

# **DIRECT ACTION**

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## **WORLD OF PLENTY**

**L**END-LEASE is over, and all the Spam tins have disappeared from the larder shelves. Over our empty breakfast plates we read in our morning papers of the spectre of hunger which is stalking Europe. It is estimated that millions will die of starvation on the Continent this winter. Many more will fall victim to disease, because the lack of housing, fuel and clothing is lowering their physical condition and resistance to illness. The rest, while perhaps not wanting the essentials of life will at any rate not enjoy the comforts which our present state of scientific knowledge could provide.

Yet the earth on which we live has not grown poorer in mineral wealth or any of the essential raw materials on which we depend. Apart from soil erosion in some parts of the world, which are the results of human neglect and wastefulness in tilling the land, the arable surface of the globe has not declined. On the contrary, we could increase it many times by artificial manures and irrigation. Science has developed a wide range of synthetic products to supplement the natural raw materials. With all this potential abundance the majority of people all over the world are starving, ill-clad, badly housed and shivering.

It puts us in mind of the good old pre-war days when they burned the wheat in Canadian locomotives, while the people of Europe had no bread. When they dumped Brazilian coffee beans into the Atlantic while the people of Europe used acorns to flavour their drink. While the Lancashire cotton mills stood off thousands of workers because there was more cloth than could be sold, millions of coolies in the East and peons in South America had hardly enough rags to cover their bodies adequately. They called this—and still do—surplus production and hosts of learned professors of economy have used up rivers of ink in an effort to find a solution for this awkward problem of capitalist economy.

They did not find the solution and meanwhile the surplus that could not be sold became so great that just burning wheat in locomotives was a puny measure compared with what was required. So they fought a war and disposed of the surplus production on a really grand scale. It had been unthinkable before to solve the problem by just giving away the surplus to those who were in need of it. That would have brought the foundations of society down in ruins, they told us. Then they brought the foundations of society to the brink of ruin with their new method of surplus disposal. The cure worked to a certain extent. But it nearly killed the horse. You cannot unleash a war and then call it to heel when enough damage has been done to allow you to resume normal capitalist production. The war destroyed not only all surplus production but a good deal of essential productive capacity as well. As a result we will all go short for a long time to come.

There is no doubt that private capitalism or its modern heir, state capitalism, will be able in due course to make good the ravages which have been caused. But as long as the wage system and production for profit remain—whether the profit of the private capitalist or of the new state bureaucracy and managerial class—the vicious circle cannot be broken. Only when production is guided by and dependent on the needs of

the consumer can there be plenty for all. As long as a man is paid a wage which allows him to buy from the private manufacturer or the state, not what he and his dependents require, but what others say should be their share according to their position in society, there will be those who have more goods than they can consume and others who are in want. Nationalisation or international trade agreements will not fill our larders or provide us with modern houses, cars, and the amenities to enjoy our leisure. We must abolish a society built on wages and privilege and the productive methods which are inherent in it. Only a society which can give "to each according to his need" and which does not ask whether he can afford it or whether his status in society entitles him to it, will bring us the world of plenty which the natural resources of the earth and human inventiveness can provide.

## SOCIALISM IN WHITEHALL ?

Almost every aspect of our lives today is controlled by various ministries, such as the Ministry of Labour, Health, Education, Fuel and Power, Transport and Agriculture, and departments like the Board of Trade and Home Office. As each Government is elected a new Minister is appointed to each Ministry or department who is supposed to control and be responsible for it. But does he really control it ?

When each minister takes command of his department, in 99 cases out of 100 he has no special knowledge of the activities over which he is to preside. He obtained his position because of his achievement as a politician or trade union official. In his new job he has to deal with a body of permanent officials who have been giving their whole time to the study of the problems of the department during the years when the minister was still making a name for himself or talking fluently on platforms. It is like putting a doctor in control of a coal mine or a coal miner in control of a hospital.

First the officials bring before him hundreds of problems for his decision and then they put before him their suggestions, supported by what may seem to one who knows very little of the subject the most convincing arguments, facts and figures. It is obvious that the minister will simply accept their views and sign his name on the dotted line. Even when the question of party principle arises—perhaps in the form of a rash promise he made on the platform during the election—there is very little he can do, because his permanent officials will point out the difficulties in the way of the fulfilment of his pledge. In all probability they will suggest to him a plausible compromise to save his face.

These officials are the dominating factor in an ever-growing bureaucracy. Under the mask of ministerial control they are gradually bringing the entire community completely under their tyranny. The files and records which afflict our daily lives, are signs of this rule of bureaucracy. They decide how much income tax we pay, when to cut the clothing ration or increase the petrol allowance, in fact they decide everything.

The present tendency in England is towards complete bureaucratizing of all aspects of life, so that everyone from the day they are born until the day they die will be controlled, directed, numbered, checked and filed. The election of the Labour Government will tend to hurry this process. For in

their attempts to reform and organise capitalism they will place more and more power into the hands of the bureaucracy. It does not take much insight to realise that the officials welcome nationalisation.

The only alternative system which will solve the contradictions of capitalism and also check the tendency of making us all small cogs in a giant bureaucratic machine is workers' control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Under such a system miners will run the mines, doctors the hospital and so on throughout every industry and social service.

Where organisation is voluntary and co-operative between the people whose labour produces the necessities of life, the functions of the modern State, of which increasing bureaucracy is an essential feature, will be unnecessary and redundant.

## Calling All Transport Workers

### II.

Two points raised in our last issue concerning our struggle against the employing undertakings were the retention of funds within our own branches and the formation of working committees at each garage, depot or works. Such a move will inevitably bring us face to face with many other problems.

One of these is the provision of sickness and other benefits. The position now in most parts of the country is that of autocratic control over our monies and benefits by a centralised body. Sometimes also the boss or his representatives invade this sphere of our activities. The Means Test also has its place in the arrangements for benefit of many trade unions and other friendly societies.

We suggest that this problem should be tackled in the light of past experiments. In the London area voluntary levies were made on certain transport workers to meet the need of sickness, distress, etc., and this scheme always worked well. Again as with other funds contributed by the workers we must exercise our own local control. Where we find our numbers too small in any given place of work to meet all demands made on the funds an amalgamation could be made with others near at hand. Any money remaining in the fund when all claims have been met should be shared out equally among the contributors at the end of each year. This will overcome what has always been a great weakness of workers movements—the accumulation of large sums of money.

Another problem which must be tackled more seriously than has been done in the past is that of propaganda. Whenever we have stated our case publicly during periods of dispute a large measure of support has been forthcoming from workers in other industries. If we concentrate on this weapon we should be able to break down the hostility we sometimes encounter. Although we do not have the use of the national dailies, our organised propaganda effort can do much to spread knowledge of our working conditions. Our daily contact with other workers in the transport industries offer opportunities which we can all use effectively.

We present these further points for your consideration, criticism and suggestions. Needless to say our proposals would apply with some modifications to workers in other industries too.

# STRAWS IN THE WIND

The successful enslavement of the organisations of the British working class and their complete subservience to the State creates a new situation for all militants. Even the most wishful Labour thinking cannot hope to tie the aspirations of the people to the political band-waggon of the Labour Government for any length of time. The conflict between State and worker is a hard and inescapable fact, and the apparent honeymoon can only be short and superficial. Opposition will soon become active and evident. What form will it take? That is the real problem of the immediate future.

The turning of the people against the Labour State will certainly be gradual and, at first, without any organised expression. The next step after this inarticulate stirring of protest will be the great responsibility as well as a great danger for all revolutionaries. Spontaneous rebellion can only too easily be diverted by well-sounding, utterly false slogans. Communists and Fascists are ready and waiting to launch their campaigns and to catch on the rebound the manifestations of discontent. To make this impossible and to ensure a true liberation of the working class from the combined embraces of the State and their own so-called representatives is the major task facing us and all libertarian militants.

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A pointer to the attitude of the Communists in the near future was their peculiar silence at the T.U. Congress. No demand was heard at Blackpool this time for "working class unity". Where were the familiar requests to remove the ban on Communist speakers and officers in T.U. branches? There seems to be only one explanation—the C.P. is sitting tight waiting to reap the harvest sown by Labour's victory at the polls.

It was not a case of inability to have access to the platform. It is true Communist influence in the factories is negligible. In old established centres of working class organisation they hardly dare show their faces in public, elsewhere they are treated with suspicion or with indifference. But though they have no popular support, their strangle-hold on the middle and higher circles of T.U. bureaucracy continues and is even on the increase.

Their technique is simple. Organised campaigning for their candidates has secured them nearly all the posts they are holding. The average member takes little interest in T.U. elections. To him the candidates are mostly unknown, and he has long despaired of ever being able to change the machinery and the rule of the professional official. It is all one to him whether Tom Jones or Bill Smith becomes a member of the Executive next year for all the good it will do him. Against this background of indifference the Communists have little difficulty in getting enough votes for their candidate by spreading the word that so-and-so must get in. The Mine-workers, practically all the engineering unions, the Railway unions among many others are all but run by the C.P. Yet there are hardly any Communist miners, engineers or railwaymen. This technique is typical and worthy of this noble "working class party" whose ambition is not representation of the working class but representation *over* them.

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Communist resolutions were not the only things conspicuous for their absence at Blackpool. Missing was also even the remotest vestige of a working class spirit. Of course, we have long become used to the

idea that everything is decided before the Congress ever meets. But there used to be heard at least from somewhere on the floor a lost voice calling in the wilderness, a poor misguided local delegate who brought up a point in the belief that T.U. congresses are held to deal with the problems of the workers. This time there were no such regrettable incidents. All the speechifying was in the best traditions of "statesmanship", the highlights being the ministerial addresses. The rest of the time was taken up by candidates for future ministerial appointments showing their paces and demonstrating in public that they will be qualified to succeed the present team or to fill some of the nice little jobs still to be distributed. Demobilisation, the 40-hour week and all the other problems were dealt with in the loftiest of spirits, miles above everything that could interest the workmate on the job.

## LONDON PROTEST MEETING

A public meeting was held on Sunday, September 23rd, at the Holborn Hall, London, by the London Group of the Anarchist Federation and the Spanish Libertarian Movement jointly to protest against the continued imprisonment of the Spanish anti-fascist fighters, captured on the Continent, in a P.o.W. camp in Lancashire. The meeting was very well attended.

Tom Brown of the London Group pointed out that the only reason for keeping these men imprisoned was that they had dared to carry into practice what genuine socialists had dreamed of and preached for a hundred years, the socialisation of the means of production and distribution. It was the duty of every conscious militant to demand their release.

Delso de Miguel on behalf of the Spanish Libertarian Movement described the men's plight during their weary years of exile and imprisonment by French, German and Allied forces in turn. He praised the spontaneous help given these men by the people of Lancashire.

Sonia Edelman told of her visit to the camp and the pitiful state of the prisoners which contrasted strangely with their dignified bearing. Bill Johnson of the Glasgow Anarchist group brought greetings from the comrades in the North and endorsed the appeal.

A responsive audience contributed generously to the collection on behalf of the prisoners.

## To all Burnley and Nelson Readers

A group of the Anarchist Federation is being formed in the Burnley and Nelson (Lancs.) district. Will all comrades and friends interested please get in touch with:

J. L. PILLING,

Height Croft,

Morsden Height, Brierfield.

*Direct Action* is on sale at Burnley Market Place on Sunday evenings and it is proposed to hold meetings there soon. The group is also producing the *Anti-Parliamentarian* as an occasional supplement to *Direct Action*.

# The Workers' International

**“Revolutionary Syndicalism stands on the platform of direct action, and supports all struggles which are not in contradiction with its aims—the abolition of economic monopoly and of the domination of the State. The methods of fighting are the strike, the boycott, etc. Direct action finds its most pronounced expression in the general strike which, at the same time, from the point of view of Revolutionary Syndicalism, ought to be the prelude to the social revolution.”**  
—I.W.M.A. “Aims & Principles”.

The International Working men's Association is today the only international organisation which has reaffirmed and stood by the slogan of the first workers' international—“The emancipation of the working class must be the task of the working-class.”

In 1921 the Russian C.P., under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, called a conference of syndicalist organisations from countries throughout the world to bring the fighting class organisations of the workers under the control of the Kremlin. This manoeuvre fortunately failed, and the following year delegates of the Syndicalist movements of many different countries again met, this time in Berlin, and the I.M.W.A. was constituted.

The statement of aims and principles drawn up at that Congress, from which we quote above, forms the basis for the struggle of the Syndicalist movement. It lays down that revolutionary syndicalism is anti-parliamentary and anti-militarist. It aims at “the union of all manual and intellectual workers in economic fighting organisations” which will pursue the day-to-day struggle under capitalism, but at the same time prepare by education and organisation for the revolutionary overthrow of the class system by the workers taking over, and holding, control of the means of production and distribution.

## I.W.M.A. Before 1939

In the years between the two wars the work of the I.W.M.A. rapidly expanded. Sections were formed in many countries and these sections were always in the forefront of the workers' struggle. In Japan the working-class movement was strongly influenced by the ideas of revolutionary-syndicalism and a strong movement, the J.R.D.Z.K., was affiliated to the I.W.M.A.

The Labour movement of Latin America was strongly influenced by the ideas of Spanish Anarchism, and sections of the I.W.M.A. existed in most countries of the South American continent. The Regional Workers Federation of the Argentine (F.O.R.A.), with a membership of 300,000 in the 1930's was the strongest of these organisations. The struggle of the movement in the South American countries has been, to a great extent, illegal and underground.

In Europe the strongest movements existed in Spain (C.N.T.) and Sweden (S.A.C.). Most European countries, however, had affiliated sections of the

I.W.M.A. In Germany before the Nazis seized power the Free Workers Union (F.A.U.D) took an extremely active part in the industrial struggles in the Rhineland. Organisations were also active in France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Poland and Bulgaria, while in countries where no Syndicalist organisations existed, the work of making known the aims and principles of the I.W.M.A. and the tactics of revolutionary syndicalist struggle was carried on by propaganda groups.

In the U.S.A. and Canada the Industrial Workers of the World, formed in 1905, although not affiliated to the I.W.M.A. have fought for the same aim and hold similar principles

## I.W.M.A. Today

The second world war made it extremely difficult, and in many cases impossible, to maintain contact between the various sections of the I.W.M.A. The situation has improved little with the restoration of “freedom and democracy”.

The work of the I.W.M.A. in countries “liberated” by the Anglo-American armies is greatly hampered by the occupying powers, who have frequently stated their opposition to the working-class “forces of anarchy” In spite of these difficulties the movement is being reorganised for the struggles of the future. Syndicalist comrades played a great part in the underground movement, and have, in many cases, increased their influence during the occupation because of this fact. From France, Belgium and Italy news has reached us of the growing activity of the revolutionary Syndicalist movement.

The red jackboots of Stalinist imperialism striding across Eastern and Central Europe are bringing continued oppression to the people and continued illegality to the independent working-class movement. Only those organisations prepared to prostitute themselves to their new bosses are allowed to function. For the I.W.M.A. sections in such countries as Poland and Bulgaria, the underground struggle continues with the certainty of death for those who are captured by the Bolshevik-Fascists.

## FUTURE STRUGGLES

*Direct Action* published recently a statement from the I.W.M.A. Secretariat in Sweden calling for a reorganisation of the Syndicalist movement internationally and the convening of an international congress as soon as possible.

It is regrettable that there has been no revolutionary Syndicalist movement in this country since the last war. The propaganda of the Anarchist Federation, however, has been inspired by similar principles and aims as laid down by the I.W.M.A. It is on the basis of these principles that the workers, struggle must be organised and co-ordinated internationally if the cycle of capitalist war and capitalist peace is to be broken, and a society free from social and economic slavery introduced.

The Anarchist Federation sends its fraternal greetings to the comrades of the revolutionary Syndicalist movement throughout the world, confident that wherever they may be the struggle against class tyranny is going forward.