

DIRECT ACTION

SYNDICALIST WORKERS FEDERATION
INTERNATIONAL WORKING MENS ASSOCIATION

IWMA CONGRESS
REPORT ON
PAGE 2

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Twopence

PORTWORKERS HIT BACK AGAINST BID TO CREATE UNEMPLOYMENT

AS WE PRODUCE "Direct Action," the strike of 1,400 tally clerks employed in the London Docks is in progress. Like the Manchester lock-out, the strike is 98% solid. Like the Manchester dispute, it is the result of a drive against the working conditions of the portworkers on the part of the Dock Labour Board and the boss class. The old sport of grinding the workers' faces in the dust is again being practised, not only with the support, but under the active direction of the so-called workers' leaders. Again the portworkers are demonstrating their abilities as fighters, and as the front rank of the militant workers of this country.

THE BOSSES ATTACK

Regrettable as it may seem, the tally clerks of London are being compelled to strike against the employment of a new man. These men are the last people on earth to wish to take another man's living away in order that they may reap a higher standard of living. Yet they realise that what the employers are attempting to do is to create a pool of surplus labour in the port, in order that the older men may be "weeded out" and, of course, the most militant workers sacked. They realise that they are living under a rotten economic system that uses a plentiful supply of labour, not to produce a higher standard of living for the men within the industry, but to provide the bosses with the big stick. They know their bosses.

Again the employers have come unstuck. Ninety-eight per cent of the tally clerks have joined the struggle and are demonstrating - in terms of action - the tried and trusted slogan, "We will hang together - or hang separately."

The latest figures issued by the Dock Labour Board are that 232 men are on strike in the Surrey Commercial with 5 scabs working, 22 ships idle; in the Royal Group, 844 men are on strike, 36 working, 26 ships idle and 3 undermanned; at W st India, 120 men are out, 7 blacklegs working, 17 ships idle and 6 undermanned; at Tilbury, the strike is 100% solid, with 204 out, none working, 14 ships idle and 2 "undermanned."

On the other hand, 61 ships are still working - most of them small

vessels - 48 of which are in the Pool and St. Katherine's, where checkers are employed. These men, although doing the same job as tally clerks, are not affected at this stage by the proposed increase of labour.

A FINAL WORD It may be asked why we think this is the beginning of a general attack. The tally clerks can answer that one. Immediately before the strike, anything between 40 and 70 clerks were unemployed on many days, and were living on their subsistence money. There can therefore be only one reason why the employers want to increase the labour force. We know them.

To the tally clerks engaged in this battle, who have seen that reason, we offer congratulations on their splendid fight. To workers in other industries we appeal for support. Don't handle black goods. Support the tally clerks with an open purse. We shall pass on to the tally clerks any money sent us for that purpose. We know that any money contributed by Northern readers to the Merseyside Portworkers Committee in support of the tally clerks will be cheerfully and promptly passed on.

Give your support. Your turn may be next. British economy is on a war footing, and the workers are going to pay the bill - it won't come out of profits.

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IWMA MEETS IN CONGRESS

THE SEVENTH International Congress of the International Working Mens Association was held in the Fernand Pelloutier Hall of the French C.N.T. at Toulouse, from May 12-23. Delegations represented revolutionary syndicalist organisations of Argentina (F.O.R.A.), Austria (B.H.S.), Bulgaria (C.N.T. in exile), Denmark (F.S.D.), France (C.N.T.), Germany (F.F.S.), Gt. Britain (S.W.F.), Holland (N.S.V.), Italy (U.S.I.), Norway (N.S.F.), Portugal (C.G.T.), Spain (C.N.T.) and Sweden (S.A.C.). The secretariat of the international was represented by Comrades John Andersson (secretary) and Ragnar Johanson (treasurer). Fraternal delegates were present from the Libertarian Association of Cuba, the Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth and International Anti-fascist Solidarity. Many telegrams and messages of greeting were received, including two from the Regional Workers Federations of Uruguay and Chile, who were unable to send delegates.

During the twelve days of discussion and debates - which were always lively - the public part of the large hall was filled with French and Spanish comrades, particularly at the evening sessions.

A shadow was cast over the Congress when we learned that one of the comrades coming to represent our underground organisation in fascist Spain had been shot dead by Franco's police, while trying to cross the frontier: one more victim in the struggle for freedom.

But it was encouraging to hear from the Spanish delegates that the movement against Franco is daily gaining strength, and that it was the C.N.T. which had been the force behind the recent strike wave.

From Bulgaria, Argentina and Portugal came similar reports of

fascist - or Stalinist - reaction, the first victims of which have been the revolutionary syndicalist and libertarian militants. In Bulgaria, for instance, 40,000 arrests were carried out on the night of April 28-29, and an appeal for international solidarity came from our clandestine movements in these unhappy countries.

In all these countries, the I.W.M.A. sections counted tens of thousands of members. Although legal activity is forbidden them today, the reports showed the fight is being carried on, and that our ideas have the sympathy of wide sections of the working class there.

The work of the Congress covered a very wide field, which it is impossible to attempt to cover in this issue of "Direct Action." But we must mention that the I.W.M.A.'s declaration of Aims and Principles was ratified in its entirety: The International remains anti-capitalist and anti-State, bases its struggle on the methods of direct action, and has as its aim a free communist society. The I.W.M.A. secretariat stays in Sweden, with John Andersson as secretary and Ragnar Johanson as treasurer. Future activity will include the creation of international seamen's and engineering workers' federations and an intensification of international solidarity. July 19th each year will be a day of international demonstrations and agitation. The International proclaimed its independence of, and opposition to, the rival imperialist blocs. Telegrams of solidarity were sent to the Pakistan Federation of Labour and the Industrial Workers of the World.

Some of the most important resolutions will be published next month, in a fuller report.

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SHARP PRACTICE AT MANCHESTER

THE LOCK-OUT of 2,300 Manchester dockers, by the Manchester Ship Canal Company and the Docks Labour Board, was one of the dirtiest pieces of sharp practice and double-dealing on record.

THE FACTS For many years, it had been the practice in the port, as in many other ports, that when a ship is not worked overtime on at the beginning, she stays that way until the cargo is discharged or loaded. The exception to this rule is that, on the last day, overtime may be worked if the ship is going to sea immediately.

The Ship Canal Company made a proposal, early this year, that this rule should be dropped, and dockers compelled to work overtime whenever the Ship Canal Company thought fit. This proposal was rejected unanimously by the February branch meeting of the No. 6/11 and 6/12 T. & G.W.U. branch. At the April meeting, the members were surprised to learn that the proposal had been adopted by a meeting - without their knowledge - of the Joint Negotiating Committee. They were even more surprised to learn that the composition of the committee was: six bosses' representatives - and the chairman, who was the deputy manager of the Ship Canal Company - and four trade union spokesmen. On this occasion, the committee was unconstitutionally constituted, and so legally not empowered to make any decision.

We will pass over the fact that the committee's decision was made behind closed doors, without the knowledge of the dockers. On April 23, the foreman approached men working on the "Princess Maria Pia," and told them they had to work overtime that night, despite the fact that no overtime had previously been worked on her. The men refused, and were suspended for three days by the port manager, who contended that the old custom no longer existed. The port manager is the same, under whose authority, suspensions had risen from 3 to 76 a month.

This action was followed by night work being imposed, and the men not reporting for it - which they had the right to do - and reporting for day work. They were refused their books and locked out. Considering that an injury to one is an injury to all, 98% of the dockers stopped work. They contended, correctly, that to lock out a group of their mates, was to lock out the entire port. That, after all, is common working class custom.

THE LINE-UP It is very interesting to see on which side various people stood during the dispute. On one side, the Ship Canal Company and the Docks Labour Board, the Press, the Government, and the leaders of the T. & G.W.U., whose area secretary cancelled the regular weekly branch meetings two days after the dispute broke out, despite the fact that the majority of the branch committee supported their fellow workers. On the other side were the men themselves, and those militant sections of the working class who knew the true position.

SOME CONCLUSIONS The Manchester lock-out is now over. The men have returned, on condition that the problem will be discussed, that no further "unconstitutional" actions will be taken by the Joint Negotiating Committee, that future decisions will not be made behind closed doors, and that shop stewards will be elected on the job. Not complete failure, but not quite complete success.

As a working class paper, "Direct Action" - which is written and produced by workers - regards it as a duty to comment, in a constructive way, on the conduct of the dispute. Firstly, we think that the statement, by the Manchester Port Workers Committee, that, "We do not challenge the negotiating machinery, but we do challenge the use of negotiating machinery in an unconstitutional manner", is an equivocal position. No negotiating machinery, constitutional or unconstitutional, is likely to gain the Dockers Charter, or even to defend existing conditions. Negotiating machinery is a trick to divert the energy of workers, and it is no substitute for action.

In conclusion, we say to our Manchester brothers: "Don't trust negotiating machinery or the union bosses. You have shown your ability to stick together, and your willingness to fight. They are your real assets, and the means to carry on the struggle."

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GET IT? "The Labour Party has got to understand that it is no longer a street corner mob. It is the governing class of this country. It has got to have the poise and self-assurance of the ruling class." - Webb, Minister of Food, at Bradford on May 6.

DECISIVE VICTORY FOR HAULAGE MEN

COACHLOADS of lorry drivers from the Provinces, the packed Beaver Hall, London, the overflow meeting outside, extra police drafted to control the crowds, and the triumphal singing of "Auld Lang Syne", indicated the decisive nature of the road haulage men's victory over the Road Haulage Executive, the Transport and General Workers Union bosses and the snooper plan. So decisive was the victory, in fact, that the only comment Deakin would make was that he "expected the men to resume work without delay." At the same time, it is known that Cousins, national secretary of the T. & G.W.U., has been rapped over the knuckles by Deakin for "mishandling the dispute." As a strike-breaker he was a lamentable failure.

THIN END OF THE WEDGE

The plan of the Road Haulage Executive to introduce 11 "road patrols" (termed "snoopers" by the men), in addition to the existing five, may be described as the thin end of the wedge. The undoubted purpose of the move was to get the men on the retreat, so that when the larger attacks on the conditions of the workers develop, the men will be less able to offer effective resistance. That the move failed, is due to the recognition by 13,000 lorry drivers of the tactics of the nationalised boards. "Bit by bit," as one of the Old Bailey Seven recently described them.

A STRAIGHT REPLY

The first move in the fighting reply of the lorry drivers was the 21 days notice of dispute handed in by men at Milehams Depot. A protest meeting, called by the 1/434 branch of the T. & G.W.U., and attended by delegates from 30 London, as well as Provincial, depots. The meeting passed a resolution, declaring: "We support our brothers at Milehams Depot, whose 21-day notice of dispute on this question expires on May 28. We will support their action if no satisfaction is obtained." A week later, the cold war became hot. The number of men who came out in a couple of days climbed to a peak of 13,335, with 241 depots involved.

The next move lay with the bosses. Robens, Minister of Labour, pointed out to the Executive "the critical situation facing the country, with the paralysis of road transport," and asked the executive to consider the men's "request." They met with the knowledge that, far from the strike collapsing, the number of men on strike was rising. Under these circumstances, the executive climbed down.

NOTHING LIKE SUCCESS

It's said nothing succeeds like success. The 11 "road patrols" were withdrawn. Assurances were obtained from the Road Transport Executive and the bosses of the T. & G.W.U. that no victimisation would take place. In addition, the men made it plain that they expected the five existing road patrols to be put in the museum.

The success of the strike is undoubtedly due to the rapid spread of the action, the fine organisation, the policy of delegates going to various workplaces and getting the support of the workers on the job, and to the panic of the Road Transport Executive.

This victory ranks alongside Grimethorpe in its completeness. To the road haulage men, we say: don't let complacency set in now, or you will lose these benefits - as did the miners at Grimethorpe. Watch out for the next move - there will be one. Better still, press on with those outstanding claims you have on wages and conditions while you are in the mood, and the executive is on the retreat. Keep your rank and file organisation intact, and remember:-

DIRECT ACTION WINS SUCCESS - HOT AIR DOES NOT!

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LEGGETT REPORT IS FINE — FOR THE BOSSES

by HARRY CONSTABLE

A REPORT of a Committee of Inquiry under the chairmanship of Sir Frederick Leggett, C.B., entitled "Unofficial Stoppages in the London Docks" (Cmd. 8236. Price 1/3d), has recently been published. The report has been submitted to the Rt. Hon. Alfred Robens, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service, and will be presented, in due course, by the Minister to Parliament.

COMMITTEE'S BASIC AIMS

The Committee of Inquiry was appointed by the Rt. Hon. G.A. Isaacs, M.P., on May 19, 1950.

At that time, he was Minister of Labour. The Committee was appointed by the Labour Government following the many stoppages in the London docks during the last few years, and it was given the task of investigating the problem fully, with a view to reporting what steps could be taken to avoid further "unofficial action of the type that has taken place during the past three years and has proved injurious to the trade of the country." The cost of the report is estimated at £1,053-14-11d and it has taken the committee, under the chairmanship of Leggett, a year to make its report to the present Minister of Labour.

The report, and its recommendations, are not only of concern to portworkers. Every section of the organised trade union movement is likely to be affected by its implications. The first point that should be borne in mind, when studying the report, is that it is not drawn up by an impartial committee, as can be seen from the quoted terms of reference above, and the composition of the committee itself. Indeed, the basic assumption of the report is not "how best can the interests of portworkers and the working class in general be served," but "what steps can be taken to avoid unofficial action" on the part of the rank and file.

The main aim, therefore, is to make recommendations to the Labour Government, the employers, the union leaders and port authorities, on how best to preserve "peace in industry" at all costs, which means in effect, at the expense of portworkers. The report is a biased report, biased against the portworkers, and must be examined in this light. The Labour Government must take responsibility for setting up an inquiry committee with biased terms of reference against the portworkers.

RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES

The inquiry committee says that, in London, the outlook if the casual worker still persists, and that this is shown "in the continuance of restrictive practices, and in the tradition of unquestioning solidarity in strike action." Readers will note the assumption that "restrictive practices" are a bad thing - but bad for whom? The employers and government, who want an increased amount of work without wages increases or wage reductions? Or the portworkers? The committee lines up with the employers and government in desiring to break down established customs secured after years of battle, and speed-up the portworkers so that men can be laid off, thereby permitting the employers to make increased profits. The committee states that dockworkers are resisting mechanisation and the reduction of manning scales. The reason why portworkers resist rationalisation is because such schemes are manipulated in the interests of the employers, with the connivance of the trade union officials, who on one job, to my knowledge, "successfully" negotiated the sacking of 25 men.

UNOFFICIAL MOVEMENT

The committee claims that the Portworkers' Committee has disrupted the work of the Port by unofficial strikes, and has undermined the constitutional methods of the unions. The report ignores the fact that the unofficial movement, which came into existence in 1945, was initiated because the unions had failed to carry out the wishes of the members. By making "unconstitutional" use of the constitutional machinery of the union, the union leaders have, in one concession after another to the employers, undermined the achievements secured over a long period of struggle. The report goes on to comment that "certain leading members of the Portworkers' Committee are members of the Communist Party," but it completely ignores the fact that many of the London committee, including myself, are not members of that party. Further, we can point out that we originated the committee in 1945, when the Communist Party stood for a Coalition Government, and opposed our strike action.

DOCK LABOUR SCHEME

The inquiry committee states that the Dock Labour Scheme "has left the organisation of employment much as it was in the days of casual labour." This is a serious admission. It is also pointed out that the Dock Labour Board constitutes a third party between employers and workers, and that this "has increased the impersonal nature of their relations," and they want "more stable and direct relations. . . ." Their solution to this whole problem is the extension of permanent employment, but we reject this proposal as it is an attempt to build up a body of men on whom they can force worsened conditions as they have attempted in the past.

It should, however, be pointed out that the main aim of the inquiry committee is to tighten discipline, and advice is given the Labour Government, port authorities and union officials, on how this can be done. Totalitarianism is their aim. They want to use the unions even further for this purpose.

Comment is made on the dual position of union officials who sit on the Board, and help the employers discipline us, and it is insisted that this "joint responsibility" must be strengthened! An implied threat

is made in the report that the "continuance of unofficial strikes and other unconstitutional action may compel the suspension of the Scheme" a policy which has already come from employers' circles who want a return to the "good old days." Victimisation of rank and file militants is also implied in the recommendations, when it is stated that "Individuals who persistently show themselves unwilling to observe the conditions of the Scheme, or who persistently incite unconstitutional action, should be dismissed from the industry...." We must fight such attempts with our usual solidarity, and the wider industrial movement must give us their support in their own interests.

THE TRADE UNIONS

The Leggett Committee says that the friction between the T. & G.W.U. and the N.A.S.D. is a "source of trouble, and closer unity between the two Unions is desirable." The employers and prominent officials of the T. & G.W.U. would like the "Blue" union liquidated for obvious reasons, as this union's constitution and its general working is more democratic than the "White" union and constitutes a threat to totalitarian control over all portworkers. I would like to see the "Blue" union strengthened.

AMENITIES

The Leggett committee is forced to conclude that the "Amenities for dock workers in London are totally inadequate, and this has contributed to the sourness of industrial relations in the Port." The report briefly reviews first aid equipment, sanitary accommodation, washing facilities, drinking water, canteens and meal facilities, and the work of welfare officers. Reading this section of the report, it is fairly obvious that responsibility for improved welfare facilities is dependent largely on finance, and consequently the various authorities have been "passing the buck." However, a report of the National Dock Labour Board, presented to the Minister of Labour in February, 1949, which is quoted by the inquiry committee, makes it clear that the Government must share in this responsibility. The National Board's report states that "In August, 1950, the Port Authorities, the National Joint Council and the Board met to consider this unsatisfactory position," and a tripartite deputation made further representations to the Minister in November, 1950, with regard to canteens and lavatories." In February of this year, the Ministry of Labour "informed the Board that no further action by the Government was contemplated." Need I comment?

CONCLUSIONS

The above brief summary of the main recommendations of the inquiry committee will give readers some indication of the biased character of such "impartial" inquiry committees set up by the Government. The basic demands of the Portworkers' Charter have been ignored, and the recommendations made are intended to fob us off with a few minor concessions, in order to put across totalitarian labour control over the portworkers.

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PORTWORKERS: Read "Portworkers Clarion," obtainable from D. Brandon, 42 Briardale Road, Prenton, Birkenhead, price 2d.

TEXTILE UNION MISORGANISATION

by J.O. PILLING

A FOND TALE of employers when faced with some demand of the workers which is likely to mean forking out more money is that "this side of the mill is run at a loss, you know. It's only kept going by the other side." And he's only too willing to go into details to prove it to you. The peculiar part about this matter is that the boss on the other side has exactly the same tale to tell to the employees over there.

Of course, no boss employs workers purely out of the kindness of his heart; he usually regards them as an unfortunate necessity to his little gold-mine, machines, but far more troublesome.

So long as these two sections of workers have no intercourse with each other, the bosses can spin this and similar yarns; when they find their common interests, his glib tongue gives out, and he has to fall back on the strong-arm type of stuff.

In a similar manner, workers in the textile industry are separated from each other, not always by working in different buildings, but by the unions to which they belong. There are seven different textile unions, and members of several of them may be working in one mill. At the minimum there are always two and, in addition, there may be members of the A.E.U., E.T.U., Joiners, etc. These workers have no connection with each other at workshop level. The textile workers only meet by proxy at the United Textile Factory Workers Conference, and with the other unions at the trades council meetings.

So the right hand of the textile workers does not know what its left hand is doing, except by the slow process of union bureaucracy. If a directive is given to the trades council delegate, it is three months before he reports back, and six months at least before a definite decision can be made - except by exceeding the mandate given. This is usually done if the matter happens to be favourable to the union officials, but if they find it unfavourable to them, they protest that the last thing they would do is to exceed the mandate.

How much simpler and how much more effective is the syndicalist method. All the workers in one mill form a branch of the union - weavers, winders, tacklers, mechanics, labourers, joiners, etc. The important thing is not what tools the worker uses, but what industry he works in. This way, there are no inter-union squabbles. All decisions are made by the workers on the job, whose natural right it is to determine their own conditions. Their delegates meet their brothers from other mills and other industries as often as is necessary to co-ordinate activity and guarantee solidarity.

The lack of attendance at union meetings allows middle-class politicians to run things their own way. Syndicalist organisation on the job cuts out clique control and makes for real industrial democracy.

With the shortage of sulphur, essential to the rayon industry, and the opening up of jet factories in Lancashire, a reshuffle of man-

power will take place. In such a situation, the employers will take advantage of a temporary weakened position of the workers, before they become stabilised in a war economy, and textile workers must be prepared to keep a watchful eye to their own interests, which are those of the whole of the working class.

UNION "DEMOCRACY"

The writer of the above article, comrade Julian Pilling, has been rejected as union representative at the James Nelson Doubling Mill, by Nelson Weavers Association Committee, because he would not agree to support the return of Labour Members of Parliament. He had, of course, always made his anti-political position perfectly clear. As we go to press, a petition has been sent to Nelson Weavers committee, asking them to reverse their decision; it was signed by practically all the workers at the Doubling Mill. Comrade Pilling was elected to the paper board of Nelson Weavers Association ("The Power Loom") at the last quarterly meeting.

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RUDOLF ROCKER

REPORTS have recently appeared in "The Word" (Glasgow) that the veteran anarcho-syndicalist, Rudolf Rocker, and his wife, Milly, had been sentenced to deportation from the U.S.A. after living in that country for 17 years. We are pleased to announce that we have just received a letter from the "Freie Arbeiter Stimme" Group (London), saying that one of the group members had seen the Rockers during the past week, and that the deportation reports were incorrect.

Rudolf Rocker will be remembered by older comrades in Leeds and London, where he edited the Yiddish-language paper, "Workers' Friend." He drew up the declaration of principles of the I.W.M.A. which was ratified by the recent Congress in Toulouse (see page 2) and is greatly respected as a theoretician of our movement.

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THE OLD, OLD STORY

First news of the sale of war materials, such as rubber, to Communist China was contained in the April issue of "Direct Action." A week elapsed before questions were asked in the House of Commons, and not until May 10 were the £1,925,000 exports stopped. It became known recently that the London Insurance market had issued 90% cover on £2,880,000 worth of rubber being exported to RUSSIA! Death pays a dividend - to the financiers. What they lose on the swings they gain on the roundabouts.

OUR ENGLISH HERITAGE

"This Festival of Britain show has been planned by the Northleach women's institute to raise funds for village improvements. Children are to dress as highwaymen.. there will be a mock trial of a dummy witch, and it will be pilloried, ducked, beaten and finally burned at the stake." "Evening Standard."

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