

# DIRECT ACTION

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One Penny

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## THIS APATHY

Revolutionary workers in Britain are appalled by the present seeming apathy of the workers. Wages are frozen, then reduced by devaluation, the workers are pressed for more production and goaded to revolt by managerial insults, yet, apart from a few "unofficial" strikes such as that of the St. Pancras railmen, they patiently endure it all.

The truth of this is, and we are sorry to admit it, that the great majority of the workers are patient because they believe that the Labour Government in some way represents them. They would never have put up with so much from a Tory Government.

Patiently and stoically they claim that, having elected this government, they must give it a "fair trial". So they endure rising prices, shortage of tobacco, enforced teetotalism and work drives, because they feel a high sense of public responsibility. We regret this and hate the thought that such a fine spirit is misplaced by trust in a political outfit that is no better, or worse, than the rest.

But we would contrast this sacrifice and sense of responsibility with the behaviour of the capitalist and so-called middle-class. Even under their own Tory Government these people rarely showed any public spirit. Now these Tories have inverted their previous patriotic slogan, "My country right or wrong", to one "My country is always wrong if I don't approve its Government".

This writer has just made a journey of several thousand miles in the U.S.A., and met many British Tories there and crossing the Atlantic. Without exception these people have reviled and cursed their country whenever they could get in audience of Americans. Nothing was decent about Britain, past, present or future, as they worked to prevent "Marshall Aid" going to a "Socialist Government".

At home we see doctors and chemists, according to the Press, attempting to sabotage the Health Act by dishonest practices, such as phoney prescriptions.

The working class is today the only socially responsible class in Britain. We ask the opponents of Workers' Control: who is best fitted to control industry, the responsible or socially irresponsible?

When the workers turn from the myth of political socialism to the realism of syndicalism, this spirit of sacrifice, now shown by them in a worthless cause, will find its proper expression in the building of the new society which is the workers' hope.

- T.B.

## UNEMPLOYMENT ON INCREASE

'Some serious trends of the times are revealed in a recent survey by the International Labour Organisation. Of 17 countries surveyed, 11 show rises in unemployment.

'In the United States, estimated unemployment rose to a peak in July of this year, when 4,095,000, or 6.4% of the civilian labour force were unemployed. This compared with 2,227,000 in July, 1948.

'Workers also had a bad time in Belgium where, again in July, 220,469 persons, or 11% of the insured population, registered for work. This marked a drop of 2% from the peak post-war figure, in January, and compared with 129,274, or 6.5%, in July, 1948.

'Unemployment continued to climb in Western Germany and Spain. In the Bizonal area, 1,254,450 persons were registered as unemployed in July, 1949, compared with 650,500 in July, 1948. In the French Zone, the July total was 48,309, compared with 14,502 for the corresponding period in 1948.

'Those countries where unemployment has decreased recently, although exceeding the corresponding figure for 1948, are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

'.... In the United Kingdom unemployment fell from 400,725 in January to 282,578, or 3.5% of the estimated total industrial population in June. Unemployment also decreased in Norway, Ireland and Puerto Rico, in comparison with the corresponding period of last year.

'While these movements are still relatively small, they represent economic tendencies which need careful watching.'

- INTERNATIONAL CHEMICAL ENGINEERING AND  
PROCESS INDUSTRIES, November, 1949.

### LECTURE

TOM BROWN on 'WORKERS' CONTROL - A SYNDICALIST APPROACH'  
Room 8, Trade Union Club, 12 Gt. Newport St., W.C.2, Tuesday, Dec. 20th,  
at 7.45 p.m. (opposite Leicester Square Station).

# THE TRANSPORT RACKET

The entire question of the cooked balance sheets published by the popular press concerning the various nationalised industries was raised again, recently, by the publication of the figures for the British Transport Commission.

Speaking in the House of Commons on November 28th, Mr. Barnes, Minister of Transport, said that during the first 44 weeks of the current year, railway traffic receipts had fallen by £7½ million, from £282½ million to £275 million. He, moreover, estimated that the balance sheet for the full year would show a net revenue deficit of some £20 million.

## WHERE THE MONEY GOES

These figures were plastered across the headlines of the daily press. So were, for that matter, the £4.7 million "losses" for 1948, published in September, 1949.

What the daily press dared not disclose then was the full, consolidated revenue account. It showed, under the title of "Carrying activities", £26.2 million profit to passenger and freight traffic, £3.9 million loss to collection and delivery (mainly concerned with serving industrial enterprise), £1.1 million profit to road haulage, £4.2 million profit to marine services, £100,000 loss to canal services. In fact, a total profit of £36.4 million.

Under the title of "Other Services", the British Transport Commission reaped a profit of some £2.1 million. Paying out "Minority interests and profits before acquisition" resulted in a loss of £2.4 million. "Other income, rents, etc" brought in another £9.1 million. A "Total Net Revenue" of £45.2 million.

£45.2 million to play with. And how they played! On "Central Administration" some £700,000. In interest on transport stock (held for the next 90 years by the "ex"-shareholders) £42.3 million was spent. On "Freight Rebates" (to Industrial enterprise) £3.9 million. And so a "Net deficit" of £1.7 million was incurred.

The British Transport Commission was, however, not satisfied at that. "Provision for Capital Redemption" (paying the shareholders out in 90 years time) took £2.5 million. "Initial expenses, etc" (whatever that may be) took a mere £500,000, leaving a total deficit of £4.7 million, the figure that the "Popular Press" published.

## THE DRAIN ON WORKING EXPENSES

That the British Transport Commission was able to make an actual profit of £45.2 is indeed surprising when we consider the drain on working expenses which the administrative bureaucracy involves. It is common knowledge that the number of supervisors, superintendents, administrative personnel, and "ex"-railway bosses on the Regional Boards (salaried from £3,500 full-time to £750 part-time) is out of all proportion to the number of productive workers. How the transport services manage

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function at all is a constant wonder to most workers who have any connection with the transport industry.

It is obvious that, only on the basis of the extremely low wages paid in the industry, is this corrupt set-up allowed to continue.

That, plus the fact that the Minister of Transport proposes to increase the railway and canal charges by 16 and two-thirds per cent, and dock charges by 50%.

The reply of the manufacturing interests to this was a threat to increase the workers' cost of living. Mr. F. Gretwick, General Secretary of the National Chamber of Trade, said: "An increase in freight and parcel charges must obviously be reflected in the price of goods".

These being the facts, let us hope that a realisation spreads among transport workers - and workers generally - that the only effective solution to the present set-up is the syndicalist solution of Workers' Control in this industry and, for that matter, in all industries.

- F.R.

## BORING FROM WITHIN

Michael Quill, trade union boss of the New York underground railway workers, has been in London to help form the new, anti-Communist trade-union international, in opposition to the WFTU. But Mr. Quill is annoyed folk call him a communist. "No-one can prove that I was ever a Communist" says bad-tempered Mick.

No - but in the Commies' Golden Age of the Roosevelt regime, the C.P. helped to push Quill (along with many more union bosses) into office and keep him there. And Mick always did what the C.P. wanted him to, and talked the party line like he was reciting poetry. He never, then, denied C.P. membership, and he publicly rejoiced in the title "Red Mike".

Then came the Taft-Hartley Act, and one morning Mick woke and discovered that, not only was he not a Communist, but he had never been one - at least, let them try and prove it! Now Quill keeps his job, and a better anti-Communist never blew down a cigar.

This has happened in hundreds of cases in U.S.A., where men have been helped to office by the Commies. Such strange antics in the trade-unions are excused by the magic words - "It's tactics, comrade", and go on in the name of the sacred idol, Lenin.

(You may read Lenin's "Left Wing Communism" for further lessons on "Boring from Within").

OUR ALLIES! - "Should we see that the Germans win, we have to help the Russians; should we see that the Russians win, we have to help the Germans, so long as as many of them as possible might kill one another". -- SENATOR HARRY TRUMAN, "New York Times", 24.5.41.

Letter from AustraliaBy K.J. Kenofick.

## THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS

(MELBOURNE, 27.11.49) We are in the thick of the Federal Election campaign here, with a good deal of interest being taken. The Liberal (i.e. Conservative) Opposition accuse the Chifley Labour Government of being Socialists, and Labour don't exactly deny the impeachment, but explain that all they mean by it is nationalisation of any utility proved injurious to the public. The sacred rights of property are otherwise not to be touched. The Commos are also putting up numerous candidates, and saying they stand for "Socialism" which, when closely examined, merely means nationalisation of big business. As far as I know there is no genuine Socialist candidate in all Australia, the actual Socialist Party (affiliated with the S.P.G.B.) being too poor and obscure to afford the nomination deposit, which is \$25. The Trotskyists, too, who have a few dozen members in Sydney, are still too inconsiderable to put up even one candidate.

I think that Labour will win again. It points to the great prosperity of the country at present, and practically says: "Alone we did it!" The workers, who remember the bad conditions under anti-Labour Governments, 1931-1941, and notice the contrast, put two and two together and make eight of it, very illogically of course, but nothing succeeds like success. And Labour, claiming all the credit, will probably succeed. Anti-Labour is hampered by their leadership being the same old gang - Menzies and Fadden - the former being bitterly disliked by the trade unions. These men are, only too obviously, the spokesmen of big business, and Labour profits from that fact. Besides, while demanding the lifting of controls on property and investment, the anti-Labour leaders demand, also, military conscription for young men. It is easy to see what their "Freedom" means.

The enlargement of the Parliament by two-thirds, and the redistribution of all seats, makes forecasting difficult, but from the election meetings I have attended, including Chifley's in Melbourne, Labour stocks are high it seems.

Today there is actually a labour shortage of a quarter of a million. Ten years ago it was the other way round. You will realise, then, that the Australian workers of today are not likely to think the social system of 1949 a bad one. The Welfare State has given them social security (or so they consider) and consequently, any rejection by them of the State, as an enemy of the workers, is not likely in any immediate future. Perhaps a world economic crisis, which would force the State to reduce social benefits, would wake them up. But reliance on the State plays such a large role in Australian traditions, that it is going to be a tremendous job to change the workers' mentality.

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# TEA BREAK

COST - £5 A WEEK

New York, 19.11.49 - Edward Rayne, who says he makes shoes for members of the Royal Family, told reporters: "The Queen buys 20 or 30 pairs of shoes every year, paying about 23 dollars (£8.7.0) ... she gets five or six pairs at a time".

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SOME ADVERTISEMENT!

"The policy of the Liberal Party has been centred consistently between Conservative Reaction and Socialist Folly". - Liberal Party propaganda poster.

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WHAT A BRICK!

A report in the October issue of "New Demand" stated that a bricklayer in that country, with the assistance of two labourers, laid 15,771 bricks during the course of an 8-hour shift. This works out at approximately 32 bricks per minute, or one every two seconds. A bricklayer comrade tells us that 600 to 800 bricks per 8-hour shift is a good day's work.

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SHE SAID IT!

"Inside the Labour Party we are beginning to produce our own breed of autocratic overlords. Take the chairmen of boards of nationalised industries. They enjoy greater economic power - and with it powers of patronage - than any private industrialist". -- Jennie Lee - wife of Aneurin Bevan - quoted in the "Daily Mail", 21.11.49

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NO COMMENT

"Those who cannot stand for Parliament include lunatics, criminals undergoing sentence, Peers of Great Britain, Representative Peers of Scotland and Ireland, Church of England clergymen, Roman Catholic priests and High Court judges".

"Star", 28.11.49.

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NANNY?

"The Queen may take over the mothering of Prince Charles during her stay at Windsor, I gather. The Castle nursery in the Victoria Tower has been prepared for Prince Charles. It is decorated in pastel shades, and consists of a playroom, night room, small schoolroom and nanny's quarters".

"Star", 25.11.49.

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MOVE YOUR KING, COMRADE!

"Russian world chess champion, M. Botvinnik, says: 'Only in a Socialist land, where the culture of the people is a matter which the Party and Government take particularly close to heart, is such rapid progress among young chess players possible. In Western Europe and America, the chess art, like all culture, is on the decline'". - Tass Newsagency, 21.11.49.

# ECONOMIC STRUGGLE & IMPERIALIST CONFLICT

The attitude to be taken towards the economic struggles which are developing throughout the world under the influence of imperialist conflicts is an extremely important question for syndicalists everywhere. An intelligent approach to this question could be decisive for our possibility of winning the workers to syndicalist ideas and for our own struggle. We must maintain our position to the workers' movement, and do our duty in the class-struggle in its changing form.

We must admit frankly that all trade-union movements, together with their present-day activity, are politically influenced. The Social Democrats, above all in the countries where they are in power, do everything possible to transform the unions into willing instruments to help their governmental policies. The unions are pledged to wage-freezing, etc: they must agree to class-collaboration and to submission to the capitalist system with its attacks on the working-class. If workers take strike action, the socialist governments are prepared to go to any lengths against them - the case in France, Britain, Australia, Finland and other countries. The working-class "representatives" in the government take strike-breaking action against workers engaged in the struggle against capitalism. Syndicalists must fight this policy of so-called socialist governments.

With regard to the communists, it is well-known that all working-class struggles are ruthlessly suppressed in countries where they have gained power. But, in those countries where they are, as yet, not in power, they try to use industrial struggles for their own party interests.

It is absolutely clear that Stalinism, with its terrorist methods, with its suppression of freedom everywhere it has the possibility to do so, is the most dangerous enemy of the working-class. We are agreed on the necessity of fighting Stalinism, energetically and mercilessly. On this question there can be no difference of opinion among revolutionary syndicalists.

And with regard to this struggle against Stalinism, we have no need to reproach ourselves. For many years the syndicalist movement and its militants have carried out a decided struggle against bolshevism. There is no doubt of the necessity of continuing this struggle. But, in doing so, we must avoid getting unwelcome bed-fellows. Our fight against Stalinism has a different basis to that of the majority of people who are today attacking communism.

The British Anarchists recently declared that they did not want to be caught up in the present anti-Communist movement. We were fighting against the Communists, they said, when their present-day enemies were still their allies.

In other words, we must not identify ourselves with the

capitalist campaign against the Communists. We must never forget that capitalism fights for profits and against every form of working class organisation. And it is clear that the capitalist struggle against the workers is now being carried on under an anti-Communist banner.

In America, for example, every radical and revolutionary tendency is branded "communist" and attacked. This tactic is used against workers on strike in cases where not even the smallest Stalinist influence is present. The capitalists are exploiting most people's natural aversion for the Stalinists and their methods.

At the time of the London dock strike, the Paris paper, LE LIBERTAIRE, wrote that the man who wants to get rid of his dog calls it mad and, in the same way, the most effective way to strike-break is to call the strike "communist". It has become an article of faith with governments and trade-union leaders to reject, in this way, all strike movements which are not recognised officially.

By supporting this we should help the Stalinists, instead of fighting against them. As the INDUSTRIAL WORKER, organ of the IWW in the United States, said recently, it would be tantamount to putting down a carpet for Stalin and inviting him to walk on it.

Revolutionary syndicalists must support every working-class action for economic ends, and we must take part in these struggles. We must do so even though the Stalinists try to use these struggles for their own interests. In participating we must do everything possible to eliminate political interference in the strikes. On this question we identify ourselves completely with the point of view expressed some time ago by the British syndicalists, in a letter to the Secretariat of the International Working Men's Association:- "One thing seems very clear to us. And that is that if we are to abstain from participating in working-class struggles because the Communist Party seeks to use them for its own ends, then we might as well cease calling ourselves revolutionaries. To take this position would lead us into a liaison, tacit or open, with all the forces of reaction. Our weapon against the Communist Party on the industrial field is surely greater militancy and honesty. Obviously we have to attack the manoeuvres of the Stalinists, both politically and industrially - we recognise, only too well, their menace, and we have never ceased from unmasking their treachery."

That is all we need to say on the question.

JOHN ANDERSSON, General Secretary,  
I.W.M.A., Stockholm; Sweden.

If the point of view expressed in DIRECT ACTION has interested you, write to us for further information, and for the AFB's list of literature.

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