

# DIRECT ACTION

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March, 1950

## THERE'S NO FUTURE IN IT!

No insurance broker in his right mind would today issue a policy for either the Labour Government or the new House of Commons. With a majority of seven, the Labour leaders are faced with the alternative of seeking a new election - possibly after the April budget and almost certainly before the end of the year - or forming a coalition with the Conservatives. The latter course is unlikely to be adopted by the Government - it would tend to clarify the issues too much. The line-up between the Labour leadership and the Tories would be in the open.

### WHY THEY VOTED

If we are to be honest with ourselves, we have to admit that the poll of more than 28½-million votes - 84% of the electorate - was disappointing. It seems that the vast majority of workers still trust the parliamentary machine. Even taking into account that a very large number of workers voted Labour only to keep the Tories out, the fact remains that they regard parliament as the deciding factor in social affairs. While there was a decided swing against the Labour Party in this election, the industrial workers certainly did not swing with it. The Labour Party actually increased their votes by over 1½-million, and a very hard fight lies ahead to convince our fellow workers of the futility of taking part in political carve-ups.

### UNCERTAINTY CERTAIN

Alistair Cooke, BBC American correspondent, pointed out, as soon as the result was known, that the U.S. Government did not particularly mind which party got in, as long as the government was "strong and stable". "Western European defence", he said, depended on it, so did "stability". We might add, so also does "wage-freeze".



We industrial workers are likely to benefit from the present uncertainty, but we shall have to watch out for the "loyalty to the Labour Government" sob stuff. Loyalty begins at home, to one's self, family and class.

THE KEY IS INDUSTRY As we have already said, the 84% poll is not an encouraging sign for Anarchists. It will not, however, drive us to cynicism, arm-chair phoney philosophy, or the study of the realms of psychology. The key to the situation lies in industry. It is inevitable that the present parliamentary stalemate will, together with the coming slump, produce a movement in industry, the like of which we have not seen for some time. The coming struggles will lay the basis for a healthy, revolutionary workers, industrial organisation. The need of the moment is not for us to become introspective and to withdraw into a kind of mutual admiration society; it is for us to get into industry, to participate even more in industrial struggles, to draw in new blood, and to develop both our ideas and our organisation in consequence.

It is, then, with this perspective that the Anarchist Federation faces the future. "Our path is struggle - our will is freedom".

## WAGES-FACT & FICTION

A lot of noise was made on the question of our wages by the rival political parties at the Election. The Labour leaders would have us believe that a few miracles have been worked on our behalf, and that we are now something like twice as wealthy as we were pre-war. The Tories, on the other hand, appear to think that our wages have risen so high that the profit-snatching class is in danger of extinction. For our own part, we believe it is high time that facts were separated from fiction. To do so we propose to examine the figures of the various official and semi-official bodies which, in the past, have provided the press with so much spectacular comment.

NATIONAL INCOME - OUR SHARE The first thing to realise is that the figures published by these bodies are classified under misleading headings. For instance, a £5-a-week clerk of a certain type is not a worker but a salaried man. And a company director's fees are not listed under profits, but as salary.

Bearing this in mind, we find that, according to the National Income White Paper of last April (Cmd. 7649), our share of the national cake in 1948 was £3,975-million, or 45% of the total. This compares with £1,735-million, or 40%, in 1938. Our share is, then, some 5% greater. But the bread-



winner section of our class is 20% greater now (20-million workers). Over four-fifths of our 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -million unemployed, plus a lot of our wives, are now at work. Twenty million workers are earning £3,975-million, while about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -million members of the middle and upper classes are getting some £4,538-million - or 55% of the national income.

#### WAGES AND WHAT THEY ARE WORTH

The average wage for all workers is shown in the White Paper to be 69s-per-week in October, 1938, rising to 139/11d in April, 1949 - a very liberal estimate. If these figures are accepted, they show a 103% increase. When, however, the average rate of taxation for wages and the consumption price index shown in the White Paper is applied, the percentage falls from 103% to 5%.

The "Economist" estimated, on January 21st, that in order to have £500 a year on the 1938 standard of living, you would have to earn £1,160 a year. After taking income tax into consideration, your net income would still have to be 123% higher, in order to meet the increased prices.

We see, then, that by relating the "Economist" estimate to the White Paper percentage, the purchasing power of our present average wage is only 82% of our average pre-war wage. It is as if we had suffered a wage reduction, in 1938, from the average wage of £3.9s to £2.17.8d. That is what our wages are worth.

Within our class there has, of course, been a certain levelling up of wage rates. The 35s-a-week City of London warehouseman is now relatively better off. A man with nine or ten children, with family allowances, is not quite so hard hit as before. Nor are those of our number who, before the slaughter, received the mercy of the means test. On the other hand, the single man, the continually employed worker and our class as a whole, is relatively worse off.

#### PROFITS - THEIR SLICE

Now let us consider how the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -million members of the upper and middle classes, getting some £4,538-million, or 55% of the national income, fared. The rent, interest and profit parasites took £2,858-million, or about 60% of the above figure. The "Economist" estimates that this is 69% higher, after tax, than in 1938. It is also approximately 11% higher, after tax, than the 1946 gross figure of £2,585-million.

It should be remembered that these figures are based on declared dividends and rents. They take no account of retained profits, bonus share issues and other such rackets. Money lifted by the capitalist class in this way is not even taxable, and is certainly not included in the April White Paper.

A good example of this is in the reports of 1,264 companies for the first half of 1949. Their gross trading profits increased by 18.7%. Their retained profits fund, therefore, benefitted by an increase of 45.3%; bonus share issues have yet



to be declared. Yet their preference and ordinary dividends showed an increase of only 1.9% and 0.5% respectively. So only these figures were taken into account in the White Paper.

AND ANOTHER SLICE The salaried section of 2½-million in the upper and middle classes, who draw another £1,850-million from the national income, are a very mixed bunch. They range from high-powered executives, £8,500-a-year bosses of nationalised industries and £15,000-a-year (£4,000 tax-free) Prime Ministers to policemen. A very large part of the income in this group (such as directors' fees, etc) is, in fact, disguised profits. The White Paper, however, prefers to save face on this issue.

HOW MANY? We have already said that the upper and middle classes comprise about 2½-million 'bread'-winners. How many of these can we class among the big industrialists - the true capitalist class? We don't know for sure, the White Paper gives no facts on this subject. We can only say that there are 650,000 persons with over £20-a-week income. And only 10,000 with over £10,000-a-year income. Ten thousand too many with over £200 a week, and far too many workers (anything up to 12-million) with less than £5-a-week.

A great deal of play is made by the press on the question of the so-called high taxation of the rich. We find, however, that an average member of the last-mentioned group, with £18,400 a year, still has £4,300 after taxation - £86-a-week plus bonus share issues. The average rate of taxation on profits is only 23%, as against 8.6% on the £6.10s-a-week worker.

If the capitalist class consider this to be ruination, then all we can say is that, in the years to come, when the workers do what the Anarchist Federation and industrial militants have always urged them to do - take over ownership and control of industry - then the capitalists will face not only ruination but atomisation as well. Which will not be a bad thing. - F.R.

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The "Economist" (28.1.50), referring to some of the White Paper estimates on the increase of wages, said:

"These figures are for the average wage-earner at work, no account being taken of unemployment or of changes in the balance of men, women and juveniles, nor has any deduction been made for taxes".

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#### N O T I C E

No issue of "Direct Action" was published during February. Copies of the AFB pamphlet, "Anarchists and the General Election", were sent to all paid-up subscribers. This is now out of print.



# THE ENUGU INCIDENT

(From a correspondent in Nigeria)

The Enugu incident was really a most stupid and dangerous affair, and has brought to the surface even more intensified racial hatred and misunderstanding. The few reports in the British press show that they obviously don't understand anything about it.

References to Communist-inspired outbursts are nonsense - the average Nigerian knows nothing about Communism. Even the educated people know nothing about Labour or Conservative, Liberal or independent. I know, because I have often attempted to explain our British political system, and the people find it hard to understand.

As for the miners, it is even more ridiculous to talk of Communism as a political weapon, because they and their leaders are not educated and therefore not likely to be influenced even by books, which are no use to them. In the first place, many of the people don't read or speak English, and secondly such books are not available here. How, then, can they be expected to come in contact with such ideas? Even the boys who go over to the U.K. for studies do not mix very much in social or political life there and, consequently, come back without knowing much about Britain.

The cost of living here is extremely high and is growing worse. When food, rent and all the bare necessities of life are increasing almost weekly - without control on the part of the Government - it follows that the people must feel the pinch. The miners, who are very few in numbers in Nigeria, like the other workers and all the rest of us, naturally find it almost impossible to keep body and soul together.

Trade unions are only now springing up in the country, and they press for higher wages. Surely any working men in any country can understand that.

The miners at Enugu had been pressing for an increase, but apparently the officials of the mining company had not taken it seriously. The miners sent a deputation of workers to the manager. It came to nothing, so they grew restive. The manager, like most Europeans here, did not understand the African and therefore feared trouble, and applied to the police to come to the mines to remove the dynamite used in mining. By this time, the miners had come out on strike.

A European police officer arrived with his men, but there



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was no violence at this stage. Soon afterwards another police officer, named Philips, arrived on the scene with a contingent of African police.

They met a group of miners who had just arrived, carrying their picks and tools, ready to go on duty. Now these miners knew nothing about the strike, but the police officer, seeing them carrying picks, etc., immediately jumped to the conclusion that they were out for trouble and ordered the miners to bring out the dynamite from the sheds and load it on to a lorry for removal. The newly-arrived miners, wondering what was happening and knowing nothing of what had gone before, told the police to remove the dynamite themselves, since that was not their work.

The British police officer then fired at them and killed two men, and ordered his African police to open fire. When one of the wounded men appealed for help, this man Philips told him he could lie there and, worse still, fired on a miner who had gone to the assistance of a wounded boy.

.... When I arrived here I was shocked to see how this country is ruled in a military fashion ..... the very idea of arming police with revolvers and tear gas bombs is utterly foreign to what one knows of the police system in Britain. Can you imagine what would happen if such an event occurred in the U.K.? ..... One feels that the true explanation will 'somehow not be made public, owing to Government officials 'covering up' the blunder which caused the lives to be lost.

So writes a British correspondent, resident in Nigeria, to "Peace News". Similar incidents have occurred and are still happening in many other parts of the British Empire and in other parts of the world. And these acts are being perpetrated by, and with the condonement of, a "Labour" Government, of which the Colonial Secretary, until February 23, 1950, was Creech Jones, one-time rebel and "champion of the subject peoples".

Our action, as revolutionary workers, must be the same whether these incidents occur in Britain, America, Africa or anywhere else. We alone can put a stop to imperialist oppression, and it is deplorable that British workers have allowed these incidents to pass without effective protest.

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"We desire the moral and material elevation of all men; we wish to achieve a revolution which will give to all liberty and well-being, and we are convinced that this cannot be done from above by force of law and decree but must be done by the conscious will and direct action of those who desire it."

Errico MALATESTA



## RUSSIAN TRADE WITH FRANCO

During recent weeks there have been a number of reports in the more reliable European papers of trade deals between Stalin and Franco. Up to now the fascist press of Spain has not confirmed the reports.

One deal, arranged through a Swiss intermediary, is said to involve the sale by Spain to Russia of 40,000 flasks (a flask is 78 lbs) of mercury. Price quoted is £17.17s per flask. One reason for the deal is that Russia has now lost some of her supplies from Yugoslavia - and mercury is required for military purposes.

Other reports indicate that there have already been exchanges, on a barter basis, between Eastern Europe and Spain.

These reports appear to be reliable, in view of an article appearing in the fortnightly Spanish fascist journal, "Criterio", at the beginning of February. This dealt with questions of international law, relating to "commercial relations with the satellite countries" with which there are no "official" diplomatic relations. The aim of the article was probably to prepare the fascist "intelligentsia" for official news of actual trade relations with Stalin.

We do not have to be reminded of the history of Stalin's deals with fascist states, for they come to mind only too quickly. The sale of oil to Mussolini during the Abyssinian war. The large-scale trade relations with Hitler during 1939, 1940 and early 1941. And deals with Peron since the war.

Stalinists have, at times, attempted to justify these deals. In "World News and Views" (semi-internal organ of the British C.P.) the "necessity of trade with Germany" was stressed on Saturday, June 21, 1941 - the day before Hitler attacked Russia.

## - TEA BREAK -

NICE CHAP "Far more important to us than the protection of London from the terror bombing was the functioning of airfields and air squadrons. We never thought of the struggle in terms of defence of London or any other place."  
(Winston Churchill, "The Second World War", Vol.2)

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HARD LUCK, COMRADE! "Scotland Yard detectives searched this afternoon for a skeleton key thief who escaped with jewellery, stamp collections and carpets"



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worth between £1,500 and £2,000 from the home of Mr. Joseph Heisler, a Czechoslovak government official, at Clorane-gardens, Hampstead". ("Star", 22.2.50)

Do all Czech workers possess such collections?

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### WATCH OUT, CATERING WORKERS!

Many catering workers are disturbed at the news that

Sir John Foster, K.C., has been appointed chairman of the Catering Wages Commission for the period of the inquiry into the operation of the Catering Wages Act in the hotel industry. An almost legendary belief has grown up among militant unionists that, where Sir John sits, the findings of the given inquiry are unfavourable to the workers. It will be remembered that Sir John was connected with the rejection of the railwaymen's recent wage claim. Sir John never appears to sit on an inquiry into an industry where the workers have shown the ability to fight.

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### YOU ALWAYS LOSE THE ONE YOU VOTE FOR

A letter wishing him an "overwhelming

victory" was sent to Ald. C.W. Black, Tory candidate for Wimbledon, by Viscountess Snowden, widow of Viscount Snowden - former Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer. ("Daily Telegraph", 13.3.50)

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### CO-INCIDENTAL?

There is at present in Bogota, Colombia, a British police mission under Sir Douglas Gordon, formerly of the Indian Police. It will be remembered that, in a recent statement signed by four ex-Presidents and 100 leading members of the Liberal Party, the Colombian government was accused of being a "fascist dictatorship". The statement accused the government of suppressing the "freedom of the press, of speech and of opinion, forcibly closing Congress and municipal assemblies, forbidding private gatherings by decree, carrying out illegal arrests and using torture in prisons.

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### WHAT HE LEFT OUT

Deakin, general secretary of the T. & G.

W.U., said on 12.2.50 at Gillingham, Kent:

"Those people who call for more wages are doing a considerable disservice to the working-class of this country. The trade union movement has derived a new dignity and authority under the Labour Government".

Yes, better pay for bureaucrats, nice jobs on the boards, and more authority over the workers.



# LABOUR, WAR AND PEACE.

"We shall refuse to support or render war service to any Government which resorts to arms"

This pledge, accompanied by a supporting circular, was circulated in 1925-27 among the Labour movements. It was signed by six trade union leaders, the first being Ernest Bevin. This is the man to implement the war-time Coalition Government's policy of military and industrial conscription, enslaving his former fellow-workers and their children to the monster military State. The man who ordered young men down the pits and to the front, women and adolescents to long hours in the war factories, and sat back on his comfortable salary as a member of Parliament and Minister of Labour and National Service.

The records of many others who held office in the Coalition Government (a coalition of leaders and rulers against the workers) and in its successor, the Labour Government, are similar. The conscriptors of today are often the conchies and war-resisters of 1916. To quote Mr. Creech Jones, Colonial Secretary in the 1945 Labour Government (and thus responsible for the shooting down of workers on the Gold Coast, in Nigeria, and possibly other incidents of which we shall never know):-

".... I served the two years hard labour and went back to my regiment four months after the war was over. I still refused to obey military orders and was sentenced to another two years' hard labour. In point of fact I actually served periods amounting to about three years and six months. Yet it was recognised all through this course that I was a perfectly genuine person".  
- House of Commons, May 18, 1939.

It is also interesting to hear the views of Mr. Aneurin Bevan, another minister in the government which talks about peace and prepares for war:-

"My friends in the trade union movement do not believe that this Conscription Bill will be confined to 200,000. We believe this is merely the beginning of extended conscription. It is the normal way in which the British ruling class does its job. Once the system is begun it will be extended.

".... If the Government wanted volunteers in a voluntary system, they would have to supply the policy which the people desired, but by the abolition of the voluntary principle, the lever of democratic pressure is taken out of the hands of the people.

"What argument have they (supporters of the Bill) to persuade the young men to fight, except in another squalid attempt to defend themselves against the redistribution of international swag?"

- House of Commons, May 4, 1939.

Nye Bevan was right then, but now Labour is



imposing conscription and he is a Labour Minister. We could go on quoting the anti-militarist speeches of Attlee, Morrison, Shinwell, Cripps, of whom the last three were World War I conchies. But all this shows that it is useless voting for Labour or pacifist M.P.'s, trusting to politicians and governments to bring peace. When the boss says "fight for your country", remember that "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel".

## GEORGE ORWELL

George Orwell's death, at the age of 46, has removed from the English literary scene one of the very few writers whose tongue was never in his cheek. Orwell's greatest quality was his transparent honesty. Even when we disagreed with his views - as was the case during the war - we recognised that his "conditional support" for Churchill's government, unlike that of so many other intellectuals, was his sincere viewpoint.

But even during the war, at the time of the formation of the Local Defence Volunteers when invasion threatened, I remember reading an article he wrote in the American "Partisan Review", in which he welcomed the revolutionary potentialities of British workers having rifles in their homes.

During the Spanish Revolution George Orwell was one of the tiny minority of left-wing writers who did not fall for Stalinism. He went to Spain, in September, 1936, with the intention of reporting events for British papers. But the revolutionary atmosphere in Barcelona drove any thoughts of writing articles out of his mind, and he enlisted in the Workers' Militia. During the 1936-37 winter he was on the Aragon front, where he came into contact with the Anarchist collectives. After his return to England, Orwell described, with sympathy and understanding, the revolutionary achievements of the Spanish workers and peasants in his fine book, "Homage to Catalonia".

We remember, too, his "Road to Wigan Pier", written during the pre-war years, in which he described the filthy conditions under which the unemployed were forced to live and where he attacked, with great effect, the lunatic fringe of the Left - the sandal-wearing, fruit juice-drinking spineless cranks.

And in post-war years "Animal Farm" and "1984" - two of the most effective books that have been written in exposure of the de-humanised dictatorship in Russia.

The paradox of George Orwell's life was that he never embraced Anarchism, for his hatred of oppression under whatever guise, and his instinctive support for the workers' struggle led him near to acceptance of libertarian philosophy. The rest of the English intellectuals were pigmies compared to him.

K.H.