

DIRECT ACTION

Syndicalist Workers Federation
BRITISH SECTION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL WORKING MENS ASSOCIATION

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TROUBLE ON THE WAY

THE BIGGEST STRUGGLES for years are building up between the ruling class and the workers. Preliminary skirmishes have already taken place in London - first the printing workers, then the busmen, now the gas maintenance men. The uneasy honeymoon between capital and labour, the result of a Labour Government, looks like ending in the Divorce Court in the near future.

Both sides are preparing for action, and there is every likelihood of widespread strikes during the coming winter.

After the past five years, there cannot be many illusions left about the character of the Labour Government. They have shown themselves ready to hurl every kind of abuse, and use every strikebreaking method short - so far - of armed force, against workers fighting for better conditions and wages.

"The men on strike are the blacklegs and scabs," cried Labour Minister Isaacs during the bus strike, when trying to pin its leadership on to the Stalinists. What tripe! Ex-trade union bureaucrat Isaacs knows full well what a blackleg is.

"At a time when our soldiers are facing serious risks in Korea," said the same character, "it is essential that there should be no danger of interference with their supplies and support." Who sent the 19-year-old conscripts to face death in Korea, Isaacs? Your Labour Government. It was certainly not the choice of the workers that they should be sent. In any case, does Isaacs seriously believe that supplies for Korea are carried on the 24 bus route from Pimlico to Hampstead Heath?

No-one, of course, took the trouble to find out what the strike was all about.

In the first place, the busmen are not against employment of "clippies" as most of the daily papers suggested. Their grievance was that a £1 a week wage claim had not been put forward to the London Transport Executive by the T. & G.W.U.

As one conductor told us, men will not join London Transport on the present wage rate. Until the £1 was secured, the men rightly held that recruitment of "clippies" should be stopped. If women were prepared to take the lower wage, providing the influx of labour needed by the L.T.E., the wage claim would stand no chance of success. This point of view was shared by present clippies, on strike with the men.

Isaacs' threats to introduce laws against "strike agitators" was welcomed unreservedly by the Tory Press. The threat, at this stage, was probably partly a bluff to break the strike, but it is an indication of the lengths to which the Labour leaders are prepared to go in defence of capitalism. It was interesting, too, to hear the "revelation" - long common knowledge - that the Special Branch had sent its spies among the workers.

The strike collapsed through lack of proper co-ordination. There was no alternative organisation to that useless monstrosity, the T. & G.W.U. The lesson is clearly that such an organisation, based on rank-and-file delegate committees, linking up the bus, trolley, tram and tube workers, must be built before the next strike takes place. Unless this is done, direct action cannot be successful.

In building this organisation, however, workers must guard against attempts by the Stalinists to capture control. Any Stalinist-run body is worse than useless for militant action. The C.P. is concerned not with winning strikes, but in using workers to serve the party's political ends. While we do not - like the Labour Government - overrate the influence of Stalinism among the working class, we do recognise that, in the absence of a positive alternative to Labour's reactionary policy, the Stalinists will gain support. And that would be a major defeat for any hopes of a decent society.

The only policy which offers a way forward is that of Syndicalism. It rejects ALL political parties, Tory, Liberal, Labour or Stalinist. It says that the workers' struggle is on the industrial field, and that the ultimate aim must be workers' control of industry. It offers a form of organisation in which - unlike unions such as the T. & G.W.U. - the rank-and-file determine policy and action.

Workers who want this kind of organisation are invited to join the Syndicalist Workers Federation. Our path is struggle - our will is freedom.

THE PRINTING LOCKOUT

The decision of the London Master Printers Association to lock-out 3,000 members of the London Society of Compositors, was the climax to a bitter struggle, of many months' duration.

THE ISSUES The principal issue of the struggle was not connected with the present average wage of London compositors. It was the result of the compositors' demand for an £8 basic wage, although most of them are earning an average wage above that figure. They take the correct view that, while the present shortage of compositors exists, they will be able to get a reasonable wage, but they are concerned at probable slashing of their extras in the event of a slump in the trade. The delaying tactics of the employers resulted in the L.S.C. taking direct action, by applying work-to-rule.

SOLIDARITY The employers, organised in the London Master Printers Association, replied by giving two weeks notice to the workers. The E.C. of the L.S.C. countered with the decision, confirmed by a delegate meeting, to apply further restrictions.

At this stage the employers brought the periodicals branch of the Newspaper Society into the fray, and applied the dismissal notices to compositors employed by members of that society. This section of the trade comprises the London suburban local papers, the trade press, and some of the weekly magazines.

On August 26 the lock-out began. The workers were solid, but not so the employers. For them the great game was to see which one could cut the other's throat first.

THE EMPLOYERS On the general printing side of the trade, the majority of employers applied the lock-out. On the local newspaper side, however, most employers decided their own survival was of more importance. Better to tolerate work-to-rule than cease production, and allow a rival paper to step in and take one's readers. Only the big publishers could take a chance. The employers' main difficulty was the lack of scabs. The best they could do, in most cases, was use apprentices, who were indentured and could not walk out in support.

PROBLEMS RAISED The fact that employers were able to issue dismissal notices without a murmur from the Government, despite the compulsory arbitration order, needs noting.

A serious setback was that the printing machine minders, who are organised in a separate union - the Printing Machine Managers Trade Society - did not support the compositors. Their reason was that they had settled their own claims several weeks earlier and called off their work-to-rule. Just another indication of the deficiencies of the craft form of unionism.

S.W.F. CONFERENCE

At a special conference of the A.F.B., held in Manchester on August 6, the urgent need in this country for an organisation which would concern itself with syndicalist propaganda and action was fully discussed.

As a result, it was decided to dissolve the A.F.B., and to form the SYNDICALIST WORKERS FEDERATION. Other decisions were that the S.W.F. should affiliate with the International Working Mens Association; that it should take over the effects of the A.F.B. - including "Direct Action" - and that its membership should be open to all workers who wanted a radical change in industrial organisation, and the creation of a free society.

Aims and principles and an organisational basis were drawn up by the conference. Greetings to the new organisation were received from the I.W.M.A. (General secretariat, Stockholm), I.W.M.A. (W. European bureau, Lyons), C.N.T. of Spain in exile, C.N.T. of France, S.A.C. of Sweden and the C.N.T. of Bulgaria in exile.

The objects of the S.W.F. are 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 by conscription of labour, strike-breaking, drives for increased production 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 organisations.

(d) Work for the extension of workers industrial committees into syndicalist unions, federated to a General Confederation of Labour, and to provide the organisational basis for this development

(e) Work for the abolition of capitalism and State authority, and for the achievement of common ownership and workers control of the land, industry and all means of production and distribution, on the basis of voluntary co-operation.

To be successful, the S.W.F. needs the immediate and active support of all revolutionary workers in its effort to create an industrial alternative to trade union bureaucracy, on the one hand, and the Stalinists on the other.

We hope YOU will join us in this work. If you are prepared to do so, or if you would like further details about the S.W.F., write to:-

S.W.F. (National Committee),
25a Amberley Road,
London, W.9.

General secretary, S.W.F.

AIMS & PRINCIPLES

Adopted by the constitutive conference, at
Manchester, August 6, 1950

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 S.W.F. 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.

CLASS STRUGGLE The interests of the working class and the ruling class are directly opposed. The S.W.F. is based upon 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 only be achieved by the direct action of the workers themselves. The S.W.F. rejects all parliamentary and similar activity as deflecting the workers from the class struggle into paths of class collaboration.

THE STATE The State in all its forms is the enemy of the workers, and cannot exist within a classless society. The S.W.F. does not, therefore, hope to use the State to achieve the emancipation of the working class; it does not seek to obtain seats in the Cabinet or Parliament. Nor does it desire to build a new State on the ruins of the old. Any attempt, by an allegedly working class party, to create a new State, can only result in a new ruling class.

ORGANISATION To achieve these aims 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 S.W.F. aids the formation of workers committees in all factories, mines, offices, shipyards, mills and other places of work, and their development into industrial unions, federated to an all-national Federation of Labour.

INTERNATIONALISM The S.W.F., as a section of the International Working Mens Association, stands firm for international working class solidarity.

PROFITS - AND TAX DODGING

The suggestion, on the part of a group of influential shareholders, that Blackburn and General Aircraft Co. Ltd., with a nominal capital of £916,812, should go into voluntary liquidation, has been dropped. One of the major factors which lifted the company off the rocks was the government's new rearmament programme. The "Daily Telegraph" of Sept. 8 gleefully commented, "The government's rearmament programme will mean substantial aircraft orders for the company. In view of the changed prospects, the suggestion of voluntary liquidation is dead."

UP AND UP Meanwhile, riding high on the tide of good fortune brought by the armament drive, Neepsend Steel and Tool Corporation announced, on August 30, a final dividend of 7½%, plus a 15% bonus. This makes a 30% dividend for the year. It is equal to a 60% dividend on the basis of the old capital, before it was "re-valued" - another method of tax dodging. Not too bad - last year they made only 50%, including 20% bonus.

Sheepbridge Engineering announced, on the same day, a final dividend of 30%, making 40% in all for the year. During their first 5½ months trading under their present title they made a 15% dividend. The present figure compares very favourably with that. Sheepbridge Engineering was formerly known as Sheepbridge Coal and Iron Company: nationalisation removed coal from their control, while the shareholders removed the cash.

"TAX SAVING" On September 7 the London "Evening News" gave shareholders advice on the best way to "save a certain amount of tax." Unless you are a wealthy shareholder, a member of the privileged classes, and have influential friends, don't try it - it will probably result in your doing time.

In essence the method is simple. A prosperous company changes, theoretically, its domicile. South African Breweries have just announced their plan to do this. The "Evening News" forecasts that the change from London to South Africa will result in an extra 15% dividend.

In case you are a shareholder in London Bricks, here is a bit of cheering news. New 40s. shares were issued on Sept. 9. If you were already a shareholder you could have got them without having to pay the 14s. 9d. premium on each share on the market. If you did not want them you could have sold your "rights" to a stockbroker and picked up some cash. Unless your conscience troubled you, you need not have mentioned it to the chap from the tax office.

Methods of company directors are direct enough in making profit, "bonus" and dodging tax. Isn't it time we took direct action to secure ourselves a living wage?

F.R.

NEWSBRIEFS

DEATH PAYS A DIVIDEND The British employing class care little how many lives are sacrificed as a result of their supplying machine tools and other war materials to Russia. Likewise, the ruling class of Russia are prepared to trade war materials to America. On September 2, American dockers, at Elizabeth, New Jersey, unloaded the Finnish ship, **TORNATOR**. The cargo, from Leningrad consisted of furs, carpet wool, essential oils and 2,100 tons of cotton linters - used in making gun cotton.

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NO LOOTING THESE DAYS Statements in the German press that more than \$26,000 was being spent on the redecoration of Auel castle, near Bonn, Germany, were confirmed by a British spokesman on August 28. The castle is the home of Lt.-Gen. Sir Gordon Macready, economic adviser to Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, British High Commissioner. The cost is to be charged to the German people. Less than a year ago, Maj.-Gen. W.A. Bishop, Ruhr High Commissioner, had his millionaire's mansion house done up - at a cost to the German people of \$32,000.

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WHAT AN INCENTIVE On September 1, Patrick McNamara, a territorial sergeant in his spare time, and a miner during the day, was sentenced to be reduced to the ranks, and to nine months detention, by a court martial at York. His offence was striking his commanding officer and using insubordinate language. This consisted of giving the C.O. a piece of his mind and throwing a glass of beer in his face. In an ordinary court, the sergeant and officer would probably have both been bound over in the sum of 5s each or, at worst, the sergeant fined 40s.

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WHERE DID IT GO? On August 23 Jones, Stephenson and Stalinist Arthur Horner, of the N.U.M., met the Czech ambassador, to enquire why the \$42,000 collected by Czech miners for the Whitehaven colliery disaster victims, three years ago, had never been paid over by the Czech Government. Results of the negotiations were not disclosed.

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KITCHEN TAP BROKEN? Water from the Jordan, it is reported, will be used to christen the new princess.

BREAKDOWN IN T.B. TREATMENT

Before the first shot has been fired, or the first plane-load of high explosives dropped on a helpless city in a third world war, the armament production drive is already taking its toll of human life. An average of four hundred lives a week, to be exact - not in Korea, Malaya or some other remote corner of the earth, but right here in this country.

Dr. John Lawson, of East London, recently told a Socialist Medical Association conference that more than 250,000 people are suffering from tuberculosis, with a deathrate of 400 a week. He considered that it was not only a problem for doctors - malnutrition and bad housing were the main contributory causes of T.B. "Since the war," he said, "there has been a serious breakdown in the treatment of T.B."

Dr. C.K. Cullen, T.B. Officer for Shoreditch, London, said at the same conference, "Under the National Health Act there has been a complete breakdown in the machinery for treating tuberculosis." Between fifty and sixty thousand new cases were being reported every year. More than 10,000 people were waiting to get into hospitals and sanatoria. The shortage of beds meant that many advanced cases were not even recommended for admission to hospital, and there were the most infectious cases.

The shortage of nursing staff, which prevented many victims of the disease from getting adequate treatment, could be directly attributed to the poor wages and bad conditions under which nurses had to work, Dr. Cullen added.

On the credit side, he said, there had been an immense improvement in the methods of diagnosis and treatment in recent years. Better X-Ray facilities existed, and personnel were better trained. What was needed were resources to build new hospitals, staff them, provide decent housing and good food for everyone.

In last year's Budget 2s. in the pound was spent on the National Health Service, as against 4s. in the pound on making guns. With the recent expansion in the armaments drive, the gap is likely to be even wider at the next Budget. More and more money is to be spent on weapons of destruction, and less and less on preserving life.

Are politicians mad? We may be able to give a clearer answer if we contract T.B. Our chances are not too remote - it is a predominantly working class disease.

- K.H.

I.T.F. CALLS OFF BLOCKADE

(IWMA) The international blockade against Argentine shipping, called by the International Transport Workers Federation, has been abandoned. Announcing this decision, the I.T.F. says the reason for this decision was that the Argentine seamen, finding it impossible to continue their struggle for economic reasons, had returned to work. Whatever the truth may be behind this statement, no facts to prove it have so far been published.

The first workers organisation to initiate the struggle against Peron's fascist treatment of the free union movement, was the F.O.R.A., Argentine section of the I.W.M.A. The F.O.R.A. organised a whole series of dockers' strikes, mainly in the port of Buenos Aires.

In these struggles the F.O.R.A. opposed not only the employers and the fascist authorities, but also the trade union organisation controlled by Peron's regime, the C.G.T. The locals of the F.O.R.A. are closed by the police, its publications are banned, but still it continues the fight.

We have already noted that the I.T.F. proclaimed an international blockade against all Argentine shipping, in solidarity with the action of the Argentine seamen, whose organisation is affiliated to the I.T.F. Unfortunately it cannot be claimed that the international federation's decision had a strong reaction among its affiliated national sections. On the contrary, transport workers in a number of countries refused to take part in the action.

The German dockers at Bremen and Hamburg refused to work on two Argentine boats. These were then diverted to the French port of Cherbourg, however, where they were loaded. The cargoes had been taken from Bremen and Hamburg to Cherbourg by railway.

In England, headquarters of the I.T.F., London dockers refused to handle the Argentinian "EVA PERON." No less than six officials of the Transport and General Workers Union came down to the dock to persuade the workers to handle the cargo. According to them, the I.T.F. blockade was not supported by the union. It was probably a similar situation in other countries, and it was this which prompted the I.T.F. to lift the blockade. And when the Argentine seamen found themselves forced to capitulate, advantage was taken of this to call off the international action.

But the ending of the Argentine seamen's strike was no reason for the I.T.F. to call off international action. This action should have been continued until the Argentine seamen's right to freedom of organisation was fully recognised. It is likely that this would have been successful if the workers of all countries had given their support.

- John ANDERSSON.

SYNDICALIST CONGRESS IN SWEDEN

The 13th congress of the Swedish Workers Central Organisation (S.A.C.) - Swedish section of the International Working Men's Association, held recently in Stockholm, was attended by 110 delegates, representing 303 local federations. In addition there were the members of the organisation's administrative and central committees, and representatives of the S.A.C.'s industrial federations and the movement's press.

The opening of the congress, which marked the S.A.C.'s 40th anniversary, was an impressive spectacle. There was singing, music and jubilee speeches. One of the finest details was a parade of banners: at the head of the procession was the banner received by the S.A.C. from the Spanish S.C.N.T. and behind it fifty flags from local federations of the S.A.C.

Many Swedish organisations sent delegates to the opening ceremony, as an expression of the great esteem in which the activity and struggle of the S.A.C. is held. Among them were the Association of Working Class Culture, the Co-operative Federation, the Federation of Swedish Writers, etc. Between them, these organisations represent several million members.

In addition, there were representatives of the I.W.M.A., the women's federations, Syndicalist Youth, the Anarchists and the Libertarian Book Guild.

Here is one of the resolutions passed by the congress:-

"The S.A.C., meeting in its 13th congress, sends its fraternal greetings to all comrades throughout the world. In the first place we think of our comrades in the Bulgarian concentration camps, and of the militants in Spain who, in spite of bloody persecution, carry on their heroic struggle against the regime of the butcher Franco. We send, also, our greetings to friends and comrades in Latin America, where fascist reaction tries, brutally and systematically, to wipe out freedom and social progress, above all against the representatives of the workers organised in the sections of the I.W.M.A.

"The congress, which re-affirms the ideas of the I.W.M.A., assures the comrades in all countries of its unshakeable solidarity and its will to continue the common struggle for the liberation of humanity from all forms of State domination and capitalist exploitation."