

be built up to replace the existing one, which has sold out to the capitalist class.

The strike of over 100,000 non-operating railway workers which was to have started on December 3 last year never occurred. The superficial reason for this is obvious. The Government of Canada passed a law forbidding the non-ops to strike for a period of six months. The union "leaders" immediately called off the strike. The attitude of the union bosses was bluntly stated by the chief union negotiator who said "We always obey the law. Even though the law may be an ass in this case".

Unfortunately, this attitude is also typical of the working class throughout Canada and the union leaders are no more mesmerised by the words "law" and "government" than are those they lead. Obviously the Prime Minister knew the union bosses would call off the strike, rather than break the law, and that the railwaymen would obey their leaders and stay on the job. Had there been any signs of militancy among the railwaymen, even the Tories would have had second thoughts about passing a law that would not have been worth the paper it was printed on when 100,000 workers went on strike in defiance of it.

Canadian workers must realise that laws are made to protect and perpetuate the capitalist system and that governments and police forces exist primarily to organise and enforce the suppression of any movement which may threaten that system. The establishment of a free society, in which war, poverty and oppression are no more, means the destruction of the existing capitalist system, its laws and its governments. Only by defiance of the law can the working class advance towards this goal.

One of the more stupid ideas put forward to help reduce unemployment is for everybody to have a Hydrogen-bomb shelter built in their basement. Needless to say this proposal has the enthusiastic support of the trade union bosses. One of the most vocal supporters of this scheme has been Mr. L. C. Halmrast who, as Agriculture Minister in the Alberta Government, is, by some logic apparent only to politicians, responsible for Alberta's civil defence programme. Unfortunately he has not as yet been able to persuade anybody to have one of these highly desirable conveniences built.

Recently he has been needed by the newspapers for not setting an example and building one in his own basement. It now appears that Mrs. Halmrast refuses to have one in her basement, as it already contains a spare bedroom, a work room, a laundry room and a cold storage room. Nothing daunted, the persistent Minister of Agriculture is now considering tunnelling under the good earth in his own back garden and no doubt will eventually have the dubious honour of owning the very first H-bomb shelter in Alberta. We sincerely hope he will never have to put its efficiency to the test.

BILL GREENWOOD

## NORWAY

### Politicians get 'their' oar in

IN Norway, where a trade-union-cum-political reform movement has attained governmental power (and not a little of a dictatorial position), it is sad to think that many of the original leaders of this set-up made use of the ideas of the IWW.

These, known in Norway as early as 1908, formed the basis for the greatest revolutionary movement in the history of Norwegian Labour, the Trades Opposition. Industrial development had begun at that time, but the people were still largely fishermen and peasants, not yet mature enough to grasp the IWW's constructive content, Industrial Democracy. This gave the politicians a chance to compare the trade-union movement to a boat with only one oar, an industrial one, which was rowing it round in a circle. For that reason, they claimed, the Trades Opposition needed a political oar as well, in order to hold a "steady course". By means of this demagoguery, the revolutionary idea in the Norwegian union movement was gradually killed. The Trade Union Confederation became a bandwagon for trade-union and political careerists.

The constructive programme of the IWMA would have then provided a better defence for the workers' revolutionary movement. The people knew of the Paris Commune and could have understood the constructive basis of the IWMA. Industrial Democracy was a foreign conception, about which they neither knew nor cared. But the principles of the IWMA were still unwritten in 1908.

After the war, in 1945, the Labour Party and trade unions gained practically overwhelming governmental power. As soon as the workers' freedom was legally clipped, they began planning State Capitalism, by inviting private capital to go fifty-fifty.

The municipalities were being amalgamated into bigger units, to centralise and rationalise, and a "Director of Labour" has been appointed for the whole country. To attract capital investment from the West, lawyer Trygve Lie has been appointed sales agent for Norwegian labour and the rights to natural resources. While other countries cut working hours, we still have the 45-hour week, with considerable overtime.

What is called "standard of living" rests on a steadily-increasing hire purchase debt, which binds the whole family to the place of work, double jobs and overtime. Social "benefits", insurances, etc. become more meagre as the value of money sinks.

The workers react once in a while, but are always struck down by their own government and their own reformist TUC. Workers at State aluminium factories at Aardal recently put forward proposals that they should be trained to take over administration of the plant. The purpose was described as "Industrial Democracy"—but after the Labour Party got their hands on it, the workers could hardly recognise their own proposal. It is proposed that the idea should again be put forward at this year's Labour Party conference.

Unhappy people, once again they have left their own work to the politicians! And the "political oar" will obligingly row them straight into the dictatorship of State Capitalism.

Z. HENRIKSEN

**AUSTRALIA**—The President of the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries revealed on February 13 that more than 5,000 car workers had been dismissed since the Government's credit squeeze and the increased sales tax on cars and station wagons. With announcements by General Motors, Holden, the Ford Motor Company of Australia and the British Motor Corporation that they intended to dismiss more than 4,000 workers between them, he predicted that unemployment in the industry would soon be well over 10,000.

**USA**—Between mid-December and mid-January unemployment rose by over a million to more than 5,500,000. With the designation of twenty-five more major industrial centres as substantial unemployment centres because of their unemployment rate of 6 per cent or higher, more than half the country's 150 major centres fell into this category. Instructions were given by the Federal Secretary of State for Agriculture for supplementing doles given to more than four million needy people. With car production and sales figures still falling rapidly, 66,000 car workers were laid off in February by plant closures in Detroit, where the unemployment rate was already 11.7 per cent.

**UGANDA**—On February 13 African workers at the Kilembe copper mine went on strike for higher pay. Twenty-six strikers were arrested after clashes with a hundred-odd miners who returned to work.

**GAMBIA**—There were serious clashes with the police and scab workers on January 25 after the Gambia Workers' Union, the largest in the colony, with 6,000 members among Government workers, employees of commercial firms and dockers, had called a general strike in support of a claim for raising the basic wage from 5s. to 9s. 6d. a day.

## Literature

### "Direct Action" pamphlets:—

<b>WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE UNIONS?</b>	by Tom Brown	5d.
<b>THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS' REVOLUTION</b>		6d.
<b>NATIONALISATION AND THE NEW BOSS CLASS</b>	by Tom Brown	6d.
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# WORLD LABOUR NEWS

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## Towards industrial unity

THE London Rank and File Conference, held on January 29, although boycotted by the Press, fulfilled the hopes of its sponsors, the Independent Labour Party, the Socialism Reaffirmed and other Socialist groups, the Syndicalist Workers' Federation and individual Anarchists with Syndicalist sympathies. Although it was a London district conference, interest was aroused in the provinces and delegates were present from, among other towns, Peterborough, Exeter, Leeds, Cambridge and Wolverhampton. But for a great storm in the North, more provincial delegates would have attended. We were especially sorry to learn of an accident to six Syndicalist delegates from Glasgow. Travelling from Scotland through a gale, their car was blown off the road and wrecked, our comrades having to return home by rail. We sympathise with them, admire their determination in setting out in such threatening conditions and were deeply disappointed at not meeting them.

Our weekly paper, *Workers' Voice*, has carried a detailed report of the Conference, so it is unnecessary to repeat the details here, but a short resumé of the arguments should prove useful. The first argument of the supporting speakers was that a daily struggle goes on between the wage working class and the employing class, now as before, and further that at this moment new attacks on the workers, mostly by increased mechanisation and speed-up, with the threat of unemployment, are being mounted.

Here the opposers, few in number and seemingly of Trotskyist tendency, agreed this struggle goes on and that new threats are developing, but asked why a Rank and File Movement?

The supporters replied because the officials of the trade unions, the union apparatus and the build-up and balanced relationship of unions, employers and the State are supporting these attacks.

True, replied the opposition, but the way to correct that is to work through the official machinery of the trade unions. Fight to change the "rotten leadership". To them, it seemed, the "official machinery" was something hallowed and eternal.

The supporters pointed to past and existing changes of union leadership, carried out in the name of this policy, of left-wing and Communist nominees, who had railed against the "rotten leadership" and the class collaboration policy of the unions, using more violent and colourful language than we do and who, when elected to trade union office, acted no whit better than those they had cursed. Indeed, such persons form an important part of the accused leadership. They described the "official machinery" which had been built up among the unions, employers and the State. They told how binding agreements were made and any alleged breach of them by employers had to go, usually, to a board of equal numbers of employers and union representatives, so that the workers could win only if one employer deserted his side to vote with the unions; how this could lead only to another conference and a third, at "national level", with the same result: "referred back, no decision." The AEU, for example, played the game for generations with the notorious "York Memo". It was told how shop stewards could not be protected from victimisation and wrongful dismissal, except by the "unofficial action" of their workmates.

Wages would remain at one national level in every branch and factory, based on the lowest wage paid by the least prosperous employer. Workers, somewhere or other, are constantly breaking this ring of "official procedure", often union officials and employers are forced willy-nilly to accept this action and wages creep up here and there, until the general level of wages rises above the official standard.

Every day, in some part of Britain or another, there are workers who are "unofficially" striking, opposed by their employers and unions. There are some who, perhaps emerging from the bad old tradition of being unorganised and not striking back, are finding, for the first time, how to use the strike weapon to their own advantage.

But they fight, mostly, in isolated groups, largely unaware of the common struggle. Organised, however loosely, with a common cause and determination, they would be a mighty army. It is the aim of the Rank and File Movement soon, we hope, to become a

national movement and help bring that about. Not to seek to create strikes, as the Communist Party once tried, but to make more effective the struggles already taking place. To avoid the repetition of past mistakes, to know our enemies at first sight, to fight, not as a rearguard, but to learn to win strikes.

Many of us approached the essay to form this movement with some pessimism. Previous attempts to unite in common action Socialist and Left groups had so often been lost in fruitless discussion of such debating points as "Is the Soviet Union a Socialist state that has gone rotten, or a rotten state that has gone Socialist?" Or they were killed at a very early stage by political manoeuvres to "gain control".

This time it has been different, right from the start. Metaphysical juggling has been out. Discussion has been sincere and practical. There has been no attempt, no thought, of "gaining control", the antics so beloved of Stalinist and Trotskyist Communists of many hues. The delegates of the SWF have found pleasure in working with the other comrades of the movement.

We do not seek spectacular successes. We expect to do some steady spadework, but we have every reason to expect solid progress.

T. B.

**MEXICO**—Troops opened fire on crowds in Chilpancingo de los Bravos, capital of Guerrero State, on January 1, killing at least 16 people and wounding 40 more who were demonstrating against the state governor.

## PRIEST RULE IN IRELAND

**DUBLIN**. For the past ten years there has been a feeling among bus crews here that they should receive higher rates for weekend work. At present they get time and a half for Sunday, but only the normal flat rate for Saturday afternoon. Some time ago the trade unions involved (Irish Transport & General Workers' Union, Workers' Union of Ireland, and the National Association of Transport Employees, the Irish section of the NUR) put in a claim for time and a half rates for Saturday afternoon and double time for Sunday.

The dispute went to the Labour Court, which recommended only an increase to time and a quarter for Saturday afternoon. This was rejected and a ballot for strike action taken by the unions. The 600 members of the WUI (a small minority among a total of 6,000 workers) voted for strike action on February 18. The members of the ITGWU have voted for a weekend strike only. The semi-State owned transport company, CIE, has so far taken no action to meet the bus crews' demands.

It would seem that the strike can hardly be averted. However, considering the power of reaction, one is forced to wonder if the trickery of mass hypnotism will not take its effect on the workers. It is doubtful if the leadership of the unions want a strike—clearly they do not as is evidenced by their mishandling of the business to date. Secondly, CIE is probably the best organised religious sodality company in Ireland and what is said by the priests at these meetings counts for much more than what is said by trade union militants.

On Saturday, January 28, seven fitters employed by Cork Gas Company went on strike over a dispute about the manner of operating a new gas-oil plant. On Wednesday the strike was settled, following a meeting between the workers involved, representatives of Cork Trades Council and the Gas Company, held under the auspices of the Rev. Dr. Lucy, Roman Catholic bishop. This speaks for itself—except to point out that the statement issued did not give the terms of settlement.

While on the subject of "loyal Catholic Irishmen", I must mention the latest persecution of the Jehovah's Witnesses. This sect is particularly active in Wexford (or rather was) and unlike other sects, many of its converts are from the "One True Church". Some time ago two of their missionaries were assaulted in Wexford by two priests. Recently they have been distributing copies of a booklet, *Awake*, which apparently hit at some sacred cows of the "One True

Church". Two of the Witnesses were arrested and charged with distributing literature liable to lead to a breach of the peace. Before the matter was brought to court, however, the defendants signed a document agreeing to clear out of town. The judge proclaimed his support of the "One True Church" and said he was pleased not to decide if the distribution of *Awake* would actually lead to a breach of the peace.

There has been trouble in another semi-State-owned industry, too. Aer Lingus last year bought Boeing aircraft. The management decided to alter shifts to suit their requirements. The situation is that among three workers working in the same capacity, one could work at time and an eighth, another at time and a quarter and another still at time and a half. The ETU (I) has been making approaches to Aer Lingus for the past year to have these rates levelled off. The management consistently refused to meet their demands and a strike was called before Christmas. As this would have had a devastating effect on the profits of Aer Lingus, the company decided to postpone introduction of the new shifts, pending further negotiation. This can be seen now clearly as a stunt. The negotiations broke down and a strike was declared for the time the new shifts were introduced, on February 7. For the second time, both sides have agreed to hold their fire, pending mediation. However, before this was agreed on the previous Friday, Aer Lingus had sent out notice to over 2,000 other employees to expire on Thursday, February 9. This can only be interpreted as provocation, since the man would not have passed the picket after the Tuesday.

D. E. P.

## INDIA

## It's the same the whole world over!

Impressions of a recent visit to India to attend and help organize the Tenth Triennial Conference of the War Resisters' International, a secular world pacifist organization.

MY stay in India lasted only three weeks. These very personal observations about Indian life, the trivial and the profound aspects of it, should be taken purely at their face value and not regarded as valuable in the objective sense, nor as an excuse to make ill-informed comments on the affairs of this exotic, overpopulated sub-continent in all their complexity. Criticism may well be the product of ignorance. Admiration could well be modified after deeper study.

India, during its long struggle for independence, was the testing ground for a comparatively new method of social struggle—non-violence, a technique which sought to combat poverty and oppression without violence, without fear, while at the same time by-passing party political activities and the sordid misuse and abuse of power which this implies. It has consequently become the Mecca of pacifists and other libertarian revolutionaries, who have so long found themselves impotent in the face of the refined means of maintaining absolute power by the modern state. Yet India is by western standards a violent country. It has been the scene of some of the worst blood-baths witnessed since the war, and religious and communal riots erupt with predictable regularity.

The drive into Bombay from Santeruz airport is a rapid and painful introduction for the uninitiated to the abysmal poverty of the East—like a warm shower must feel to an Eskimo. The main town sewer wends its sluggish way rather reluctantly over table-flat waste land to the sea. On its banks and in the open spaces round about are clustered tiny hovels built of sticks and woven matting. Some of them are little more than holes in the ground. Men and women, the men looking the more ragged, look busy doing nothing. They are unemployed—a majority class by all appearances in this part of the world. Children, the smaller ones clad only with a thin metal strip resting on their buttocks and under their pot-bellies, play—many of them in the mud on the edge of the sewer. The stench, even in the coach, is overpowering. It is a strange smell, which, mingled with the warm, dusty air, could almost be described as sweet.

Water buffalo wallow neck-deep in a pond, the water of which is hidden under a lush green carpet of plants which might be lilies. The road reaches and travels alongside the sea and the city mushrooms up ahead. Quite a few of those graceful triangular-sailed fishing boats are moored to dilapidated jetties. Indian boatbuilders were once renowned throughout the world and used to do a great trade with Europe, before British control reached its late nineteenth century dimensions. The roads become congested with animals, rickshaws, bicycles, cars and people as Bombay unfolds itself. Decaying, once prosperous houses are interspersed with more shacks and hovels, and shops appear smothered with advertisements in a chunky Indian

script. Some sternly rectangular buildings with plenty of washing hanging outside must be council flats, but their austerity, coupled with the bars at all the windows, gives them a prison look. This is evidently not a European or fashionable quarter.

Shanti collected Bayard Rustin and myself from the swish Taj Mahal Hotel, where we were booked in by BOAC, in a chauffeur-driven car. Bayard was until recently assistant to Martin Luther King, figurehead of the sit-in movement in the southern states of the U.S. Shanti, wearing a white Gandhi cap, hand-woven khadi cloth and leather sandals made from the hide of an animal which had died a natural death, was one of a small group of men who carried Gandhi's ashes at his funeral. That is to say, that through his personal friendship with that hoary old politician and the assistance he gave Congress during those halcyon days before national liberation, he is one of the most respected men in India. He also owns a large portion of the total tonnage of Indian shipping.

We were shown round the impressive handicrafts emporium with its galaxy of colourful goods, the products of village industry heavily subsidised by the Government. Anything from soap to ivory elephants, saris to sandalwood could be purchased, all with a percentage reduction. Driving out towards the fabulous Juhu beach, we passed the Parsee temple, where members of this strange religious sect dispose of their dead in a novel manner. At four every morning and afternoon, corpses, if they are available, are placed on the top of a tower for the benefit of the vultures which, having seen all this before, are conveniently around. Local inhabitants are thus liable to find more than rain dropping from the sky.

The purpose of our visit to Shanti's estate was to see his private temple, which was nearing completion. It was quite something. A large building, one storey high, with living quarters as well as a large sanctuary devoted to Lord Krishna (the incarnation of Vishnu, with female and male characteristics as a liking for butter), which stood in its own garden. Outside were concrete replicas, reduced size, of many religious monuments and stone carvings from all parts of India.

Over a glass of warm rose water we discussed prohibition and the way in which rich men are able to tackle the problem. When permission to drink anything stronger than tea has been obtained, the necessary forms filled in and a pass issued, an Indian still has to pay £5 for a bottle of genuine Scotch and visit the doctor regularly for check-ups. Later on in Madras, it took Bayard almost a whole day of pleading, signing and contributing to the ex-servicemen's association to get hold of two bottles of Indian-made gin at 17s. 6d. a bottle—and the authorities make it easy for tourists! The visit was over and we were driven to meet the rest of the party at the airport, en route for the south. I said good-bye to the friendly Gandhian-millionaire-temple-builder—and thought of the slums.

A reception committee awaited us in Madras, with more delegates to the Conference. Accommodation had to be arranged, sight-seeing tours prepared and train tickets booked to where the Conference was to be held, 300 miles south, near Madurai. Chaos reigned, and continued to do so until we left. I discovered, though, that this was nothing unusual and very soon ceased to care. Rather rashly I agreed to help Danilo Dolci, the Italian social reformer, do some statistical research into the labour situation in Madras State. He needed an interpreter, as he speaks only Italian and understands French. The idea was that I should, with the help of written figures and diagrams, guess what he was trying to ask. Then, having elicited an answer, I would endeavour to give the gist of it to him in French. Somehow we managed.

We were given the name of a high official and the address. We duly reported, sent in our credentials and were handed on to another official. Why were we in India? Were we intending to publish our findings because, if we were, we might as well know that all the current figures were out of date and a new census was going to be taken in 1961. Were we connected with politics? (Who—us?) Eventually some figures were obtained from a book. Could we buy the book? No—well, perhaps. We were given an address. We went to the Government publishing house (at the other end of town) and eventually bought a pile of books, none of which had the figures we wanted. They were checked and rechecked by different people three times before we got outside. The whole operation took several hours.

It seems the only thing Britain gave India was a plentiful supply of adhesive red tape. Indians like to see it grow and struggle happily to extricate themselves, without even hoping to succeed. The combination of stoicism and genuine disregard for the time factor will make it very difficult for the State to become more than a ponderous nonentity in India and, although it can cause frustration in those used to thinking in terms of efficiency, the long-term effect will be beneficial.

T.S.

**TUNISIA**—Police opened fire on a crowd demonstrating against the transfer of a school teacher at Kairouan on January 18. Four demonstrators and one policeman were killed in the fighting.

## Rhodesia—the white man's myth

The following article and its sequel, to be published in our next issue, set the background for the chaotic situation in Rhodesia following the London talks on the future of Northern Rhodesia and the British Government's concessions to white settler interests.

"YEAR after year we have voted vast sums of money for the purpose of providing facilities of all kinds for the Africans. That money was not provided by His Majesty's Government. It was provided by the enterprise, the driving power, and the initiative of the Europeans of this country."

Thus Roy Welensky once presented the myth of the White man's philanthropy towards the African in the Northern Rhodesian Legislature, of which he was then an Unofficial member. It should not be necessary to add that his words enshrine another, deeper myth—the capitalist myth of the creation of wealth primarily by investors and managerial executives, perhaps with "top crust" workers thrown in as a gesture to Labour's contribution.

The profit motive—and nothing else—is the reason for the existence of a flourishing community of some quarter-of-a-million whites in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and their wealth, like the Pyramids, has been built with the sweat and tears of black serfs.

The Rhodesian colonies were created by the commercial enterprise of the British South Africa Company, formed by that great empire-builder Cecil Rhodes in 1889 to exploit mining concessions secured from Lobengula, Paramount Chief of the Matabele, and then from Lewanika, Paramount Chief of the Barotse. Like the East India Company in earlier times, the British South Africa Company was granted powers of administration over the exploited territories. In this way a purely commercial company, answerable primarily to its shareholders, came to exercise the dominant influence on the economic, social and political development of a great chunk of Africa, larger than France, Germany and Italy combined, with a population today of over seven million Africans.

Capital for the exploitation of the great natural wealth of Central Africa was provided by European investors. But, despite, Welensky, capital was, as always, useless without labour. The poll tax levied by the company on each adult native male and each wife except the first not only served to contribute to the costs of administration, but also, and far more important, to force the Africans to work for the white man. Since they lived by subsistence farming in independent communities, they knew nothing of money, and for the great majority of them there was no other way of paying their poll tax. For a long time their labour was mainly migratory in character, the Africans returning to their villages after a term of employment had enabled them to pay their tax and buy a few white man's luxuries.

The white settlers, basically a farming community, were aggrieved not by the native policy of the Company, but by the knowledge that the biggest part of the country's resources was being milked for the benefit of overseas investors. It was largely through settler pressure that the Company's 30-year rule was brought to an end in 1923, when Southern Rhodesia became a self-governing colony and Northern Rhodesia a Protectorate administered by the Colonial Office. However, the Company owned the mineral rights of Northern Rhodesia in perpetuity, and as late as 1948 fully half the total value of the country's mineral production was being siphoned out of the Protectorate. It was not until 1949 that the Company agreed to surrender its mineral rights to the Northern Rhodesian Government without compensation in 1986, and to pay a 20 per cent tax on its net income from them until then.

Everywhere in Africa the dilemma of the white conquistador has been the same. They have been torn between the need to harness the African's labour for the development of the country and the white man's enrichment, and the desire to keep him a backward peasant who would not compete for a real share of the wealth produced.

Their answer was to bolster up the waning power of the tribal chiefs and elders, while regarding the native villages (in the words of Charles W. Coulter, contributing to an independent investigation of conditions on the Copperbelt in 1932) "as reservoirs of cheap labour which can be drawn off in any desirable quantity and poured back when no longer required, which can be used as an asylum for the unwanted or broken human wreckage."

In the long run it was found to fail, for working as industrial labour inevitably meant a breaking down of tribal customs and institutions and, moreover, it has always proved impossible to prevent industrial workers from aspiring to a share in the privileges enjoyed by their lords and masters.

Meanwhile the whites cynically exploited the mumbo-jumbo of a way of life which they despised, while failing to appreciate those positive aspects of tribal life—solidarity and equality of treatment during times of privation—so foreign to their own "civilisation".

In 1938 the mumbo-jumbo was brought to the towns by the setting up of native urban courts composed of chiefs and their satellites, acting as assessors for the District Officer sitting as a magistrate. Edward Clegg puts it very well in *Race and Politics*, his intelligent study of "Partnership in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland". "The traditional elders and councillors constituted that section of African opinion most rigidly against change, most anxious to maintain the old ways in face of the new, for they had a vested interest in seeing that customary law was administered, not only because it was from traditional custom that their authority sprang, but also because it now gave them lucrative—in African terms—Government posts."

A striking example of the reactionary influence of the traditional tribal rulers is provided by their hostility to the efforts of the Government to introduce improved farming techniques to combat soil erosion and famine. Edward Clegg writes: "The chiefs and traditional councillors who formed the Native Authorities held power, apart from that reflected to them from the Central Government, by virtue of their people's belief in the supernatural qualities they were held to possess, especially with regard to land and agricultural prosperity. Any measure tending to undermine this necessarily weakened a chief's real power. And the emergence of a class of master farmers certainly would. . . . The more advanced Africans who were ready to support measures for the conservation of the soil were also more politically conscious, and for this reason the Government found their views on other questions embarrassing. Hence their firm support for the tribal leaders. . . ."

And so progressive measures introduced by the Government where it suited white interests, as in agriculture, were obstructed by the tribal Bonapartes because they undermined their petty power. But in everything else they grovelled at the feet of their white masters.

"We know," said one chief in the African Representative Council, a purely advisory body set up in 1946, "that Government has all the power, and we are the Government's children." Another member of the Council, the Rev. H. Kasokolo, declared: "The Governor is like a father to this territory. . . . he is the only one who can choose the right person to represent our interests."

This so-called Representative Council actually represented no one but itself and a number of other bodies drawn almost entirely from traditional leaders, for its members were elected by the African Provincial Councils set up in 1942, whose members were elected by the African Urban Advisory Councils set up in 1937 (whose members were partly elected by the tribal elders' councils and the "boss boys", who were responsible for a gang of African labourers and might be described as African foremen) and the Native Urban Authorities, consisting of chiefs, headmen and elders nominated by the Governor. What rule could be more indirect than that!

These ignoble savages, hand-picked to exclude Chiefs who retained something of their warrior pride and spirit, were the political babes chosen by the Great White Father to "represent" the interests of the African peoples, stretched on the rack of both white and black superstitions. Of these gullied and exploited masses, Dr. A. I. Richards wrote: "Whichever code they follow today, they are aware of a rival one, and conscious of their possible guilt, either as a Christian who breaks the rules of a pagan ritual and is never quite sure whether he will not be smitten by a fatal illness, or as a pagan, who is apt to fear the punishment of the White Man or his God."

That the advent to power in Britain of a Labour Government made not the slightest difference to the official policy of bolstering up the stooge chiefs and elders as a rampart against the growing forces of the African progressives is clearly revealed by the remarks of the Secretary for Native Affairs in December, 1946: "There is a danger that if the Native Authorities do not keep abreast of the times the more advanced elements among the African population will tend to become discontented and, still worse, will tend to form separate political bodies instead of adopting the right course, which is to co-operate and help to strengthen the native administration." (My italics.)

A great deal of indignation has been aroused by the realisation that the Belgians in the Congo callously milked the country for three-quarters of a century without bothering to give more than a handful or so of Africans the opportunity to acquire European professional skills. But the British have been scarcely less callous in Rhodesia and other African colonies in trying to keep the African in the political darkness of tribal conditions, without the rights or opportunities of a citizen, for almost as long. In a second article I will show that the Africans in Central, as in South, Africa have been treated as members of a helot class.

D. P.

**NORTHERN RHODESIA**—Two Africans were killed and seven-teen wounded when police fired on a rioting crowd in the beer-hall of a copper mine on January 1. Thirty-two Africans were arrested.

# WORLD LABOUR NEWS

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## A new 'do-it-yourself' movement is born

IN 1960 we saw chaos in the nationalised industries, the mines and railways in particular. Tons of surplus coal being mined, threatened closure of pits, oil fuel in the background like the Sword of Damocles.

The railwaymen, one of the lowest-paid sections in the country, pressed hard towards a showdown in the form of a strike. The strike was averted, but the strength of the rank and file was apparent, to such an extent that the reformist leadership of the NUR was forced to call an official dispute. The weakness of the railwaymen, as in most industries, is the existence of many unions dividing the workers. There is only one solution to this problem—one union for the industry, industrial unions based on the rank and file, with the rank and file in control.

This year started with a crash on the industrial front, short-time working in the car industry and its various suppliers. The furniture trade on short-time working in a period when the trade is normally flush with orders. The immediate reaction of the workers has been work-spreading with no sackings, which is commendable from the point of view of equality of sacrifice, but the fact remains that all suffer.

The reaction of the official trade union leadership and the politicians, particularly the Communist Party, has been typically reformist. Appeals to end the credit squeeze, more trade with the People's Democracies and the biggest blind of all, lobbying of MPs. It is

## Workers' Voice

The Syndicalist Workers' Federation is now publishing a weekly, duplicated paper, *Workers' Voice*, in addition to *World Labour News*. This enables us to report and comment on day-to-day struggles of the working class and each issue is packed with up-to-the-minute information. Specimen copy, 5d. post-free, or £1.00 for 12 issues. 5s. post-free, from SWF, 25A, Amberley Road, London, W.9.

tragic to see so much time, money and energy wasted, apart from the utter disillusionment it creates.

The employing class and the trade unions are only too glad to see this type of activity, which tends to syphon off dangerous militancy.

Referring back to the question of work-spreading (short-time working): the employers see no future in this and Rootes, the car manufacturers, have taken the lead and are proposing to sack 850 workers, using the argument that the rest of the employees will then speedily return to the five-day week.

These sackings have the trade unions worried. With no sound solution of their own, they are concerned in case the rank and file take matters into their own hands.

This is precisely what the seamen had to do last year, and what they will have to do again in the very near future. If the seamen can establish the principle of ships' delegates, rapid progress will be made, because with them will lie the power. That is why the National Union of Seamen is opposed to the idea. Power in the rank and file spells disaster for union bureaucracy.

One point has to be made perfectly clear: the trade union machine is part and parcel of the system and is used by the employers to discipline militants. How many disputes have been won over the past year? Practically none—by which I mean the workers' demands met in full. They have all been sold out by negotiation and compromise. "Get back to work and talks will start" is the popular slogan.

I quote from *IRIS*, publication of Industrial Research and

Information Services, on the Industrial Conference of January 29: "Should strikes unfortunately be necessary, so-called reactionary leaders are not averse to using the weapon." They give two examples and then go on to state: "Strikes are not an end in themselves. They are a last resort. Peace is always more productive than war." (My italics.) Substitute "compromise in the employers favour" for "peace" and you have official trade union policy in a nutshell.

Having said that, one must not be led into a "strike for strike's sake" frame of mind. The time and method of striking must be of our own dictation. A survey of strike methods, new and old, must be made. The traditional method of "all out" and posting pickets is a spent method in most cases, because employers are prepared to stick it out for a few weeks and wait for the drift back. In any case, the employers are covered by insurance for a period of time, so they can afford to let you sweat it out.

What is the solution to this air of frustration among workers? First and foremost we must find it ourselves, we must direct the policy and take the action. Vanguard parties, political saviours, leaders from on high are out.

On January 29 in London, an Industrial Conference was called to discuss a policy to link up rank and file committees of all industries. About 100 workers attended and, arising from it, came an elected Liaison Committee (subject to recall by the monthly meeting of the National Rank and File Movement).

The job of the Liaison Committee is to assist and unite workers in struggle on a class basis. Encourage and assist in building rank and file committees in varying industries, with the ultimate aim of workers' ownership of production for need, and not for profit.

A National Rank and File Movement can and must discuss all problems affecting workers, from childbirth to mass suicide by nuclear weapons. We, the workers, must solve our problems ourselves by direct action. Let's use our noses for smelling with, not as something to be led by.

BILL CHRISTOPHER

## Postbag

ENCLOSED find my check for \$2—a dollar each from C.M. and myself to cover subscription and mailing of *World Labour News*. We do not think that 35c is enough to really cover the costs, so whatever balance there is should be considered a contribution. Wishing every success, yours for Industrial Solidarity,

J. B.

Los Angeles, Calif.

YOU ASK FOR some industrial news from Sweden. I will try for the next issue. I do not see anything here in the papers about the rank and file conference held in London and should like to know a little about the results. Yours for a workers' world,

D. S.

Stockholm, Sweden.

AT ONE PERIOD, several years ago, I read *Direct Action* frequently, as I sympathise with many of the views advocated by the SWF. Through sickness and other troubles thrown up through the economic system of this psycho-jungle we know as capitalism, I have been out of circulation as regards the class struggle in general. As I am unemployable, through being physically unfit, therefore unprofitable, I spend a lot of spare time in reading. Most of my literature comes from the public library, as this is the only place that is still free. I also peruse all the phoney rebel weeklies in the reading room. The only Syndicalist or Anarchist journals that get on the shelves are the few I leave there myself. If you have any back issues of *World Labour News* kicking around doing nothing useful, you could let me have them.

M. F.

Manchester, 11.

IF YOU SEE in the papers, or anyone tells you there is a lot of work over in Canada, you can ask them why there are thousands upon thousands of men out of work. The mission and the Sally Ann (Salvation Army) is full up. The slaves over here want more leaders—and these so-called leaders are doing a good job, for themselves. The slaves get what they have been getting for a long time—nothing.

Vancouver, B.C.

Card X302220

## Argentine Syndicalists freed

BUENOS AIRES: The last of the imprisoned Syndicalist plumbing workers, Carlos Kristof, was freed from jail on January 11. This came to a successful end a magnificent campaign of propaganda and solidarity, organised by a Commission linking all libertarian tendencies in Argentina. At one time some 40 militants of the IWMA's Argentine section, FORA, were imprisoned without charge.

U.S.S.R.

## Neither liberty nor bread

IT HAS OFTEN been the boast of Communists that, while they have destroyed liberty, they have given bread in return. It certainly has been, too, the argument of half- and quarter-Communists and the "unbiased" liberals who can see nothing wrong in the Soviet Union. Bread, using the term as a symbol of good wholesome food, is certainly the first criterion by which we should judge any society. We can get along without Sputnicks, H-Bombs and many lesser things too, but we soon feel uncomfortable when we are short of what the farmer produces and the persons who speak of the honours of sacrificing for mechanical "progress" do so on full bellies.

Let us examine the bread-for-freedom deal. As the Russian Revolution overthrew Tsarism, the peasants, in many areas acting through Social Revolutionary and Anarchist organisations, began taking the land of the big estate owners. The Bolsheviks, although opposed to this policy and demanding the "Nationalisation of land", accepted the *fait accompli* and suddenly supported it.

Russia was then a country with a large agriculture, mostly locally self-supporting and hardly at all depending on industry, foreign imports or the cities for its existence. All that was needed to get an ample supply of food was to leave the peasant alone. The peasant, whatever else the learned may think of him, will produce food for his own needs, and will produce more to take to market to exchange for tools, clothes and other industrial products.

The soil of Russia, too, is good, among the finest in the world, and there is plenty of it. Yet from the beginning of the Bolshevik régime, Russia has suffered from a chronic food shortage, often breaking out into widespread famine like that of 1921-22, when millions perished.

The Bolsheviks, while apparently accepting the peasants' seizure of land, yet tried to control and exploit them by decrees, penal taxes and confiscation of crops. Lenin and his men knew much about how to seize power and how to hold it, but little about economic technique. Stagnation tended to spread over anything they touched. As a very young admirer of the Russian Revolution, I often wondered how Leningrad suffered from an acute shortage of fuel, when it was surrounded by pine and larch forests. Emma Goldman was puzzled by the same problem, when she went to live there and, having the ear of Lenin, tried to do something about it. "Let the workers go and cut their own firewood," she said. No, the forests were State property and the State had not yet thought of a way to cut wood, so thousands perished from cold.

The same stagnation alternated with military war against the peasants. Expeditions against the countryside, war against the Anarchist peasants of Makhno in the Ukraine—and all the time the peasants were being accused of growing only enough for their own needs, of burying their wheat and hiding their goats in the woods, rather than have their surplus taken by the government. A most unnatural offence!

Then came a sudden change, NEP, the New Economic Policy, which included one more recognition of peasant ownership and the right to sell some produce on the open market. Soon Lenin was dead and the factions of the Communist Party were openly warring against one another and the peasant was the chief scapegoat. In propaganda the image conjured up by words is always more important than their definition and in this war of words the countryside became peopled by "kulaks", rich peasants. A kulak has been defined as a peasant with two cows, a middle peasant a farmer with one cow and a poor peasant one without a cow, but reading the speeches of those days it seemed that all peasants could be kulaks if propaganda demanded it.

The Left (Trotsky) Opposition, as the Communist records show from 1923 to 1927, advocated "stepping up the struggle against the kulaks", "a more pronounced class struggle in the rural regions" (admitted by Trotskyists). The Stalinists replied: "The Trotskyist proposals to increase the agricultural taxes, hitting the peasants, and to increase the sales price of industrial products were particularly dangerous." *History of the CPSU*.

Suddenly, with the complete defeat of all the opposition, Stalin changed the farm policy. Peasants were to be forced into State collective farms. Millions of countryfolk died in the war which followed, a war between a well-armed military force and unarmed men, women and children, driven to desperation, to slaughtering their last animals, then being dragged into the "collectives" or exile, or prison camps. One of the most damning documents of the period is one written by Stalin (published in English in 1930 in *Labour Monthly*). "Many are made dizzy by success," in which he makes a show of putting the brakes on the worst excesses of his henchmen.

The new policy was more swift than the old "scissors" policy, raising the prices of factory products and lowering the prices of farm products, but at what a cost! The number of horned cattle in the USSR in 1928 was 66.8 millions; in 1930, 50.6 millions; 1931,

42.5; 1932, 38.2 and in 1934 it had fallen to 33.5. Half the cattle vanished in five years (figures from *The National Economy of the USSR*, Moscow, 1957).

Khrushchev, reporting to the C.C. of the Communist Party of the USSR on September 3, 1953, gave these figures:—

Livestock population of the USSR (millions of head on January 1, 1953 in comparable territory).

	Cows	Pigs	Sheep & goats	Horses
1916	28.8	23.0	96.3	38.2
1941	27.8	27.5	91.6	21.0
1953	24.3	28.5	109.9	15.3

N. S. Khrushchev, *Measures for the Further Development of Agriculture in the USSR*, Moscow, 1954, page 21.

Khrushchev further said: "District which had long been famous as butter suppliers are now producing less butter than before. Siberia, for instance, produced 75,000 tons of butter in 1913 and only 65,000 tons in 1952." *Ibid*, page 26.

All this after vast colonisation schemes for cultivating "new lands" in Siberia and other parts of the USSR and when the population was 50 million greater.

The culture of other farm animals and of grain also fell in the same manner and, even today, Russia has not recovered the lost ground and grain is largely used for direct human consumption, leaving little for animals to supply meat, butter, eggs and milk.

Russia passes from one farming crisis to another, interlarded by promises of plenty in five years' time and heads roll or party officials are fired, according to the political climate. Khrushchev in 1955 confessed that the food problem had still not been solved. In 1957 he reviled Malenkov for saying, in 1952, that it had. Later Malenkov was accused of causing an acute food shortage and was disciplined.

At the end of 1959, Belyaev, First Secretary of the CP of Kazakhstan, was dismissed. Early in 1960, Kunayev, who got the job, explained the dismissal as being because of the collapse of the vast "virgin land" scheme.

"Mr. Kunayev gave a clear idea of the dimensions of the crisis in the "virgin land" areas. He said that 140,900 people sent to the virgin lands in the last two years had left them again. They included skilled mechanics, mobilised to handle the farm machinery on which the success of the new grain areas depend. The main reason for this mass exodus was bad living conditions. It was admitted that housing accommodation was often primitive and food supplies broke down completely. Mr. Kunayev said he had accepted a suggestion attributed to Mr. Khrushchev, who is the originator of the virgin land scheme, that a special Ministry be set up to supervise the work of the new State grain farms. It would be responsible for preventing a repetition of last year's failure to bring in the harvest through lack of machinery. The lack of skilled labour is to be made good by special training schemes." *Daily Telegraph*, 25.1.60.

In the autumn of last year, Khrushchev was lashing out at the Party leaders, secretaries and premiers, at congress after congress, castigating them for the failure of the farming programme. In mid-February this year, six high Communist officials in the Soviet Republic of Kirghizia, were sacked by him for crop failure. The six First Secretaries were expelled for bribery, extortion, mismanagement and defrauding the government in the areas they controlled.

On February 11-12, 1961, Moscow Radio was reporting a speech by Khrushchev in Tiflis, Georgia (birthplace of Stalin). He threatened farmworkers "who think of their own interests" and certain "aristocrats" who did not want to get their hands dirty. It is presumed that the latter are Party officials.

But there is hope. Canada is selling 7,300,000 bushels of wheat to Russia!

TOM BROWN

## A CUBAN CORRECTION

An introductory note to the report on Cuba in our last issue stated that "El Libertario" and "Solidaridad Gastronomica" had been banned by the Castro Government. This information, taken in good faith from Spanish-language papers in Uruguay and France, was incorrect. "El Libertario", organ of the Cuban Libertarian Association, has ceased publication for financial reasons; "Solidaridad Gastronomica" is still appearing regularly and copies have reached us in recent weeks.

GLASGOW: Readers in the Clydeside area interested in SWF activity are asked to contact R. Lynn, 22, Ross Street, Glasgow, S.E.

MANCHESTER: For information about SWF activity in Lancashire, contact J. Pinkerton, 12, Alt Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs.

## BELGIAN STRIKE—LIONS LED BY RATS

The following analysis of the Belgian general strike is by a Syndicalist militant, Jean de Boë, Secretary of the Amalgamated Printers' Union of Brussels, one of the leading organisers in 1931 of the seven week printing strike for the 40-hour week. For reasons of space we have had to omit the earlier part of the article, giving details of the Eyskens austerity law.

WHEN Prime Minister Gaston Eyskens disclosed the general outlines of his austerity proposals at a Brussels Press conference in mid-November, the trade union organisations, from left to right, were unanimous in raising objections. The Press, both financial and newspaper, expressed reservations in regard to this or that detail of the proposed law. The Government clearly needed to strengthen its majority, which was threatening to crumble away, both on the left and right. It was to this end that the Confederation of Christian Unions was called on to fulfil its traditional blackleg role—and its responsibilities to the Social-Christian Party. These were again to be recalled to it during the ensuing struggle by Cardinal Van Roye and the entire Belgian clergy.

Although opposition was unanimous within the bureau of the FGTB (General Federation of Labour), this was sufficiently varied in degree to show one could not expect equal preparedness for union action to stop the Eyskens plan. This duality, to be found at all levels of the union hierarchy in Belgium, was the cause of the violence of the demonstrations that followed, of the complete lack of co-ordination and of the eventual defeat of the movement. Some explanations are needed.

Firstly, Belgium is clearly divided in two unequal parts: Flanders and Wallonia. Between the two is a frontier of language, ethnics, culture, economy and politics. In the North, a rapidly-growing population; in the South, a falling birthrate. While in 1958-59 the total population of Belgium increased by 0.55 per cent, this increase was only 0.057 per cent in Wallonia. On the economic field, 45,000 jobs in the Walloon coal mining industry are to be done away with between now and 1963. One must also remember that work, in this part of the country, is particularly hard, centred as it is on heavy industry: metallurgy, coal-mining, glass-making, etc. The people of Wallonia became assimilated into the working class very quickly and, through having to defend themselves against industrial and finance capitalism, were soon familiar with the class struggle. That is why the electorate has pronounced itself for Socialist representation at all levels of public life. This is "Red Wallonia".

In contrast, the big landowners and priests are masters in Flanders. With the exception of some industrial centres, such as Ghent, or ports, such as Antwerp, one can accept the term "Clerical Flanders" for this part of the country. On this bastion of political reaction the Government rested. While the Confederation of Christian Unions has only weak effectives in Wallonia, it shepherds the broad masses of workers in the North, to the point of virtually neutralising the FGTB.

These differences are clearly discernible in the workers' leaders of the two regions. One can personalise this by André Renard, always hard and tenacious on proposals of change in structure, and Louis Major, always prepared for political compromise, despite a certain verbal demagoguery. Around these two dynamic national secretaries of the FGTB are grouped the representatives of the two geographical tendencies of the big confederation.

The practice of politics, which all too often coincides with that of self-interest, leads also to the practice of compromise, in opposition to a clearly-defined policy, capable of inspiring confidence in workers of a country where class contradictions are as sharp as in Belgium. Equally, the practice of a double political-trade union ticket has led to deterioration of union militancy. This practice is so widespread that most of the leaders of the big unions sit in Parliament or the Senate, not to speak of the provincial and communal councils and mayoralties. The one leading to the other, they also hold an impressive number of seats inside the many organisms of class collaboration which clutter our economic and social set-up. That necessarily creates jealousies, disagreements, *a priori* decisions which paralyse any normal reaction. Our union movement is sick. The events which have just taken place will certainly have had the merit of provoking a re-awakening of working-class consciousness of this fact.

Against these practices and tendencies of integration in the system, under the cover of "democracy", a "Left" was gradually constituted, encouraged by the powerful metalworkers' union, and, through its Press, this could not fail to influence events. But it equally had the effect of stiffening and stereotyping existing tendencies within the FGTB. It was with such a union leadership that the struggle was to be launched against the austerity law.

From the beginning of December, the local unions of Wallonia,

snowed under by agendas of protest against the proposed law, organised ever-greater meetings, resulting in a concerted decision for a half-day stoppage, with mass meetings and street demonstrations. Some sections, such as the communes of Charleroi and the metalworkers of the ACEC, even decided to stay out. When the public service workers realised all the threats contained in the proposed law, they urged their leaders to organise strong counter-measures.

The FGTB bureau, forced to make a decision, called a meeting of the enlarged National Committee for December 16. Let us note that, on this date, it was no longer possible to doubt the power of the insurrection already in motion. However, the agenda for this national trade union meeting bore only one point: "The austerity law", without the least commentary or resolution. This economy of words was due to the fact that no proposal had been drawn up. Faced with the inevitable conflict, the left and right had met without result in the union bureau.

André Renard took the personal responsibility of communicating to members of the National Committee the text of the proposed resolution which had been rejected two days earlier by the bureau, but which he would submit to the National Committee. This read:

"The enlarged National Committee of the FGTB, meeting on December 16, 1960, decides in principle for the general strike. This general strike will be prepared by limited stoppages of work and launched on the date decreed by an extraordinary Congress of the FGTB, called following a national trade union referendum.

"The enlarged National Committee decides that the first national day of struggle will be marked by a general 24-hour strike fixed on ..... (between the 1st and 15th January, 1961)."

The debates only put in bold relief the tragic discord within the Belgian trade union movement when faced with a showdown between the working class and the social reactionaries of the country, and at the moment when co-ordination of working-class forces for an inevitable action should have imposed itself. Defeat was to carry mortal consequences for the FGTB itself. The disagreement was the more formidable in that it bore the linguistic economic imprint of the Flemish and Walloon regions. It was the perspective of rending asunder the Belgian confederation and weakening the working class for a long time—and no militant could be unaware of that.

Prudence would have counselled support of the André Renard resolution, which anticipated delays and would allow tactical preparation, giving the movement legitimacy through a referendum.

But personal bitterness and, perhaps, also ruffled pride, carried the day over reason. The Renard motion was rejected by 496,487 mandates to 475,823, with 53,112 abstentions. The result of the vote reflects equally one of the faults in structure of the FGTB which, through an administrative stranglehold over the regional organisations, allows union members to be set against their own trade organisation. The meeting passed a resolution presented by Dore Smets, Socialist senator and chairman of the General Industries Union, who can be considered representative of the trade union right wing. This read:

"The FGTB is contributing and will contribute with all its strength to the struggle for withdrawal of the law of misery.

"The National Committee recommends the national organisation of a day of struggle in January, the date to be fixed by the FGTB bureau, taking into account the development of debates in Parliament.

"On that day of struggle all regions will contribute with the greatest possible effort, commensurate with their possibilities.

"The withdrawal or rejection of the proposed law will not, however, be enough. The country must be endowed with a social and economic policy suited to present conditions and adapted to the community evolution of economic life which, increasingly, will put in the forefront man and the collectivity of men."

This resolution, sweetened with a dollop of public relations syrup, dared not even use the word "strike"; it contained nothing concrete; called on the FGTB bureau only to choose the date, "taking account of the development of the debates in Parliament", and left to the regional organisations the cares of taking part in a day of struggle according to their own means. This decision was extremely serious, because it accepted in advance the parliamentary verdict and was in direct conflict with the will of the rank and file, who demanded: "Withdrawal of the Eyskens plan". A disastrous blunder at a moment when part of the country was already in the streets and it was clear that their aspirations were irresistible.

When Debunne told the meeting that the General Union of Public Services would call for a general strike, whatever the decision of the National Committee, there were some bitter-sweet exchanges. A parade of officials from the trade unions and regions followed each other, veering from hot to cold. Some for, others against. Some tried to cause panic by declaring that the union treasuries were empty and that

strike pay could not be guaranteed. That allowed De Keyzer (Chairman of the Transport Union, UBOT) to claim that the Antwerp dockers would not move without strike pay. Others hid behind the pretext that this was a political question, that should be decided by the parliamentary institutions. The Brussels region, through its chairman, Hervé Brouhon, threw in the balance the structure of the industrial economy of its region, to safeguard its own position. And we have seen how the final vote reflected this evasion-favouring confusion. All this at a time when, with everything at stake, strong measures were called for.

To what extent was the attitude of certain union leaders, such as Louis Major, Dore Smets, De Keyzer inspired by the agreements that the FGTB, in conformity with the Christian and Liberal trade unions, had reached during the previous May with the Federation of Belgian Industries for a three-year social armistice?

At the very moment when the National Committee was bearing witness to its own impotence or opposition to a showdown, the factories and offices were rapidly emptying. Step by step the strike was gaining breadth. The strike of the council workers, railwaymen, gas and electricity workers gradually paralysed the whole economic and administrative life of the country. The harbour services at Antwerp no longer being assured, boats could neither enter nor leave the port. At one fell swoop the dockers quit work and marched to the local headquarters of the union, UBOT, demanding a strike call from De Keyzer, the man who, in their name, had said "no" to the movement. Police intervention was needed to lift their siege of union headquarters.

Under the threat of seeing the vital activities of the country stopped, the provincial governors were forced by the Gazelec union (National secretary, Yerna) to limit their use of electric current to absolutely indispensable needs. Let us recall, in passing, that the Government was finally to escape this pressure by obtaining electric current from Germany and Holland. At one blow, practically all industry and trade was paralysed. The "unemployed" joined the strikers the more readily through the lack of transport to carry them to their workplaces, in a country where the villages supply a big labour force to the towns.

In Wallonia, from Tournai to Verviers, the strike was truly general. In Flanders, despite the manifest ill-will of some officials, strike centres were created and demonstrations drew in ever-greater crowds. In Brussels, Hervé Brouhon (still an MP) was forced out of inaction, outflanked by the local organisations, among them the metalworkers, public services, transport, etc. The tramways, drawn into the struggle, blocked the movement of traffic. Lively demonstrations marched through the city, occupying for hours on end the main thoroughfares and disorganising anything that still remained of the industrial and commercial life of the capital.

One can estimate the workers involved in the struggle at between 600,000 and 700,000, although the FGTB had neither officially called the general strike, nor set up a national co-ordinating strike committee. It was clear that the political slogans of the Belgian Socialist Party were prevailing over trade union disciplines.

Exasperation was gradually taking hold of the strikers, as well as the forces of "law and order" (police, paratroopers, gendarmes). Increasingly violent incidents were reported from all corners of the country. And it was during a demonstration organised by *Action Commune* (party, trade union, mutuality, co-operative) at Brussels (the first clear indication of the political grip on the movement) that the representatives of "order" were able to lay the first corpse on their hunting table. All conditions were then fulfilled for a conscious and energetic initiative. The different tendencies within the FGTB should have sunk their differences, the general strike been called, plans drawn up. Blood had flowed. A worker's body lay between the Government and the working class. Eyskens gave the FGTB a last challenge by introducing his plan in Parliament—and the challenge was not taken up.

Public discussion could in no way influence the results of this so-called parliamentary consultation: the chips were down—and well down. Discipline would be rigidly enforced on the two Government parties. Eyskens was sure of himself; he played his hand confidently.

No miracle happened. The union right wing remained, if not in a state of inaction, at least in a state of very reluctant participation. The parliamentarians sought refuge in policies of compromise—with the responsibilities of tomorrow well in mind—and called for the good offices of the king, who had returned from his Spanish honeymoon. Henceforward the issue was not in doubt. Events moved steadily towards the degeneration of a strike which had expressed a class will rarely seen in such strength. Accepting parliamentary discussion, the Socialist MPs, among them many union bosses, accepted in advance the verdict of "democracy."

It was in these conditions that Wallonia drew in on itself, producing from its romantic arsenal threats of separatism and of economic and political decentralisation. The Walloon cock appeared in strikers' meetings, while "The Marseillaise" was sung. Lacking a co-ordination committee for the general strike on the national scale,

the Walloon regions met at Namur and set up their own permanent committee. One more step towards division. In their turn, Walloon Socialist MPs met in extraordinary session to draw up an address to the king, appealing for a constitutional reform towards federalism.

At Liège, the Government, acting with increasing violence, claimed its second striker's corpse. Eyskens' law was voted by 115 to 90, with one abstention. So there it was. Parliamentary institutions had been respected. The conscience of our brave democrats was easy. Henceforth they could dissociate themselves from "the violence to which irresponsible elements have lent themselves" in demonstrations, and beg for a few minor amendments to the law of misery.

The strike which, at its peak, had virtually paralysed the entire activity of the country, drawing into its countless expressions hundreds of thousands of workers, was condemned to decay. Discouraged, disgusted, or at the very least disappointed, the strikers resumed work. Some in an orderly way, respecting union discipline; others in indiscipline and anger. Only Wallonia, in its most solid bastions of Liège and the centre, fought on. Anger in their hearts, and more impassioned than ever, the workers of these big industrial areas were conscious of the greatness of their struggle. For them it would not be the first or the last. And it was in a suburb of Liège, at Chênée, that blood flowed for the third time, claiming another victim and marking the final point of this social tragedy which will doubtless permit—despite the triumph of a reactionary Government—the entire structure of the Belgian General Confederation of Labour to be set to rights and its leaders forced to submit to discipline that will prevent them from joining forces with the middle class and maintain them, as they should be, on the level of the working class.

On the positive side, the first result was the vote on the Eyskens law. This will doubtless be confirmed by the Senate, after an approved period of delay. Equally important, from the negative point of view, was the incredible disorder within the trade union movement, from both an organic and doctrinal angle. Three deaths, hundreds of wounded and hundreds of arrests. Bitterness and disillusion.

On the positive side, we must put the shattering demonstration of obstructive power—which could become destructive—of the working class, although politically divided. A demonstration unhopied for at a moment when, among the ruling circles of the country, "middle class" tendencies of the working class were a cause for rejoicing. An unequivocal reply, too, for those who claimed that Belgian workers were enjoying an almost unparalleled standard of living (one might well ask what the standard is of workers in other countries?)

On the positive side, too, the inevitable reforms that will be demanded by the union rank and file to prevent collaborationist deviations, which divert the union movement from its revolutionary mission. Complete independence will be demanded from political parties and governments, also an end to the double political-union ticket of officials.

Finally, the certainty that, though voted and sanctioned, this law of misery can never be applied. The will of the working people will be expressed clearly enough to prevent any further reactionary aggression by those who take over from the present government.

And we note simply the dissolution of Parliament, which will in no way alter the economic and financial structure of the country, nor probably its political make-up.

Let the Belgian workers keep their powder dry. And let them rebuild their union movement, the FGTB.

JEAN DE BOE

### CANADA

## One in ten out of work

THE new year brought little hope for Canada's ever-growing army of unemployed workers. The spokesmen for big business and the bankers expressed "cautious optimism that conditions might start to improve slightly towards the end of 1961", or in plain language things will get worse before they get better. It is the usual vicious circle of capitalism, some people are thrown out of work, they have no money to spend, fewer goods are bought, fewer goods are made, more people are thrown out of work, even fewer goods are bought, even fewer goods are made, even more people are thrown out of work and on and on goes the vicious spiral. Between mid-December and mid-January unemployment rose by 165,000 to 693,000, 10.8 per cent of the labour force. In the Maritime Provinces, 14.9 per cent of the labour force was unemployed.

The trade union movement has long since ceased to be anything but a millstone around the neck of labour. Hopelessly involved in reformist politics, loud in its support of the capitalist system and with a fanatical determination to respect all laws, the Canadian Labour Congress is quite incapable of taking any positive action to help its members. A new and independent workers' movement must