

Direct Action

For workers' direct control of industry

Inside—Wind of inflation
Hungarian Revolution
Organised witch-hunting
'Reshaping' at BMC

MONTHLY PAPER OF THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION (IWMA)

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COUNCILS OF ACTION

IF YOU REMEMBER the "Councils of Action", you are over 50 and probably need somebody's nerve tonic. After the first World War they were the quick, makeshift answer to attacks on wages, or in defence of peace. In 1919, the Coalition Government's attack on railmen, a threat to all wages, called them into being. In 1920, the threat of armed intervention against Russia brought them to life again. In

the mining dispute, which gave us Red Friday, they re-appeared, as they later did in protest against a threat of war with China in 1927.

Now, more than ever, Councils of Action are needed to fight a wage freeze which, in reality, is a drastic wage cut, prohibition of strikes on pain of heavy fines and imprisonment, suspension of "the rule of law", crippling of the unions by threats, repressive laws and open prostitution. All these were, until the advent of this Labour Government, virtually unknown outside Mussolini's Italy, Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany. Only men and organisations which were thoroughly saturated by Fascist thought and action could act to this end.

Parties seem to have a telepathic sympathy with one another, so that each may often forecast the deeds of the other. Here is such a premonition:

'It is inconceivable that a Socialist Government will allow its authority to be constantly challenged by the trade unions. It is far more likely that with the coming into existence of the 'new order', the trade unions will be declared to have exhausted their usefulness and to be no longer necessary.'

Conservative Party Daily Notes, General Election, 1945.

Such prophetic accuracy is possible, because of the inborn, anti-union character of the Labour Party, the marriage of the incompatibles, unions and parties, and the deep inner corruption of the trade unions, hastened by political association. The revolt of a section of the trade union movement is small, not at all deep and almost entirely limited to legalistic argument with those who openly practise that defiance of the

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"Your tiny wage is frozen"

'Buried alive by the National Coal Board'

... suggested "cause of death" of the Aberfan victims, at the opening of the inquest (24.10.66) by a bereaved husband and father. We agree: irrespective of the Inquiry findings, this was a horrifying—and easily avoidable—case of mass murder.

"rule of law" they so loudly condemn in Ian Smith. "I do believe in the rule of law so far away as Rhodesia is."

It would be folly to expect much from a trade union movement the vastly greater part of which is dedicated to wage-freeze and anti-strike activity. A scab is a scab. Fresh organisation is needed, for the old has completely failed us. Councils of Action to support, co-ordinate and inspire the revolt against the nascent Corporate State must be formed. The years of the fat cattle have made us soft; the art of struggle is but dimly remembered, but now the years of the lean cattle are upon us again.

Councils of Action were *ad-hoc* bodies brought into being for one purpose, to one end, the stopping of a war or the winning of a great strike. In that case they should not be the sort of united front that so often came about with the ILP and the Communists or the unhappy gatherings of many small "Left" groups. Such groupings, even when called into being for an avowed industrial end, usually develop rapidly into a kind of political party in embryo with no industrial purpose, but with an ill-assorted list of political aims ranging from China's right to Formosa to coffin clubs for revolutionaries.

Useless, too, are the attempts to exploit discontent by running "Get rid of Wilson" clubs. A leaflet from one such tells us that "If we don't get rid of Wilson . . . the party will be in for its biggest blow since '31." Here is one person who hopes it gets blown to Hell.

Wilson is a true son of the Labour Party. He wasn't left on the doorstep. Get rid of Harold and replace him with—Georgie or Grunter or Callaghan? Changing jockeys won't change the horse into an elephant.

The fount of struggle is the place of work. Only from there can viable Councils of Action arise. The place of work can be an office as well as a factory, a school as well as a coalmine. Wherever men and women sell their labour for wages, conflict will develop. There the job committees must deal primarily with resistance to the government's diktat, putting aside the temptation to take over the business of the United Nations.

Thousands of good job organisations already exist. What is now needed, besides sparking them into action against the freeze and sackings is to link together the kindred committees, to federate by industry, to federate all in a district into a District Council of Action.

Resistance must grow, but the danger is isolation of units. In recent years we have seen how strong workshop organisations even in *one* firm have had no contact with one another if they were in different towns—Ford's and other car firms, for example. The greatest army can easily be destroyed, one platoon at a time.

GEORDIE

Suffer little children . . .

"THE PRICES and incomes freeze has not cooled Ray Gunter's oratory. As Minister of Labour he has been defending the Government's economic measures with evangelical fervour—like his speech at Doncaster last Monday on thriftless and dishonest Britain. All good stuff from Gunter, who is a Methodist lay preacher.

"He is not the only sermoniser in the Gunter family. His brother is an honorary canon of Bradford Cathedral, and has just retired as vicar of St. Luke's, Bradford.

"A clerical associate of Canon Gunter described him as a 'very good preacher.' His comments suggested that he didn't think too much of the Minister of Labour's pulpit technique. 'Canon Gunter is a more cultured man. He has a more refined delivery with a grasp of language and its use. He preaches for adults'."

Observer, 2.10.66.

Ten years after

IN TWO successive trials this year, 20 young Hungarian workers and students were sentenced to long prison terms for their anti-regime attitude and for having voiced criticism of the communist system.

In mid-June, after a trial in Budapest Central Court, 12 young persons aged from 18 to 23 years were jailed for terms of from 18 months to five years. Charges included "conspiracy", planning to attack a police station and a prison to seize weapons and to free political prisoners.

On May 19, a group of seven young workers and two students, accused of "seditious statements", were tried by the same court. The main defendant was sentenced to five years prison, seven others to terms of from one-and-a-half to three-and-a-half years and one received a ten-month suspended sentence.

—Information from *Espana Libre*, New York.

HELP STUART CHRISTIE!

THE APPEAL for clemency by SWF member Stuart Christie, serving a 20 year sentence in Madrid's Carabanchel Prison, has been rejected. It is obvious that now only outside pressure can secure his early release. Franco's latest tinpot-nationalist capers over Gibraltar must make him determined to avoid any apparent signs of weakening towards anything or anyone British. Again we appeal to readers of DIRECT ACTION to continue to press local MPs and the Foreign Secretary for the British Government's intervention on Stuart's behalf.

TOURIST BOYCOTT SPREADS

IN RECENT years freedom movements in Spain have continually appealed for a boycott of Spanish tourism. This year following past highly successful campaigns by the SAC (Swedish syndicalist organisation) which have virtually stopped working-class tourism to Spain from Sweden, and by the free Spain Committee of Denmark, the Norwegian Committee for Spain (headed by the Secretary of the Norwegian Federation of TUs) brought together groups from all three Scandinavian countries in a campaign against Spanish tourism.

● The SWF has reprinted its leaflet, "A Cheap Holiday", attacking tourism to Franco Spain. Copies are available at 1s. 6d. for 100; 15s. for 1,000, postpaid.

* * *

RECENTLY the W. German TU Federation (DGB) expressed strong opposition to the proposal of the W. German Foreign Minister supporting Spain's entry into the Common Market. In a press statement the DGB reaffirmed its entire solidarity with the Spanish workers fighting for freedom and for the establishment of a democratic regime in Spain.

BRIGHTON DEFENCE FUND

We have received the following appeal:

A LEGAL AND WELFARE fund has been opened to assist in the defence of the nine charged at Brighton following the demonstrations in church the Sunday before the Labour Party Conference.

Money is needed to defray legal costs and to assist dependents in case of imprisonment. If you think that these nine were right and justified in protesting when and where they did, support them by contributing to their defence fund. Take a collection among your friends and workmates.

Donations should be sent to: Felicity Crump (Brighton Defence Fund), Glynleigh Farm, Pevensey, Sussex.

THE WIND OF INFLATION

"I was surprised when Harold Wilson took Nye's line. He ought to have had more understanding of the economic situation."

A Prime Minister Remembers, Clement Attlee.

* * *

EVERY few years political gimmickry boosts a word or phrase and peddies it as the key to the social problem. "The affluent society", "automation", "managerial revolution" have in turn been chanted, as the Beatles chant "Yellow Submarine." Now inflation is the keyword. "If we do not deflate we are ruined and the cause of inflation is high wages."

What is inflation? It is the increase of money, without an increase of goods, a watering of the currency, a change in the money name of prices. But this has been with us for hundreds of years. Definite general increases of price were recorded in the Middle Ages; 600 years ago a day's good food for a family cost a few pence, a year's rent a few shillings. A recent work, *History of the Worshipful Company of Poulterers*, tells how Edward II, in 1315, fixed the price of two chickens at 1½d, three pigeons at 1d. and a goose at 3d., when sold in the City of London.

REAL WAGES ADVANCED LITTLE

The enormous increase of prices during the following centuries was not caused by high wages, for real wages, commodities earned by one's labour, advanced very little in 600 years following 1315. Many general price rises were caused by further discoveries of gold, for cheaper gold, the chief currency, meant dearer commodities; more gold bought the store goods, hence higher prices. The greatest influx of gold into Europe came in the XVI and XVII Centuries, from the exploitation of the Americas by Spain and Portugal, and the exploitation of the exploiters by the English. Further notable price increases were caused by "gold rushes" in California (1848) and Colorado (1859), then Alaska and Canada, later Australia and South Africa.

But the greatest cause of price increases is the deliberate debasement of the currency by governments. Let us suppose that we have an island community with 1,000 workers, each paid £10 a week. Every week they are paid £10,000 in paper money and go to the store, obtain goods and hand over £10,000. Every week this happens. Then one day the Government decides to build a presidential palace, or a pyramid to the Prime Minister. To do so they import another 1,000 workers.

But how shall the government pay the workers? Quite easily, print 10,000 more £1 bills . . . nothing could be easier. Now, 2,000 men with £20,000 go to the store on Friday, but the goods in the store have not increased, for the newcomers have not been making bread or boots, bicycles or beer, but

pyramids—or guns or warships. So £20,000 now buys what £10,000 once bought, prices have doubled and the Premier gets his pyramid for nothing. Paper money does not create wealth out of nothing, it is an invisible tax, a universal form of robbery, impossible to evade and a temptation to all spendthrift governments.

PRECEDES HIGHER WAGES

Does this happen here? It does, and inflation *precedes* higher wages. When Britain went to war in August, 1914, shopkeepers seized the opportunity of a shortage of food to raise enormously the price of necessities. Despite this, the trade unions signed a voluntary wage-freeze agreement with the government, but greater ills came. Britain withdrew the common currency of gold sovereigns and half-sovereigns, replacing them with paper. Inflation was on; all nations used it, increasing the speed and number of the printing presses as the war progressed. As money increased, food decreased and clothes and shoes went shoddy, while the little luxuries of the humble vanished, men and women worked harder and children, old people and cripples were pressed into war service.

Of course, inflation was greatest in the defeated nations. The German inflation of the 1914-18 war and the postwar period was swollen to a terrifying extent by the peacetime blockade, reparations and the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. It is this German case of inflation which is used over and over again by Right, Left and Centre, from Ramsay MacDonald in 1931 to Wilson in 1966, to terrify working men by the cry: "Such is inflation—the result of high wages."

Inflation is the work of government, of those who control the Bank of England and the Mint; it is not engineered by trade unions, shop stewards and other workers.

The stock-in-trade of the Wilson Government is to blame others for the mess they are getting into. "It's all due to 13 years of Tory misrule" is wearing thin, and the chief stone-casting is now at the workers: "It's your fault, you earn too much and spend too much." But the greatest spendthrift in this country is Government, and it spends money it does not earn. By taxation and inflation, Government daily increases its giant's share of the national cake and, on the plea of cutting down national spending, increases the old taxes and invents new ones. No one has yet explained how one reduces spending by taking money from a man's pocket and giving it to the Government to spend.

THE ONLY PROMISE

Surely the Labour Government must have established a peacetime record of taxation. Starting with a big increase in their own salaries and a huge increase in the State machine, they went on quickly to impose fresh levies, in two years thus:

1964—October, 15% tax on imports; November, 6d. a gallon on petrol, 6d. in the £ on income tax, bank rate raised to 7%.

1965—6d. a packet on cigarettes, 6d. on petrol, 4s. a bottle on whisky and other duties, £2. 10s. on car licences, £1 on TV, increased postal charges, including 33½% on letters.

1966—Employment tax to raise £315 million a year, corporation tax of 40%, capital gains tax, gambling tax, 10% regulator on purchase tax, another 4d. on petrol, 1d. on beer, 4s. on whisky, 10% on surtax and the threat of much more to follow.

Second only to national government as a spendthrift is local government. I know of one working man's house in London which, 16 years ago, was levied rates of 10s. a week; now it is

cont. on page 6, col. 1

SWF EVE-OF-CONFERENCE SOCIAL

Upstairs room, Griffin Inn
113, York Street, Manchester 1
Saturday, November 12
8 p.m. Admission 3s.
Entertainment . . . Refreshments . . . Raffle
(4d. bus, Nos. 80, 82, 88, 50, 64, from Piccadilly
to All Saints stop)

SWF 8th CONFERENCE

Manchester, November 13, 1966

For details contact Secretary SWF, Bill Christopher, 35 Cumberland Road, London, E.17.

Direct Action

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION, BRITISH SECTION OF INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION

Rationalisation is paralysation

THE MANAGEMENT of ENV Engineering in Willesden, employing 1,500 workers make the claim that the firm is going broke and therefore will have to close the plant.

In 1962, the firm was taken over by the American combine Eaton and some attempt made by the previous managing director to rationalise production and to establish friendly labour relations. Obviously labour relations were too friendly because a couple of months ago the managing director resigned and a new one, Mr. Townsend, took over.

The new broom was determined to sweep clean. As far as he was concerned negotiation with stewards was out; he was calling a meeting with top officials of the unions including Carron of the AEU to discuss the deteriorating profit position of ENV. Carron accepted the invitation, instead of informing Townsend that "either you recognise the stewards or no talks". Carron's action put the stewards out on a limb for a start.

The management submitted two documents, one "Functions

Direct action pays

A SHEET METAL WORKER at BMC, Birmingham, had been off sick for some time and came back to work with a certificate stating he would have to be given a lighter job. The gaffer gave him a heavier job than he had originally. The shop steward objected and had the door slammed in his face cutting his cheek. No more talk, the lads downed tools for three days and the bloke got a real light job.

This is not the first time that a man claiming a lighter job has been given this particular job by the gaffer, the difference being that on the first occasion the bloke *dropped dead* whilst doing it.

YOU CAN GET D.A. AT . . .

DIRECT ACTION is on sale at the following bookshops:

BELFAST—The Paperback Shop, Gresham St., Smithfield Sq., Belfast.

GLASGOW—Clyde Bookshop, 292 High St., Glasgow.

LONDON: Collets, Charing Cross Road, WC2.

Freedom Bookshop, 17a Maxwell Road, Fulham, SW6.

ILP Bookshop, 197 Kings Cross Road, WC1.

Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, Kings Cross, WC1.

CHICAGO: IWW Headquarters, 2422 N Halsted Street.

Solidarity Bookshop, 1947 Larrabee, Chicago 14.

SAN FRANCISCO. City Lights Bookshop, 281 Columbus Avenue, SF 11.

PARIS: Librairie Publico, 3 rue Ternaux, Paris 11.

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of Management", which was intended to wreck the authority of the shop stewards. A steward must have a pass to leave his department. Stewards' convenor was no longer to be full time on conciliation work. The second document, "The Interim Agreement", scrubbed all domestic agreements, which had the effect of a drastic wages cut.

These two documents alone exposed ENV management's real aim, to smash the shop floor organisation which by its militant action had gained improved wages and conditions.

The management have not given any evidence to justify closing the plant. A letter to this effect has been submitted to the President of the Board of Trade by ENV workers and union officials.

In spite of all the protests from the unions, ENV Engineering Co. is going ahead with plans to close down. The unions took the management through the engineering industry's official grievance procedure at York but the two sides registered "failure to agree". But still no date is set for the closure. The management attempted to carry out what they called normal stocktaking, calling upon the workers to assist them. As the workers didn't agree with the closure, they saw no point in this *so-called* normal stocktaking; and refused to do it.

On the first day of stocktaking all the workers turned up as usual and found they had been locked out. The decision was taken that as stocktaking was storemen's work those men should be employed. They stuck it for one day then joined their mates outside. Pickets were maintained for a week receiving full co-operation from all lorry drivers delivering, who turned away unloaded.

This pattern of events is not new, factories are closed down, then reopened employing chosen labour, working for less wages and under inferior conditions. Situations like this are on the increase where American-type labour relations take over, for example Remington Rand in Scotland, Ford's of Dagenham.

This is all part of the general struggle that workers are facing, and will be facing in the future.

It shows the urgent need for a genuine national rank-and-file movement with no party-political strings, which realises that the ultimate goal must be Workers' Direct Control of Industry.

GROUP NOTICES

ABERDEEN: Contact Ian Macdonald, 15 Cotton Street, Aberdeen.

BELFAST—Contact Tony Rosato, 103 Deer Park Road, Belfast 14.

BIRMINGHAM AND W. MIDLANDS. Contact Peter Neville, 12 South Grove, Erdington, Birmingham 23.

BRISTOL: Contact Mike Davis, 130 Chesterfield Road, Bristol 6.

GLASGOW: Contact R. Lynn, 2B Saracen Head Lane, Glasgow, C.1.

HULL—Contact Jim & Shelagh Young, 3 Fredericks Crescent, Hawthorn Avenue, Hessle Road, Hull, Yorks.

LIVERPOOL: Contact Vincent Johnson, 43 Millbank, Liverpool 13.

LONDON: Weekly meetings at Lucas Arms, 245 Grays Inn Road, WC1 (5 min. Kings Cross). Wednesdays at 8.30 p.m.

Nov. 23 The Hungarian Revolution—Ken Hawkes

LONDON: SWF Industrial Action Sub-Committee (London). Readers wishing to help in the work of this committee are asked to contact the Secretary, c/o 34 Cumberland Rd., London E.17.

MANCHESTER & DISTRICT: Contact Jim Pinkerton, 12 Alt Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs.

NEWCASTLE: Contact M. Renwick, 122 Mowbray Street, Heaton, Newcastle 6.

POTTERIES: Contact Bob Blakeman, 52 Weldon Ave., Weston Coyney, Stoke-on-Trent.

SOUTHALL: Contact Adrian Derbyshire, 2 Oakley House, Oakley Ave., London, W5.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS: Contact J. D. Gilbert Rolfe, 4 Mount Sion, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

WITNEY: Contact Laurens Otter, 5 New Yatt Road, North Leigh, nr. Witney, Oxon.

'RE-SHAPING' AT BMC

AN INTERESTING article by Donald Last in the *Sunday Telegraph* (16.10.66) underlined a very important aspect of the BMC sackings. The article was headed "B.M.C.'s chance to reshape", and in the first paragraph poses the all important question: "Is the British Motor Corporation taking advantage of the slump in car sales to cure over-manning and sort out its trouble-makers and clockwatchers?" Last also states the obvious: "If it is, it is not going to admit it".

The chairman, Sir George Harriman, has publicly stated that 12,000 sacked car workers will certainly not be needed for a year. Looking at the future when car production does pick up, the prospects are not too bright. On resumption of full production, negotiation will take place on staffing. Allowing a couple of hundred men either way will still leave a considerably reduced labour force for the same, if not increased, output.

Industrial relations never have been all that wonderful at BMC from the management's point of view. The shop steward organisation has been active and effective; what better opportunity than now for breaking it up? Car workers at Ford's, Dagenham, had the same experience; true, the reason for the break-up was different but the effect meant reorganising from scratch.

There are 13 unions in the car industry all facing the same problem, and they cannot agree on a common policy. When the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions met on Thursday October 13, the NUVB put forward the proposal to have the Confederation sponsor a special meeting of all the car unions and work out a "common front" policy. But the executive rejected its proposals. The AEU, NUVB and TGWU have had separate talks with Gunter, which annoyed other members of the Confederation, in fact Cannon of the ETU moved a censure motion which was carried by a three-to-one majority. Cannon's point was that the action of the three unions threatened the future of the Confederation.

What precisely has been the result of these infamous talks with Gunter? I venture to suggest, very little. The majority of TU leaders are very parochial, always in competition for members. Therefore if one can get a better deal than the other there is always hope of attracting new members, like a Dutch Auction.

In the meantime of course the major problem is not being tackled with the necessary solidarity. The NUVB have not given up trying, they have written to the Confederation asking for a meeting to be arranged with the other 12 unions. The NUVB wants to force a four-day week even if it means going on strike for the other day. They are in line with the emergency motion carried at Labour Party Conference. Wilson's reply on his defeat is worth remembering: "We shall continue to govern." In other words—"Get stuffed!"

There have been many conflicting reports about the AEU vote on that motion. Carron stated in Glasgow that the AEU delegates had strict instruction to give 100% support to the

Labour Government, when in fact the AEU delegation supported Cousins against the Government.

NOT ANOTHER PAPER!

MR RICHARD O'BRIEN, industrial adviser to the Department of Economic Affairs, in a personal paper to the Royal Commission on Trades Unions, suggests upgrading shop stewards and downgrading the power of national officials. This sounds too good to be true and in fact it is, when one delves into the proposals a little deeper. O'Brien's idea is to negotiate at national level minimum earnings, local levels on hours, holidays, pensions and other fringe benefits; and upon the efficiency criteria to guide plant bargaining.

He also proposes joint negotiating committees empowered to deal with all matters relating to the plant, including earnings, time and piece rates, work study and job evaluation. No claim by a union would be allowed to go beyond factory level without the joint committee *expressing its opinion*. Now for the punch-line. The Confederation of British Industry and the TUC would be given greatly increased powers. In consultation with the Prices and Incomes Board they would interpret the criteria for exceptions to the incomes norm in individual industries. "Provided that there has been thorough consultation before the norm is finally determined, *it would be expected that both these bodies would not support any of their members which decided to oppose their recommendations. The Government would, however, continue to have the final responsibility for defining the incomes norm.*"

O'Brien forgot to mention whether dividend and profit norms would be discussed at the joint negotiating committees. Apart from the fact that the shop stewards could argue for months, the POWER still lies where it always has done, with the employers and the Government. The TUC has been included as the poor relation.

GPO TIGHTEN SCREWS

INSPECTORS must not sign postal workers' overtime dockets before the overtime is completed and must query any that seems to them excessive. Football pools which rate compulsory overtime cut from three days allowed to two. The Post Office always does give b——all away in any case; that's probably why Ron Smith prefers the Steel Industry.

NOT FORCED TO—BUT!

AT THE beginning of September, Hull dockers were warned by the TGWU about the serious effect their banning of weekend work could have on their employment. The warning was sent through the cyclostyléd Hull *Dockland News* issued by the local region of the TGWU. It gives a list of ships diverted to other ports because of the weekend ban. It then goes on to say "In consequence of this information, we feel sure that you will appreciate the urgent need for a resumption of weekend working in this port.

"There is of course no compulsion upon registered dock workers to work week-ends. Men may volunteer to do so if they wish".

Dockland News continues "It would be wrong for men to be told they must work weekends. It is equally wrong when men are told they must not."

What's all the fuss? A docker decides whether he wants weekend work or not, he doesn't need an economic survey to convince him that he wants to work. Strange, maybe he prefers weekends at home with the family. Surely this is not unusual, even in Hull.

BILL CHRISTOPHER

"THERE are a lot of foolish people who believe that this nation can live without work."

Mr Ray Gunter, Wolverhampton, 21.10.66

SMASH THE WAGE FREEZE!

by **BILL CHRISTOPHER**

New Direct Action pamphlet — 2d.

SECOND PRINTING

(5d. postpaid; bulk orders 2s. a dozen)

Help fight Wilson's bid to hamstring the working class by giving this pamphlet a big circulation.

From Direct Action, 34 Cumberland Road, London E.17. Cheques and p.o.'s should be payable to Syndicalist Workers' Federation

Organised witch-hunting

SPEAK of spies to the average person and he thinks of James Bond and the men from UNCLE. Yet this is far from the truth. Speak of industrial spies and he conjures up secret snapshots of the latest Paris creations—much nearer the truth. Speak of “spies” who watch and report on militants among their workmates and the image is always spot-on—slimy, sneaky rats, willing to sink to the lowest sewer levels and beneath contempt.

Few workers, however, realise that many organisations exist just for this purpose, though most are not so blatant as Complete Security Services, who in 1963 issued a letter (reprinted in DA, November, 1963) offering “carefully selected and thoroughly vetted” stool pigeons to business concerns. Only prompt exposure put an end to that little caper.

Most spying organisations hide behind some cover—politics, education, religion, etc. The following are the best known:

- The Economic League,
- The Freedom Group (Edward Martell),
- IRIS and Common Cause,
- Catholic Action.

Catholic Action, like Moral Re-Armament (MRA) operates on the alleged basis of Christianity. It preaches the reactionary, unscientific theory of “A fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay”. It has, to my knowledge, been involved in witch-hunting many militant workers and, on Merseyside, is very active in the docks.

Common Cause is the political and open wing of IRIS. It preaches that worker and capitalist have common interests and should work for these (shades of Wilson). Recently it published a list of over 200 alleged “Marxists.” Many named, however, were not Marxists, members of the SWF, for instance, also being fingered. Some connect Catholic Action and Common Cause; this would be difficult to prove, but not, as others say, beside the point.

IRIS (Industrial Research and Industrial Security) is semi-

secret. Although they push the “Research” aspect, it really exists for so-called “Security”. Some readers may be shocked to learn the HQ of IRIS is in the National Union of Seamen’s offices in Clapham—not so surprising, however, as several NUS members have told me that union has one of the best-organised spying departments of all. In fact, most big unions and the Labour Party have such sections.

The Freedom Group, run by Edward Martell, concentrates most of its attention on the Tory Party, but is more famous for strikebreaking—printing, transport, postal and port workers having been the chief targets to date. Its press can produce 50,000,000 leaflets in just 24 hours—one for every man, woman and child in this country. It claims “a large and expert campaign staff which, in recent years, has been responsible for running the Freedom buses, when London’s busmen were on strike, running rivercraft when the railwaymen were on strike, organising the Nationwide Delivery Services during the postal go-slow.” It owns Sapphire Press (formerly John Waddington’s). Its Tileyard Press Ltd. has an authorised capital of £500,000. During the print strikes of ’56 and ’58, it printed *TV Times*, *The Listener*, *Radio Times* and the *British Medical Journal*, among many other periodicals. Despite the fact that only print workers have been hit really hard by Martell, despite his claims to be merely a Tory ginger group, despite rocky finances which have led to the suspension of his *New Daily*, this grouping poses an obvious danger to the British working class.

Moral Re-Armament’s vast resources include theatres and hotels all over the world, a rumoured 100 full-time organisers in this country alone (source: John Calder, *Peace News*) and assets of millions of pounds. It is difficult to see how “ordinary people” can finance its full-page press advertisements and expensive brochures and free trips.

But of all these organisations, the best known is the Economic League. I shall deal with it at some length next month.

VINCENT JOHNSON

(to be concluded).

Letter

COMRADES,

In Belgium the workers’ movement appears to be entering a new phase. Increasing numbers of workers are realising the miserable role of the trade unions and so-called working-class parties.

At Zwartberg, striking miners kicked out the union officials and carried out their struggle themselves. At ACEC, Charleroi, union officials—CP members—beat up women wanting to show their solidarity with strikers at FN-Herstal.

In some firms, workers have collectively torn up their union cards. In others, workers’ groups have been formed.

“Unité Ouvrière” (Workers’ Unity), in collaboration with other groups (especially “La Voix Ouvrière” of Liège) seeks to aid the formation of such action groups and to build firm contacts between them. With this aim, a manifesto is to be distributed in the main Belgian industrial centres. We do not claim to possess any eternal truths and we are conscious of the great difficulties we must overcome. The ideas and experiences of your grouping could probably help us, so I suggest regular exchange of information with you. So that you may understand our group’s position, I am enclosing our programme. Hoping for a favourable reply,

Cordial greetings,

Brussels, Belgium.

J. CLABAU

The programme of these Belgian comrades includes direct workers’ control of production and society, opposition to bureaucratic control of workers’ struggles and denounces parliamentarism; as “the best weapon of the bourgeoisie in maintaining its society of exploitation.”—Eds.

INFLATION (cont.)

levied at £2. 15s. a week. At that rate, in 16 years they will be £15. 2s. 6d. per week and, in return, nothing he would not have had 50 years ago . . . the only promise one of a steeper rate of increase.

During the week that Wilson announced his latest “grave economic crisis” on TV, a representative of the Greater London Council also came on the box to tell of a new motor road inside London to cost £3,000 million (enough for ten Channel tunnels) if prices did not rise. But prices did and will. At this point the TV drill is for the interviewer to say, “But in the present economic crisis, can the ratepayers afford to spend such money?” And the usual reply, given with a smirk: “Let me put it another way—can we afford *not* to spend it?”

As to the “balance of payments crisis”, Tory odd-man-out the learned Enoch Powell recently demonstrated that while Britain exported a certain amount, she imported less, leaving a large surplus, vast Government expenditure abroad converted the surplus into a large deficit. The problem, therefore, was not economic but political and could not be solved by Wilson’s repressive measures. One might add that the whole general problem is not economic, but is one created by politicians, who aggravate the problem by their attempts to pretend that the Great Empire was never lost. Now, however, it is the British taxpayer on whom the sun never sets.

TOM BROWN

HUNGARY: THE FLAME OF FREEDOM

"A FANTASTIC aspect of the situation is that although the general strike is in being and there is no centrally-organised industry, the workers are nevertheless taking upon themselves to keep essential services going for purposes which they themselves determine and support.

"Workers' councils in industrial districts have undertaken the distribution of essential goods and food to the population, in order to keep them alive. The coal miners are making daily allocations of just sufficient coal to keep the power stations going and supply the hospitals in Budapest and other large towns. Railwaymen organise trains to go to approved destinations for approved purposes.

"It is self-help in a setting of Anarchy."

The Observer (25.11.56)

* * * *

On October 22, 1956, the workers and students of Hungary, moving into full-scale revolt against the dictatorship of the Communist Party over the social and economic life of that Central European country, lit a flame that—but for the brutal military intervention of Russia's Red Army—could have swept across Eastern Europe and into the USSR itself, opening a new era of hope for the libertarian and working-class movement throughout the world.

The movement began in Budapest, following a 14-point students' manifesto (22.10.56), demanding a series of social reforms, including freedom of speech and of the Press, the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Hungary and the retrial in open court of all persons serving sentences for political or economic offences.

On the following day, a mass meeting of students and workers, numbering some 10,000, demonstrated their solidarity with the Polish people's struggle for independence from Russia (the Polish workers had struck against Communist dictatorship four months earlier):

SECRET POLICE LYNCHED

"Towards evening, the main body of demonstrators had converged on the radio station, where they demanded that the student manifesto should be broadcast. The building was packed with 300 men of the AVH (*Allamvedelmi Hatosagom*—political police), who opened fire on the crowd. The people's huge, long-smouldering hatred of the secret police burst into a wild flame and soon they were hunting them through the streets and lynching those luckless enough not to be killed by rebel bullets." (*The Hungarian Workers' Revolution*, SWF, 1957).

From the outset there was a direct confrontation between the organs of State power and the democratically-elected workers' councils, which sprang up all over Hungary, providing the embryo form of a new society, based on the administration of things. Budapest showed the way and the rest of the country was quick to follow:

"The Council of Miskolc provides us with an example. It was formed on October 24, democratically elected by all workers in the Miskolc factories, irrespective of their political position. It immediately called a general strike, with the exception of three services: transport, electric power and hospitals. These measures show its care to administer the region and ensure for the people maintenance of public services. Very quickly, too (the 24th or 25th) the Council sent a delegation to Budapest to establish contact with the insurgents of the capital, to assure them of the active support of the provinces and to act in agreement with them." (*L'Insurrection Hongroise*, Socialisme ou Barbarie).

Among the chief centres of resistance and support for the revolution outside Budapest were the mining and industrial towns, such as Varpalota, Dunpentele, Tatabanya and Pecs. Peter Fryer, correspondent of the London *Daily Worker* in Budapest, saw for himself what was happening; his reports were suppressed or distorted by that paper, leading to his resignation. Later, in his book *Hungarian Tragedy*, Fryer testified: "It was the proletariat of Hungary, above all, that fought the (Russian) tanks which came to destroy the revolutionary order they had already established in the shape of workers' councils."

Again and again, in discussing the Hungarian events of ten years ago we are forced to consider these workers' councils, which supplanted the State-controlled trade unions. Elected on the basis of the mass meeting of the workers at their workplace, these councils were essentially Syndicalist in character. And it was the traditional Syndicalist methods of struggle which they employed so successfully: the general, stay-in-strike, armed militias, sabotage and non-co-operation.

The vast network of councils did not remain isolated, one from another: "It is quite extraordinary to note how these councils, born spontaneously in different regions, partially isolated by the Russian armies, immediately sought to federate themselves. At the end of the first revolutionary week they tended to form a republic of councils." (*L'Insurrection Hongroise*).

FREEDOM AND WORKERS' CONTROL

The Hungarian workers had no intention of overthrowing Bolshevik dictatorship, only to return to a capitalist form of society. The primary aims of the revolution were freedom and workers' control. Fryer (*ibid*) writes of "The absolute failure of the Hungarian Communist Party, after eight years in complete control of their country, to give the people either freedom from want or freedom from fear . . . The Communist leaders promised the people an earthly paradise and gave them a police state as repressive and as reprehensible as the pre-war fascist dictatorship of Admiral Horthy."

The peasants, like the industrial workers, played a dominant role in the revolution: "The farms, too, joined the revolt, forming Freedom Fighter groups, denying large areas of the country to the Red Army and the puppet government and leaving the enforced farm collectives of the Communists, to decide themselves whether to farm the land individually or in voluntary collectives." (*Hungarian Workers' Revolution*).

There can be no possible doubt that, but for Khrushchev's massive intervention with the Red Army (some units of which had to be replaced, because of their sympathy with the rebel workers), the revolution would have succeeded. And, as it developed, the aims increasingly were those of direct workers' control of Hungary's social life—and international solidarity. In other Communist-ruled States there were movements of support for the revolution . . . Bulgaria, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic States were all simmering with unrest that was ready to boil over.

Unhappily, the Hungarian workers—like the Spaniards nearly 20 years earlier—were eventually defeated by naked military force. But the flame of freedom they kindled is still alive. It provides the greatest hope of eventual victory for libertarian ideas, not alone in the Communist dictatorships, but throughout the entire world.

KEN HAWKES

POPULAR joke in Hungary before the revolution, related to us by an exiled worker: "Capitalism is the exploitation of man by man. Communism is the opposite."

THE RIGHT MAN FOR RIGHT JOB!

WELL, WELL, WELL! Ald. Andrew Cunningham, regional boss of the NUGMW, has been made union director of Fairfield's yard, the Government's corporatist venture on Clydeside.

Readers will remember that when helping to break the seamen's strike, "Wor Andy" referred to Newcastle dockers as "my workers". You've got to give it to the lad, though, he is straight—unlike his mate Sir William Carrion of Accrington, England, Universe (AEU). Carrion referred to the Fairfield's workers as "Our investment" when leaving the Labour Party Conference for a visit there (giving the revolutionary Bro. Scanlon his famous chance to switch a few hundred thousand block votes on Vietnam, etc.)

And again, you canna say Andy's out of line with official NUGMW collaborationist policy. Wasn't it Andy's national boss Lord Cooper (NUGMW: Never Underestimate the Grab Motive, Workers) who put a million quid of members' funds into ICI just after it had sacked a thousand workers?

In fact, Andy's move seems really trendy. Ron Smith has stepped off his round to help his fellow Tories run the second profitable nationalisation of steel. President of the Amalgamated Society of Woodcutting Machinists, Cecil Spence, bench-hand and convenor at a Teesside works, has just been made Production Manager there. His executive are keeping him on until his term expires, but they thought being convenor and manager might be tricky, giving orders to yourself and all that . . .

His first task? To bring in work study.

THE RIGHT APPROACH

WHEN a thousand shipyardmen from Blyth came back from holiday in August 1,000 redundancy notices were awaiting them like bolts from the blue. Allegedly the yard is £1½ million in debt.

There is no alternative employment in Blyth, thus making the town a dormitory suburb of Tyneside overnight and—strange coincidence—solving the Tyne shipyards' labour shortage and weakening Tyne yard workers' bargaining power. Older workers are, of course, on the slagheap.

A Blyth Shipyard Action Committee has been formed on official lines to fight the closure. Apart from this disability the committee is hamstrung by not being able to see the books to get the real facts out.

Two proposals from the Committee are that any dismantling work be "blackened" and that a token strike in support be staged by all yardmen on the Tyne. Obviously, the first proposal is essential. But as for the second, even if it comes

off, frankly it is just a waste of a half-day's pay, quite apart from getting cold standing around. What about Teesside, Wearside and the Hartlepoons? Remember, an injury to one is an injury to all. Surely, instead of courting MPs who are a drag and ineffectual, and who represent the party whose policies are causing closures all over, and instead of piddling protest measures, a campaign of genuine resistance is needed on the job. What about a regional work-to-rule?

Should the campaign be successful, any new boss can get a large Government grant under the Local Employment Act. With strings attached? Like a Fairfield's-style reopening?

DIRECT ACTION REPORTER

Keep right on . . .

LABOUR PARTY Conference this year was a Significant National Event. The press, TV and radio saw to that. What was all the fuss about?

Conference does not decide Labour policy. This has been shown time and again. In 1960 the vote went against the leader, Gaitskell, over the Bomb. He said he would "fight, fight and fight again" to reverse the vote. Labour had been out of office then for nine years and though it did *not* make Unilateralism party policy Gaitskell knew this vote would put them out for longer still. The marginal-seat electors who make and unseat governments were for the Bomb.

This year, Wilson is leader and home and dry in office. Some votes went against him, but was he worried? Not a bit, and he said so, said he was going right on governing, regardless, and let's not forget that it was Wilson himself who challenged Gaitskell for the leadership over the very issue of Conference deciding Labour policy—so much for that little "stand for principle".

If we think about it, things can't really be otherwise. A prime minister's job is, after all, to run capitalism—besides staying in office, of course. The real policies of the governing party—not to be confused with vote-catching promises made with elections in mind—are dictated by this task.

The State machine was not created by the ruling class to bring life, liberty and happiness to the oppressed and exploited—quite the opposite in fact. Sixty years' experience since the founding of the Labour Party (and the indications were there well before that, even) plus the experiences of workers in other countries should have taught us that by now. The advantage over the Tories that the Labour Party brings to the driver's seat of this one-way steamroller is that it can draw along the masses of workers behind it through capturing their class loyalty. Thus they will stomach a wage freeze and sackings policy that they would have fought tooth and nail if introduced by the Tories.

In creating this situation we should never forget the role of the TU officials, the middlemen in the labour market who run the unions in their own interests and not those of the rank and file. It was the forefathers of the Carrons and Coopers of today who did most to bring about the Labour Party, calling then on the class loyalty of the rank and file but in reality anxious only to secure political careers and safeguard themselves and the funds they controlled against legal action following disputes.

One of the most revealing things about the Labour Party Conference this year was that the opposition to the sackings and wage freeze was led by Cousins, a TU bureaucrat without equal, elected for life and in spite of whom, not because of whom, rank and file TGWU members have struggled over the years for a better life.

MARK HENDY

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