

DIRECT ACTION

SYNDICALIST WORKERS FEDERATION
INTERNATIONAL WORKING MENS ASSOCIATION

IRISH SPARKS

STRIKE

PAGE 5

Vol. 6 No. 6 (No. 53)

July-August, 1951

Twopence

A WEEK'S WORK FOR A PAIR OF BOOTS

"NEVER BEFORE," declared a delegate to the recent A.E.U. annual conference, "has a man had to work a week to buy a pair of boots." This apt comment, of an engineering worker, crystallises in one sentence, the feelings of the overwhelming majority of the population. Never before have price increases continued so relentlessly, as during the past twelve months. Never before has so much talk been wasted on the subject of price controls - and so little done. There is no need to mention the innumerable items which have increased in price. It is sufficient to say that it now takes a week's work to buy a blanket, and eight years' wages to buy a house - if you can live on air in the meanwhile.

Since the beginning of this year, official estimates admit that the cost of living has gone up by some nine per cent, or eleven shillings a week to the average worker. Still there is no sign of respite. Wholesale prices have, in the last six months, gone up by 30 per cent. This means that, by the end of the year, the average £6 a week worker will be 30s a week worse off. To offset this, the government would have us believe that we are, on an average, receiving seven shillings a week more in the pay packet. This increase, of course, exists mainly on paper. The chief beneficiaries are such people as the higher-paid civil servants, who received, not long ago, pay increases of up to £15 a week. In view of the present size of the Civil Service, this represents a not inconsiderable factor - and a great strain - on what is now termed "the national economy."

SMASH AND GRAB In answer to this fantastic situation, what, it may be asked, has the trade union movement done. Mr. E.F. Fryer, chairman of the T. & G.W.U. conference, held at Whitley Bay a few weeks ago, gave the answer. He urged that a policy of wage restraint was still necessary, and that union members - who include 95s. a week railwaymen - should not adopt a policy of "smash and grab." The only hope he could hold out was that they would not see union members suffer

"in the general wages movement which is now taking place." The conference then went on to discuss workers who were abusing sickness benefit schemes and robbing the boss.

The record of the Labour Government, in this respect, is no better. Week in and week out, senior ministers appeal to the industrial workers, "not to use the present favourable employment situation as a lever to raise their wages." With the same monotonous regularity, the President of the Board of Trade meets the barons of industry to discuss general price increases.

We know, from our own experience, that talk of price controls is useless. Despite the fact that industrial production is nearly half as much again as before the war, and exports last month reached a record figure for all time, our standard of living is deteriorating. The armament economy of the entire world is absorbing the world's wealth. This, of course, quite apart from the fact that, whenever the workers' organisations fail, as they are doing at present, to conduct an active struggle for higher wages at the expense of profits, organised capital reaps even greater dividends at the expense of wages. A glance at any issue of the "Financial Times" will show that profits have never been better than at the present time.

FIGHTING MACHINES The only successful struggles that have been waged during recent years have been unofficial. The trade unions, integrating themselves with the state machine, and bent on getting governmental positions for their leaders, have no time or use for the dangerous road of really fighting for wage increases. The unofficial movements and committees, operating very much on syndicalist lines, have replaced the trade unions as the fighting organisations of the industrial working class.

We believe that these movements should not regard themselves as temporary "pep groups" within the trade unions, but as the workers' organisations of the future. Not only as the fighting machines for the day-to-day struggles for improved wages and conditions, but as the means of ending the profit system and the rule by one class over another. Nobody who has vested interests, as the trade union leaders have, in maintaining the triangle of employers, government officials and trade union bureaucrats can accomplish that. Only the industrial workers, in whose interests it is to end the system, will do it.

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-

PRICE OF HOT AIR If you want to compare your wages with the rake-off for emitting hot air, here are a few figures:-
Sir Frank Soskice, Attorney-General, £10,000 a year; Mr. A.L. Ungood-Thomas, Solicitor-General, £7,000 a year; Sir Hartley ("Pretty Boy") Shawcross, President of the Board of Trade, £5,000 a year; Mister Attlee, Prime Minister, £15,000 a year. The last-named gets as much in a week as YOU get for a year's work.

SPAIN — JULY 19TH, 1936-51

JULY 19th, 1936 . . . Spain in the headlines throughout the world. The workers had taken arms against the attempted coup-d'etat of the fascist generals, and had begun the greatest social revolution of modern times.

JULY 19th, 1951. . . Spain again in the headlines. American militarists are carrying out a deal with Franco, the fascist dictator. In return for military bases, the United States - bastion of the "democratic" world - will increase its support for Franco's regime of firing squads, jails and concentration camps.

Fifteen years, and the wheel has turned full circle. In 1936, Franco was able to count on the tacit support of the democracies - remember the infamous Non-Intervention pact? In 1939, international fascism triumphed in Spain and, a few months later, the "World War against Fascism" began. Franco took part in that war, on the side of the Axis Powers - remember the Blue Division? And now we're back where we started.

The half-hearted protests by the Liberal press of this country - particularly the "News Chronicle" - won't worry Washington or Wall St one little bit. The attitude is one of typical mealy-mouthed hypocrisy - "We mustn't have Franco in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation - that would show too clearly what kind of comp ny we keep - but if the Americans want to take him under their wing, we mustn't protest against it." Rule the dollar, the dollar rules the waves, and Spaniards ever, ever, ever shall be slaves!

The right-wing press, of course, is delighted that its old friend, "the very gallant Christian gentleman," should be welcomed back into the fold. "Sunday Dispatch" columnist Alastair Forbes, for example, writes (22.7.51) in an article headed "FRANCO FACES HUMBUG FROM OUR LEFT": "You can call Spain's dictatorship fascist if you like, but that word is nowadays little more than a seven-letter rude word from the Communist dictionary." He claims that the Spanish Civil War "has for fifteen years been consistently misunderstood and misinterpreted abroad."

A few - very few - voices of genuine protest have been raised, however, and the opposition to an alliance with Spanish fascism by the workers of this country should not be under-estimated. There is a great body of opinion which, like Alastair Forbes, knows perfectly well just what fascism means, but, unlike Forbes, hates it.

Meanwhile, practically forgotten by the outside world, the resistance movement against Franco in Spain is daily gaining strength. This movement is, above all, that of our sister section of the International Working Men's Association - the National Confederation of Labour,

the C.N.T.

It was the men of the C.N.T. who, on that 19th of July fifteen years ago, took whatever arms they could find, and poured into the streets to repulse the fascist rising. Even the Spanish Socialist and Republican leaders admitted, a few days later, that but for the Syndicalists and Anarchists, there would have been no effective resistance to Franco. Jaime Miratvilles, Catalan Republican politician, wrote:

"From the beginning of the struggle, the anarchists went into the streets and, followed by small groups of workers; were authors of the victory. In 24 hours, the Spanish army was virtually dissolved. That was the most crushing success ever registered in the history of a revolution."

The fighting of those early days of the revolution, the organisation of workers' militias to conduct the fight against Franco, Hitler and Mussolini, were only the prelude to a profound re-organisation of social life. Industry was brought under workers' control; the land was seized by the peasants and turned into collective farms. In Catalonia and Aragon, particularly, the social transformation was all but complete. The only unemployed were capitalists and landlords.

The reasons for the defeat of the Spanish Revolution are well known. . . the armed intervention of Germany and Italy, the "Non-Intervention" of the "democracies", the shameless treachery of the Stalinists, the apathy of the international working class when its active support was most needed.

But the struggle against Franco has never ceased for one moment. The proof of this are the thousands of anti-fascists who have died before the firing squads, the tens of thousands who are rotting in the prisons for daring to strike a blow for freedom. The proof, too, was given recently by the mass strikes in the Basque country, in Catalonia, in Madrid, in Pamplona. The present writer talked recently with comrades who had crossed the French frontier at the risk of their lives. They told the story of Spain to-day in the same words - that the C.N.T. was the focal point of the resistance to Franco. . . a resistance which had cost, was costing, bitter sacrifices.

To-day, more than ever, the Spanish workers need our aid. They know they can hope for nothing from governments, whether totalitarian or democratic. They know the alliance between Franco and Yankee imperialism will make their struggle doubly hard. They know that the Communist Party - which plays no role in the resistance to Franco - will benefit from this alliance.

In this situation our duty as members of the international working class is clear. . . to use every effective means possible to help the Spanish workers undermine and smash Franco fascism.

IRISH 'SPARKS' STRIKE

FOR SEVERAL WEEKS now the electricians employed by the Irish nationalised transport board, Coras Iompair Eireann, have been on strike. It may be settled by the time "Direct Action" is published, but the significance of the strike, from a revolutionary syndicalist point of view, will not be altered.

In Ireland, all electricians get the same rate of pay in the same area. Unlike England, where there are "Contracting Trade Agreements," and "Engineering Agreements," often causing a difference of as much as £1 per week between the pay packets of two electricians in the same district, in Ireland there is only a Dublin rate, and provincial rates. Every electrician in Dublin should get the same rate, and so on.

This state of affairs has been maintained by the workers for some considerable time, but last March, when the employers agreed to raise the rate from 3s.3d per hour to 3s.8¹/₂d per hour (Dublin rate), after a strike ultimatum for all Ireland (including the Supply Board) had been issued, C.I.E. decided to be awkward.

Negotiations went on and on, and eventually the E.T.U. (I) were forced to show the C.I.E. bosses that they were not negotiating for the good of their vocal cords. Every electrician in C.I.E. was withdrawn, and strike pickets were placed in every railway station and bus depot. The strike has been running for weeks now, and though it may be settled to-day or tomorrow, the significant thing about it all is that those picket lines were crossed, and that nobody - not even the E.T.U. (I) has made any remarks or protest loud enough to be heard.

And all this is happening in the city where Connolly was preaching the doctrine of the sympathetic strike 40 years ago. In an article in the "Irish Review" in October, 1913, Connolly said:-

"... When any body of workers is in conflict with an employer, that all other workers should co-operate with them in attempting to bring that particular employer to reason by refusing to handle his goods."

Yet in Dublin in the last few weeks we see electricians picketting railways, etc., and other workers - motor mechanics, drivers and so on - working away as if nothing was wrong.

A complete stoppage throughout the C.I.E. system might have settled the dispute in a matter of hours. Instead of that it drags on for weeks. No doubt many of the mechanics and others who are still at work will say, "Why should we come out in sympathy, when the electricians might not do as much for us another time." The answer to that is that this is not "another time." This is early July, 1951, and a section of the workers of C.I.E. are fighting the employers. The time is now, and if the electricians in Ireland, in C.I.E., lose this strike, it is a defeat for every worker in Ireland - and even in the world. To quote Connolly from the same article in the "Irish Review,"

"One of the Wise Men of old, when asked what was 'the most perfect state,' answered, 'That in which an injury to the meanest citizen was considered an outrage on the whole body!'"

The workers of Dublin in 1913 learnt the wisdom of that statement. It is a view that has always been held strongly by the organised workers of Dublin. There are, and always have been, workers in Dublin who know what to do with individuals like the Royal Festival Hall scabs of last January. But unfortunately the craft union outlook is sometimes allowed to overrule the fundamental principle of unionism, with the amended slogan, "An injury to one member of this union only." As a result of this, good militant trade unionists are crossing the picket lines in Dublin, and are not aware that this is wrong. That is the point which all syndicalists will criticise in this strike.

However, let us look to the credit side, lest it be thought that we are merely concerned with picking holes. There is much that the electricians of Britain could learn from their Irish brothers.

The pickets are well organised, and are carrying picket signs so that no one can pass a bus depot or railway station without knowing that there is a strike on. This is a point that was neglected on the South Bank last January. Being a picket there felt like loitering, without intent even!

Every member of the E.T.U. (I) is being levied 5s per week for the strike fund, and the strike has the full official backing of the union. The strike will be won. Syndicalists can only say that it could be won quicker. It will be a victory on points, whereas it could be a knock-out!

—O—

IWMA

SEVENTH CONGRESS RESOLUTIONS

FUTURE WORK OF THE IWMA

1. The IWMA must become known throughout the world by the medium of short, precise, manifestos, pamphlets, books, radio, cinema, lectures, propaganda meetings with explanations of its principles, tactics and aims, etc. . . an international revue shall be published in the languages considered most useful.
2. The IWMA shall make known its opinion about vital questions affecting the workers of the world, always basing itself on its principles and aims, and presenting concrete proposals and solutions which will keep it always in the vanguard of other working class organisations. Sections must be consulted before an important question affecting them is thus dealt with.
3. The IWMA shall work for the creation of sections in countries where they do not exist, and help them in the development of their work.
4. A primary task of the IWMA shall be to develop propaganda among youth. . . an intense and permanent campaign of orientation, social, cultural and ideological education, in conformity with the concepts of the IWMA shall be carried out in this respect.

5. Against the two blocs fighting for world domination, and which both aim to maintain capitalism, the State, imperialism and totalitarianism, the IWMA shall work. . . for the creation of an international front of opposition to war, to the State, to capitalism, to Stalinism, to clericalism and to all totalitarianism.

TO THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD

The 7th Congress of the IWMA calls on all manual or intellectual wage workers, and on all men of goodwill, anarchists or otherwise, to join our international organisation, with the aim of counter-acting the demagogic propaganda of the social democrats and authoritarian communists, who support or prepare regimes of inequality, which may provoke wars and prejudice the true interests of humanity.

AGAINST RACIAL PERSECUTION

In response to a request by the "David Edelstadt" Group of Jewish workers (Buenos Aires), and on the proposal of the delegation of the C.N.T. of Spain (Interior and in exile), the Congress declares:-

That the IWMA has always condemned, and continues to condemn, all persecutions of a racial, political or religious character, which are harmful to freedom of thought, and to the moral and physical integrity of the individual.

That the IWMA has as its aim the suppression of frontiers, the brotherhood of man, and social justice and freedom for all.

That the IWMA rejects with all its force race hatred and wars, considering that political persecution derives from capitalism, from economic inequality, from the existence of the State and of authority. While these latter exist, the risk of persecutions will remain, and hatred between men will not cease.

To end all persecution, and to defend human rights as a whole: to avoid repressive abuses and all kinds of hatred and enmity between men, the IWMA calls on all men of goodwill to swell its ranks, to struggle unremittingly to build an equitable and free society which will engender spontaneously and naturally a deep fraternity between human beings of all races and in all countries.

A DATE FOR INTERNATIONAL PROPAGANDA

The 7th Congress of the IWMA declares that the 19th of July shall be celebrated each year in commemoration of the Spanish Revolution of 1936, and shall be a day of international propaganda for the preparation of the future social revolution.

STRENGTHENING OF S.I.A.

The 7th Congress of the IWMA, considering that International Antifascist Solidarity (S.I.A.) is an organism which, independent of any political, religious or philosophical factors, carries out humanitarian work;

Recommends its sections to give their support and sympathy to S.I.A., to help it to carry out its work and development, and to encourage their members to join this organism of international solidarity.

RESIDENCE AND COMPOSITION OF THE IWMA SECRETARIAT

The new seat of the

IWMA Secretariat shall be STOCKHOLM. After examining the activity of the Secretariat, the Congress expresses its satisfaction with the work it has accomplished. It names Comrade JOHN ANDERSSON as secretary, and Comrade RAGNAR JOHANSSON as treasurer, and asks the competent comrades who formed part of the old secretariat to participate in the new.

SUB-SECRETARIATS The Congress recognises the value of sub-secretariats for those national or linguistic groups which desire them as auxiliaries of the general secretariat. For this reason, sections shall be free to group themselves together for the aims cited above.

Each sub-secretariat may be constituted only with the express authorisation of the IWMA Secretariat, and after other sections have been advised.

The structure of the sub-secretariats and their functions shall be determined by the sections concerned.

The sub-secretariats shall establish their own resources, and shall reach agreement with the IWMA Secretariat to organise financial aid between the different bodies.

SYNDICALISM IN SWEDEN

THE OPPOSITION inside L.O., the Swedish TUC, has recently shown a steady increase. After the metal workers' last wage revision, Swedish newspapers all over the country reported the workers' dissatisfaction with the L.O.'s handling of their economic interests, and at ever-shorter intervals, the same criticism comes from workers in other unions.

While the businesses shovel in enormous net profits, and have the greatest difficulty in placing their profits in new capital investments, taxes and prices of consumer goods are mounting. In more and more places is there open condemnation of the L.O.'s leadership. Members of L.O. consider there should be a greater levelling out between the business interests' enormous profits and their own wages than the leadership seems to want, and the workers are beginning by giving up their membership of reformist union movement.

The overwhelming majority of the workers in the Rockhammar Mills have left the Paper Industry Workers Union and founded the Rockhammar Syndicalist local, reports "Arbetaren" (Stockholm).

The L.O.'s handling of the workers' interests resulted in the Rockhammar mill workers getting their earnings reduced. The Paper Workers Union considered that irrelevant - their concern was that members' dues should be paid.

Since the workers joined the Syndicalist organisation, S.A.C., wages and working conditions have already been substantially improved. In all trades the Syndicalist organisation is now beginning to make itself very effectively felt. It is possible that the next transfer to S.A.C. will be of workers in the metal industry.

SOLIHARITET

Oslo

SYNDICALISM AND THE STATE

By JULIAN PILLING

SYNDICALISM is a product of circumstance; it has evolved as the natural reaction of men and women working in industry, and is their answer to a system which robs them of their share in the products of their own labour. It is not a utopian idea thought up by middle-class intellectuals as a panacea for all the workers' ills, and it has no connection with any such. It is significant that those middle-class philosophers such as Sorel and Lagardelle, who made a bid to become the intellectual leaders of the movement at the beginning of the century, miserably failed to make any headway at all, for they were afraid, not unnaturally, of the realities of the class struggle.

Syndicalism does not present a blueprint which must be rigidly adhered to. Such an attitude, so typical of various socialists, is the infantile disorder of those who cannot face the complexities of social life. The socialist who has freed himself from all governmental influence and political authority finds, like the anarchist, that syndicalism is the field in which he can best take his part in the class struggle. For without the class struggle, socialism is meaningless and degenerates, at best, into mere philanthropy and liberalism.

The difference between the Syndicalist Workers Federation and a Socialist party is the difference between a workers movement and a middle class movement. In the latter we see a breach between theory and practice, as the concern of the Labour Party for the memory of the Tolpuddle Martyrs and Keir Hardie while they administer capitalism in the traditional manner. But in Syndicalism, theory and practice become one in Direct Action.

Behind Socialist parliamentarians lies a misunderstanding of the State. It is seen as something outside the industrial world, an independent force, as it were, and it is deemed possible to abolish the system of capitalist industry by using an institution which exists for the purpose of conserving it. For Parliament is a class institution and cannot be used to destroy the class that benefits from it. It is true that Parliament may produce occasional laws which make the lot of working people easier - nearly always as a result of working class pressure - but the way to achieve this is not by sending Socialist members to Westminster.

The Socialist member, if not already a political adventurer, soon succumbs to parliamentary atmosphere and procedure, and develops the well-known "parliamentary mania." The employing class like and encourage the workers to support the Labour Party - "Your own men", as they say - for then the workers are playing the game according to the bosses' rules. Let them force the bosses by strike action to come to their

terms, and these bosses - who are such "good sportsmen" - cry treachery. Similarly do the employers, by means of work co-operative councils, place the workers in a position of inferiority by taking them out of their element and on to the bosses' own ground. The place to argue with the employers is in the workshop, not in their offices.

A good example of the way that parliament can be "used" was given by the French Syndicalists. For twenty years socialists and radicals had tried to introduce bills to abolish the private employment exchanges which were detested with good reason by the whole of the working class. The Syndicalists started a campaign of strikes and demonstrations and, in three months, succeeded where twenty years of parliamentary action had failed. The function of the Labour Exchanges then rested entirely with the Trades Councils which, for many years, was a highly satisfactory arrangement. The only way in which parliament can be used is by external pressure. Parliament is much more impressed by a show of strength than by the empty oratory of its "left"-wing members.

Revolution is a daily process, and not a catastrophe in the dim and distant future as Marxists would have us believe. Such an attitude isolates its adherents into small, esoteric groups just as surely as the individualistic Anarchists of the Stirner school, who fail to recognise any value in association.

There is no virtue in this isolation, which represents a society in decay. The future of society lies in a working-class movement, and not in the political machinations of parties who, by their nature, perpetuate class rule.

---O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O---
MR. GEORGE R. STRAUSS, M.P.

Mr. George Russell Strauss, M.P., is a man who considers himself a socialist and enemy of the profit motive. Like other alleged leaders of the working class, he knows a great deal about profit. He should do. That's how he supplements his £20 a week job as M.P.

The private company of A. Strauss, metal merchants, is a prosperous affair. The nominal share capital, £200,000, consisting of £25,000 in £1 shares, and £175,000 in £1 ordinary shares. Holders of preference shares, of course, have no voting powers in the running of a business. Those who own, under their own name, or that of someone else, the largest blocks of Ordinary shares, not necessarily the majority, control and run the business. In the firm of A. Strauss, however, the controller of the business is not hidden. The lion's share, £99,500 worth of £1 Ordinary shares to be exact, is down under the name of Mr. G.R. Strauss.

No doubt his constituents of LAMBETH NORTH find they have a great deal in common with him. At least he is an expert on the profit motive. Just another of the "workers' leaders" in parliament. . .

---O---
 Published by the S.W.F., 25a AMBERLEY-ROAD, LONDON W.9.