

# DIRECT ACTION

ORGAN OF THE  
**Syndicalist  
Workers  
Federation**  
INTERNATIONAL  
WORKING MENS ASSOCIATION

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Twopence

## THE WAGES PAPER CHASE WE DON'T WANT HALF A LOAF — — WE WANT THE BAKEHOUSE!

IN THE FACE of a steadily rising cost of living, the natural reaction of the worker is to seek an advance of wages. Now, although the Syndicalist Workers Federation supports all such attempts at wage increases, we recognise the grim fact of their limits and inadequacy. So long as the wages system exists, such wage advances are just a little better than aspirin doses - though in our present civilisation even aspirin may be necessary.

With production limited by the outmoded system of capitalist property, trade curtailed by Iron Curtains and the poverty of the colonial raw material territories, a limited amount of goods meets an ever-expanding amount of money. The result is, generally, higher prices.

But, into this dilemma is thrown the complication of rearmament, claiming a big slice from a limited cake. In such a situation, more and more workers are beginning to see the very strict limits of living standards within the wages system.

The Communist parrot cry of "take the wage increase out of capitalist profits" offers no encouragement to anyone who gives it a second thought or even a first thought. To try to do so would be to contradict all economic experience and theory - even Marxist theory - for, but a few years ago such a slogan would have been regarded as a school-boy howler by Marxists.

In any case, the capitalist profit-seeking system can never be made to work in favour of the wage earner and against the capitalist.

The stand of the S.W.F. is this: to solve their problems, the workers must end the wages system by taking, without "compensation", the means of production and democratically running them for the workers themselves. "Abolition of the wages system" is a major plank of the Syndicalist platform.

Unfortunately, seeking a wage advance is not the only way some workers seek to solve their immediate problem. Some seek to increase



their income by working systematic overtime, taking on "spare-time" jobs, and even by the hideous 19th century practice of doing small industrial jobs at home on the kitchen table, even enlisting the unwilling services of their infant children.

With a limited, even decreasing, supply of consumer goods, such extra work is, in the long run, unpaid labour, being rewarded by more money, that is more pieces of paper, but not more goods. Very soon it results in an increase in the working day without any real increase in wages.

One of the few real gains which have resulted from 100 years of labour struggle is the 44 hour working week. A wage advance may be chopped in halves by that modern highwayman, H.M. Inspector of Taxes; the remainder may be immediately cancelled by a rise in prices, but a shorter working week is a real gain.

No one can tax that extra 60 minutes; no one can increase its price and so put 20 minutes of it to his own account. It is yours to use for reading, sleeping, playing darts, boozing, making love or just, like the cows in the fields, standing staring and meditating on the strange ways of men.

It is better for labour to refuse overtime, stamp out all kitchen table homework, and seek at once a reduction of the working day.

There are signs that the Labour Party will, at the next General Election, promise to reduce the general level of prices and offer this to the workers as the solution of their problem.

Even if the Labour Party could reduce the price index, benefit of this to the workers would be doubtful. Every period of a general reduction of prices has been a period of unemployment and suffering to the workers. 1930 and the two to three years following are an example of this.

For labour power under capitalism is a commodity and its price - wages - tends to rise and fall with the price of other commodities.

It may seem very elementary to say so, but unfortunately hundreds of thousands of people who have spent their lives in the trade unions and in political parties have yet to learn their economic ABC.

So long as the workers put their main efforts into getting an advance of wages, which is gobbled up even before the arbitration board gives it, just so long will they be like a dog chasing its own tail.

OUR AIM IS THE CONTROL OF INDUSTRY BY AND FOR THE WORKERS.  
WE DON'T WANT HALF A LOAF - WE WANT THE BAKEHOUSE!

-T.B.

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SOCIALISM? - Advert in a Co-op hairdressers : "SOCIETY PERMS"



Textile Notes

By MURIEL BROUGHTON

## MILL WORKERS REJECT UNION POLITICS

READERS of DIRECT ACTION will remember a news item in the June issue, where a member of the Syndicalist Workers Federation was rejected as a mill representative by Nelson Weavers Association because he would not agree to support the Labour Party. The principle involved here is an essential one of union democracy, and of great importance to all working men and women.

Our comrade Julian Pilling was nominated as union representative for James Nelson's Doubling Mill upon the resignation of the former representative and, on appearing at the committee meeting, was told he would be expected to support the return of Labour members of Parliament. This he naturally refused to do, and his nomination was rejected. When the winders at the doubling mill learned this, they immediately organised a petition, which was signed by practically all those employed there and taken to the Union office. The petition regretted the committee's action and asked them to reconsider their decision. The committee's answer was to reaffirm their position, but they promised to hold a meeting at the mill to explain their reasons for this position.

WORKERS STAND FIRM After several promptings, a meeting was held at the mill with the President and Secretary of Nelson Weavers Association. It was obvious from their handling of this meeting that they did not propose discussing the bone of contention - they asked for further nominations, but none were forthcoming. Many of the workers questioned the union bosses mercilessly, and it was obvious that they were solid in their determination to have the representative elected by them. Pilling himself pointed out that, by Acts of Parliament which the Labour government had not revoked, anyone contracting out of political levy retained full union rights, so how did this tally with asking a representative to support the Labour Party. This question was unanswered. The only result of this meeting was a decision for a delegation from the mill to discuss the matter at the union's office.

This delegation comprised ten millworkers, who represented all processes in which workers were involved. The meeting was a stormy one, and ended in a deadlock, the positions being stated briefly as follows:-

Union bosses: A representative is only nominated by the workers and is appointed by the committee, who must adhere to the union rules, which include support of the Labour Party.

Mill workers: A representative should be elected by the workers and accepted by the committee. He or she should support the workers, not a Party.

When asked for chapter and verse for his ruling, the Secretary



was unable to give it, but pointed out that it originated in 1913! It is largely a matter of interpretation. I.L.P. members have previously been similarly rejected, but it is well known that Communists got in - even on the committee there are Stalinists.

### THE NEXT STEP

And so James Nelson's Doubling Mill at Nelson has no union representative, and some workers have left the union disgusted. Their best plan would be to have a works committee to safeguard their interests, and they probably will as soon as any trouble arises. The viewpoint of these girls who stuck out for union democracy was well expressed in a letter which appeared in the "Nelson Leader":-

"... We elected a representative almost unanimously and were amazed when he was turned down by the Committee on the grounds that he would not agree to vote for the Labour Party. When we were asked to join, we were not questioned about our politics, neither were we informed that we should pay so much a month out of our subscriptions towards the support of the Labour Party. I have not any strong political views, but I do feel that a workers' organisation should belong to the workers."

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## THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

UNDER the above heading, the following letter appeared in the SOCIALIST LEADER (8.9.51). It is a sign that the spirit of solidarity is still very much alive, and that cases such as that of Julian Pilling will not be allowed to go unchallenged:-

"With the end of Order 1305 there is an opinion abroad that 'the right to strike' has been given back to the workers of Britain. This is not so - that 'right' has been given back only to the Trade Unions (and only the 'recognised' Trade Unions at that).

"So long as the big unions remain tied closely to the State machine, and their leaders secure in their hold on the unions, strikes will still be outlawed.

"Workers' rights are threatened to-day from many directions. A recent case in the North is significant. The representative nominated with the support of the mass of the workers in a Nelson mill was rejected by the Committee of the Nelson Weavers Association because he would not guarantee to support the return of Labour Members to Parliament.

"The workers refused to make an alternative nomination, so they now have no representative on the Committee. Just another example of 'the workers can do as they like, so long as they do as they are told.'

"The Industrial Rights Movement exists to fight both repressive legislation and petty tyrannies such as the above. I call upon all



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those who are willing to assist in the tremendous tasks the I.R.M. faces to write to me at this address, and to help us to defeat totalitarianism wherever it springs up."

E.A. HARTLEY (Hon. Sec.  
Industrial Rights Movement.

## BOYCOTT THIS BLACK FIRM !

THE LOCKOUT COMMITTEE at Change Wares, a South London engineering firm, ask for our support in making known the facts of the dispute in which they are involved. A letter from the Committee secretary states:-

"I am placing before you the facts of this dispute (which you will find on the enclosed pamphlet) and ask for your assistance in stopping material being picked up at the wharves for this BLACK FIRM of Change Wares.

"The wharf they are picking the material up at the moment is Fleet's Wharf, Blackfriars."

Here is the leaflet:-

### OFFICIAL LOCKOUT AT CHANGE WARES, MORDEN

#### Why are 80 Union members Locked out? Here are the facts

In August, 1950, the workpeople joined the A.E.U. to protect their wage packet, which the management were endeavouring to reduce.

Finally, trade union conditions and principles were established, and shop stewards were recognised. In December the shop stewards, on instructions from the workers, opened negotiations on the November Wage Agreement.

After several meetings from December to April, the management maintained that the workers were not entitled to a single penny, despite the fact that there has not been a general increase in wages in this firm for a number of years.

In view of the management's attitude, a factory meeting was called when it was resolved that the workers would work the normal 44-hour week.

The management's reply to this was to sack eight out of ten tool-room workers for alleged lack of work, including Ron Taylor and Ron Good, the convenor.

Ron Taylor has worked at this firm for nine years, but now that he is on his sick bed with T.B. this is his reward for services rendered. Incidentally, this is the fourth case of T.B. within 12 months at this small firm.

The workers held a meeting to protest at the sackings and decided to stop work for the rest of the afternoon. Those workers who protested were immediately sacked.

This dispute has been recognised by the Executive Council of the A.E.U. as an official lockout. A meeting was arranged by the



Industrial Relations Department, Ministry of Labour, which, after a four hours' meeting, resulted in a failure to agree.

We are now in our eighth week and determined to fight for our right for a living wage.

Having placed the facts before you, we are confident you will give us your financial and moral support in this fight against victimisation, and for elementary trade union rights.

ALL WORKERS WILL NOTE THE FACTS GIVEN ABOVE, AS THIS IS AN OFFICIAL DISPUTE, AND THIS INFORMATION SHOULD BE PASSED ON TO ANY WORKERS ASKED TO TAKE A JOB THERE.

There are many neighbouring factories where wages and conditions are unsatisfactory. The result of this dispute will have important effects on conditions throughout the area.

We need cash urgently.

All cash to: R. Good, 4 Rutter Gardens, Mitcham, Surrey.

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL.

(Signed) Change Wares Lockout Committee.

The National Committee of the S.W.F. gladly associates itself with the above appeal. That material should be handled for a "black" firm is a blot on working class solidarity; any workers engaged in handling such goods must be made to understand their responsibility to the brothers of Change Wares.

## CO-OPERATIVES IN THE DOCKS

DOCKWORKERS in London, Grimsby and Merseyside have been setting up their own companies, to contract the turn-round of ships and share among themselves the profit that used to go to private companies.

At Surrey Docks, London, 115 workers set up Associated Stevedores (London) Ltd. in June, each putting in between £4 and £10. The members of the new organisation include dockers, stevedores, clerks, lightermen, and ship and tug pilots. Mr. Henry F. Whitewood is secretary and managing director of the company, its only paid official, and receives about the same pay as he would for an 8-hour day in the docks. There are 12 elected directors who take financial responsibility for the company and receive 5s a year and no expenses. Mr. Whitewood has stated that the profits up till now have just covered the outlay of £500 on gear and on having it officially tested for safety.

Some Grimsby dockworkers run a similar organisation, Grimsby General Workers Co-operative Stevedores Ltd., of which the secretary is Mr. George Collins. Mr. Collins explained, at a meeting of Merseyside dockers at Picton Hall, Liverpool, on August 26, how the scheme ran. Other speakers also supported the scheme, in which each docker would invest from £1 to £200, but in all cases have only one vote. The members would elect their own management committee, which would appoint staff to run the business. Labour would be drawn on as before, from the Dock Labour Board. At the meeting, the Merseyside Co-operative



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Stevedores Society Ltd was formed, and it was decided to set up district organising committees to enlist members.

In the past, and in other industries, a number of workers' co-operatives (that is producer as distinct from consumer co-operatives) have failed, often because of boycott by the private companies by whom the goods produced would be handled or consumed, as in the case of a Tyneside workers' co-operative which made marine engines. But in the case of the docks, at the present time the supply of labour is limited and shipping companies cannot be in such a strong position to boycott as if dock labour were casual and unrestricted.

Already, however, the London co-operative has come up against trouble with the Board of Trade: the co-operative had asked to be given some large timber ships to unload, but the Board answered that the dockers were "inexperienced". Said Mr. Whitewood: "Four foremen in charge of the last two ships we dealt with have worked 115 years between them on the docks. And they call that inexperience! But we need a share in bigger ships. One big ship equals in profit four or five of the small ships we have been handling. Eleven firms in the Surrey Docks get the big ships in turn. We want to go on the list and take our turn."

The subject of forming workers' co-operatives where possible in the existing commercialist world could be much debated and discussed, but beforehand we must bear in mind that the issue is more fundamental than that of the consumer co-operatives, such as the well-known "Co-ops", because in those the employer-employee relationship is the same as in a private or nationalised concern, and profit is not transferred to their workers. For the moment we must see how producer co-operation works in practice, and note firstly if it raises the economic standard of its workers, and also whether it has any effect on the standard of living of the working class generally.

Producer co-operation affects both the economics and the administration of the workplace, and is therefore at least of some interest to all workers, and to syndicalist workers in particular, whatever opinion of it they finally form.

- P.G.

Footnote: The ABKS Co-operative Stoneworks, founded in 1926 by Syndicalist workers in Sweden, recently held its annual meeting. It now has 764 members in nine branches, and a yearly output of about 18,000 tons.

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PRINTING FUND (List No.1): LONDON - F.R. 10/-, J.S. 10/-, M.W. 10/-, S.G. 10/-, K.H. 10/-, M.H. 5/-. "Freie Arbeiter Stimme" Group £1: MANCHESTER - A.C. 2/3, R.B. 10/-; NORTHWICH - J.F. 10/-; CARDIFF - S.F. 10/-; GLASGOW - F.D. 5/-; SHEFFIELD - M.S. 7/-; ARGYLL - H.D. 5/-. . . . . TOTAL - £6.4.3.

Support this fund to establish a real workers' press! -Our target is £100.



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## COAL BOARD HAS ANOTHER GO

THE NATIONAL COAL BOARD has taken out summonses against 400 miners for alleged breach of contract - the usual term they use when miners go on strike. The summonses will be heard at Durham on October 6, and are against 90 miners from Bowburn Colliery for a stoppage on August 16, and about 300 from Thrislington.

There is nothing new in the coal employers going to the law to stop mineworkers protecting and advancing their standard of living and their working conditions. It is, in fact, largely a relic of the days when all mineworkers were indentured to work for their employers and a state of near-serfdom existed in British pits long after workers in other industries had gained comparative freedom of movement.

More recently, under nationalisation, it has been the policy of the Coal Board to sue miners who struck work for breaking the contract between the N.U.M. and the Board itself.

Thus, many miners who took part in the Grimethorpe strike in 1947, and thereby quickly defeated the attempt to increase the stint, were heavily fined.

After the recent strike in the Lancashire coalfield, Jim Horrocks, one of the miners involved, was jailed for his part in it - and several thousand of his workmates struck work again. In a few days he was released. Here is an example to be followed.

The DAILY EXPRESS, reporting the impending summonses at Durham, said: "Saturday (October 6) has been fixed for the hearing so that production will not be too heavily affected" (!)

Perhaps if the Durham miners make sure immediately that there is NO production to be "too heavily affected", the summonses may never be heard.

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## TEA BREAK

DIRECT ACTION A friend has sent me a cutting from an American paper, which tells the story of the early days of railways. The miners who lived in Black Lake, a village in the asbestos mining district in Canada, were dissatisfied with their railway station. As repeated protests to the company had been ignored, they tried arson - but the wooden building failed to burn. So one night, when a goods train stopped at Black Lake, they put a rope round the building and hitched it to the last waggon. When the train moved off, the station went too. That's how Black Lake got a new railway station.

PRICE CONTROL Overheard in a chemist's shop: "How much is a sixpenny bottle of aspirins?"

PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYER An Oldham mill worker says that his boss is known as a progressive employer, and gives the following example to show what is meant by the term. On a certain textile machine, there was a lot of trouble owing to the thread breaking as it



went through a gadget which gave it the required tension. The operative's wage fell, and naturally she complained. Many remedies were tried unsuccessfully, as the trouble was due to inferior quality yarn - but to this the manager would not agree. He sat in his office and said: "Try it for a few more days, and we'll see how it goes on." In the course of these few days, the faulty yarn gave out and was replaced by some of the normal quality. Still in his office, he enquired if the girl was satisfied yet. "Oh yes," he was told, "she's all right now." "There you are," he replied, "psychological effect of changing the yarn." Progressive . . . if you see what we mean!

## TACTICAL FREEDOM OF THE I.W.M.A. SECTIONS

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS of the I.W.M.A., meeting at Toulouse during the first days of May, 1951, decided to annul from the Declaration of Principles the paragraph which stated: "Faithful to its federalist traditions, the I.W.M.A. grants its sections a broad autonomy in the struggle for its aims. The means may change, but the aims must remain always the same."

It has been said that the suppression of this paragraph removes from the sections of the international their right to fix tactics in accordance with their own interests. This, however, is not true. The resolution of the Toulouse Congress does not hinder tactical movements within the sections. The Congress well understood that special circumstances in different countries call for particular tactics, and that it is necessary to adapt methods to these circumstances - when this is not in opposition to principles.

The paragraph in question originated at the 1933 Congress of the I.W.M.A. It was a question then of finding a basis of agreement with the C.N.T. of Spain which, during the Civil War of 1936-39, had relations with political parties, and which even sent militants, as Ministers, into the Spanish Republican Government. The paragraph was adopted at the request of the C.N.T.

Governmental participation by the Spanish section of the I.W.M.A. was the cause of profound discussion inside the international syndicalist movement. In this controversy was heard the voice of the C.N.T. of Spain, and that of other militants. Here, as an example, are one or two texts.

Our comrade ALBERT DE JONG, of Holland, said in an article published in 1939: "It seems necessary to make clear that the governmental tactics of the CNT-FAI have failed completely. These tactics have not solely been in opposition to our principles; they also allow us to state that the Spanish comrades have not arrived at the aim for which they made these concessions. The concessions have been useless. The events in Spain have clearly confirmed the validity of the I.W.M.A. principles against such concessions to circumstances. These events and the consequences that followed them are not conclusive examples - far from it - of the effectiveness of tactical deviations from revolutionary syndicalism and the abandonment - even circumstantial - of



anti-parliamentarian methods.

Comrade ALBERT JENSEN, of Sweden, was of the same opinion. He wrote in the review, "Syndikalismen": "By participating in the works of the government, the State and its government have been given moral justification which should never be granted to them. The representatives of the C.N.T. inside the government, faced by the people, guaranteed not only the government itself, but also the institution that it represented - that is to say, the conservative activity of the capitalist system and the exploitation of man by man which it has exercised for decades. . . I affirm, without fear of being mistaken, that the C.N.T., through its participation in the government, and its subordination to the State machine, took the road of the counter-revolution."

The paragraph adopted by the I.W.M.A. Congress in 1938 attempted to justify the participation of the C.N.T. in politics. It is clear, therefore, that it is solely from this viewpoint that the resolution taken at Toulouse should be adopted. The rectification was inevitable, since the paragraph of 1938 was a justification for those who wished to continue political collaboration in exile, and in the interior of Spain, and for the participation of the C.N.T. in two Spanish Governments in exile. All the Spanish comrades, of both tendencies have now understood that participation in exile governments was irregular, and because of this it was necessary to sweep from the I.W.M.A. Statutes the 1938 paragraph.

I said at the beginning of this article that the Toulouse Congress, through this resolution, had no intention whatsoever of limiting the freedom of movement of the sections. It wished to make clear that tactical liberty without limitations could not be interpreted as compatible with governmental participation, for that would signify - according to the Congress - a break with the principles of revolutionary syndicalism.

Through the resolution adopted the Congress did not establish any principle of centralism, nor did it intend to force sections blindly to follow international resolutions. It wished to make the precision that unlimited tactical freedom must not be allowed to go to the lengths of the abandonment and complete rejection of principles. And that is all. I wish to draw everyone's attention to another passage in the Declaration of Principles of the I.W.M.A., where the following words occur: "Revolutionary syndicalism is opposed to centralist organisations and institutions, which methodically destroy any manifestation of initiative, of will and of independent thought."

The same declaration states: "Each section shall decide its own problems in harmony and solidarity with other sections of the International."

The I.W.M.A. Congress has, therefore, done nothing more than suppress a paragraph which lent itself to a justification of governmental participation. As far as the autonomy of sections, the right of each one to solve its own problems with unlimited autonomy, is concerned, that is completely unchanged, and guaranteed, by the Declaration of Principles.

- JOHN ANDERSSON, General secretary, I.W.M.A.