

DIRECT ACTION

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LIFE WITH THE TORIES — THE FIGHT IS ON!

AFTER the General Election it took the Tories only eight days to show their hand. As most people foresaw, the "sacrifice" of a few supertaxed thousands by a handful of rich men, who will not thereby lose one cigar a week, was the curtain-raiser to a long, new series of attacks on working class living standards, with the cutting of basic foods as the measure of sacrifice.

That food rations are chosen to be cut first, while petrol for pleasure, wines and spirits and other luxuries are spared, is indicative of the Tory class war theory.

In spite of Tory posing as the party of social reform and winning the election by out-bidding the Labour Party's reforms -- 300,000 houses and increased family allowances -- it's still the same old Tory Party - the party of privilege and hunger.

Does the leopard change his spots?

THE WOLVES ARE HOWLING

While the threat of unemployment may seem at present remote to many, and the Tory employing class may have difficulty in creating their ideal of "a marginal labour force", be sure they will attempt to do so as soon as they can.

Even during the election, spokesmen of the employing class were drumming the need to them of a reservoir of unemployed labour; theoreticians like Crowther of the "Economist" - who said unemployment is necessary to industrial discipline and that an employer must be able to tell a worker that if he doesn't do as he is told, "something unpleasant will happen to him" - were saying their little piece.

Talk to any Tory factory manager, and soon he will reveal how eagerly he looks to the day when, at a snap of his fingers, he can deprive a man of his livelihood and his kids of their dinners.

INFLATION?

On this question, the writer feels a sneaking with the Hollywood comic senator, who said he favoured neither inflation nor deflation - he was in favour of "just plain, ordinary

flation."

But we must record that deflation leads to unemployment more rapidly than any other capitalist dogma, and that Churchill, with his passionate love of the 19th century, is an unrelentant deflationist, though few now recall how, while Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1925, he reintroduced the gold standard and precipitated the mining crises of 1925 and 1926.

Even if - ridiculous thought - the Tories did not want unemployment, their theories would lead them to it.

America, on the other hand, has, especially during the last four years, deliberately organised a vast system of inflation by State interference in economics, on a scale undreamed of by an "Socialist politician."

It is probable that Truman knows nothing of economics - if he did, the U.S.A. would now be in the slough of trade depression. For economists, those blood brothers of the astrologers, have condemned his methods with bell, book and candle.

THE DEPRESSION THAT MISSED THE BUS

Economic experts, including the Moscow sort like Professor Varga, predicted a severe post-war depression in the U.S.A. - and that depression had already in 1947 showed its head.

But Truman, knowing nothing of such high-falutin' theories as that unemployment is caused by "spots on the sun" (see Prof. Jevons, "Primer of Political Economy," Macmillan) went ahead with vast schemes of State expenditure, of which rearmament and Marshall Aid are but two of many.

Buying surplus crops from farmers, river valley schemes like T.V.A., soil reclamation, highways, new forests and new territories add enormous figures to Uncle Sam's astronomical budget.

The truth is that America has, so far, escaped depression of great depths by vast inflation, ever-rising prices and wages, ever-expanding business.

Such a mass-produced, machine-made "boom" is not likely to appeal to the Churchill crowd, who yearn nostalgically for the "good old days".

NORTH. . . AND SOUTH

Londoners sometimes wonder why Welsh, Scots and Northerners hate the Tories with a feeling like that of the children of Israel for Pharaoh. It is the people of the depressed areas who know the Tories.

The industrial revolution swept over the North and over South Wales, missing London and the South - industry was in and about the coal-fields and, when depression came, it was those areas which first felt the icy wind. The people of those areas well know the cruelty, the hatred and fear, the arrogance of the capitalist class.

But now much industry has moved South, and the next depression will hit the Thames Valley as hard as it ever hit the Rhondda or the Clyde.

BY HIS OWN HAND?

Considering these things, it seems foolish for any worker seriously to consider "joint appeals" for

more production. It is bad enough for a man to lose his livelihood, without doing so by his own hand. It's a bit thick to ask a man to be his own executioner.

And, in passing, we would remind our readers that in 1919, while the dole queues were growing, the Government had the hoardings plastered with appeals by trade union leaders to work harder and increase production.

You can't catch a monkey twice with the same trick.

THE FIGHT IS ON THE JOB Now, more than ever, it should be clear to all that the workers' fight must be concentrated on the job site - at the factory, mill, mine and office.

Nor must we be content, as some seem to be, to stave off wage reductions as such. Indeed, direct wage reductions, except for piece workers, are unlikely for some considerable time. The Tory way to reduce wages will be by raising prices and rents and curtailing social services.

Any refusal to go ahead with wage increase claims is equal to an acceptance of a wage reduction.

UNIONS' STATE SHACKLES The miners, and this must feel strange to them, are the least likely to feel the punches of Churchill's Government, for the canny pitmen have built themselves a fortress, a position difficult to take.

But this has been made possible by the drift from the mines of half-a-million people who suffered from the Tory policy of cheap iron and steel, based on slave-produced coal. The miners, beaten in industrial conflict by the forces of coalowners and State, operated a Silent Strike, telling their sons never to go down the pits.

The other unions, however, are not in such a strong position, chiefly because of the thousandfold agreements with which they have shackled themselves.

The agreements for "avoiding disputes", made between unions and employers, and the tie-up of unions and State, grew up before the Labour Government, but during its life the process was speeded.

Now that Attlee's regime has been replaced by a Tory one, the old system of tie-up remains.

Some unions - the E.T.U. and the A.E.U., for example - will show some willingness to fight, but the leadership of most of the others will be only too eager to let things drift.

The T.U.C. has gone to the trouble of saying, twice in one week, that it is eager to work with Churchill's Government. A spokesman of the powerful M. and G.W.U. said the same only two days after the Tory premier was appointed.

In these circumstances, the "unofficial" movements, such as those of the dockers, and the spontaneous outbursts of "unofficial" strikes, become trebly important.

It is to these, much more than to the official union machine, that we must look for our defence against the Tory offensive.

-T.B.

THE CABLE WORKERS' TEN BOB

By a Dagenham Cable Worker

The Joint Industrial Council for the Electric Cable Making Industry has recently awarded wage increases of 10/1d per week for men and 8/3d for women in the industry. This article reviews the events leading up to the award, and indicates some conclusions, with special reference to the struggle at Dagenham. There are about 36 cable works in the country, mostly on Thames and Merseyside, each employing at least a few hundred workers, who are organised in the T. and G.W.U., N.U.G.M.W., A.E.U. and E.T.U. The employers are strongly organised in the Cable Makers' Association (C.M.A.).

EMPLOYERS BEGIN TO CLIMB DOWN

Earlier this year, the Trade Union side of the Joint Industrial Council applied for a general wage increase of £1 per week. Parallel to this, in early September the district union representative for the workers at Southern United Telephone Cables (S.U.T.C.) Dagenham, also applied for a £1 per week local increase for employees of S.U.T.C.

This company had always claimed not to be affiliated to the Cable Makers' Association, although it is known to be owned and controlled by C.M.A. members. At that time, the company refused to consider offering any wage increase at all.

Then, on September 19, meetings of S.U.T.C. workers re-affirmed the £1 a week demand unanimously, and indicated that we were prepared to go all the way in order to get it.

It is interesting to note that at this stage the district representative of the T. and G.W.U. talked airily of "banging the big drum" and the "balloon going up" should the company refuse to change its attitude.

The shop stewards and the district union representatives concerned had a meeting with the management on Friday, September 21, at which the company's representatives gave the first indication that they might start to climb down. They made an offer of an increase of 1½d an hour for maintenance men, and a revision of the bonus system for production workers, to yield an average increase of 5/6d per week.

The maintenance men accepted this offer, but still associated themselves with the general application for the £1 per week. Production workers decided unanimously to reject the offered bonus increase, which was of uncertain value and, in any case, too far short of the £1.

NOT WORTH CONSIDERING

During the week, the management had tried to make a number of workers operate more machinery and accept a small wage increase, but none of the workers gave way.

On Monday, October 8, each shift held a half-hour token strike, in support of the wage demand. Immediately the company invited the shop stewards committee and district union reps to a meeting to be held the next day.

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At this meeting, the only concession the company made was that the bonus increase offered to production workers would be without prejudice to any award made nationally by the J.I.C., and that the details could be presented at a further meeting with the workers' representatives on October 16.

On Wednesday, October 10, each shift again struck work for half-an-hour, this time at a different time of day to keep the management baffled. A meeting of production workers heard the representatives report on the previous day's meeting with the management, and then voted unanimously to reject outright the company's offer of an increase in the production bonus - we knew it was not worth considering.

However, after we had taken a decision on this, our friend the district rep. of the T. & G.W.U. asked to be allowed to consider the offer in detail at the next meeting with the management, and report back before accepting or rejecting it. This proposal was out of order and confused the issue, but the official's persistent attitude misled a number of workers there and a further vote was taken.

This accepted the official's proposal, but not by a large majority; he was bitterly and rightly criticised by many workers for having split the meeting from top to bottom and caused chaos among what had been a solid body of opinion. After this, however, we did at least agree to ban overtime other than Saturday morning work.

HOME FROM THE RIVIERA

On Thursday, October 18, the Union representative reported back to production workers on each shift: the details of the company's offer showed that the yield to each worker would vary between 4/4d and 8/- per week. Needless to say, both shifts rejected it, and at 5 p.m. the evening shift workers came out on strike, despite a last-minute appeal by the General Manager, speaking from the tea bar counter to a hushed audience in the canteen. (Only a week previously the discontent at the works had made him fly home early from the Italian Riviera, poor devil!)

Morning shift workers the next day came to work and went home again without starting. Both shifts attended a mass meeting in the afternoon and first heard the usual appeal to return to work by our old friend, the district representative of the T. & G.W.U., who only a month earlier had talked so airily of "banging the big drum," etc. Perhaps we banged it too loud for him. . . .

No one of use took much notice of this, and after it was known that the maintenance men would join us on the Monday if we were still out, we decided unanimously to stay on strike, and passed a resolution calling on all cable workers to support us.

It then came to light that shop stewards from a Greenwich cable works were present, having come over to discuss possible joint action to speed up the national wage claim. It was not until they arrived that they found out that Dagenham cable workers were already taking some very direct action over the matter.

Realising that interest and readiness to fight were not confined to Dagenham, we decided to return to work, pending the organisation of a stoppage throughout the industry. We did not return to work, as stated by the "Dagenham Post" because we accepted the company's offer,

nor did we go back because the union official told us to. Work was resumed on the Monday, on the old terms, and in any case the company's offer had been withdrawn from all who took part in the stoppage.

That weekend and the next, delegates from cable works all over the South met to consider common action. After the second of these meetings, however, the Joint Industrial Council announced its award, as stated at the beginning of this article.

The award was more substantial than many workers expected at this stage, and has thus caused a general falling off of interest in securing improvements, though this may only be temporary.

RANK AND FILE CONTACT IS NEEDED

It must not be concluded from this that our struggle has been a failure: on the contrary, the general discontent, which at Dagenham boiled up into strike action, and into a work-to-rule strike at another Thames-side cable works, must have been a major factor which influenced the Joint Industrial Council to make the award it did.

No doubt it was realised that further delay might have resulted in the workers throwing up a permanent unofficial organisation, militant and decentralised, in opposition both to the employers and to union officialdom.

Such an organisation is badly needed by cable workers, to cut across the bureaucracy of existing trades unionism, which splits cable workers, even in the same works, into at least four unions, and makes rank-and-file contact directly between different works very difficult.

The lesson we have learned over the past few months is that we need such a commonsense form of organisation, so that in any future struggles no energy will be wasted, and no opportunities let slip through acting too slowly. Then we can use direct action to its full value.

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VICTORY AT CHANGE WARES

THE LOCK-OUT of workers at the South London engineering firm of Change Wares Ltd., reported in the last issue of "Direct Action," ended, after a long struggle, in victory for the militant workers.

The Secretary of the Lock-Out Committee writes to us:-

"A settlement was reached on October 24 by the management and the union, and a document was signed by Mr. L.W. Dowdall, Managing Director for Change Wares, which went something like this.

"1. That all those still unemployed, 40 being the number, shall be re-employed, 30 to commence work on October 29, the remaining 10 to be re-employed within the following eight weeks from October 29.

"2. That Mr. R. Taylor (the member who was off sick with T.B. when he was sacked) should be re-employed on his recovery, should be again wish to work for this firm.

"3. That after the reinstatement of the 40, should any more

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vacancies occur, then preference should be given to those members who were locked out on May 9, but who have since found other employment, should they again wish to work for this firm.

"Mr. Dowdall has also agreed to join the Masters Federation.

"That is the extent of the victory achieved at Change Wares, and when I add that it was only two months back that Mr. Dowdall gave out to the local Press that he did not care if we picketed the gates for two years, he would not have one of us back, you will realise it is a 100% victory over this once adamant employer."

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WARIS FOR "FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY"

by JOHN ANDERSSON
(General Secretary, IWMA)

FOR many years, propaganda for rearmament has presented the argument that armaments were absolutely necessary to defend our freedom and democracy. Submission to this argument has resulted in people of different countries now being oppressed by military burdens. The same viewpoint is put forward in wartime, though naturally on a much bigger scale. Always we are told it is a question of defending freedom with arms in one's hands.

During the war, freedom was thrust to one side in the so-called democracies. War is in itself a dictatorship of the highest degree; the totalitarian demands of militarism transform people into cogwheels of the war machine.

During the first world war, the ruling class of Germany, supported by the workers' political leaders, claimed that they were fighting Russian tsarism. They said it was necessary to defeat the power of tsarist reaction so that freedom could be safeguarded. In that way, it was impressed on the German people that the war was one for freedom, in which everyone should take part.

But Germany was not alone in making this "war for freedom." France and England were doing the same thing. Their arguments were that it was a war against Prussianism, against the reactionary Germany Empire, which would strangle freedom unless it was stopped. For these reasons, and analogous arguments, the people of France and England were more easily led to the mutual massacre. Because propaganda made of war a noble act, the people of different countries had to suffer its horrible results.

Freedom and democracy were victorious. Russian Tsarism and German Prussianism were defeated. Freedom and democracy could, therefore, triumph.

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But what happened? In Russia there developed a totalitarian power, stronger and more horrible than tsarism. In Italy, fascism seized power. In Germany, Prussianism found its most concentrated expression in nazism. A similar development befell the people of Spain and Portugal. Freedom and democracy were encircled. . . .

"The war for freedom," proclaimed with trumpet blasts, led to a huge fiasco. In the place of freedom and democracy, repression developed to an alarming extent and, in many places, dictatorships appeared. In the democratic countries, the strength of the State grew more and more, freedom was limited and restricted for the people.

The second world war had the same result. Like the first it was fought for freedom and democracy. It was a question of defeating nazism and fascism to save the freedom of the people. The "War for Freedom" was again won. The military forces of the democratic states, in concerted action with those of the Soviet Union, on the ground, on the sea and in the air, decisively defeated nazism and fascism. Once more it was claimed that the armies of freedom had overcome reaction and oppression, that freedom and democracy had been saved.

And what now? Without hesitation we can say that never have the reactionary powers and forces in the different countries been so strong. Not only does fascism continue an untroubled life in countries such as Spain, Portugal and Greece, but the whole of Latin America is in the process of being conquered by it, and in Italy and Germany fascism and nazism are being resurrected and becoming increasingly sure of themselves in the political arena. Lastly, in the Soviet Union and its satellite countries in Europe and Asia, freedom and democracy has long been suppressed. In democratic countries, such as the United States and France, reaction and the crusading spirit are growing every day.

To-day the democratic states are arming themselves for a new "War for Freedom." This time it is to be fought against the Soviet Union. And for the bitter struggle that awaits them, the democratic states are allying themselves with the existing fascist states. The efforts of America to bring fascist Spain into a new "War for Freedom" are typical of the present international situation.

It seems, therefore, that people have always deceived themselves in believing that war and militarism were means of defending freedom. War and militarism do not solve the problems of freedom. War and militarism, on the contrary, lead quickly to reaction and the deprivation of freedom.

The struggle against war and militarism must be taken up again. The spirit of internationalism must again be reborn and developed. Men must be made to understand that the problems of freedom are not solved by national war policies and power blocs, but only through the struggle of the people themselves and their own direct action. It is particularly necessary that the workers and their organisations, on the national and international fields, organise together the strength which can guarantee, in peace and freedom, the end of wars and militarism.

S.W.F. NATIONAL CONGRESS

THE SECOND National Congress of the Syndicalist Workers Federation was held in Moss Side, Manchester, on Sunday, September 30, when delegates were present from London, Manchester, Liverpool, Nelson, Huddersfield, Ashton-under-Lyne, and Dukinfield. The C.N.T. of Spain in Gt. Britain was represented by a fraternal delegate.

Greetings to the Congress were received from the I.W.M.A. General Secretariat (Stockholm), the C.N.T. of Spain in G.B. and the S.A.C. (Sweden).

The National Committee report, which summarised the work of the organisation since the inaugural 1950 Congress raised several points of discussion, but the report was adopted unanimously. Group reports were presented by Liverpool, Nelson, Dukinfield and London.

The Aims and Principles and Organisational Basis - both of which are available on request - were ratified without amendment. One proposal, presented by the Huddersfield delegate, that the sentence: "The international outlawing of all administrators of exploitation or war as criminals against humanity" should be added to the Aims and Principles was referred back to groups for discussion.

Among other decisions on industrial policy, was a resolution that all members should intensify activity within their own industries and appropriate trade unions.

After a discussion of general activity, and experience in anti-militarist work and opposition to anti-labour legislation, the Congress recommended: "That groups and comrades should co-operate with other organisations on specific issues which are in accord with the advancement of revolutionary syndicalism, for example anti-militarism."

It was agreed that, for the future work of the Federation, it was essential that "Direct Action" should again appear in printed form. To this end the Congress resolved that a special effort should be made by all comrades to raise the money needed to buy a printing press.

Dealing with international relations, it was decided that the S.W.F. should affiliate to the West European sub-secretariat of the IWMA.

After electing a National Committee for 1951-52, the Congress closed by passing a resolution of greeting to comrades abroad engaged in the revolutionary struggle.

Our Congress was not one of big speeches by political mis-leaders, but of constructive discussion between comrades. One of the main factors preventing a more ambitious programme of activity is the very small membership of the S.W.F. - what about it, comrade reader?

WE'RE TELLING YOU . . .

Criticism is sometimes levelled at us, on the ground that too much of the space in DIRECT ACTION is devoted to news of what is happening on the working-class front in and around London, to the exclusion of other parts of the country.

Fair enough. . . we accept the rebuke and admit it is justified. But we have no corps of reporters to send around bringing us in the news and our only means of getting material for the paper is by relying on comrades to give us our facts.

In other words, we are throwing the criticism back. YOU want news of what's happening on the industrial front in your own district to appear in DIRECT ACTION? All right, YOU let us have it.

The same goes for short, general articles. Believe us, we've no particular desire to do all the work ourselves. What about giving us a hand-out.

. . . and talking of hand-outs, another thing we're short of these days - as always - is cash. Even to produce DIRECT ACTION in its present form costs a sizeable sum in these enlightened times. There a quite a few readers who seem to have turned a blind eye to the subscription renewal notices we send them. Maybe they object because the forms are printed on blue paper. It would be a big help, however, if they stumped up. . . and sent us something for the Press Fund at the same time.

We know you're not impressed with the present format of DIRECT ACTION. Nor are we. That's why we've launched a fund to buy a printing press. But we're only just over one-tenth of the way to our £100 target so far. If you want to see a printed revolutionary syndicalist paper, why not send a donation along.

If it's for current expenses, mark it "Press Fund"; if it's to get the printing press turning, mark it "Printing Fund."

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