

There does seem to be a disconcerting suggestion that many workers, being influenced by wartime regulations involving conscription, control, coercion and general compulsion, have retained an idea that these methods are efficacious. They may have been effective in the suppression of any opposition by the people to a war of death, destruction and desolation, but the same methods can only prove disastrous to the saner efforts to promote a people's peace that might lead to real freedom and social harmony. Workers have been known to express a qualified approval of the methods of fascism, saying that at least it got things done. In this we are reminded of the urgent need to convince people that the methods of force advocated by fascists and, to the same degree, the methods of control and compulsion advocated by the new types of democrats in the various political parties, are wasteful of human effort, are productive only of human strife in the long run, are a denial of the fundamental right of individual development. Trade unionists of today should remember that the early founders of working class organisations (before bureaucrats took control) fought for the freedom to combine, and, remembering this, be careful that they are not led to fight to prevent freedom to combine.

But we believe with Kropotkin, despite all the pettifogging distractions caused mainly by the workers' mistaken loyalty to political bosses, union bureaucrats, etc., that trade unionists along with other people are capable of manifesting the principle of mutual aid, and are motivated by the desire for a measure of social security. We are at one with all workers who want to use working class organisations for wages, life and leisure, and therefore have our contribution to make.

In some cases the local strikes to secure a closed shop have been a form of protest against working conditions. The workers in a majority have expressed resentment against other workers who have too readily assisted the bosses to maintain unsatisfactory conditions. The union bureaucrats have in most cases prevented a proper appreciation of the circumstances, preferring to exploit them for their own purpose of 100% docile dues-paying members. There is also one outstanding instance where a big union is using the closed shop movement for the sole purpose of smashing a rival organisation and making it impossible for another similar organisation ever to arise.

The proceedings at the TUC, however, have been very illuminating in showing that the union bureaucrats have foreseen

the probably embarrassing difficulties that could arise if the idea gained that the closed shop was a prelude to a smashing attack against capitalism. Already we have had the news that the Prime Minister has met the union officials to warn them of the difficulties of the government and to impress them with the need to avoid industrial disputes, wage increases, etc. Mr Dukes warned in advance all those workers who have the idea that the present circumstances are favourable to union activity when he referred to "reckless and irresponsible elements which work much mischief today". Another significant statement by the same gentleman was that "in the new situation resulting from socialising (*sic*) legislation and the closer association of unions with management, the unions will have to reconsider their attitude towards many restrictive methods and practices". Incidentally, it has always been argued that trade unionism did not approve of 'restrictive practices', but here we have an official publicly placing on record a statement that union policy is sometimes guilty of 'restrictive practices'.

Following Attlee's directive to the unions, we have the announcement of more working committees for industry. All indications are that the period of disillusionment for the workers has commenced. The 'socialising legislation' which is not socialising legislation, but nothing more than new attempts to rationalise capitalist industry without any fundamental change of ownership, will require sacrifices from the workers. As before, the workers will be told that 'their' government must not be embarrassed. Any and every attempt to urge the claims of the productive workers to a better life will be stigmatised as placing obstructions in the path of the 'workers government'.

Many workers, however, observe how the union bureaucrats are being absorbed into the new national and regional boards controlling industry at high salaries, and are realising that the unions have no independence, but are part of the state apparatus which oppresses all of us. The cleavage between the workers and the dictatorial officials of the unions widens. Mr Morrison is reported as saying that "this government is not out to destroy the profit motive"; the ordinary worker on the other hand believes strongly that the profit motive must be destroyed if any advance is to be made. Stafford Cripps made a revealing statement that in his opinion the workers were not qualified to control industry; the workers know, however, that they could control industry and could manage to do so without the hordes of officials whose job it is to guard the profits of the owners.



To the workers whose energies will be frittered away in promoting a form of totalitarian organisation that will later rebound to their own loss of freedom, should the closed shop movement continue, we urge the need for a new appraisal of effective industrial organisation. We are faced by an alignment of government, industry and union bureaucrats. There is today no basic change in the circumstances facing the worker and preventing his attaining a larger share of the good things of life. Industrial organisation having for its object better wages, improved conditions, etc., is still a vital requirement, but the workers must realise that it is a mistake to continue the fetish of leadership and imagine that the union officials who are merged with industry can represent their interests.

Syndicalist industrial unionism exists to foster and develop unity of the workers in industry; this is the only alternative to the present disunity and dissipation of energy resulting from a multiplicity of unions. Within syndicalist industrial unionism the workers will improve immeasurably their capacity to control industry themselves, for the aim of syndicalism is workers' control of industry and the establishment of a form of social society in which the 'profit motive' is destroyed, and the labours of the toilers result in social advancement and not political advancement of individuals. Instead of a closed shop to prevent workers earning a livelihood, we would close the shop against all those who would rob the worker of the results of his toil, be they politicians, parasites or puppet governments.

30th November 1946

C. W. ROOKE



## Nationalisation Begins

On the 1st January, the nationalisation of the mines took place officially, and the nominal ownership passed out of the hands of the capitalist mineowners, and into the hands of the Coal Board, which is supposed to administer the industry in the interests of the people. We use the word *nominal* deliberately, because the changeover in fact makes little actual difference to the administration of the industry. The shareholders will still draw dividends, from fixed-interest stocks instead of from shares whose return fluctuates with the variations in trade. The active owners and former managers remain, and, indeed, Shinwell has remarked that they are indispensable, while Lord Hyndley, Chairman of the Coal Board, has remarked, "At most pits, managers and agents will not be changed". In other words, the same people will draw the cash from mining, the same bosses will rule, but as managers instead of owners.

The only change that is really taking place is the substitution of the Coal Board and the various regional boards for the old individual groups of capitalist directors. But this will make little real difference; the coal industry, like most modern industries, has tended more and more to be ruled by the managers, and shareholders and directors who were not also active managers have tended to recede into the background as mere sleeping partners. The condition is not likely to be changed, for it is hardly to be expected that the managers will allow any real power to rest in the hands of the strange collections of discredited politicians, retired generals, financiers, trade union bosses who have crept into the peerage, and other odd fauna of the political and financial jungle, who compose the nominal rulers of the industry. Clearly, these men are merely highly paid figureheads who know next to nothing about mining, and are likely to be directed in all important decisions by the managers and bureaucrats of their offices, who know at least slightly more than they do.

But what of the men who have a real and first-hand knowledge of mining, the colliers themselves? All their dreams of workers' control have been dashed to the ground in this nationalisation scheme, where they do not have any even nominal say in the questions of production. A few trade union bosses play some part in the activities of the coal boards, but the actual men at the face have no say. For them it is merely changing an old boss for a new



one. The coal-owners were among the most ruthless of capitalist employers, and the miners may think that the state cannot be other than an improvement. However, when they find themselves driven in the same way by the same officials, and treated as mere employees in just the same manner as under capitalism, they will begin to see there is a wide difference between nationalisation and real workers' control.

The union leaders are already beginning to show their own attitude towards the workers under the new arrangement. They are using nationalisation as a further excuse to impose their own discipline over the workers. Edwin Hall, general secretary of the Lancashire area of the National Union of Mineworkers, made a speech at the vesting ceremony in his area in which he violently attacked strikes and absenteeism, describing them as 'cankers', and declaring "we are past the days of settling disputes by withdrawing our labour". He further expressed the typically totalitarian approach of the modern trade union official by saying that "the industry matters more than any individual or group of individuals".

Already, moreover, the union leaders are pressing hard for a closed shop in the mines, which will help to prevent the rise of a really militant body among the mine workers. And there has been talk of a bargain for the unions to abjure strikes in return for an improvement in negotiating machinery. This has since been denied very violently by Arthur Horner, but — "methinks thou dost protest too much!"

Generally speaking, the miners seem to regard the changeover with almost complete apathy. Otherwise, how can one explain the fact that the two days following the Christmas holidays saw record absenteeism, reaching as high as 50 to 60 per cent in some pits? It is clear that the enthusiasm for nationalisation which was whipped up among the miners during the war has very much died down now that they realise how little change this will mean in their actual material position. Already they are beginning to see, in the lack of any real workers' representation or control, a sign that they have been led up the garden by their own leaders. This feeling of 'being had' must have been increased for many miners by the evident self-satisfaction with which some of the owners handed over to the state. Typical of this attitude was an address to the miners by Sir Francis Joseph, chairman of a large group of Staffordshire collieries, who sent a message to the miners saying:

"On New Year's day the collieries become the property of the nation. All employed at the pits will then become the servants of the State. Will the change help the country? The answer is 'Yes', but it can only do so with your help . . . I ask you to serve the State to the utmost of your power."

This is hardly the speech of a man suffering from ruin as the result of expropriation. He sounds as though he has plenty to be pleased about. And what pleases a man like this is not likely to please the workers.

Undoubtedly, nationalisation will be a bitter experience for the miners. They will find themselves indeed 'servants of the State', and very far from being their own masters. But we can hope the old militancy of the colliers will live on, and bring them back to the revolutionary ideas of workers' control which had a great influence on miners at the beginning of the present century.

18th January 1947

## Cripps Attacks Workers' Control

Stafford Cripps has offended even his own followers by his strictures on the capacity of the workers to manage their own industries. We have already noted in *Freedom* his speech of 27th October in Bristol, where he stated in his opinion the majority of the workers were not fitted to take over the control of industry. This speech aroused a lot of protest on the part of the Bristol Trades Council, who asked Cripps to clarify his position. The letter he wrote in reply was received with indignation by the Trades Council, but it at least represented quite honestly what must be the attitude of the leaders of the Labour Party.

His first point was that "The Labour Party's policy is not syndicalist — it does not believe in workers' control as such". This is true enough — and we never thought otherwise.

He then goes on to elaborate his theme that the workers are not fitted for management, that management demands long experience, and an apprenticeship, and that the workers are just not educated in the right way to be managers. This again is quite true