us on our guard, should not of itself, however, fix a gulf between anarchists

and revolutionary socialists. It seems likely, nevertheless, that such a gulf does exist, but it arises not from mere animosity over past quarrels, but from a fundamentally different approach to the whole question of revolution itself. As Frigo points out "Marxism is decided on using the state, in the hands of the proletariat, to suppress the former ruling classes while Anarchism denies the possibility of doing this." This difference in theory has far-reaching effects in its practical application in a revolutionary situation.

We will not here discuss the question as to whether the dictatorship of the proletariat *can* mean anything other than the dictatorship of a strong caucus of party leaders as exemplified by the Bolshevik dictatorship. Or whether the State will, in fact, wither away as Marx and Engels and Lenin predicted. These questions were discussed in previous issues of *War Commentary* by Camillo Berneri (August 1940 and October 1940 respectively). The point at issue here is: Can the State be an instrument of the revolution?

"The emancipation of the working-class must be the work of the working-class itself." To overthrow the structure of bourgeois institutions, guarded as they are by economic monopoly, and the organized power of State violence, tremendous force is required. Yet in the face of revolutionary action these structures crumble away. What is it that endows revolutions with their power and energy? It is the simultaneous rising and united action of the workers; what has been called "the creative energy of the people" or the "collective spirit of the masses". This tremendous uprising force is generated because every individual is taking a part in the collective social movement, is a responsible being acting in concert with his fellows voluntarily and on his own initiative. It is this spirit that Anarchism strives to inculcate and foster. Because we recognize it as the effective strength of the revolution we do not seek power and initiative for ourselves but strive to see it exercised by the workers as a whole.

In sharp contrast to this stands the conception of the Marxists—the idea of the State as a revolutionary instrument for the suppression of the ruling class. It implies the delegation of power and initiative into the hands of leaders who form the "revolutionary government", the "proletarian dictatorship", "Workers' State" or whatever one chooses to call it. The important consideration is to recognize the direct antagonism between the anarchist idea of initiative and responsible action from every individual in society as the source of the energy of revolutions, on the one hand; and on the other, the Marxist idea of initiative in the hands of representatives of the people. For anarchists, as soon as free initiative has passed out of the hands of the workers the revolution is doomed: the counter-revolution has begun. Hence their opposition to the State.

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Frigo, in his article sees in the Spanish Anarchists' "collaboration" with Negrin, *even though it was an error*, a step towards a synthesis between Anarchism and Socialism. It seems that he has in mind here the common conception of Anarchism as an idealist, Utopian theoretical system, and is commending our Spanish comrades for their readiness to "come down to earth". This view of Anarchism is often found in socialists. F. A. Ridley, for instance wrote recently in the Glasgow paper *Solidarity*:

"From a point of view that is eminently practical—much too practical, indeed for those worn-out dreamers who usually arrogate to themselves the exclusive title of "practical men"—the synthesis between Marxism and Anarchism has now become an historic

necessity: Revolutionary Order Number One of the Day! for Marxism it is necessary to learn the value of Liberty: for Anarchism, to learn how to overcome Power by Power. Marxism is a philosophy of "means", but its "means" are of such a character as may well defeat its "ends". Whereas Anarchism is a philosophy compounded exclusively of "ends". But it ignores the essential means; it denies the State; it is oblivious of the Problem of Power; means without ends; and ends without means."

Of course we do not agree with the Marxist assumption that Anarchism is an impracticable dream. It is a gibe that we have grown used to. But it simply rejects the Syndicalist programme of Anarchism which outlines the practical means whereby *the workers* can secure their emancipation as a class. In its pre-occupation with revolutionary "leaders" it forgets the revolutionary workers.

But here again we shall have to forgo discussion of the Spanish issue in detail though the light shed on theoretical issues by the history of the revolution, the counter-revolution, and the victory of fascism in Spain is extremely significant and fully confirms the realism of anarchist theory.

We must content ourselves, within the context of this reply, with pointing out that the force which checked fascism in the July and August days of 1936 was once more the collective resistance, not of any kind of State or any other centralized committee wielding authority, but the power of the Spanish workers and peasants themselves. Once more the creative spirit of the people demonstrated the power of the social revolution, and the tide of fascism was checked and rolled back as it has never been before or since. The free initiative of the Spanish workers acting through their industrial and agricultural syndicates, and the free collectives they established, provided a tremendous resistance. Virtually unarmed men and women drove back Franco's armies with their German and Italian equipment and Moorish levies.

Meanwhile, the socialist and communist theoreticians who were also engaged in the struggle with Franco, what did they contribute to the struggle? The Prietos, Negrins, and Pasionarias? They urged the formation of a strong State "to combat Spanish Fascism", and were able to set such a State up under the leadership of Caballero. Inevitably the State began to absorb in itself the functions which the revolution had placed in the hands of the workers and peasants. Functions, be it remembered, which they discharged with overwhelming success. But as initiative passed from the syndicates to the government (and the "People's State" did not hesitate to use violence to secure more and more control) so the strength ebbed from the revolution. Once more the counter-revolution had triumphed.

Far from being an approach to reality, the attitude of the Spanish anarchists who collaborated with the government disregarded all past revolutionary experience. Instead of being a practical step, it was a factor in the defeat of the revolution.

It is the hard fact of experience which makes us decisively reject the suggestion that a union is possible between the Marxist dream of using the State as a revolutionary weapon, and the Anarchist determination to vest initiative once and for all in the workers themselves. With Frigo we shall never forget Makhno and Kronstadt and the May days of Barcelona. But let us do more than merely keep alive their memory: let us refuse to allow the circumstances to arise which made these tragedies possible—nay inevitable. Let us never again make any concessions to apologists (however well-intentioned) for the State.

ANARCHIST

# THE MARKETING ILLUSION

by Clifford Holden

EVER SINCE THE Industrial Revolution, when the privileged classes deserted agriculture and sought greater profits in industry, agriculture has declined and become insignificant except during a national "emergency". The Government has invariably been in a dilemma, it being in its interests to import food but at the same time to preserve a skeleton agriculture. To maintain the agrarian population and to appease the farmers the Government has from time to time resorted to various subtle distractions, the most notable of which have been in the form of Marketing Acts. Farmers have been gulled and deluded into thinking that these so-called reforms were instituted in order to protect their interests, whereas in reality they merely gave the Government wider powers to dominate and control agriculture in both peace and war.

In 1914 agriculture was moderately prosperous. The war created a new set of conditions: more land was ploughed and the prices of farm produce fixed. In 1921, however, a slump occurred and prices fell rapidly: wool, which was 4/- a pound in 1920, was fetching only 4d. and 6d. a pound in 1921. This depression did not show signs of lifting until about 1937, when the country faced yet another war. In these years the change over from the production of corn and beef to that of milk was rapid, and finally resulted in a crisis in the milk industry in 1933, when the Government took the opportunity of forcing the vast machinery of the Milk Marketing Board upon the farmers. The intricacies of such moves were never fully realised, but the propaganda continued. That astute Government spokesman, A. G. Street, has for years urged his doctrine that our peace-time farming ought to be mainly stock-farming, and therefore mainly grass-farming, in order to store up fertility beneath the turf for successive grain and potato crops in time of need. Such a doctrine is clever—we import cattle foods, even hay, to the detriment of the fertility and the humus deficiency of the soil in other countries. But the Government was also alive to the need of control and the agricultural Marketing Acts of 1931 and 1933 paved the way for various marketing schemes. The farmer was gulled into a false sense of security by a reversion to the viewpoint of the 1830's, in the gradual imposition of import duties and quantitative restriction of imports of foreign produce. But imports still came into the country and prices were poor. The Government urged that the public preferred Danish bacon and Danish eggs because they were invariably guaranteed a standardised quality and size. Therefore the British farmer needed standardisation and controlled marketing to be in a position to compete with those imports. The fact that Denmark is essentially an agrarian country was conveniently overlooked, as it is obvious that such a country would export the best while retaining the inferior products for home consumption.

The first early attempts at Standardisation were made in 1920. Investigations were carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture and the matter was referred to the Federation of British Growers. Standard grades and packs were introduced, but the scheme failed—chiefly through lack of funds. In 1922 the slogan "British and Best" was coined and eventually led up to the National Mark scheme for

tomatoes. The legislation necessary to put Standardisation on a national basis has been provided by the Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marketing) Acts 1928-1931. Although the use of the National Mark was purely optional, it had the desired effect of making every producer grade-conscious. The Government maintained that the scheme would prove of great benefit to producers, but, in practice, it has not met with quite the success that was expected. Many of the important horticulturalists refused to adopt the scheme on the grounds that they already had a reputation based on their own particular names and trade marks, and that the use of the National Mark would place them in the same category as the other growers. Although this refusal was motivated by competitive issues, it had a certain value. Unfortunately, the majority of producers were lured into these schemes by the offer of better markets and higher prices, whereas in practice little monetary benefit was derived as additional expense was incurred in meeting the high salaries of the multitudes of inspectors and officials. The schemes merely served to make the producers grade-conscious and to concentrate their attention within the industry; to squabble among themselves and to spy on one another. They came to regard their produce as being vastly inferior to that produced in other countries, and looked upon the solution of the marketing problem as a panacea and the pathway to economic security. Thus the farmers were dazzled by what appeared to be organised efficiency and became blind to the wiles of vested interests and the bureaucrats who thus dominated them.

It is important to realise, however, that the Agricultural Marketing Acts of 1931-33 were merely 'enabling' Acts, *i.e.* they made no provision in themselves for the marketing of any particular product, but provided producers with the machinery for creating their own marketing schemes. Thus the illusion was created that the producers were restoring law and order, organisation out of chaos, and using their own initiative with the backing of the Government for their mutual benefit. A provision of the Acts makes it possible for the majority of the producers of any commodity to force the minority to abide by the provisions of a marketing scheme. As always, the law gives power to the majority and the powerful. A marketing scheme may be local or national, or may even cover the whole of Britain. The producers may formulate a scheme based upon suggestions made by a reorganisation commission, as in the case of milk or pigs, or without assistance from the commission as in the case of potatoes. But, curiously enough, although these schemes are made by producers ostensibly in their own interests, they must first be submitted to the Minister of Agriculture, who usually modifies the scheme and has a pow-wow with the Board of Trade before handing the draft over to Parliament for possible amendments. Often it is only with difficulty that the final version can be recognised from the original. The Acts of 1933 supplement the 1931 Act and provides for the restriction of imports of agricultural produce, and by regulating the quantities of corresponding home-grown produce sold in this country.

It is clear that these reform measures are not introduced for the benefit of the farming community or the

consumer, but solely for the purpose of controlling agriculture in the interests of the industrialists and the ruling class. It was not until the present 'emergency' arose in 1939 that the Government, urging the necessity for an organised and ordered agriculture, and using the lever of the threat of starvation, completed the control and exploitation of the land and those who work the land, by forming the War Agricultural Executive Committees. A farmer no longer farms his land—he is now merely a unit of labour, directed under compulsion to do certain work specified by a vast army of bureaucrats, intermingled with a few careerist technicians, to meet the requirements of the industrialists. His whole life is organised in the same manner as the production machines or the breeding of his stock. All are units and part of an abstract whole—the State.

The editor of *The Farmer's Weekly* gives some revealing figures when he quotes from "Foreign Agriculture, November 1942", published by the U.S.A. Department of Agriculture in Washington. This states that the Com-

mittees function as a service organisation to an average of 5,000 to 6,000 farmers per county. A conservative estimate of the cost of one Committee for one year is given as in the neighbourhood of £25,000. This figure apparently covers the salaries of administrative officers, technical staff and office personnel responsible for the direction of operations of central executive committee, district committees and sub-committees, and the expenses incurred by some 70 persons in each county, who give voluntary service. £25,000 per year paid in each county in the country to people who perform no service of value to the community in which they live. Money and energy wasted in the domination of man by man.

It is time that the workers faced up to the stark fact that the solution of all problems of production and distribution, in agriculture as in all other branches of industry, will only be found when they themselves take control and cease to acknowledge the authority of any master. Only then will the popular fallacy of the "free yeomen of Britain" become a living reality.

## "Grateful Fatherland"

BRITISH LEGION JOURNAL Sept. 1942.

"Turned out of the Army with T.B., a 21 year old soldier was refused a pension."

★

"A young wife, discharged from the A.T.S. because a baby was expected, was tempted to earn a little money in a distant war factory, her husband being in the Forces, Her strength gave out and she was stranded . . ."

★

. . . Here's another case where a woman got her full rights from the State, yet was in acute distress. The husband had served six years with the Colours in India, and was called up on reserve from his home in Battersea when war broke out. He was killed in action. She got a total pension of two guineas a week, out of which she had to pay seven shillings a week rent, the balance of £1 15s. od. having to suffice to keep four people. And the cost of living in Eire to-day is high. The Legion found the family sleeping on the floor . . .

★

. . . A soldier out on manoeuvres was accidentally drowned, leaving a widow and two young children. She got a pension without difficulty. But war had meant a big drop in the family income. After the husband had been called up the wife could no longer go out shopping with a full purse. The children needed clothes, and their footwear was shabby. Her natural distress at the loss of the breadwinner affected the widow's nerves and threatened her health . . .

★

The lot of many poor widows whose menfolk served with us in the last war is one of hardship, loneliness and want. The poor women, often with sickness to contend with and no near relatives to support them, have been obliged to apply to the Public Assistance Committee to enable them to exist at all, and that committee has no alternative under the regulations—it must, even against its own judgment, cancel out anything the Women's Section may give the applicant by deducting it from her public assistance money. Northern Ireland has recently abrogated this rule, but elsewhere in Britain the knife must go in and the "extra", however much needed or deserved, is cut off. It is difficult to see who benefits by this arrangement. It is only too plain who suffers.

A correspondent of a Thames Valley paper wrote that he had met an old soldier who had been reduced to begging in the streets because his pension was so small.

★

. . . An Oxfordshire man who was gassed in 1918, resulting in eye trouble, has just been granted a 100 per cent. disability pension through the Legion . . .

★

At East Suffolk County Council the Rev. G. T. Wilkes complained that when the British Legion gave a man a shilling or two the Public Assistance Committee took it off his allowance.

### LECTURES

EVERY FRIDAY EVENING

7.0 p.m.

APRIL 2nd. G. PITTOCK BUSS  
"The Corporate State and After"

APRIL 9th. M. L. BERNERI  
"How the Russian Workers Live"

APRIL 16th ALBERT MCCARTHY  
"A Survey of Negro Poets"

APRIL 23rd TOM BROWN  
"There Ain't No Justice"

APRIL 30th MAT KAVANAGH  
and other Speakers.

May Day Solidarity Evening

MAY 6th JOHN HEWETSON  
Some Aspects of Syndicalism

QUESTIONS DISCUSSION

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# The Black Man's Burden

Among the many oppressed and subject populations of the British Empire the race who seem to have the unenviable distinction of having been the most unfairly treated are the Bantus, the native population of the Union of South Africa. Right from the days of the Boer settlers, who made them slaves and disciplined them with utmost brutality, their lot has been one of continual exploitation and degradation. Released from legal slavery, they have been forced, in order to earn cash to pay the Government head tax, to take work in the gold and diamond mines for miserable wages, under contracts which amount to very little better than slavery for a term of years. They have been forbidden to take up skilled occupations, and where they can follow the same unskilled occupations as whites, their pay has been much lower. Of the country that once belonged to them only the most unfertile fragments have been left for their use.

The *Cape Argus* of the 21st January, 1942, reported a statement made by D. L. Smit, Secretary for Native Affairs in the Union, when giving evidence before a National Health Services Commission.

"Contact with the European, he said, had brought with it a loss of tribal sanctions and the disintegration of family life, while the change to European food and clothing and unsatisfactory housing conditions in urban areas had had a disastrous effect on the general health of the native. There had undoubtedly been a marked deterioration in the physical well-being of the people.

The influx into the towns of natives, many of whom left their women in the reserves, had had the result of spreading venereal disease. The urban native became the prey of native prostitutes and from them the disease was taken back to the reserves. Those who had their women with them were badly

housed. There was little family discipline and the children ran about the streets.

A large proportion of young natives was growing up, underfed, undernourished and ill-disciplined, and if not properly guided would become a menace rather than an asset to the national life.

The country must face the fact that the native health and character was being irretrievably condemned and steps must be taken to remedy this state of affairs before complete ruin occurred, not only in the towns but also in the reserves. The root cause of the trouble was the poverty of the native who was the backbone of the labour supply in the country. If employers would pay better wages and give their native employees better food and housing this would in large measure avoid the huge cost of measures which the commission may think it necessary to recommend.

Mr. Smit then outlined the measures which the government had taken to improve the lot of the native by provision of more land, improving the stock by means of good bulls and teaching them better agricultural methods. He went on to say that the prevalence of Tapeworm among the natives was becoming a menace and must be tackled.

Some employers treated natives well but there was a large section which did not and that gave rise to the scarcity of farm labour. On the mines the conditions were very satisfactory, though not on some of the smaller ones.

The estimate of the native population at present was 6,958,294 and for that population they had 14,696 beds in hospitals. *In one district in the Transvaal there was a population of 116,000 and only one doctor.*

It was most undesirable that financial assistance should have to come from all parts of the world. In certain areas, for instance, whole social service schemes for natives had been financed and staffed from Germany.

Mr. Smit said that to put a social tax on the native for hospitalisation would be an iniquity. The poorer class of native was already contributing a considerable amount in poll tax and could afford no more. The amount contributed was equal to that of the European if one took account of his means."

This statement, made by a member of the South African government itself, gives as complete an indictment of its policy towards the subject race as the most bitter of its enemies could have done. Such an admission of his own powerlessness in the face of property interests is uncommon for a politician, and one can not but concede a certain ineffectual sincerity in Smit's concern for the natives. But the weak measures he suggests—appeals to employers, government palliatives—only help to prove that under the present exploiting system there is no hope of a better life for the South African natives. The ruling class may in their own interests make their slavery a little more endurable, but they will remain the chattels of an exploiting imperialism, denied access to decently paid work and to the land which is theirs by right. Only a social revolution that embraces and frees the colonial peoples, giving back to them their land and the right to live as they will, extends any hope for a healthy and happy life for the enslaved Bantu.

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# The Stratford Railway Strike

ON THE LAST three Sundays, 14th, 21st and 28th March, several hundred L.N.E.R. locomotive men, most of whom work at the Stratford depot, have refused to work as a protest against the dismissal of Fireman Robert William Owen, who had been employed by the Company for the past twenty-five years. In an interview with a *War Commentary* representative, Owen stated that the facts of the case are as follows—

On September 3rd he was charged under the Defence Regulations with "endeavouring to cause disaffection among H.M. Forces" and sentenced to three months imprisonment. This was confirmed when the case was re-heard in a higher court. Whilst travelling in a guard's van, which contained a number of soldiers, Owen had expressed his views against the war and given them literature to read—including *War Commentary*, a copy of James Dick's speech from the dock before receiving sentence of twelve months' imprisonment for refusing military service, and *Solidarity*. By 5.0 p.m. on the day of the first hearing Owen's name was removed from a duty list at Stratford.

## UNANIMOUS DECISION TO STRIKE

This was resented by his fellow workers, and a petition demanding his re-instatement was signed by 900 of them. This was rejected by the Company and negotiations were opened by the Stratford branch of the Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. The Company refused to receive a deputation until threatened with strike action, but then after 2¾ hours discussion they refused to change their attitude. This discussion took place on the 10th March, the foregoing negotiations having gone on for several months. Immediately, a resolution to strike was moved at a Branch meeting of the Union, and was carried without a single dissentient voice. The men decided to strike every Sunday until Owen was reinstated. 200 stopped work on the 14th and 250 on the 21st March. Support for Owen's case is growing and 400 came out on the 28th March. In addition to those at Stratford Depot, men attached to Enfield Town and Wood Street, Walthamstow stations have supported the strike. The local N.U.R. Branch has

also elected to stand by Owen, considering that he has been victimised by the Company. (It was well known that Owen had always urged the fusion of the two Unions: at present, the absurd position exists that some drivers and firemen are in the A.S.L.E. & F., and some in the N.U.R.)

The strike has no support from the Union's 'leaders', but is the spontaneous action of the rank and file members. W. P. Allen, General Secretary of the A.S.L.E. & F. is quoted as having said "The A.S.L.E. & F. did its best to get the man reinstated, but the Company were not to be persuaded to change their decision. I have addressed the workers, explaining the position and telling them why they should remain at work, but this, apparently, had little effect."

## C.P. BLACKLEGS

The role of the Communist Party was no different from that it assumed during other recent strikes. In January the Stratford Rail Group of the C.P. issued a statement to members of the A.S.L.E. & F., embodying its attitude towards Owen's case. After describing Owen's "indiscreet talk" as a "crime" and saying that he was "in fact lining himself up with the pro-fascists", they concede that "nevertheless, one sentence is enough, and proper action through the T.U. machinery can get his re-instatement and should be used." After negotiations "*Further action can be decided in a way that will show the Company where the workers stand in this case, in a way that will not in any way impede the fight against Fascism*" (our italics). However, after negotiations had failed and the men were deciding to strike, we find the C.P. issuing a further statement talking about "playing Hitler's game" and "stabbing 'our boys' in the back, and clamouring for 'harder work and many more sacrifices'". It is an interesting indication of C.P. machinations that a resolution condemning the strike, which was passed by the Essex District of the N.U.R. contained almost the same phrases as those used by the C.P. in this statement (playing Hitler's game, stabbing our boys in the back, etc.).

The C.P. has since attempted to sabotage the demand for Owen's reinstatement by issuing a leaflet on March 17th, in which an emotional appeal was made for revenge for a recent raid on Ilford, and a further diatribe against the strikers. The majority of the men at Stratford are disgusted with the attitude of a Party which claims to represent the workers but which, in actual practice, acts in the role of blackleg when it comes to a clash of interests with their masters. Their leaflets have been received with derision by the members of the Branch.

The importance of a strike at a key locomotive depot has not escaped the attention of the ruling class, and last week one of the Conservative M.P.'s asked in the House of Commons what the Government intended to do about the matter. Bevin replied that the strike was illegal and that prosecution of the men was under consideration. The settlement of the strike was in the hands of the Ministry of War Transport. Up to now, however, neither has the Ministry of War Transport got very far towards solving their difficulty, nor has the Ministry of Labour instituted any prosecution.

## War Commentary

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