

**SYNDICALIST  
WORKERS  
FEDERATION**

S.W.F.

1. Name The name of the organisation shall be  
The Syndicalist Workers' Federation.
2. MEMBERSHIP. Membership shall be open to all who adhere  
to the organisation's aims and are prepared  
work actively for their realisation.
3. Objects. Objects of the organisation shall be to:
  - (a) Take an active part in the struggle  
for working class solidarity, shorter  
working hours, immediate wage increases  
and improved working conditions; to  
propagate direct action as the only  
effective means in this struggle.
  - (b) Oppose all attacks on the working class  
whatever form they may take, ~~whether~~ <sup>whether</sup> ~~er~~  
by conscription of labour, strike  
breaking, drives for increased prod-  
uction and longer working hours, wage  
cuts or unemployment.
  - (c) Resist the attempts of all political  
parties and ambitious individuals to  
gain control or make use of the workers'  
industrial organisation.
  - (d) Work for the extension of workers'  
industrial committees into syndicalist  
unions, federated nationally and to  
provide the organisational basis for  
such a development.
  - (e) Take an active part in the struggle  
against war and militarism.
4. International  
Affiliation. To further its aim of international  
working class solidarity, the  
organisation shall be affiliated to the  
International Working Mens Association.
5. Trade Unions. Members shall, with the exception of

particular cases, belong to their appropriate trade union and, where possible become shop stewards and work through the Trades Councils.

6. Contributions. Each member shall pay a minimum weekly subscription of 6d to the National Committee, for the general expenses of the organisation and shall be requested to contribute a minimum of 6d. a week to a solidarity fund for members on strike or victimised as a result of their activities in industry.

7. METHOD OF ORGANISATION.

The basic units of organisation shall be the industrial and local groups. Members may belong to both an industrial and a local group, but they shall have only one vote within the organisation on national questions. Local and industrial groups shall be federated into regional organisations.

Where practical, rand-and-file industrial groupings shall be formed.

Local and industrial groups publishing their own literature shall do so under the imprint of their own group.

8. Policy. General policy of the organisation shall be decided by an annual congress. Decisions shall be reached, where possible by common agreement, reconciling diverse points of view; only where this is not obtainable, majority opinion shall become the decision of the organisation.

9. National Committee. To co-ordinate activities between congresses a national committee shall be elected. This shall consist of a general Secretary, general treasurer and five other members. This committee shall administer and edit the organisation's national publications, in accordance with the policy laid down by congress.

Members of the National Committee shall be subject to immediate recall by any national conference; they shall be replaced after a maximum period of two years in office, but may be re-elected after a further period of six months.

10. Congresses. Congresses shall normally take place annually. Special congresses shall be called by the national committee on the basis of group referendum at the request of one group.

11. Local Representatives. In districts where no industrial groups exists, the national committee will, where possible, accept a local representative.

12. Freedom of Press. Freedom of the press shall be guaranteed by articles in the organisation's press being signed, or clearly marked where they do not represent the organisations policy.

13. Revision of Organisational Basis. These aims and principles and organisational basis may be revised by any national congress.

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I wish to join the S.W.F.  
I would like more information  
(delete where not applicable)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

INDUSTRY.....

UNION.....

SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION,  
18, Scoresdale, 13, Beulah Hill, London, S.E.19.

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE UNIONS?

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The subject has probably often been discussed by you and your mates, be you miner, bus driver, clerk or machinist. "What's wrong with the unions"?

Perhaps the most talked about union at the moment is the Transport and General Workers' Union - that big, ungainly and redoubtable animal. All seem to agree that it's far too big and too undemocratic. Some would destroy it at once, others would reform it, and a few would rejoice in it's dismemberment into more homely portions.

But many oldre members of the union, remember past labour struggles, hesitate to attack its fabric. The oldest dockers, for example, remember the days when their calling was the most depressed of any, when wages were very low, work casual and always uncertain; when men were often, in their hunger, forced to fight like animals for a day's work, and when the pub-owing stevedore robbed them of half their miserable wages.

The contrast these days with their later position, especially after 1920, when wages rose above those of many skilled men, the "slave" marked was curtailed and most of the old abuses abolished. These men say: "Without our union this could not be. As clumsy as it is, we don't want to wreck it". Certainly, without the struggle, the solidarity and the discipline of the dockers' organisation, these fruits would not have been gathered.

A similar, though less dramatic story is told of the London busmen, the unskilled factory workers, women industrial workers and others. Organisation and strike actions have raised their living standard and position in society.

But these replies, sincere as they are, do not meet the main objection. The T. & G.W.U. is a huge union, formed by

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amalgamation and a policy of recruiting "everybody from midwives to gravediggers", and the brightest battle honours on the union's flag belong to preamalgamation days. The dockers' greatest vicories, for example, were achieved by the old Dockers' Union, before it was swallowed up by the T. & G.W.U.

Now this union is a colossus which strides the country. It is big, unwieldy, unresponsive to changing needs of its members, undemocratic, with appointed organisers and irritatingly clumsy and slow.

But these faults are not held alone by the Transport Union. Other unions are similarly clumsy and huge, and the reason for these things may be found in the earlier development of labour unionism in Britain. The present Trade Union movement (I leave out the earlier abortive attempts to form unions) was in its initial stages limited to the miners and unskilled craftsmen. The others were ignored for years. So trade unionism became, except for the miners, craft unionism.

Then came the organisation of dockers, tramwaymen, lorry drivers and general labourers. Organised at first in particular unions, such as the dockers, and in amorphous collections of unskilled labourers, they tended to amalgamate without any defined boundaries, such as are natural to a mining community or a strictly sectarian craft.

In some cases the new labourers' unions organised definite groups of workers, such as the tramwaymen and dockers, but soon most of their membership was spread throughout all industries - engineering, farming, milk distribution and a hundred others. Because the craft unions in these industries refused to organise unskilled labour, there was no choice for the lower paid workers but to join a general labourers union.

Having demonstrated that "union is strength", it seemed right and proper to these new unionists to amalgamate the several general unions into a larger and ever more general organisations, until two unions, the Transport and General Workers' Union and the National Union of General & Municipal Workers, numbered most of the unskilled and even some skilled unionists on their books. The result

was the overgrown, unweildy, undemocratic and shapeless crowds these unions now are.

Having completed its historic task of raising the unskilled worker, the general union has now reached a dead end. With its present basis, no further development seems possible. Its members are either apathetic or discontented, there is a constant conflict between officials and members, and breakaways are ever more recently threatened.

### THE CRAFT UNIONS.

The position of the craft union is scarcely better. It seeks to justify itself by organising men on a social basis which is mediaeval rather than twentieth Century. Its basis is not the factory or industry a man works in, or the commodity he helps to produce, but the tools he uses - and even, in some cases, the tools he once used. This had some meaning a few years ago, for men in one small workshop, using a kit of tools, might produce one complete commodity, as did the coachbuilders, coopers or shipwrights.

It was natural, then, to organise men according to the tools they used... carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, cutters, goldsmiths. But now many tools and crafts are needed to produce even one commodity. For one engineering product, the work of moulders, fitters, machinists, electricians and a score of others comes into play. And not only tradesmen, but semi-skilled and unskilled labour (if we may use these rapidly fading definitions) and office labour (draughtsmen and bookkeepers) too.

Yet the old union demarkations persist - like the Lord Mayor's Show, a relic of another age. In an engineering shop where a few hundred or a few thousand workers produce but one commodity, 40 or 50 unions may claim to organise the workers. Not only the craft unions but the general unions, lapping like sea over broken dykes, claiming a large slice of union

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membership behind their banners: "We organise everybody from mid-wives to gravediggers". Yet all claim that this mess is organisation and shout: "Unity is strength".

The simple truth is that the craft union was forced to fight a war on two fronts - against the employer and against other workers. It bargained with the employer to get the highest price for its labour. To increase its bargaining power, it sought to curtail the supply of the commodity it was selling by restrictions, such as a long and low paid apprenticeship. It kept out the worker who had not "served his time" and fought other crafts to maintain its monopoly of certain processes and even sought to nibble at the reserves of other unions. Thus, in a situation which demanded the highest degree of class solidarity and consciousness, the skilled unions have been a little more than limited liability companies selling labour power.

More conservative than the Tories, the craft unions tried to hang on to their exclusive and sectarian positions in a changing economy which fast made them obsolete. Machinery has broken down many craft barriers, two world wars have opened the gates to a flood of unapprenticed labour, and social and political development has swept away social differences of skilled and unskilled. Yet most craft unions go on clinging to the fast diminishing tradition. Like the Bourbons, they forget nothing and learn nothing.

#### SECT OR INDUSTRY.

What is the alternative to craft unionism and crowd unionism? Let us take a walk through a factory - say an engineering shop producing locomotives. We start in the drawing office, go through the pattern shop, then the foundry, on the machine shop, visit the stores and minor workshops, finally passing through the fitting and erecting shops. How true must seem our earlier statement of all these, say, 2,000 workers are united in producing one single commodity. Each is necessary to the other; a single process operates from gate to gate.

ONE  
BIG  
UNION

OF ALL WORKERS

CONTROLLED FROM THE

BOTTOM.

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Yet in this one factory, in the jackets hanging behind bench and machine, are the membership cards of 20 to 40 different unions - all probably bearing such inscriptions as "United we stand, divided we fall", or, "Unity is Strength"! Some may even carry a picture of a small boy watching his grandfather vainly try to break a bundle of firewood, and its companion picture showing the old man, who has now tumbled to the trick, breaking them one by one, much to the child's relief.

Unfortunate men! They are united in their work and divided in their unions.

Now it must seem obvious that all men and women in this one factory should belong to one union, whatever their craft, whether they be skilled or unskilled, male or female. The clerical and drawing office staff, too, should arrange to be organised in this one engineering workers' union.

The industry, the commodity produced, gives a good, easy basis of union organisation. A worker going from one engineering factory to another finds himself on familiar ground within a few hours and usually understands the problems of other workers like himself fairly easily. The limits of the industry, then, should generally be the limits of the unions. It would obviously be foolish to suggest that the engineering union should organise farm labourers or miners or mid-wives into its ranks. Yet some unions spread themselves even more diverse occupations than these.

#### FALSE INDUSTRIAL UNIONS.

The Syndicalist propaganda for industrial unionism has, in some industries, been met by the transformation of some craft unions into false industrial unions. Most prominent of these is the Amalgamated Engineering Union, which opened its doors first to the semi-skilled, then the unskilled and, a few years ago, the women workers.

But the A.E.U. is not an industrial union. It has not succeeded in amalgamating the many craft unions in the

engineering trade, yet it seeks to organise sections of workers in almost every industry - building, electricity, milk processing, chemicals and many others, even where a union claiming to be industrial is organising most of the workers. For many years the A.E.U. has been in dispute with the miners union, because the latter claims all workers in the mining industry.

There are other unions, such as the Electrical Trade Union, which have a similar double basis - to seek to organise a large slice of one industry and fragments of the rest.

The Syndicalist conception of industrial unionism is certainly not that of the A.E.U., E.C.T. or other so called industrial unions. We believe in one union for one industry. But revolutionary industrial unionism means more than that - it has its beginning, its foundation in industry. Most unions - the miners is an exception, are organised on a doss-house basis. A doss-house is not concerned on where a man works ; but only where he sleeps, and most trade unions organise their members according to their place of residence. If a London A.E.U. member works in a factory at Acton, but lives in Willesden, he will usually join a Willesden Branch of the A.E.U. His fellow workers in the Acton shop will, similarly, be organised by branches in the localities where they sleep - perhaps a hundred branches in 30 or 40 places, often 20 miles apart.

One result of this seemingly convenient arrangement is the unsuitability of the branch meeting as a means of discussing workshop problems, for our member may, when he goes to his branch at Willesden or Poplar, be in the company of men who work in scores of different factories or even industries, and are unwilling to devote the whole of an evening to discussing his particular place of work. One may see the result of this in the dull, lifeless business routine of trade union branch meetings and in the irrelevant matters they discuss.

The place to start the industrial union branch is industry

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- the factory, mill, mine shop or office. Every worker in the factory should be a member of the one branch, or sub branch where the factory is very large. The branch should meet at, or near, the factory, and the secretary, treasurer and shop stewards be elected from the factory. In such a branch, all matters relating to the particular factory could be discussed in an atmosphere of understanding and interest.

#### DISTRICT FEDERATION.

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But a worker's problems are not limited to the place where he works, I can hear someone say. That is true, and the factory branch is only the beginning of Syndicalism. In all things which are particular to our factory, the branch has autonomy, but there are other problems which may concern say, similar factories in the same area. This presents no difficulty, however, for the industrial branch will be federated to the district federation of engineers - or miners, or railwaymen.

It is surprising how, on reflection, we find certain industries fall into distinct districts .... Lancashire cotton, West Riding wool, London transport, Durham coal and so on. Here the superiority of the Syndicalist over territorial organisation will be seen, for a district of one industry say, in the West of Scotland organisational basis of Syndicalism is adaptable to this, but the territorial method, such as that of parliamentary groupings, has to squeeze, lop off and fill up to make its rigid pattern on the political map.

Look at any population map. You will see how, while people live together in moderately defined regions, their work districts overlap each other.

Now, while the district federation of the industry deals with things which are peculiar to the industry of its district, and not the special concern of one particular factory there are problems which can be solved only on a national or country-wide basis. Just as the branch has autonomy over its own affairs, but federates to the

district to tackle more general questions, so the district federation of each industry is federated to its national federation of engineers - re textile workers - or chemical workers.

Up to now we have thirty or so industrial unions or federations and I can hear some of our critics crying that we have left labour still divided, but again the Syndiclist principle of federation goes to work. The industrial federations deal with those questions that are peculiar to each of their industries, but some problems may concern more than one industry.- such as a strike of railwaymen directly concerning busmen, and there are questions which affect all workers, whatever their industry. So there comes about the federation of all industrial unions on a national scale - the National Federation of Labour.

#### NATIONAL FEDERATION OF LABOUR.

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The National Federation is a gathering of all strength and council of the industrial federations, covering every industry and service - mines, factories, power stations, offices, schools, hospitals, railways and shipping - It is able to swing its forces from one front to another, to aid any one section of labour by the solidarity of whatever other sections are needed.

Such a federation is quite different to the present Trades Union Congress, which has rarely been more than an annual consultative meeting and has long been degenerated into a political debating society.

As well as federation on a nation ~~scale~~ some form of general local organisation is necessary. Quite simply the industrial branches of each union join together in a local federation in each town, city or farming district. While this may seem somewhat akin to the existing

trades councils, there is an important distinction. Trades Councils are, in the main, rather loose federations of trade union branches formed on a residential basis and, in any case, are usually confused as to their exact function, become bogged down in local politics and can rarely distinguish themselves from the local labour party and its functions.

The Syndicalist local federation, on the other hand is largely a body of delegates from factories and other places of work in or about the town and is concerned with truly labour problems, rather than who shall wear the mayor's brass chain next year or who shall be nominated as the town's dog-catcher.

#### DELEGATES.

While Syndicalists look to the elemental mass meeting of the workers at their place of work as the foundation of organisation and the greatest source of labours strength, there are, nevertheless, certain functions which cannot be carried out by a mass meeting - certain details and arrangements where delegation of function is necessary. So the meeting elects delegates to carry out its wishes and general resolutions.

But these men and women are nothing but delegates. They are elected for certain limited functions, to carry out certain general instructions, and always subject to recall. The right of recall is fundamental to Syndicalism, though it is somewhat strange to the orthodox trade union movement and completely foreign to the Labour Party.

It is the simple principle that whoever elects can recall, whoever gives can take away. A delegate is elected to carry out

a certain function or policy; if he disregards the wishes of his fellow workers, then they can at once recall him. How the trade union movement has suffered from neglect of this principle, which trade-union leaders and would-be bosses have always disliked.

The nearest the trade unions have come to is in the shop steward movement, but for years the Communists - often with considerable success - have fought fiercely against this principle, seeking to make each Communist shop steward a papier-mache commissar even denying the workers the right to make strike decisions.

But the Syndicalist stands firmly by these things - the mass meetings, delegates not bosses, the right of recall. Here indeed is the hallmark of Syndicalism.

It is now evident that Syndicalism is organised from the bottom upwards - the factory, the mass meeting, the delegate - and that all power comes from below and is controlled from below. This is a revolutionary principle, one of the few truly revolutionary principles advocated in the twentieth century. In all other movements, government, regulation, is from downwards. The Capitalist, the Dictator, the Leader, the hereditary boss tells his flock what they must do - strictly in their own interests, of course. But he decides what is good and what is evil. All movements so based, even if claiming to be revolutionary, are founded upon the concept of slave and master - though maybe a self-styled master. Only Syndicalism is based on free men.

All parties, capitalist or "labour", are all social relationships except Syndicalism, are at one in opposing the principle of control from below. All are prepared to fight to the last ditch to preserve the principle of control from above, the

relation of master and servant. Communism, Conservatism, Labourism, capitalism, business (big or small) - are all bound and rooted in the master principle, as are the previous systems of feudalism and chattel slavery.

The Syndicalist principle of control from below, then, is truly revolutionary and, as such, is repulsive to the political parties and excites the anger of groups and individuals who wish to appear revolutionary while, at the same time, they retain the principles of a conservative society.

Control from below runs through all Syndicalist manifestations - its organisation, its activity and its idea of a future society.

#### THE RIGHT TO STRIKE.

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In our strike activity we find ourselves at once in conflict with the social workers party, which denies the right of the workers to make their own decisions. To us, the decision to strike or not to strike belongs, as a group agreement, to the workers concerned in a dispute. It is from them, as a collective body, to decide when to strike and when to return.

To this principle the official will bow only when he is forced, or - as most often happens - when, after made a fiasco of a strike he has called, he is anxious to get the strikers back to work before his ill-judged and mismanaged skirmish collapses. Then he will call on the workers to vote, "to make their own decision" knowing full well that only one decision is possible in the circumstances he has created.

In unions over which self-styled intelligenism have gained control, the officials have taken from the members the right to strike and vested it in themselves, so that the workers are like cannon-fodder at the disposal of generals.

A worker who has not the right to strike is less than a man, he is a slave. Only this right raises him above the beasts of burden.

Knowing this, Syndicalists have always fought in its defence. In the unions, in capitalist society, in France, Spain as in Fascist Italy and Bolshevik Russia, they have defended the right to strike.

The strike, the withdrawal of labour power in varied ways, is not the only weapon of working-class struggle, but it is the chief one, - and the basis of others. By striking, however, we do not mean necessarily the conventional method of long negotiation, several months notice and then a withdrawal of labour into the streets, to await the results of a long drawn out struggle in ever-increasing poverty.

Certainly, such a struggle may have to be faced, but other methods, quicker and not so painful, are quite often open to the workers. Such ways have been thought out, used and developed by Syndicalists of many countries, with great success. The lightening strike, "work to rule", the boycott, the sympathetic strike, the guerilla and the stay-in strike are Syndicalist weapons, which even trade unionists have learned to use with excellent results, Syndicalist propaganda having made them familiar to thousands.

Let us consider, briefly, the nature of some of the Syndicalist strike tactics. The lightning strike, not alone because of its speed, but also as a result of the time and place of its blow, is usually more effective than the orthodox, long drawn-out affair played according to a set of rules almost as traditional as a game of chess. It is particularly effective on a small scale, as in a single factory or group of factories. Here again, the right of the workers to decide

is important, for the worker on the spot usually knows better than any official when is the right time, where is the right place to use the lightning strike. Only he knows all the many, often minute conditions which will determine its success or or failure.

The practice of guerilla strikes has been tried in England by one orthodox trade union, with some success, but this experiment was but a pale imitation of the red-blooded Syndicalist method. The guerilla strike is particularly well suited to certain industries, such as engineering, which are of a diverse character. Even in the pre-war days of slump, some sections of engineering, were quite prosperous - aircraft, for instance - while other sections, such as shipbuilding, were in the lowest depths of industrial misery.

Yet wages for the whole industry were based on its most depressed section. Obviously, here was a case for obtaining better conditions as time, place and circumstance allowed, winning a pound in this town or ten shillings in that factory. Certainly this was tried, with some success, but in every case the workers concerned found themselves in conflict with their unions, who had all made agreements fixing national scales and outlawing guerilla strikes.

One of the foundation principles of Syndicalism is the sympathetic strike, but for a hundred years this principle has had but a flickering life in Britain. How many times have we seen strikers defeated, not by the employers, but by their organised trade union brethren, who blacklegged against them? Busmen against railwaymen; London tubemen against London busmen working for the same company; ship repair workers on strike and members of the dockers union and the National Union of Seamen taking the ships to be repaired in France or Holland; iron moulders on strike, while machinists and fitters worked scab castings.

So the unpappy tale might go on. Only recently have we seen the faint begining of the sympathic stricke in England. A lot

more Syndicalist propaganda is needed to bring it to fruit, and a Synicalist form of federal organisation is necessary to make it work effectively. Then we shall realise the strength of the historic slogan of the I.W.W. "An injury to one is the concern of all".

### THE BOYCOTT.

Akin to the sympathetic strike is the boycott, little used by unions - apart from the strong Syndicalist organisations of Spain and Sweden. It is worth while recalling the origin of the term boycott.

In the fight of the Irish peasants against the landlords, the tenent farmers formed the Irish Land League. The landlords were evicting tenants who could not pay their increased rents, and replacing them with new tenants. The League forbade

farmers to occupy the farms of evicted tenants, but some farmers defied this order.

Then the League used its greatest weapon, against which the landlords, the magistrates and the military were helpless, - the boycott. Farm labourers and house servants left the farms, the cows went unmilked and the crops rotted in the fields. The carter, the grocer, the butcher, even the Doctor and the undertaker refused their services to the boycotted farmers.

Successful as it was in the early 19th century Ireland, much more victorious can this weapon be in our modern, complex society. The boycott can be used by certain sections of industrial workers, in particular transport men, to support other striking groups, but it can also be used in a general-public way to aid strikers in public service by black-mailing the disputed concern's goods and services. Newspapers, shops, cinemas, theatres, laundries, coal,

" The function of industrial organisation.... is to build up an Industrial Republic within the shell of the Political State, in order that when the Industrial Republic is fully organised it may crack the shell of the Political State.... Every fresh shop or factory organised .... is a fort wrenched from the Capitalist class and manned with the soldiers of the Revolution. On the day.... (we the working class) proclaim the Workers Republic, these shops and factories will be taken charge of by the workers there .... The new society will spring into existence ready equipped to perform all the functions of its predecessor "

James Conolly.

merchants and life insurance are examples which spring quickly to the mind.

Many ingenious strike tactics have been invented by the French Syndicalists. Of these, the work-to-rule strike of the railmen is, perhaps, best known. When, under nationalisation, French rail strikes were forbidden, their Syndicalist fellow workers were delighted to urge the railmen to carry out the strict letter of the law. Now French railways, like those of most other countries, are governed by thousands of laws, most of them unused and ignored, their place being taken by commonsense and experience.

But the French railmen worked to the rule-book. The railway laws were carried out just as the government said they ought to be.

One French law tells the engine-driver to make sure of the safety of any bridge over which his train must pass. If, after personal examination, he is still doubtful, then he must consult the other members of the train's crew. Of course, trains ran late!

Another law for which French railmen developed a sudden passion related to the ticket collectors. All tickets had to be examined thoroughly on both sides. The law said nothing of city rush hours. The results of working to rule were to tie up the railways, make the law look an ass and win the railmen's cause.

It is interesting here to recall that groups of English Syndicalist workers on the old North Eastern Railway carried out this tactic years ago with complete success.

More recently, largely as a result of Syndicalist propaganda, London busmen have, with great success, tried this method.

#### GOOD WORK STRIKE

A similar Syndicalist strike tactic is the good work strike. Workers, particularly in Spain, who were

who were building cheap working class houses, put best workmanship into even shoddy materials. Doors hung straight, windows opened and shut, roofs were water-proof and walls perpendicular.

The most amusing case of this form of strike action comes from the U.S.A. and concerns an accusation made against the militant union, the I.W.W. In a canning factory, the labels for the tins are said to have been mixed, so that poor people buying what they thought was cheap pink salmon, were delighted to get sock-eye steaks. From the poor districts came ~~orders~~ ~~orders~~ for more of "that salmon", while from better-off districts came bitter rebukes and insults.

Many other examples of Syndicalist strike strategy might be given, had we the space, but enough has been said to show that Syndicalists are not committed to only one strike method, but adapt their tactics to the time and place, so that the greatest victory may be won by the least amount of human suffering.

But all such ways of striking are skirmishes before the real battle, training for the most powerful Syndicalist weapons -- the stay-in strike.

#### STAY-IN STRIKE

The workers, instead of walking out and leaving the factory or other plant in the hands of the employer, stay in and lock out the boss. This at once prevents the factory being used for blacklegging and protects the strikers.

This method was tried by the automobile workers of Detroit and other parts of the United States in 1937. There, strikers had suffered defeat by using the conventional strike method, principally because their picket lines had been battered by the police and by the employers' gangs. But in 1937, by "seizing" the car factories, they at once made the strike black-leg-proof. They were no longer assaulted by the police, for now they were barricaded in the factories. The strike was completely

successful in a few weeks.

But Spain, France and Italy, with their strong Syndicalist traditions, give us the best-known examples of the widespread stay-in strike. In France, the last occasion of its use on a nation-wide scale was June, 1936. To combat falling wages, the engineering workers declared a strike and seized the factories. They were quickly followed by millions of others, even by saleswomen in the fashionable shops.

The Stay-in strike action - swift, widespread and determined - at once arrested the downward trend of wages and gained solid increases on previous rates. It also gained for most workers the forty-hour week, holidays with pay and other improvements. Shortly after this sweeping victory by workers' direct action, there came into being the notorious "People's Front" Government of Liberals, Communists and Socialists. Abroad, this government was given the credit for the workers' gains of 1936 by lying Popular Front propaganda, although the "People's" Government was elected after the event.

This government, as must be expected of any such reactionary combination, at once began to gnaw away at the workers' gains by acts of legislation, until most of them had been lost and the way prepared, first for industrial conscription, then for the Vichy government. Remember, the Vichy fascist government of 1940 was built on the foundations laid by the reactionary "People's" Government, after the French workers had relinquished the proven weapon of direct action for the paper sword of political action.

#### AN ITALIAN LESSON

Italy in the '20's gives us another example of large-scale stay-in strike action. This, too, began in the engineering factories. The Italian engineering employers had demanded a substantial reduction of wages and, meeting refusal, decided on a lock-out. The engineering workers, with a strong Syndicalist minority, decided to

minority, decided to use the chief Syndicalist weapon. Telephone and telegraph wires hummed, couriers and motorcyclists sped through the night and, in one swift, co-ordinated action, the metal factories were seized by the workers.

Other industries at once responded, Railwaymen and road transport men moved supplies, food was provided by the workers in bakeries and flour mills, by the co-operatives and by the peasant organisations. Post office and telephone workers maintained communications among the many factories "on strike".

But what of the government, the army and the police? Railway-men were willing to refuse to move any soldiers under arms or any military supplies. The police were helpless, for the strikers were barricaded in the factories, surrounded by barbed wire and electrified steel fences.

At that time in Italy there was a strong, well-armed Fascist military organisation, but it was helpless against the stay-in strike. The workers had the means to arm themselves in defence against the blackshirts - steel, forges and machines. Mussolini looked on, powerless to intervene.

George Seldes, in his best-selling biography of Mussolini, "Sawdust Caesar", writes of this strike:-

"Not a skull was cracked. Not a safe....Commotion everywhere, except in Italy. It is true, that, day by day, more and more factories were being occupied by the workers. Soon, 500,000 'strikers' were at work, building automobiles, steamships, forging tools, manufacturing a thousand useful things, but there was not a shop or factory owner there to boss them or to dictate letters in the vacant offices. Peace reigned."

The Italian workers were victorious. The employers withdrew their demands for wage cuts and, instead, offered increases and other concessions. Unfortunately the workers accepted these offers and, against the advice of the syndicate minority, handed back the factories. They enjoyed their gains for a little while, then

reaction began nibbling at the gains of 1920, until, two years later, the workers' - weak without their factory fortresses and their direct action spirit, and debilitated by political propaganda - were defeated.

Again the political fabulists click their typewriters, falsifying history, and political speakers, by malice and by ignorance, propagate ignorance by falsehood, declaring that the blackshirts expelled the strikers from the factories and instituted the Fascist State from that action.

In truth, Mussolini, who at the beginning of the strike loudly opposed it, soon fell silent and took no action against it, mute and awed as he was by the mighty force of workers, conscious for a brief hour of their great strength. The stay-in strike was in 1920; the Fascists gained power in 1922, after the Italian workers had relied on political action for their defence. Two years of history was then neatly clipped out by the scissors of "progressive" political propagandists, in their attempts to discredit the stay-in strike.

Of course the workers were wrong in the limited use they made of their strike weapon. They ought to have retained the factories and extended the strike to all industries, using it as a basis of a new society.

#### BLIND-ALLEY UNIONISM.

The greatest weakness of the trade union movement is its lack of an ultimate aim. Created to secure a higher wage and a shorter working day, it achieved its aims and now finds itself at the blind end of a limited path. Its own members are becoming dissatisfied with such a circumscribed social function. In any case, the usefulness of wage advances in conditions of inflation is increasingly questioned yet, at the same time, the permanence of the capitalist wage system is accepted.

Wage increases and rising prices make the trade union movement look like a dog chasing its own tail. The constant scramble for paper pennies has even led to the abandonment of the shorter working week and the eight hour ideal of 70

years ago. True on paper we have a 44 hour week - on paper, but systematic overtime is becoming almost universal and is even established in some trade union agreements. It is often said that some people were in favour of the 44 hour week so that their overtime would start sooner.

Here is the end of trade union thought. It can no more think itself into a further stage of social development than a man can lift himself by his own shoestrings.

The trade union is designed to function only in a commodity society, where everyone is selling something, and in which the worker has only his labour power to sell. The prices of commodities rise and fall with changes in supply and demand and the price of the commodity, labour power - wages - also rises with an increase in the demand for labour, as we see at the present time. But, with an increase of the labour supply beyond the needs of the market, wages fall, British labour's wages, however, are not governed alone by national conditions, but, more than most countries, by international factors. Changes in India, Japan, the U.S. and Australia are, almost at once, felt in Britain.

It is in this work market society that trade unions function and beyond which they have no hope or knowledge. It is true that many unions have in their rule-books a preamble in favour of the nationalisation, of the means of production and distribution, but such declarations have no significance more than the dubious Latin inscriptions on coats of arms.

#### A NEW SOCIETY.

Any major advance by labour can be achieved only by escaping from the bonds of the wages system, and that means a radical change in the social order - a change from private to social ownership and the designing of production for men's needs, instead of their fluctuating purchase power.

But it is just here, in the contemplation of an alternative to capitalism, that the trade union stops dead.

Negotiate an extra threepence an hour or question the redundancy of some machinists, yes...but a new society? That is like asking a fish to move onto dry land.

"A society such as we desire, based on the economic and emotional needs of all, and not of a ruling class, must have an economic and not a political foundation. As Jim Connolly so often quoted:

"There is not a Socialist in the world to-day who can indicate with any degree of clearness how we can bring about the co-operative commonwealth except along the lines suggested by industrial organisation of the workers."

"Political institutions are not adapted to the administration of the co-operative commonwealth that we are working for. Only the industrial form of organisation offers us even a theoretical constructive socialist programme. There is no constructive socialism except on the industrial field".

Syndicalism distinct from orthodox trades unionism, regards wage struggles not as principles ends, but as secondary aims and means to a greater end - the abolition of the wage system and the creation of a new society. The organisation of Syndicalism, in industrial unions, is in harmony with this end. The strike strategy of Syndicalism, leading to the social stay-in strike, is the true ideal of a society of free men.

Production would be for the human needs and not for the profit of a few. The wage system would be abolished and, with a rise in techniques, there would come, not the present fear of redundancy and starvation, but a full and free life, such as we wage slaves have dreamed about but have never tasted.