

DIRECT ACTION

AUGUST 1945.

PRICE ONE PENNY

LABOUR IN POWER

For five and a half years this country has been through the bitter experience of modern warfare. Soldiers, sailors and airmen in the combat areas have suffered mental and physical anguish, many were wounded others went to their death. All for the apparent reason of crushing National Socialism in Germany, though the real reasons for this greatest of holocausts are far beyond those stated. Now we should be able to look forward to at least five years of National Socialism in this country.

What this prospect may mean to us personally in our daily struggle for the scanty means of life may not be very clear at the moment. But let us consider a few of its aspects. Among the many promises of our new rulers Nationalisation of the Bank of England has been presented as a pretty picture of things to come. Let us consult an expert's opinion. The late Montague Norman, Governor of the Bank of England, had this to say about nationalisation: "I would welcome nationalisation because I know that nationalisation and nothing else would, by greater centralisation, increase the power of those who, behind the scenes, control the centralised Government". An American financier has this to offer: "Give me control of a nation's money and I care not who makes the laws."

So having taken care that the control of the money-issuing institution and the law making will move from the hands of the old-style capitalist into those of the rightful disciples of Mond and Turner (Chairman of the I.C.I. and trade union official who issued a joint report on employer and employee class collaboration in industry) we shall now be ready for the usual plucking. Doubtless it will hurt none the less.

Other items in the five priorities of the Labour Party Programme are the nationalisation of coal mining and transport. Workers in these industries have been under government control during the entire war period. Apart from some concessions made to the workers, due entirely to the added importance of their industries in wartime, the government control has been just as merciless in its demands as were the colliery owners and transport magnates in the old pre-war days. We may change one boss for another, we may even have one from our own ranks—but we still have a boss. A working collier from the Rhondda Valley, Coombs, author of the Left-Book Club book "These Poor Hands" said that if you give a working man a little authority and call him boss then he becomes a perfect bastard. We can find this ourselves if we care to look round inside the factory gate, depot, colliery, or wherever our place of work is to-morrow morning. A trade union official, a boss stooge vested with a modicum of authority, will defend his or her position in a hundred and one dirty ways. In the same way we find that a Labour politician will always use his authority against the people when they protest against State impositions. In the final analysis the claim of all politicians to dominate us rests upon force and is the same for Capitalist or Labour politicians alike.

That is why we say that it is wasting our energies to get rid of one set of rulers only to deliver ourselves into the hands of another, for nationalisation must mean that the State takes the place of the private boss.

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Calling Transport Workers

Against a background of press lies, radio distortions and the order to return to work from Transport House, bus-workers again renew the struggle against the intensified slave driving of the employing undertakings. First the trolley-bus workers with some central bus support, came out; then the Midlands and London Country services. The strike action was confined to certain districts but the conditions causing these strikes apply throughout the whole country.

We have no doubt that the intensification of working schedules practised in the past will be extended in the future. So that we can see plainly that the struggle of some sections is the concern of us all. The fight will be a stiff one. The challenge of the boss leaves us in no doubt and we must accept it and wage our fight efficiently. All our weaknesses of the past must be attacked and serve only as a guide to the future. In the past we have paid two-fold, in blood, tears, toil and sweat to the employer and in money, hard earned, to the Union official. Let us then make a radical change and keep these monies within our own branch under our control. There is no need, surely, to pay for orders to submit, rather should we pay to wage our fight successfully.

When the boss attacks we must fight immediately and with all the strength we can muster. In order to do this we suggest a working committee at each garage, depot or works, all to be linked by speedy contacts. These committees could at once be made into strike committees when the occasion arises or their basis broadened and everyone marshalled in support and given a job they feel they can do. The sole reward should be that which each one gains from the fight. We have had enough of budding Bevins, Papworths, etc., that leave our ranks at our expense. These are some suggestions that may help to overcome past mistakes. You have observations to make too. Let us have them and we will see they are circulated. The job is urgent, lets get down to it.

BUSMAN

LABOUR IN POWER

(Continued from page 1)

Instead of analysing the complexities of Labour politics and nationalisation let us consider a few simple facts. All production of wealth is based on three factors:

- the land containing the raw material;
- the tools we ourselves fashion;
- the labour we ourselves wield.

The ruling class, be they the private or State variety, own and control the land and production machinery and have our means of life in their hands. The workers alone can alter this division within Society with its attendant evils of War, unemployment and the speeding up of working conditions by taking the means of production and distribution into their own hands. The Labour Government's nationalisation means just a new kind of serfdom.

OUR SPANISH PRISONERS

Among the brilliant operations of our General Staff there is one which *Direct Action* wishes to record for posterity. Thousands of Spanish workers took arms against Fascism in 1936. When German and Italian help, aided by Western complicity defeated them, part of their millions sought refuge in France. The French put them into concentration camps behind barbed wire. Their ranks were decimated by hunger and sufferings. Those who survived, were handed to the Germans on a plate when they entered France in 1940. The Germans recognised in them an indomitable will to fight for freedom, and put them into concentration camps and forced labour battalions. More years of suffering and persecution further reduced the number of survivors. Some managed to escape and joined the French resistance movement.

This was the situation at the time of the successful landing in Normandy. In camps, labour battalions and among the French resistance forces, were 200 odd Spanish fighters of 1936 still alive in the North of France. They thought the "Armies of Liberation" had come to liberate them. . . .

They soon found out their mistake. The day after the occupation the Allied armies invited all foreigners to register with them in order to "regularise their position". Our Spaniards did so and found themselves interned as "captured prisoners of war".

They are in England now and the National Press has recently taken notice of them because one of them, tired of nearly ten years of persecution and humiliation has killed himself. We have seen them and their tale is an eloquent commentary on the ideas of justice and freedom for which this war has allegedly been won. Every one of them is identified as a proved fighter of the working class movement, about half of them our comrades, the other half members of the U.G.T. unions. Their physical condition is best illustrated by remembering the news-reels made in German prisoner and concentration camps. They have been herded together with Nazis and Fascists, their few remaining shirts and socks were taken away by unidentified members of their "capturing forces". Their protests and requests for proper treatment were received with alternative shoulder-shrugging, and assurances that it is "all a mistake of war, which will be cleared up in a day or two". They lack the most elementary hygiene and medical attention. And they are prisoners. They need help. Workers in this country must see that they are not kept behind barbed wire. And they must give freely to show their solidarity, so that these comrades can be fed, clothed and receive medical attention.

Please send your contributions to:

A. RUIZ

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

The different schools of Marxism used to explain to us that things can start to happen only if the "objective" or "material conditions" for them have been fulfilled. The "objective conditions" for a great awakening of the working class have certainly been fulfilled. Already reduced to the bare minimum of existence the working man and woman is today further menaced by the perils of post-war reconstruction. At the same time all their alleged defenders and their own organisations have declared themselves class collaborators and proved to be not organs of the workers but instruments set up over them.

This sad experience makes us distrust the workings of "objective conditions". If we leave the future to them we may never see any independent working class action. The fact that we remain the only conscious and determined opponent of oppression and exploitation and the advocates of workers' emancipation by their own efforts places a heavy responsibility on the organised Anarchist movement. From a small nucleus of people inspired by common ideas, we must quickly develop into a large fighting force, rallying around us the best militants among the ordinary people. It is up to our forthcoming Congress to find the best and speediest means to bring this about.

Among the many tasks awaiting our movement is that of reviving the old tradition of revolutionary movements: solidarity with the persecuted militants. At present when the powers that be pounce on a militant worker whether through the police, the military, depriving him of his job or any of the manifold means of persecution at their disposal, he is alone and at their mercy. In some cases Defence or Aid Committees are formed and may have a limited success. Elsewhere in this issue we are publishing a call to aid some hundreds of Spanish comrades who have recently been "liberated" into Prisoners-of-War. But such isolated actions, successful or not, are insufficient. Revolutionary militants must awake to their responsibilities and begin to organise their great defensive weapon, solidarity.

If anyone is in need of enlightenment on the principles of Justice the trial of the great Marshal of France, Petain, provides good material for a textbook. Any unbiased observer would have to award the prize for dignity to the accused. His almost unanswerable opening statement ran somewhat like this: 'I am a fool and a fascist. I always have been and that is why you made me Marshal of France and Head of State. Thus you have given me proof that I was right and all good Frenchmen should be like me'. Then he sat down and slept through most of the proceedings. While he dozes witness after witness and even prosecutor and judges plead in their own defence. Everybody is only anxious to show that they have acted more wisely than the accused. And the more they try the more it becomes evident that the whole political set-up was rotten to the core. Some succeed in proving that they were bigger fools, others that they were bigger fascists. But none can substantiate the claim that they are fit to sit in judgment over one of the great scoundrels of the last French generation.

Politicians work in mysterious ways their wonders to perform. The following dialogue was reported in the "Daily Express" (30.7.45):

A shunter asked Mr. Binks (J. Binks, President, National Union of Railwaymen), "If we now have a Socialist Government which says that among its first aims is nationalisation of the railways, why can't we railwaymen negotiate with it direct now, instead of having to go to the railway companies to try to get what we want?"

Mr. Binks replied: "Before our new Government can nationalise the railways it must first give them back to the companies that own them, and then do what it says it is going to do. Until then it's the companies we have to deal with. But although we now have a Government of our own liking and choosing, it may be in the future—time will tell—that we of the trade unions will have to fight them to get what we want just as we fought the Government in the past."

Trade Unions, where they have not already done so, are rapidly falling into their place in the State machine—the counterpart here of Dr. Ley's Labour Front. As far as fighting this Government or any other government is concerned, it's so much "Pie in the Sky". They have neither the guts nor the organisational machinery to say Boo to a goose. There is only one solution to the problem, and the Spanish workers showed us the way in 1936. **Organise consciously** to take over transport and the other means of production and distribution. Not nationalisation, but control of the railways by the railwaymen. Workers' control of industry, minus governments, union fakers and politicians. The workshops to the workers, the hospitals to the doctor, nurses and patients, the fields to the farmers. In short let us mind our own businesses, and Mr. Binks, Lord Leathers and Alf Barnes will have no business to attend to.

The Great God of Private Property is being attacked, and when workers lose their respect for private property anything can happen. Workers and soldiers aren't waiting on any Vigilantes, they are going ahead on their own if one can believe the Press. The fever has spread as far as Sydney, Australia, where 13 houses have been seized and 7 more are on the agenda for next week. "Go to it" comrades, 'You can take it'.

The Communist Party, His Majesty's Own Mental Featherweights, have succeeded as usual, to discredit the spontaneous action of the people, by taking over a house in Edinburgh which was under the control of the military authorities. They used for their purpose a poor sailor and his family who were promptly ejected by our kind friends, the police. When political gangsters are forced to take up the fight of the common people by public pressure, they can be relied upon at least to botch it and land their human guinea-pigs in trouble. Direct Action is no advertisement stunt.

Direct Action has even spread as far as Chicago, U.S.A., where some dirty thieves raided Police H.Q. and got away with £25,000 worth of evidence and impounded goods. We suppose the cops will now put a new slogan over the door:

"Don't do as I do, do as I tell you"

ATOMIC ANNIHILATION

The news of Man's latest invention has shocked people the whole world over. No one surely can remain unmoved by the spectacle of such an utterly destructive weapon as the atomic bomb. Today Japan, tomorrow the world. And the headlines shriek "Every living thing, human and animal, was seared to death".

Even though we have experienced all the horrors of aeroplane, fly and rocket bombing our imagination recoils from this new frightfulness. In terms that we might hope to understand we might visualise such a bomb dropping upon, say, Leicester and exterminating almost every living organism in the city. The Japanese may seem far away, but we should be under no illusion about the intentions of would-be world conquerors. Yellow, black or white skins, there will be no colour bar restricting the use of this devilish instrument.

With the exploding of the atom numerous propaganda and political fallacies were exploded, among them being that of pin-point bombing, i.e. the hitting of military targets such as marshalling yards, mines, factories, etc. To annihilate a city of nearly 300,000 people by one comparatively small bomb needs no special skill now that the scientists have given us the weapon. "Science" says the President of the Royal Society, "is becoming the direct agent of indiscriminate devastation at long range needing only a minimum of apparatus and personnel. There, I suggest, lies the threat of final disaster to civilisation."

Every so often we are reprimanded on the declining birth rate. Women who refused to produce cannon fodder in the past will refuse even more emphatically now that life holds no possible security and very little hope of any future. Public "morals" will again be up for discussion, because men and women will tend to live only for the day. Organised religions will use what little influence they have in a futile effort to supply a fake haven of refuge. Life will be cheaper than ever and we can probably expect that murders and suicides will increase.

All this because we are people without hope. The day the atomic bomb was first released on the unsuspecting inhabitants of Hiroshima civilisation faced final disaster. But ARE we entirely without hope? No,

not quite. The urgency of getting rid of the state machines and warmongers the world over before they get rid of us is greater than ever today. Those that fear our ideas and the revolt of the common man, the powerful and privileged everywhere, lie to you and say Anarchy is chaos. If that were so we would be living in an Anarchist society today, for it is hard to imagine that social chaos can ever reach greater heights than the conditions manifest today all over the continents of Europe and Asia. To prevent "anarchy and chaos" our rulers everywhere intend to uphold "law and order". But the law and order of governments and societies rest finally on the governors' right to use force. This force, employed by our rulers in many ways, has now presented itself in a new and terrifying shape — atomic annihilation.

MINER WINS CASE

Conducts his own defence

Comrade Robert Lyle, a member of the Burnbank Anarchist Group, has successfully fought a case brought against him on the grounds of "absenteeism". The charge arose as a result of Comrade Lyle's refusal to work while the colliery firemen in Lanarkshire were on strike, last March.

Quoting the Coal Mines Act, 1911, Comrade Lyle, pointed out that it was provided that firemen were required to devote their whole time to statutory duties in connection with safety. Normally one fireman covered the Black Band section—in which he was employed—and the Virtuewell section, while another fireman attended to the Dalziel section.

During the strike, the oversman, Montgomery, not only took over the duties of fireman in all three sections, but also carried on as oversman.

Comrade Lyle stated that on March 5th he went to the pit. During that day no fireman visited his section. He did not return until March 21st as he considered that proper safety precautions were not being taken.

In summing up the case on Thursday, August 2nd, Sheriff Brown issued judgment at Hamilton that the charge had not been proved.

"In the present case," stated the Sheriff, "the objection taken by the accused was a serious one, and I have not sufficient reason for thinking that it was not genuine. On the facts of this case, as proved by evidence, it is not, I think, possible to say that the arrangements made for securing the safety of the workers in the mine were sufficient."

In conducting his own defence, Comrade Lyle tied the prosecution up completely. He stated during the case that if he was not given a fair hearing he would ask for a stated case. He was backed up during the case by the comrades of the Burnbank Group.