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Tom Brown

THE BRITISH GENERAL STRIKE

1926

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STORM CLOUDS

IN THE Spring of 1925 storm clouds gathered over the British coalfields. The coming struggle was the chief conversational topic in the grim mining villages. Germany was re-entering the international trade war as a competitor of Britain. The German miners' wages had been slashed, the industry rationalised by the aid of Anglo-American capital investment, German currency stabilised by the Dawes plan. Already faced by this keen competitor, the British coal export trade was embarrassed by the Government's return to the Gold Standard.

It was soon obvious that the mine-owners would meet the new international situation by cutting wages and on June 30, 1925 they served notice to terminate the national agreement, proposing ending the minimum wage, heavy wage cuts and district, instead of national agreements. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain replied by putting their case before the Trades Union Congress General Council at a joint meeting on July 10. The General Council pledged the trade unions to full support of the miners and, setting up a Special Committee, met the executives of all the railway and transport unions, who agreed upon an embargo on moving coal. The unions quickly acted by issuing "Official Instructions to all Railway and Transport Workers":

"Wagons containing coal must not be attached to any train after midnight on Friday, July 31, and after this time wagons of coal must not be supplied to any industrial or commercial concerns...*Coal Exports*: All tippers and trimmers will cease work at the end of the second shift on July 31. *Coal Imports*: On no account may import coal be handled from July 31...All men engaged in delivering coal to commercial and industrial concerns will cease Friday night, July 31."

A specially summoned conference of trade union executive committees gave unanimous support to the instructions.

Unprepared for such resistance, the Cabinet, which had fiercely backed the coal-owners, hastily met and the Prime Minister (Baldwin) summoned the leaders of miners and owners to Downing St. On the morning of Friday, July 31, the Government announced the granting of a subsidy to the coal industry amounting to about £25,000,000 and extending over nine months. The wage cuts and other demands of the owners were postponed until April, 1926. July 31, 1925 became known as "Red Friday".

It was obvious to all that the nine months' grace was merely a time of preparation for the ruling class and this thought was expressed in the report of the Special Committee of the T.U.C. "It felt that its task had not been completed, and with the consent of the General Council proposed to remain in being, and to apply it

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE UNIONS?

TRADE UNIONISM OR SYNDICALISM?

THE SOCIAL GENERAL STRIKE

NATIONALISATION AND THE NEW BOSS
CLASS

self to the task of devising ways and means of consolidating the resistance of the trade union movement should the attack be renewed."

Alas! Little, if any, preparation for the inevitable struggle was made by the TUC or the affiliated unions. Not so the Government. Speaking of Red Friday, Winston Churchill, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, said, "We therefore decided to postpone the crisis in the hope of averting it, or if not of averting it, of coping effectually with it when the time comes."

A strike-breaking organisation known as OMS (Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies) was created. Blacklegs were trained to drive locomotives in the private railways of large factories at week-ends and potential scabs instructed in the operation of telephones and telegraphy. The country was placed on a war footing by dividing it into ten areas, each under a Civil Commissioner, and a civil service organisation was set up in each of these areas. Great numbers of special constables were enrolled and mobile squads of police organised. Every possible preparation was made and the Commissioners and their officers stood ready for the signal.

In the meantime a Royal Commission on the Coal Industry, presided over by Sir Herbert Samuel, presented its report. The report was vague and woolly on the subject of re-organisation of the industry, but very definite in demanding wage reductions and the lengthening of the working day.

On the First of May

As the renewal of the battle became more certain, the miners rallied around the slogan "Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day, no district agreements," and behind the leadership of the indefatigable A.J. Cook attempted to arouse the Labour Movement.

In April the coalowners announced that unless the miners accepted the employers' demands a lock-out would take place on May 1. On April 20, King George V proclaimed a "State of Emergency" and the Special Constabulary were mobilised. Hyde Park became a military camp, troops in full war kit paraded the streets and tanks and armoured cars rumbled into Newcastle, Liverpool, Birmingham and all the industrial cities. Warships were sent up the Thames, the Tyne, the Humber and the Clyde.

The executives of the trade unions were called to a conference of the TUC on April 29. The conference continued to sit during the following day (Friday) while the TUC leaders trotted to and fro between the conference hall and Downing Street, begging Baldwin to find a way out. Said J.H. Thomas: "I suppose my usual critics will say that Thomas was almost grovelling, and it is

true...I never begged and pleaded like I begged and pleaded all today."

Saturday, May 1, 1926—May Day—one million miners were locked out. The TUC conference assembled at forenoon in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, and received the General Strike Memorandum of the General Council. A tense pause and the roll call began, union by union. For once in a score of years a trade union conference expressed the mood of the workers. For the General Strike—3,653,527; against—49,911; unable to reply in time—313,000. The executives rose and sang the "Red Flag" and left the gloomy old hall for the sunshine of the streets, to mingle with the greatest May Day demonstration London had ever seen. Strange though it seems, the TUC leaders immediately resumed their begging perambulations to Downing Street. While still trying to avert the strike, they were suddenly horrified to learn the fight had already started. Late on Sunday night, May 2, the leaders of the Miners' Federation and the TUC were meeting the full Cabinet at Downing Street when the news of the first skirmish reached them. The *Daily Mail* was about to appear with a particularly vicious anti-strike article. The type had already been set and moulded, the machines set up and the proof copies run off. When the machinists read the bitter words of editorial hatred of the workers, the machines stopped, the Natsopa chapel met and quickly decided to tell the management to delete the leader if they wanted their paper. All other departments met and decided to back the machine room. Monday, May 3 and no *Daily Mail* appeared.

When Baldwin heard the news he jumped up from the table and ended the negotiations. The TUC leaders still grovelled to avoid the fight. Said one of the most prominent grovellers:

"With other union leaders, I sought an interview with the Prime Minister and his colleagues in a last-minute attempt to show that the compositors' strike was isolated and unofficial, without our approval, and to plead, almost on our knees, for a less cruel arbitration than he was forcing upon us—an open fight between the workers and the Cabinet. But the Cabinet had left No 10, and the place was deserted save by a single sleepy attendant."—*Memoirs of J. R. Clynes*.

Think of it—a general repudiating his soldiers on the eve of battle and condemning them for being ready to fight!

In the House of Commons the grovelling went on, but the Government knew the cowardice of the labour leaders and refused to allow them a way out. Baldwin knew the TUC and Labour Party leaders hated and feared the General Strike.

"He (Baldwin) turned on us and quoted an article written some time before by Ramsay MacDonald in *The New Leader*:

"All my life I have been opposed to the sympathetic strike. It

has no practical value; it has one certain result—a blinding reaction. Liberty is far more easily destroyed by those who abuse it than by those who oppose it.

“‘I agree with every word of that,’ commented Baldwin to the hushed and crowded House.”

Memoirs, Clynes.

So Baldwin led the employers to battle with an ILP text inscribed on their banners. Midnight, Monday, May 3, 1926, the General Strike was on.

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LIONS LED BY RATS

BRITAIN AWOKE on the morning of Tuesday, May 3, to find the General Strike in being. The railways were still and silent, buses and trams had disappeared, no newspaper was on sale. Unfortunately the strike was not really general. Indeed the TUC wished it to be known as the *National Strike* instead of the old Syndicalist name. The General Council, apparently on the initiative of Bevin, decided to divide the workers' forces into two sections, front line and reserves. The front line, composed of the printing trades, railmen, busmen, tramwaymen and other road transport workers and dockers, were called out from midnight, May 3. The “reserve line” of engineering and shipyard workers, iron and steel and chemical workers, the textile industry and the building trade were not called out until the last day of the strike, *after it had been called off*. This division of the workers' forces is a particularly stupid example of the attempted application of military rules to a social conflict.

The result of the division was to isolate the strikers in certain towns where they formed a minority. Let us consider the example of Coventry, a very compact town devoted entirely to engineering. Such a town does not depend on road transport proportionately as much as London does. Nor is Coventry a railway centre. So, in Coventry the strike was limited to the railmen, a small body of busmen and a few printers. The case of Coventry was repeated in hundreds of other towns given over to engineering, textiles and chemicals; the strikers were to be small bodies of trade-unionists separated from the mass of their fellows.

Fortunately the workers thought differently. Again we shall take the example of Coventry as being typical of the whole country. The workers of the Armstrong-Whitworth Aircraft Co trudged gloomily from Coventry to the aerodrome on Whitley Common. Arriving there they found the hangars surrounded by the military. The first arrivals refused to enter while the place was under military control and when their numbers increased a decision to join the

strike was made. Returning to Coventry the strikers besieged the district offices of the AEU and sent small parties to the auto factories to inform their fellow engineers. The aircraft workers successfully demanded a district aggregate meeting of AEU members and the meeting decided to close the engineering shops of the city on May 6. Much the same was happening in many parts of the country. The workers were making the strike general.

Nor were the workers content to spread the strike—they had to make it effective. Immediately they turned their attention to transport picketing. The stoppage of road and rail transport was almost complete the first day. In London only 40 of the 5,000 buses ran; in most towns no attempt was made to run tram or bus services throughout the strike. But quickly the student and middle-class blacklegs appeared on the roads, mainly to drive lorries.

Class against class

The almost instinctive strategy of the masses was superior to that of their self-esteeming leaders. The workers knew that a modern state depends on centralisation and concentration of power and that centralised power could be effective only by the use of intricate communications, electric power, telephones and telegraphy, railways and road transport. So the strikers and the unemployed formed themselves into mass road and rail pickets.

The road pickets were particularly effective in the mining areas for the miners did not need to picket their blackleg-proof pits. No student ever went down a mine to scab on a miner; they preferred sitting in the driver's seat of a car, with a big policeman each side to stop the bricks. A glance at the map will remind us that the chief communications arteries of England run north to south and near the Border are narrowed down by the waist of Britain and the Pennine Chain, so that the two slim sets of railways and roads skirt the east and west coast. One of these, the east, runs through the Northumberland and Durham coalfields, and there took place the most effective picketing of the strike.

Throughout the country buses and lorries were overturned and often petrol bowlers were fired. In some towns huge car parks were formed of blacklegs' vehicles and their drivers were often taken prisoner. On the railways a scattered warfare was carried on and the BBC and “press” reported damage to points, blackleg platelayers running for their lives, telegraph wires cut and signal boxes successfully attacked. The Flying Scotsman express was derailed by miners at Cramlington, Northumberland. The BBC gave a stirring account of the workers' attack on the central railway station at Middlesbrough. At 9 p.m. on Thursday, May 6, the workers stopped a train at a main line crossing in the middle

of the town and then in one spirited charge captured the station and blocked the line with heavy wagons.

We must not suppose that the General Council had the slightest sympathy with such robust action. At the beginning they had urged the workers to stay at home or play games. They even suggested that the workers play football with the police. The miners had ideas how a football match with the police should be run. Such ideas are not approved by the Football Association.

Revolutionary beginnings

The mass pickets gave enormous strength to the transport permit committees. These committees had been formed when the Government refused the TUC offer to carry on food transport along with the health services. The purpose of the committees was to check the claims of, and grant permits to, those wishing to transport food or other essentials. In most localities employers ignored the Government transport committees and humbly presented their claims to the strikers' permit committees. In Northumberland and Durham the OMS broke down and the Government's Regional Commissioner at Newcastle pleaded to the Joint Strike Committee to join him in dual control of the food distribution.

The attack on other forms of communication was gravely hindered by the timidity of the General Council. Post Office, telephone and telegraph workers were never called out. The position of the electricity supply workers was very obscure. The GC talked of cutting off power but maintaining light. In most cases the electrical workers settled the problem by coming out.

While the workers struck at the communications of the enemy, they at the same time organised their own. Thousands of cars and motor-cycles, tens of thousands of cycles stood ready at strike headquarters or sped along the roads, the black and yellow TUC label clearing the road before them.

The strike was organised in each town by a hastily formed Council of Action. In some cases these councils were just the old trades councils or their executive committees. In other cases entirely new councils were formed by delegates or officials from district offices of the chief unions. In Northumberland and Durham the local Councils of Action were federated into a regional council covering the important industrial area of the North-East, controlling the two coalfields and the ports and shipyards of the Tyne, Tees and Wear, with the great engineering and chemical works and the north-south traffic routes.

The councils suffered a great deal from lack of daily contact with the masses of strikers and most of the stirring and really effective actions were unorganised and spontaneous.

The Government's chief weapons were a great display of military force, police terrorism and heavy propaganda. Attempts to run the economy of the country were secondary to these. No newspapers appeared (though most newspaper offices published a few duplicated bulletins) until the Government issued the *British Gazette*. Churchill was chief editor. The paper was published at a great loss. In Durham it was distributed by dropping copies from aircraft, a method reminiscent of war. In most localities copies were slipped into the letter-boxes of working-class homes at night. The BBC, however, was the Cabinet's chief propaganda weapon.

The TUC could have overcome any effects of the BBC by holding a thousand or so meetings every day. Those were the days of open-air Labour propaganda and crowds would quickly have assembled. Instead, the General Council discouraged meetings. "*In common with my principal colleagues, I avoided speechmaking and advised against mass-meetings of strikers or sympathisers.*" (Clynes).

Printed propaganda for the strike had been prohibited by the TUC ban on all printing, even the TUC's own *Daily Herald* coming under the ban. Local strike committees got round the ban by issuing cyclostyled bulletins. After a few days the General Council issued the *British Worker* in reply to Churchill's *British Gazette*.

In the House of Commons Sir John Simon, speaking as a lawyer declared the General Strike to be illegal. Much has been made of this since, but at the time it did not have the slightest effect on the strikers. The Government did not limit itself to propaganda. In the Clyde, the *Hood* (then the world's largest battleship), the *Warspite* and the *Comus* threatened the working-class quarters with their guns. Destroyers lay in the harbours of Harwich, Cardiff, Portsmouth and Middlesbrough. The London power stations were manned by naval engine-room ratings and naval men worked in the London docks. A submarine supplied electric power to the Port of London.

The London docks were besieged by striking dockers and middle class blacklegs were afraid to go there. The docks were heavily guarded by soldiers in full war kit and machine guns were mounted everywhere. The Home Secretary met high army and naval officers. "*Make your own plans,*" he said. "*Use whatever force you require—I give you carte blanche—but my orders are that the London Docks must be opened at all costs.*"

Warships took loads of blacklegs down the Thames at night and one hundred food lorries were loaded. Next morning the lorries passed through the East End in convoy, guarded by hundreds of police, two battalions of infantry with fixed bayonets, a number of tanks and ten armoured cars.

Every day the strike became more clearly a struggle between two classes, a fight between the workers and the State. The struggle itself created that clear picture. It was not a result of propa-

ganda, as the Labour leaders wailed.

"The whole crux of the struggle had been skilfully shifted by propaganda from a sympathetic protest at the unfair treatment of the miners to a Constitutional struggle between Parliament and Anarchism." (*Memoirs, Clynes*).

★ BETRAYED

AS THE strike developed, more workers joined it, the picket lines increased, the tourniquet on the high roads tightened. There was never any slackening of the strike. According to Professor W. H. Crook (*The General Strike* pp. 390-396) quoting reports of the Ministry of Transport, 99 per cent of London Underground workers struck. On the GWR by May 11 only 8.4 per cent of goods trains ran; on the LMS less than 3 per cent and on the LNER much less than 1 per cent. Railwaymen claim that these figures were exaggerated by running the trains over much shorter distances and so increasing the number of trains, but not the goods carried.

The reply of the Government was to increase the terror. The limits of their own laws were too narrow for them. Thrusting aside the Constitution and laws, the Cabinet, no doubt with memories of their Black and Tans, promised immunity to the Forces for any violence they might wish to commit. On May 7 they broadcast this announcement:

"All ranks of the Armed Forces of the Crown are hereby notified that any action which they may find it necessary to take in an honest endeavour to aid the Civil Power will receive, both now and afterwards, the full support of His Majesty's Government."

Nevertheless, the Armed Forces were little used other than as a threatening parade. The chief forces of the Government were the regular police, the Special Constabulary and an extra special body of mounted "specials" recruited from the well-to-do to form Cossack troops. Their chief weapons were wholesale arrests, where the strikers were not too strong, and wild baton charges, often on crowds coming out of theatres and cinemas. But the strikers stood firm. The two classes confronted one another, as over a barricade.

As the strike developed, some members of the ruling-class, particularly those running municipalities, showed signs of worry. The Newcastle City Council, with a heavy Conservative majority, called upon the Government to seek an armistice. The Archbishop of Canterbury, after consulting the leaders of the churches, appealed for the calling off of the strike, the withdrawal of the miners' lock-out and the renewal of the coal subsidy until a settlement

was found. The anxiety was not limited to City Councillors and parsons.

"J.H. Thomas, representing the railwaymen, found, early in the Strike, that his duties took him to Buckingham Palace. King George asked him a number of questions and expressed his sympathy for the miners. At the end of the talk, His Majesty, who was gravely disturbed, remarked, it is said: 'Well, Thomas, if the worst happens, I suppose all this—' (with a gesture indicating his surroundings) '—will vanish?'

"Fortunately for Britain and the world, it did not come to the worst. The Trades Unions saw to that." *Memoirs, Clynes*

Thirty pieces

But the Government was undisturbed; it knew its agents in the Trades Union movement. All during the Strike the General Council was seeking anything which looked like a way out. In the course of their seeking they met Sir Abe Bailey and Sir Herbert Samuel at the former's house. Samuel proposed terms of settlement which included wage cuts and some vague re-organisation of the mining industry. That was sufficient for the General Council who pretended that the proposals were, somehow, coming from the Government. Sir Herbert Samuel was quite clear about this, saying: "I have been acting entirely on my own initiative, have received no authority from the Government and can give no assurances on their behalf."

The Government, through the Minister of Labour, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, declared that no terms would be considered, or negotiations opened, the strikers must surrender unconditionally,

Returning to the miners' leaders the General Council presented these unofficial and private conversations as terms of settlement, speaking airily of guarantees.

"Mr. Pugh was continually pressed and questioned by Mr. Smith (the MFGB president, myself and my colleagues as to what the guarantees mentioned were and who had given them. We got no answer." A.J. Cook: *The Nine Days*.

The miners' leaders contemptuously rejected the shufflings of the General Council and expressed their determination to carry on the fight. The Council deputation then went to 10, Downing Street and Pugh, addressing Baldwin, said:

"We are here today, sir, to say that this General Strike is to be terminated forthwith in order that negotiations may proceed." Wednesday, May 12, 1926

Once again workers looked at one another with bitter eyes and said "We are betrayed!"

Immediately the police terror was renewed. The number of arrests increased after the strike and baton charges continued. On

the night of Wednesday, May 12 a meeting of dockers was being held outside Poplar Town Hall when a lorry full of police drove through the crowd, scattering injured people to each side. Father Groser, the vicar, held up a crucifix and told the police the meeting was peaceful. He, too, was batoned. The same night a van-load of police was driven to the headquarters of the Poplar branch of the National Union of Railwaymen. Without warning the police charged into the building and batoned all within reach.

When the strikers returned to their places of work the following day, hundreds of thousands of them were met by victimisation, demands for non-unionism, wage reductions or dismissals. The railwaymen were the chief victims and spontaneously renewed the strike. The threat of a new General Strike, without the leaders, curbed the viciousness of the employers' attack, yet even then thousands of men were victimised. In sullen anger the workers returned and the miners were left to fight alone until November when, driven by hunger, they accepted defeat. Wages were cut, the working day was increased from seven to eight hours and district agreements replaced the national agreement.

Post mortem

It is now our task to examine the various social bodies and forces at work in the Strike and from a study of their relationship find lessons valuable to the workers in their struggle against the employing class. *The Government and the Employers*—The old revolutionary statement that "the State is but the executive committee of the ruling class" was well justified by the events of 1926. From the beginning to the end of the struggle the "Constitution" was on the side of the mine-owners. All the old social-democratic nonsense of the State being above classes was cruelly pushed to one side by the employers and their government. Although the *Conservative Party* was in power, the *Liberal Party* was wholeheartedly behind the coalowners. In times of strike the Popular Front sham of "progressive" Liberalism is flung aside away and the Liberal coalowner is at one with his Tory brother. The Popular Front can wait until the next General Election.

A fairly large *Fascist* movement existed in 1926 in the form of the British Fascisti. Forgotten were the "social" message and "workers' charter" of Fascism. The Fascists joined the OMS and drove lorries or unloaded ships, as did the other blacklegs.

The role of the leaders of the *TUC* and the *Labour Party* was particularly despicable for they had always been opposed to the General Strike and never at any time had they withdrawn their opposition to it. By leading a struggle they opposed, they took the part of agents-provocateurs. It seems that the labour leaders believed that a struggle in defence of the miners was inevitable and

that it was better to initiate the fight in order to control and hamstring it. In any case, what treachery lacked, cowardice made up.

"It must not be forgotten that apart from the rights and wrongs of calling a General Strike, there would in any case, with the miners' lock-out, have been widespread unofficial fighting in all parts of the country, which would have produced anarchy in the movement." Ernest Bevin in *The Record*.

"What I dreaded about this strike more than anything else was this: if by any chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would have happened. I thank God it never did." J.H. Thomas in the House of Commons, May 13, 1926.

"Every day that the strike proceeded the control and the authority of that dispute was passing out of the hands of responsible Executives into the hands of men who had no authority, no control, and was wrecking the movement." Charles Dukes (NUG & MW): Report 1927 Conference of Executives.

"I have never disguised that in a challenge to the Constitution, God help us unless the Constitution won." J.H. Thomas, House of Commons, May 3, 1926.

"I have never favoured the principle of a General Strike." J.H. Thomas at Hammersmith, May 9, 1926.

"No General Strike was ever planned or seriously contemplated as an act of Trade Union policy. I told my own union in April, that such a strike would be a national disaster... We were against the stoppage, not in favour of it." J.R. Clynes; *Memoirs*

The *Independent Labour Party* was at that time anything but independent and was still affiliated to the Labour Party, a majority of Labour MP's and ex-Cabinet ministers being members of the ILP. The attitude of the ILP was essentially that of the Labour Party; its leaders, Snowden and MacDonald, had years before opposed the General Strike in their long disputes with the Syndicalists. In 1926 MacDonald was still leader of the ILP, as well as the Labour Party, and was still repeating his old opposition to the General Strike.

"I don't like General Strikes. . . I am terribly cold-blooded about the matter. . . . With discussion of General Strikes and Bolshevism and all that sort of thing I have nothing to do at all," Ramsay MacDonald, House of Commons, May 3, 1926.

The *Communist Party* had never yet aspired to being anything more than the vague left wing of the Labour Party and trade unions. The crises of 1925 and 1926 found them without any alternative policy to that of the labour leaders. On the second day of the Strike the Communist Party issued a manifesto repeating the MFGB slogan "Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day" and adding a self-contradictory call to "Nationalise the Mines un-

der Workers' Control without Compensation" and the formation of a Labour Government. That is a Government of MacDonald, Snowden, Clynes and Thomas! The miners must wait until the next General Election for that! To these slogans the CP added the one it had used since the beginning of the crisis—"All power to the General Council." A stupid parody of the slogan of the October Revolution "All power to the Soviets." "All power" to Thomas, Clyne and Bevin. They already had too much power—the power to betray the miners.

There existed at this time a trade union opposition known as the *Minority Movement*, a thinly disguised Communist body. Shortly before the strike, in the usual Communist fashion, it claimed to have an affiliated membership of 1,000,000. Being a Communist organisation it was forced to trail behind the CP and during the Strike, in which it played no part, it even ceased to hold meetings. A few years later it perished miserably.

We shall rise again

No *Syndicalist* movement existed in Britain in 1926, although until the end of the Great War a small propaganda movement had lived vigorously. Unfortunately this movement had been eclipsed by the Russian Revolution or engulfed by trade union work. Nevertheless the General Strike propaganda of the old Syndicalist groups had had a much greater effect than was ever expected of it. The idea of the General Strike appealed to the imagination and conscience of the British worker.

The present Syndicalist movement in England was as yet unborn in 1926. The betrayals of a decade, the failure of two Labour Governments, the Labour desertion of the Spanish Revolution and the Socialist-Communist support of the second world war were to later make inevitable the creation of our present Revolutionary Movement.

Without a Syndicalist minority among the miners, factory workers and transport men, on the picket lines and at local strike headquarters, the strikers were easy prey to the Judas Iscariots. Without such a strong, compact and resolute body of conscious revolutionaries, no alternative to the treacherous leadership could be found.

Of the workers, nothing but the highest praise is sufficient. They responded to the strike call magnificently. When the Government wished to publish the *British Gazette* not one linotype operator could be found to set up its paper. In thousands of cases trade unionists walked out to certain dismissal. In many cases, especially on the railways, men in supervisory posts sacrificed jobs and pensions to join the fight. The ninth day of the strike found the workers more determined than ever to carry on the fight.

There was never any drift back. What the workers lacked was revolutionary understanding and organisation. It is our task to create these. The General Strike is not dead. Weighing carefully the treachery and cowardice of labour leaders and drawing inspiration from the courage and sacrifice of the workers, we prepare ourselves for the Second British General Strike.

SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION

BRITISH SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION seeks to establish a free society, which will render impossible the growth of a privileged class and the exploitation of man by man. The S.W.F. therefore advocates common ownership and workers' control of the land, industry and all means of production and distribution, on the basis of voluntary co-operation. In such a society, the wage system, finance and money shall be abolished and goods produced and distributed not for profit, but according to human needs.

CLASS STRUGGLE. The interests of the working class and the ruling class are directly opposed. The S.W.F. is based upon the inevitable day-to-day struggle of the workers against those who own and control the means of production and distribution, and will continue that struggle until common ownership and workers' control are achieved.

DIRECT ACTION. Victory in the fight against class domination can only be achieved by the direct action of the workers themselves. The S.W.F. rejects all parliamentary and similar activity as deflecting the workers from the class struggle into paths of class collaboration.

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

ORGANISATION. To achieve these aims, the workers must organise. They must replace the hundreds of craft and general trade unions by syndicalist industrial unions. As an immediate step to that end, the S.W.F. aids the formation of workers' committees in all factories, mines, offices, shipyards, mills and other places of work, and their development into industrial unions, federated to an all-national Federation of Labour.

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