

Direct Action

For workers' direct control of industry

**Inside—Life on the dole
Devaluation hits workers
Cannon sells out sparks
What to do with pitheaps**

MONTHLY PAPER OF THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION (IWMA)

Vol.8 No.12 (78)

December 1967

Sixpence

NO COALS FROM NEWCASTLE

WHEN Lord Robens let a premature cat out of the bag and announced the Wilson government's plan to kill off the mining industry, watchers of TV in the North-East felt they had been hit by a block buster. Then the BBC put on a show of mining history ending somewhere in the 19th century, with children of seven working in pits, women carrying coal up ladders and working at the coal face and men working naked in almost unbelievable conditions for a pittance.

At the end of this parade townspeople were heard to say, "If that's mining it's a good job they are giving it up." Visual impressions are strong—and what is political propaganda but the juxtaposition of unrelated facts? The BBC would never tell us that only in Soviet Russia do women work down coal mines, as the Durham miners' delegation found to their surprise and disgust.

Though Robens has been condemned for speaking too early this does not conceal the fact that his figures were the true estimate of the Labour Government's intention. Robens's pals were ratting on him.

The figure includes a reduction to only 277,000 men by

1971, 161,000 by 1975 and only a few thousand by 1980.

I can recall when 1,000,000 men were employed in British coal mining, 100,000 of them in Durham. Now Durham and Northumberland and Cumberland are to have, in all, 6,500. Truly, as the miners here say, "It is the murder of an industry—and more."

The "more" is the destruction of many great and small communities. Miners have a distinct way of life. They are neither townsfolk or countryfolk, even having ways that are not always shared by nearby townsmen, including a strong degree of matriarchy. But there is always a strong community with high solidarity and local self-reliance. With the mines will perish the bases of hospitals and old peoples' houses (established long before the Welfare State), choirs, brass bands, chapels, workmen's clubs, sport (when England won the World Cup three of the players on the field at Wembley came from one little street of the mining town of Ashington), co-operatives, convalescence homes and the hundred things that make a community.

HIGH PRICE OF COAL?

Nor is such a community composed entirely of miners. There are women, children, old people and those who serve the community, shopkeepers, cobblers, barbers, teachers, nurses, builders, and a host of others, totalling more than the population of many states in the UN. All to be scattered like the Children of Israel, their little towns like the ghost mining towns of the old American Mid-West.

The excuse for this massive slaughter is the allegedly high price of coal for the production of heat and power, compared with hydro-power, electricity, nuclear power, and natural gas and oil. Robens challenges these figures, some wonder if they exist. Now to their relative merits.

There is little hydro-electricity here because of its cost and physical factors. As an example, this week the Central Electricity Generating Board abandoned their much boasted plan for a £36 million hydro-power station at Bideford, Devon, in its early stages, losing £400,000 on planning.

Nuclear power stations have proved disappointing, costly and behind schedule. The cost of the experimental work on these machines seems to be a State secret, but would certainly prove to be a frightening figure. Their immediate future is uncertain.

As to natural gas from the North Sea, no one objects to its use, but it is, as yet, a small and uncertain factor.

● contd page 2 column 1

Help for the homeless

THE Durham Buildings demonstration on November 12 at Wandsworth had one major advantage over previous demonstrations on conditions at reception centres for the homeless such as King Hill.

The Friday before the demonstration a number of owner-occupiers in Wandsworth who were already fighting compulsory purchase orders, seeing no point in having their houses turned into luxury flats, rang up and offered to make an illegal entry into some houses that had lain empty for some time and rehouse the residents of the buildings. This means that the support for the residents would not be confined to revolutionaries but would become a sympathetic action from a largish (850 members), local, relatively affluent working-class body for their more deprived neighbours.

The demonstration began as a result of the Council's warning to the residents that they were to be evicted and not provided with alternative accommodation. The buildings are positively ghastly and no one would willingly live there if they could help it.

The fact that people are fighting to stay there is eloquent testimony to the lack of any alternative accommodation.

NO COALS (cont.)

However, the placing of electricity in opposition to coal is either a political trick or the fruit of ignorance from bureaucrats who believe that electricity is produced by pressing a wall switch! Almost all our electricity is produced by the burning of fuel in boiler furnaces to produce steam, to drive turbines, to turn generators to produce electricity. The only issue is which fuel? And the main issue is coal or oil.

Apart from the doubtful accuracy of Government figures which favour petroleum, there are other factors of cost, if oil takes the place of coal, loss of tax and insurance paid by miners, loss of their labour, payment of dole and special payments, cost of despairing schemes to plug the gap, the great increase of applicants for National Assistance from the ruined. Not only inhuman but bad bookkeeping, and each pit carries a share of the burden of compensation to previous owners. When a pit closes the payments continue.

MILITARY COST

But the economics of State capitalism are the economics of private capitalism, and society carries the burden of profits failure, and the base of the pyramid gets the greatest crunch.

Above all else this must be shouted; before nuclear power stations, before gas spouted from the North Sea, the then Labour Government decided in favour of oil against coal in 1946 and went to work on it.

When Britain has a permanent balance of payments crisis it is decided to switch irrevocably from home-produced fuel to imported fuel. The fuel we have here is scorned for the fuel we have not.

More than 80% of oil used here comes from the Middle East, which has, since Attlee started the pro-oil policy, had three wars, the Suez Canal blocked twice, and the Persian oil crisis. One figure never cited is the military cost of maintaining the supply of sea borne oil, or the cost of far from peaceful intrigue among Arab oil wells.

When, in the thirties, Ludwell Denny wrote his "We Fight

Sitdown at Barrow

THERE was an element of nostalgia about the Barrow Anti-Polaris demonstration on November 4. The police obviously were as mystified by civil disobedience as other police had shown themselves back in the late fifties.

The police had provided themselves with fire engines, had put up barriers and were there in force, but were prepared for the sort of uncoordinated punch-up that characterized Grosvenor Square, not for civil disobedience.

There was the same mystification when the police told us to go and we remained sitting. (We had previously dissuaded a Maoist from throwing a smoke bomb: an action designed to cause minimal damage to the state and maximal damage to the demonstration.)

I was carted off by the police early and so did not see much (other than a police cell) of Barrow and did not see the sub go aground. We had hoped to block the opening of the lock gates (there was only a leeway of ten minutes for the Navy to get it through if it were not to go aground) but we did not get there and only managed to delay the opening ceremony a little.

The magistrates did the usual business of interrupting any statements, but nevertheless it was possible to say far more there of why we did it than I had ever previously been able to do.

LAURENS OTTER

for Oil", none could deny his fearful picture; it hasn't grown better since.

Labour MPs are worried—about their seats! The Miners' Union holds 27 seats in the House of Commons, 53 more rely on the miners' big vote. A switch of 80 seats could decide any General Election. A new party and other political antidotes are proposed, then out come Labour officials, Right and Left, Trots and Communists to cry, "Don't desert the Party. They're traitors, but we must vote Labour—traitors or not."

WITHOLDING THE LEVY

Communist Will Paynter, Secretary of the National Union of Miners, is one who rushed to Wilson's aid when Right-wing officials spoke of leaving the party, "We must stay in the Labour Party." How else can one get to the House of Lords?

Will Calvert, chairman of Silksworth Miners' Lodge, Durham, expressed the view of most miners when he said in a BBC-TV interview, "For years Durham miners have been the backbone of the Labour Party. Now that same party is actually going to destroy the miners . . . I would not go out of my house to vote Labour next time." Silksworth has given a lead to all miners by at once leaving the Labour Party, and withholding the political fund. The decision was unanimous by 1,000 members, the money now withheld is £400.

"Treachery", and "Stab in the back" are general comments, anger the constant mood. At South Shields 400 miners met in Armstrong Hall to hear the Wilson apologies recited by local Labour MP Arthur Bienkinsop. For an hour they listened to speeches, then the platform announced, "No questions will be allowed." 350 miners jumped up shouting; picking up the tables and chairs they threw them to the floor as they stormed from the meeting.

The 50 who remained passed a resolution calling on the government telling them to support the industry in every way. They who left are finished with such pious resolutions.

It is wrong to talk of "fighting within the Labour Party", it is like a man meeting a beast of prey in a jungle and saying, "It's all right, I'll fight when I'm in the tiger's belly." There is absolutely no basis for fighting inside the Labour Party.

PLAN OF RESISTANCE

Labour Party rank and file are like the married woman often found in Victorian novels, who says of her husband, "He starves me, bashes me, insults me, steals my money and spends it on drink and harlots, but he's my husband and I'll stand by him." No party needs to placate the ever-faithful, it's the floating voter the politicians watch.

The only possible plan of resistance for the miners is simple:

- (1) Withdraw from the Labour Party and, individually and collectively, withhold the political levy from that party.
- (2) Refuse to vote for the Labour Party.
- (3) Organise at pit and lodge level, federating into regional and national councils, for industrial action.
- (4) Form Councils of Action of miners and all others in the country who will suffer by the Anti-Coal Mining programme.

GEORDIE

KILBURN ANARCHIST GROUP—Contact Andrew Dewar, 16 Kilburn House, Malvern Place, London N.W.6. Meetings every Tuesday, 8 p.m.

SW MIDDLESEX ANARCHIST GROUP: Contact P. J. Goody, 36 Norman Ave., Hanworth, Middx.

PROPOSED GROUP: Syndicalists, Anarchists, Libertarians and Pacifist Socialists wanted to form S.W. London Libertarians. Contact Martin Page, 10 Thornton Avenue, S.W.2.

LIFE ON THE DOLE

IF Harold Wilson continues with his (hopeless) policies aimed at setting capitalism to rights, many more workers are going to find themselves signing the dole soon. Just what is the dole? How does it work? Here are some of the facts.

Some form of poor relief has always existed in Britain. During the Middle Ages the church gave handouts to the poor and needy and it was not until Tudor times that the authorities began to take a hand.

In 1834 was published the Poor Law Report, the work of one Edwin Chadwick. This report recommended the transfer of relief from the magistrates to a specially appointed board of "guardians". Its most notorious provision was for the setting up of workhouses. In due course a Department was set up to administer the Poor Laws. If anything reflected the "Protestant Ethic" it was the 1834 Poor Law Act. No able-bodied man was to receive relief unless he entered a workhouse, which to quote the actual words of the Report was to be "an uninviting place of wholesome restraint". They were. It is this attitude which pervades the Ministry of Social Security, the spiritual descendant of the Poor Law Department.

INTERROGATION SESSION

The cardinal rule is that no one must receive more in benefits than they do when working; thus the infamous "wage stop rule". Under this rule thousands of families are kept in abject poverty—by a Ministry which is supposed to erase poverty. And the Government is on a good thing financially, too. For instance, in 1926, it was found that 45% of insured workers had not drawn any benefit for the preceding five years. The State made a nice profit out of their contributions. Taking into account the fact that unemployment was much greater in those days, one can imagine the rake-in taken by the State today, when people are paying around 15s. a week to the State. How much of this is used for unemployed workers is another question. In fact the annual intake of loot divided by the number unemployed gives a figure of roughly £900 for every unemployed person. How many unemployed do you know with £900 a year! What happens to the surplus? As in the thirties, it is channelled off to "defence".

Now the mechanics of the dole. You are given your cards (and don't mutter "what about redundancy money?"—if

you haven't seen the holes in the Redundancy Payments Act, the employers *have!*). So you go to sign on. You'll get a little interrogation session. If you can't remember the exact date of jobs, etc., the bureaucrat will get sharpish and tell you that such information must be exact or it may affect future payments. Then they send a letter to your last boss. If he doesn't feel like answering for a while you can wait for your money. Suppose you get the sack for complaining about the filthy toilets. There's a very good chance that this will be recognised as "industrial misconduct". Strike agitating is also recognised under this heading. So you'll find that you are getting no money for six weeks.

But you do have a right of appeal to a tribunal. This usually consists of a trade unionist (more accurately, a union *official*—which may or may not be a blessing!) a lawyer and a civil servant, or an employer's representative (who's bound to be on your side!). The insurance officer has the right to place your past record (unknown to you) before this body.

The tribunal usually doesn't sit for ages, by which time you've probably got a job and can't attend in person anyway. So they carve you up, and you are not even there to watch the slaughter. In the end they send you a letter turning down your claim (I've never actually heard of anyone winning).

They'll say you should have complained about the toilets to the proper quarters, *e.g.* the union (big laugh) or the factory inspectors (who always make sure the boss knows exactly who complained even if they don't mention you by name).

The reason you always lose is obvious. The union official gets a few bob for sitting on the board, the lawyer gets a steady retainer, one civil servant is hardly likely to condemn the actions of another, and the solidarity is legendary. The motions of democracy are always scrupulously gone through.

ANOTHER TRIBUNAL

So, deprived of money for six weeks—what next? To the Ministry of Social Security—or to give it its common name, the NAB (officially dead, but still alive in spirit). Here you will sit in a filthy office waiting to be checked up to the nines by some weaselly official. Should you want to use the toilet—there's none. Go outside and you've lost your place in the queue. Then they'll send a snoop round your house. Officially this is to make sure you haven't got a Rolls in your outside toilet, or paper on the walls or anything extravagant like that. Linoleum in the floor, to these boys, marks you down as being loaded. They will "assess your needs", *i.e.* calculate the minimum you could scrape by on, taking the diet of a church mouse as the governing factor in their deliberations. You would almost think it was *their* money they are giving out, but it's *yours!* And what happens when you complain about this pittance? Well, there's another tribunal! Get really stropky and they call the police. People have drawn three months for kicking up in their offices. Then they stop the money for the wife and kids while you're inside.

A charming system for a charming society. So if you collect a stamp collection this winter—watch out! The stamps in that particular album are worthless!

IAN S. SUTHERLAND

Sources: (1) *An Illustrated History of Modern Britain* by Richards & Hunt.

(2) *English History 1914-1945* by A. J. P. Taylor.

(3) *Circumstances of Families* (Ministry of Social Security).

(4) Bitter Experience!!!

Army cadets routed

RECENTLY a rather hopeful development: a school headmaster in Brixton, London, told his children to get permission to come back in the evening, but did not tell the parents that this was to allow them to be indoctrinated by the Army Cadet instructor for the area on November 7.

One parent, finding out and not wishing to let his kids be so indoctrinated, contacted the Committee of 100 and with him Jim Radford and Viv Broughton went there. They started by leafletting and then intended to ask awkward questions through the meeting. This latter was called off as the military obviously did not feel it could handle hecklers but in fact this made it easier to put the anti-militarist case to the children, the day was ours.

● Pirate Press is still going, despite savage sentence on Terry Chandler, under management of Mike Seaman and Neill Collins, 116 Whitfield Street, W.1. 01-387 8864.

Direct Action

Published monthly by the Syndicalist Workers' Federation,
British section of the International Working Men's Association

Devaluation hits the working class

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT'S devaluation of the £, on November 19, was just one more proof that Wilson's policies are determined not by the interests of the working class, nor by his own party, nor yet by its parliamentary representatives, nor even by his Cabinet, but are dictated for him by the economics of international finance capitalism.

Despite all the claptrap about how little this action will affect the standard of living in his country, it is perfectly obvious that—as usual—the working class will carry the can. Prices of very many consumer goods, including primary food-stuffs, can be expected to rise sharply during the coming months. Wages will take a two-way cut, through the lowering of their purchasing power and the newly-threatened legislation to enforce a new version of the "Freeze". With higher interest rates, Council rents will rise again, as will the

products of nationalised industries—coal, electricity, gas—which conveniently are exempted from the "control" of the Prices and Incomes Board.

And, as usual, it is the pensioners and the poorly paid who will suffer most.

One-third of Britain's State income, some £2,200-million pounds is spent on what we can call the "open" arms bill—terrifying weapons of nuclear warfare, chemical and biological warfare, whose social value to the community is precisely nil. We are told that one-twenty-second of this is to be cut, as a Government step towards balancing its national books—this just after an identical increase of £100-million had been announced for the F111. In fact, the real arms bill is even greater than admitted, because vast sums are spent on Government services directly related to "defence", but not covered by the "open" account. Whatever else suffers, clearly military expenditure will not.

In many ways, the situation is reminiscent of the late 1920's, when social democracy in Germany (under the Weimar Republic) and Britain (under Ramsay MacDonald) faced financial crisis. Then, as now, the State "Socialists" were puppets on the end of strings manipulated by the Gnomes of Zurich and their like. Weimar collapsed, following massive inflation and unemployment, to be followed by the horrors of Hitlerism. Ramsay Mac split the Labour Party, to form a coalition with the Tories.

LONG OVERDUE

Wilson, with a large Parliamentary majority, is unlikely to follow his ILP forebear's example. The so-called Labour "Left" MPs, alternately cajoled and reviled by the bankrupt followers of Stalin and Trotsky, offer no threat to their boss. One crack of the ringmaster's whip and the pink-frilled poodles fall obediently into line to jump through his hoop. In fact, the "Left's" call has been for even larger doses of devaluation—with a consequently greater adverse impact on our wage packets. They have nothing, absolutely nothing to offer but threadbare phrases.

One significant sidelight is the Rhodesian decision not to devalue its currency. Significant, because Wilson's much-vaunted sanctions policy against the racist Smith regime has clearly had no real effect on that country's capitalist economy.

No effective opposition to Wilson's attacks on the workers can be expected from the TUC. The official trade-union movement of Britain is hog-tied by its links with the Labour Party, as the miners are now finding to their cost. The situation is one where Syndicalist policies offer the only constructive way forward for the working class.

Within the confines of capitalist economics, parliamentary politics and wage-regulating unions there is no future for labour. The only programme which offers ANY hope is that of breaking the bonds of capitalism by building a rank-and-file controlled industrial organisation to inaugurate a society based on direct workers' ownership and control. Revolutionary? Yes—and long overdue!

Down at the Dung House

THE appeals of the three Greek Embassy demonstrators sentenced by Widgery having been turned down, that night (November 8) some of us went down to raise the matter off the agenda in the deliberations of Parliament. Interjections spaced out from 8.00 p.m. until 11.00 led to 15 of us being taken down to cells below (actually for the men an old morgue), but also meant that those very few of the Members who actually were to be seen in the Chamber were made to realise that the demonstrating has not stopped.

There was a picket the following Sunday at Jenkins' House and there will be others; probably some more militant action will be tried before this issue is printed.

GROUP NOTICES

ABERDEEN: Contact Russell Knight, 42 Mathews Road, Aberdeen.

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

BRISTOL: Contact Adam Nicholson, 10 Bellevue, Bristol 8.

GLASGOW: Contact R. Lynn, 16 Ross Street, C.1.

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

LONDON: Open meetings every other Wednesday at 8.30 p.m. at Lucas Arms, 245 Grays Inn Road, WC1 (5 min Kings Cross). Correspondence to 34 Cumberland Road, E.17.

Next meetings:

Dec 13 How Labour Governs—Ken Hawkes.

Jan 3 Communist Party Strategy and Methods in Industry—Andrew Dewar

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

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

LITERATURE

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE UNIONS? by Tom Brown | 4d |
| WORKERS' CONTROL SWF Pamphlet (2nd printing) | 6d |
| STRIKE STRATEGY (National Rank & File Movement) | 2d |
| THE SOCIAL GENERAL STRIKE by Tom Brown | 2d |
| SMASH THE WAGE FREEZE by Bill Christopher | 2d |
| THE BRITISH GENERAL STRIKE by Tom Brown | 4d |
| HOW LABOUR GOVERNED, 1945-1951 | 6d |
| UNHOLY ALLIANCE. The 1966 Seamen's Strike:
an Analysis by George Foulser | 6d. |
| THE BOMB, DIRECT ACTION AND THE STATE | 6d |
| SYNDICALISTS IN THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION
by G. P. Maximoff | 6d |
| LENIN AND WORKERS' CONTROL by Tom Brown | 4d |
| THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS' REVOLUTION
(2nd edition, revised) | 6d. |
| SEAMAN'S VOICE by George Foulser | postpaid 18s |
| INDUSTRIAL WORKER (monthly paper of IWW) | 4d. |
| THE IWW'S LITTLE RED SONG BOOK | 2s 6d |

Add 4d in the 1s for postage—minimum 3d

HOW WE GOT THE TU BUREAUCRATS

AFTER every major struggle in industry the question is posed, "What's Wrong with Our Unions?" There is no easy answer to this question when it's related to a specific dispute. The TU bureaucracy has steadily become an integrated part of the British State machine whose function is to control and manipulate organised labour in the interests of the capitalist system.

Integration has been steadily growing since the First World War. But it was always in the background during the period leading up to 1914. It was in this period that the TU leaders set up the Labour Party which today receives seven-eighths of its funds from the unions. The unions also sponsor more Labour MPs than any other organisation.

INDUSTRIAL TRUCE

Also during this period before the First World War the Shop Stewards Movement had become firmly established. And in 1915 a meeting in Sheffield of Shop Stewards Committees from London, the North-East and the Clyde Workers' Committee declared the objectives of the Movement to be:

To obtain an ever-increasing control over workshop conditions, to regulate the terms upon which workers shall be employed, and to organise the workers upon a class basis and to maintain the class struggle until the overthrow of the wages system, the freedom of the workers and the establishment of industrial democracy have been attained.

In answer, the TUC and Labour Party leadership declared an "industrial truce" and the union leaders were thereupon drawn into consultations by the government on all vital issues of dilution and industrial relations generally, and the practice developed of appointing them to serve on a variety of committees, commissions and advisory councils set up by the different Government departments.

The Shop Stewards Movement continued to give fusion to an otherwise divided labour movement. They organised sympathy and solidarity strikes which posed a threat to the whole capitalist system and although neither the TU leadership or the employers gave them official recognition they could not be ignored.

In 1916, the Government set up a committee under J. H. Whitley. This called for the establishment of Joint Industrial Councils, bringing together employers and employed on a national, district, and works basis. The Whitley scheme, particularly the proposal for Joint Works Councils, was evidently inspired by the desire to draw the teeth of the shop stewards by agreement with a number of engineering unions. The agreement specified that shop stewards shall be subject to control by the trade union and declared that the recognition of shop stewards is accorded in order that a future safeguard may be provided against disputes.

The TU leadership was limited in its ability to support such agreements insofar as they depended on the shop stewards to recruit membership to the unions. On the other

hand, employers refused to co-operate with their union collaborators in the organisation of the unions.

The National Shop Stewards and Workers Committee Movement was formed. The unit of organisation was the Shop Committee, composed of stewards elected in a particular shop or department. Representatives of various Shop Committees formed the Works or Plant Committee; these in turn sent their representatives to constitute the Local or District Committees, which in turn elected the National Administrative Council of the Movement.

The movement's rules prescribed that the stewards and officers of the movement be elected for six months, although they would be eligible for re-election, and that frequent shop meetings would be held. The three weekly papers were established as shop stewards' organs—*Direct Action*, *Solidarity* and *The Worker*.

Also laid down by the constitution of the movement was that "no committee shall have executive power, all questions of policy and action being referred back to the rank and file", but the movement, although strongly influenced by the Syndicalists, was also under the influence of the political agitators of the time.

Union membership continued to increase. In 1918 the TUC grouped over 4½ millions, as against 2½ millions in 1913; while the big employers had already united to form the Federation of British Industries, which was later to hand over dealings with labour questions to a further new body, the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations. Meanwhile, after the Russian Revolution, divisions began to appear in the National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committees Movement. Many wished to keep the movement purely Syndicalist, while others, inspired by the Revolution, began to move towards a political basis. Nevertheless, the struggle for workers' control remained the prime objective.

BLACKLEGS' CHARTER

By 1926, the year of the General Strike, TU membership had increased to 8½ millions, but alongside it had also increased the collaboration between Government, unions, and employers.

In 1927 the Government pressed home its attack by passing the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act. The Blacklegs' Charter was placed on the Statute Book. Not only general strikes, but sympathetic strikes, even when purely industrial, were made illegal. Anyone leading or participating in an illegal strike was liable to fine or imprisonment (up to two years, on indictment), while union funds were made liable for civil damages. Mass picketing was forbidden and ordinary picketting was hamstrung by the blanket definition of "intimidation".

The TUC offered to co-operate with the employers "in a common endeavour to improve the efficiency of industry and to raise the workers' standard of life." The employers took up the invitation under the leadership of a group of 20 big-shot industrialists, headed by Sir Alfred Mond. In 1928 the General Council held its joint meeting with its new allies and Mondism was born.

Later in the year the TUC reported back from the meeting and stated that the policy of militant working class struggle must be abandoned as futile, certain to fail, and sure to lead to bloodshed and misery. Instead, the TUC was to state boldly that not only is it concerned with the prosperity of industry, but that it should have a voice in the way industry is carried on: "The unions can use their power to promote and guide the scientific reorganisation of industry."

● contd back page column 1

Subscribe to DIRECT ACTION

Yearly subscription rate 6s 6d (USA & Canada \$1—dollar bills preferred to cheques owing to loss in negotiating latter) from 34 Cumberland Road, London E.17. Cheques and p.o.'s payable to Syndicalist Workers' Federation.

DIRECT ACTION PRESS FUND—October–November, 1967
London N.W.3, K.H. £5; Thornton Heath, A.H. 3s 4d; Bristol 8, Anon. £1; London N.8, J. & T.S. 3s 6d; Wimborne, D.M. 10s; Canterbury, D.P. 10s; Tadworth, N.W. £1; London N.16, M.V. 3s 6d; Göteborg, I.J. 9s; Smethwick, G.C. 15s; London S.E.5, M.H. £1 17s; Vancouver, J.McA. £1; G.F. (Seaman's Voice) 18s; SWF London Group £5 10s 4d. Total £18 19s 8d.

Life on the Rock

DEAR COMRADES,

Syndicalists usually agree that one union is better than two! This being so, the amalgamation of the syndicalist Gibraltar Labour Trades Union (300 members) with the local TGWU (2,000) was a desirable contribution to industrial unity. Alas, some anarchists didn't see it like that and declined to follow the majority into the T & G.

Anarchists have been active in Gibraltar since before the Spanish Civil War, and at the moment have far more industrial influence than the CP, who hardly exist here. In HM Dockyard, the libertarian leaders seem to have the respect of the men in this, the union's biggest section. Progressive schemes like the Consumers' Co-op (T & G policy) planned, were originally master-minded by libertarians in the Gibraltar GLTU. Libertarians have also resisted where possible trends towards demarcation and low pay which this British colony has had to put up with.

On the political question, our comrades feel that to identify the union with the governing political party (the AACR) damages the union in the eyes of many workers, who see it as a tool of the party. We believe it best, therefore, to avoid involvement in politics, in order not to divide the workers!

It is obvious from the recent referendum that most people here would sooner stay a colony than become citizens of Spain under Franco. Gibraltarians always boast they know the Franco regime as well as anyone! The T & G advised workers to vote against the Spanish dictatorship, in favour of free trade unionism.

The SWF's "Cheap Holiday" leaflet against tourism to Spain also went down well and has been greeted favourably by the leaders in the local union.

All this isn't to suggest that Gibraltar should forever remain a British colony! But while Spain is a dictatorship it's not going to be easy to find a satisfactory solution. Independence is not on, but perhaps federation would be if Spain was federally governed.

In politics, short term solutions must be found and it is best if we press for the system which most closely resembles our ideal. As such, federalism, which permits some regional independence, might be better than dictatorship.

T & G

SKIDROAD SLIM

GUY B. ASKEW, better known to readers of DIRECT ACTION and the INDUSTRIAL WORKER as "Skidroad Slim", died in Seattle, Washington on September 8 at the age of 71. With him the SWF and IWW have lost a loyal valued comrade and fellow worker.

"Skidroad" was an old-time Wobbly. He had worked in railway workshops, lumber camps, in agriculture and on construction sites. "Wherever he went," writes the INDUSTRIAL WORKER (Chicago), October, "he carried the message distributing literature and the IWW papers. Where there was opportunity, he soapboxed."

With the SWF, he held that the policy of the IWW and the IWMA were one and the same—to bring about a new society through direct workers' ownership and control of industry, with the abolition of the State and wage system. He consistently advocated the IWW's affiliation with our Syndicalist international and was the typical, rank-and-file, anonymous revolutionary who makes the struggle for a new society not only possible, but a living reality.

During the past ten years he had suffered worsening ill-

health and, some twelve months ago, wrote asking for his copy of DIRECT ACTION to be sent to a friend, who could read it to him, as cataracts on both eyes threatened him with total blindness.

"To him," says the IW, "everything else was of little importance compared to fighting the employers on the economic front of the class war. He held this to be the one essential factor in workers' education and the primary purpose of any worthwhile organisation of labour. Fight to boss and in the process create the organisation that will constitute the framework of the new society, that was his philosophy."

"Skidroad" was of the stuff that social revolutionaries are made. We shall miss him very much.

K.H.

What we stand for

THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION seeks to establish a free society which will render impossible the growth of a privileged class and the exploitation of man by man. The SWF therefore advocates common ownership and workers' control of the land, industry and all means of production and distribution on the basis of voluntary co-operation. In such a society, the wage system, finance and money shall be abolished and goods produced and distributed not for profit, but according to human needs.

THE STATE: The State in all its forms, embodying authority and privilege, is the enemy of the workers and cannot exist in a free, classless society. The SWF does not therefore hope to use the State to achieve a free society; it does not seek to obtain seats in the Cabinet or in Parliament. It aims at the abolition of the State. It actively opposes all war and militarism.

CLASS STRUGGLE: The interests of the working class and those of the ruling class are directly opposed. The SWF is based on the inevitable day-to-day struggle of the workers against those who own and control the means of production and distribution, and will continue that struggle until common ownership and workers' control are achieved.

DIRECT ACTION: Victory in the fight against class domination can be achieved only by the direct action and solidarity of the workers themselves. The SWF rejects all Parliamentary and similar activity as deflecting the workers from the class struggle into paths of class collaboration.

ORGANISATION: To achieve a free, classless society the workers must organise. They must replace the hundreds of craft and general trade unions by syndicalist industrial unions. As an immediate step to that end, the SWF aids the formation of workers' committees in all factories, mines, offices, shipyards, mills and other places of work and their development into syndicates, federated nationally. Such syndicates will be under direct rank-and-file control, with all delegates subject to immediate recall.

INTERNATIONALISM: The SWF, as a section of the International Working Men's Association, stands firm for international working class solidarity.

Social Evening in Aid of
ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS

(to help libertarian prisoners throughout the world)

Monday December 11 at 7.30 p.m.

at the Arts Laboratory, 182 Drury Lane, London W.C.2
(50 yards from High Holborn)

Jazz : Folksingers : Spanish Dancers : Flamenco Guitarist
Food and Wine

Tickets 7s 6d (10s at door) from Libra House, 256 Pentonville Road, London N.1, or Freedom Press; or S.W.F.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE PITHEAPS

PIT HEAPS and landscape gardening—are the two compatible? Landscape gardening now means a small lawn, a dozen daffodils and a shrub each side of the door of a semi-detached in Hendon. But in its golden age during the 18th and early 19th centuries it meant gardening on the vast scale of the landscape. English landowners turned away from the Italian gardeners and their ideal of a flat rectangle covered by geometrical pattern, and engaged English workers who followed nature's pattern and gave us the many beautiful landscapes we think are the sole work of nature.

The greatest of these gardeners, Capability Brown, faced with a flat landscape, relieved it by undulations doubtless inspired by the rolling hills of his native North country. Why then should not the ugly, threatening waste heaps of mining be made friendly by trees and covered by nature's green mantle?

THE WASTE LANDS

Mining desolates every land it touches. A couple or so generations pull from the earth the better part of its wealth then the land is left spoiled, marred, shunned. Yet farming can go on for a thousand years and make the land richer. This is a small island with little natural wealth and a rapidly increasing population, therefore all scourged acres should be returned to purposes of human wealth and happiness.

Other industries have added to mining's crime against the land; sand pits, quarries, chemical wastes and abandoned factories add to the nightmare landscape. Yet it need not be so. The economics of capitalism, including State capitalism, declares it "uneconomic" to extract all the mineral wealth or restore to mankind the countryside it spoiled. Social economics would declare it most uneconomic to destroy in a few years what should be useful to mankind for long ages.

I have seen a few attempts to make pleasant the pit heaps, some less than half-hearted, some very well done. But I offer you a better reference than my observation. In 1963 Mr. Keith Joseph had issued from the Ministry of Local Government a large pamphlet, well illustrated, on *New Life for Dead Lands* (HMSO, 4s) giving seven examples of such good work, two of which I have visited.

At Wallbrook, Staffordshire, the Coseley Urban District Council, short of building land, acquired for £5,520 18 acres of derelict pit land. For £5,160, a local contractor cleared and levelled the pit waste. Drainage, a problem aggravated by extensive building, was cheaply solved by directing the surface water into one of the disused pit shafts. "The soak-away was so successful that there are regrets that so many old shafts have been filled in."

A hundred and thirty-two houses, 68 flats and 4 shops with flats above were built on this reclaimed land. Roads were made and trees planted, about 1,000 were rehoused. The enhanced value of the land was greater than the cost of reclamation.

SYNDICALISTS in the RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

by G.P. MAXIMOFF

Direct Action Pamphlet—6d.

(9d. postpaid; bulk orders 6s. a dozen)

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

At Ince (Lancs) some frightfully derelict land was taken over by the urban and county councils. Coal had been mined there for 100 years until 1908, since when it has become an eyesore and a menace to health. Pit heaps and shafts, chemical waste, concrete foundations, stagnant water, a canal branch and basin scarred the landscape, and sulphur stank.

THE COST OF A BANQUET

The owner donated the land, a civil engineering firm was engaged to tip the concrete and old buildings into the canal. 48,000 cubic yards of pit shale were excavated and used to level up low-lying land. Burnt red shale was spread a foot deep on a housing site as an extra foundation, silt from the canal was spread as soil. This work cost £10,520, little more than the cost of a municipal banquet.

Eighty houses were built, 32 acres were turned into playing fields, giving a track up to AAA standards, three football pitches, a cricket ground, a bowling green, a mini-golf course, and four tennis courts.

The 32 acres were landscaped for £1,340, grass established and trees and shrubs hid the old shafts and lined the whole area.

At Wombwell (Yorks) Mitchell Main closed in 1955, leaving deserted the usual pit heaps to fill the eyes with dust and the soul with despair. The NCB sold the 44 acres of tips to the county council for the "glad-to-be-rid-of-it" price of £5.

Three sharply pointed hills stubbed upwards on the skyline. The tops of these were removed by heavy earth-moving machinery, the hollows between partly filled, a more reasonable gradient established and a maximum height of 80 feet established. The land was ditched and fenced. For all this work £9,000 was paid. It was feared that the hidden fire of the heap would burst out. This fear was proven false.

Fertilizer and lime were spread and the area sown with grass seed. This cost £1,230; the area was then prepared for planting trees. Afterwards cattle grazed and now trees are growing over a pleasant landscape.

Croxdale tip, near Durham city, can be seen from the North Road and the main-line railway, but no one will recognise it as a tip. In the mid-1950s the Durham County Council took over this tip and successfully changed the contour, sowed grass and planted pine, birch and alder trees over the whole area, straight into the shale; no soil or fertiliser was used. Now the one-time eyesore is a green and pleasant ridge, 120 feet high, rolling down to sweet pasture land.

IT'S UP TO YOU

Much has been learned from such experiments as these. The cost is a fraction of what was feared, it is possible to grow grass, trees, flowers, even oats on pit waste heaps. Ugliness, dirt, danger to health, the massacre of innocents are not the inevitable price of "Progress".

Previous governments have made it easy for county, borough and district councils to do something about the lost lands, but the councils, even when deprived of these chief excuses, "It's impossible" and "It would cost millions", are apathetic. But there is a cure for municipal apathy; the council is not a faceless Whitehall or a faraway Government. It is known and, like the waste land and the spoil heap, is near your doorstep. Demonstrations to the council chamber and the homes of councillors, if sufficiently strong and often, get the council, and the tip, moving.

TOM BROWN

SPARKS SOLD OUT BY ETU

IT would appear that rank and file contract electricians dislike their new agreement, which was negotiated and accepted by the great Les Cannon.

The protest against the agreement is not voiced by a few malcontents, Trotskyists and Communists, as the ETU leadership would have us believe. On November 10 a mass demonstration took place, in Hyde Park and outside the employer's offices, in opposition to the agreement. On December 12 there is to be a one-day stoppage.

The infamous agreement is diabolical to say the least. It is class collaboration to the last degree. The Joint Industrial Council for the industry is to be replaced by a Joint Industrial Board made up of 13 ETU representatives and 13 Employer representatives, with an independent Chairman. The purpose of the Board is to cement employer-worker relations. The Ministry of Labour think it is a cracking idea; that in itself should provide the kiss of death as far as any worker is concerned.

The purpose of the Board as far as electricians are concerned will be to control and discipline the rank and file. Unofficial strikers risk penalties of up to £100 fines. Welfare

BUREAUCRATS (cont.)

What the approved policy meant had been suggested in the first joint report of the General Council and the Mond Group. This declared the tendency to rationalisation and trustification should be welcomed and encouraged. It proposed the establishment of a National Industrial Council, representing the General Council and the employers (through their National Confederation and the Federation of British Industries), and a system of compulsory conciliation was to be operated. In return, the employers conceded a species of union recognition.

In the years that followed leading up to the Second World War, TU membership fell, the union leaders collaborating with the employers and the Government through the various committees that deliberately planned unemployment.

During the Second World War the machinery for linking the TU leaders with the State became more extensive and elaborate than ever before. Two of the principle national committees the TUC is represented on along with the employers' national organisations are the National Production Advisory Council for Industry, concerned with the drive to increase productivity, and the National Advisory Council to the Ministry of Labour, dealing with the question of employment (or unemployment).

As it was necessary to secure a certain amount of co-operation from the rank and file there was a certain amount of relaxation and there was an illusion of consultation created between TU leaders and the shop stewards. But it was an uneasy alliance.

After the War there was a new determination on the part of the working class to bring about increases in wages and improvement of conditions at work. The trade unions' membership was once again increased—and at the same time betrayed.

The struggle to gain hundred-per-cent union membership, associated with collective bargaining at the point of production, was continually sold out by the union leaders. I'll describe how next month.

E. STANTON

(to be concluded)

benefits can be forfeited, suspension and expulsion for incurring the displeasure of the Board means, in cold hard facts, NO JOB.

Future pay prospects arising from the formation of the Board leave everything to be desired as far as sparks are concerned. The idea is that Board members shall really be Board members, *not* represent two sides of industry. Therefore, for the Board to agree to any new wage scales three-quarters of its members must be in favour. One does not need a great deal of imagination to appreciate the outcome of such an agreement.

The proposed grading scheme means an estimated saving to the employers of 9%. Electricians will be carved up into four grades, technician electrician, approved electricians, and electrician and labourer. Chargehands and mates are to be abolished. Technicians must have five years foreman experience, and approved electricians will have been indentured and hold a City and Guilds certificate. Unfortunately for them, many electricians in the industry are highly skilled but do not possess the passport to higher grade. They will be graded electricians and mates classified as labourers who will be asked to sign a contract giving them an extra ½d. per hour over three years. Failure to sign will mean NO JOB.

There are two other ways of securing the grade of approved electrician (1) spending two consecutive years of the last five with one employer. Rank and file members on the job say this is difficult due to the nature of the industry, the uneven demand for labour. (2) "With the support of his present employer" and in "exceptional circumstances" a man will get approved electrician's grading. All the brothers who are Good Boys and give no trouble are the only likely applicants to be in the running. Herein lies the 9%; highly skilled electricians could be used as cheap labour.

Another innovation of the new agreement is the "employment pool" for "out-of-work" electricians or, looking at it another way, a cooler for militants. At the moment, employers retain their labour during slack periods; after January 1 1968 if the rank and file ALLOW the agreement to be worked, it won't be necessary for the employers to do this.

HMV

Cannon, President of the ETU, has attempted to defend the agreement by wild accusations about the "deliberate fostering of discontent" and the claim that the membership were informed of the draft agreement at a national conference on April 1 (!) 1966. The draft consisted of three pages, the final agreement consists of 82 rules included in a 36-page document containing explanatory notes plus a booklet on grading. If it takes 36 pages to explain three pages the latter must either have been written in Arabic or had more strings attached than a puppet.

Cannon was once the blue-eyed boy of King Street, obeying his masters' voice; the only thing that has changed is the master, and we can rest assured his master is not the ETU membership—which of course it should be.

One can truthfully say, "It's all happening!" The sparks are not alone in having to fight against agreements made over their heads without their full consultation. Rank and file organisation is the only answer with right of recall. Control from the bottom, not in theory, but in practice.

BILL CHRISTOPHER