

means government, if by State one means 'the sum total of the political legislative, judiciary, military and financial institutions' which are controlled and manipulated by others in our name. After all, from 1945-1950 some industries and services were nationalised and in 1985-1990 they are being privatised by government. When one government follows another the infrastructure of authority remains unaffected: the same prisons, the same police chiefs and military, the same bureaucracy, the same judiciary and laws. All you have exchanged is one bunch of ambitious politicians (I was going to say crooks but refrained from tarnishing all with the same brush) for another. And one of the salutary lessons this little volume can provide is that Labour politicians in office are no better than the others.

As I said in my opening paragraph, the relevance today of these articles of forty years ago is unbelievable. For instance, in 1949 there was a London dockers' strike involving 10,000 men (page 53). The Labour government for the second time in just over a year invoked the Emergency Powers Act of 1920 to break the strike and called in the Army. That Act had not been used since the General Strike of 1926.

Again in 1949, *Freedom* was reporting that:

"... with very few exceptions, every strike which the workers have undertaken since the advent of the Labour government has been unofficial. They have been condemned alike by government and [nationalised] boards, the capitalist press and their own supposed leaders. The men have learned — the hard way — the unity of those in authority.

So neither nationalisation nor privatisation — so what is the anarchist alternative? I think it will become clear in the course of reading these articles. But more important than theories about workers' control, no struggle against the employer can succeed where the workers are divided among themselves. *Solidarity* invariably decides between victory and defeat. More than ever today in the 'affluent' countries of the world this fundamental lesson needs to be learned all over again. It is an irony of our times that the lesson is being learned more quickly in the so-called totalitarian countries without the advantage of our 'free press' and 'independent' trade unions. We could well ponder a slogan that has come from Poland: "There can be no freedom without solidarity".

19th July 1989

VR

Footnotes

1. *Anarchy* by E. Malatesta (Freedom Press, 1984) pages 13-14.

The Nationalisation Farce

Capitalists are not afraid!

The Censure Debate marked the return in full to the old-style Party system, by which instead of being ruled by a united front of the bosses, the people are governed by one set of rulers while the party out of power throws as much garbage as possible for the entertainment of the audience of electors — just to give them their money's worth — and a ridiculous comedy of disagreement is played out, where in fact there is no fundamental disagreement and a very cordial agreement on one important point — to keep the workers as long as possible from having any real say in their own affairs. The Censure debate was the first gala performance of this egregious farce, and, indeed, much of the repartee was so childish and pointless that it might have been designed for a fifth-rate music hall. Listening to the radio report of the debate, one had the feeling that Groucho Marx would have made circles round any of these pontifical fools, whether for sanity or for wit.

The Conservatives, with consummate hypocrisy, blamed the Labour Government for infringements of civil liberties which they themselves originally initiated, and brought accusations of inefficiency in departments where their own representatives had displayed no better achievement. Undoubtedly many of the accusations of the Tories were correct. The only thing wrong with them was that they were brought by the Conservatives and thus must appear to many workers, who have not yet seen through the pretensions of the Labour party, to be merely devices aimed at making political capital.

Owners not displeased

But the fact that the Tories make a great show of attacking the Labour Party should not lead the workers to the opposite extreme of considering that, because it is attacked by the Tories, the Labour Government is really endeavouring to further the interests of the working class. The real opinions of capitalists can be seen more from Stock Exchange conditions and statements of industrialists than from the Tory Front Bench, and if we pay careful attention to such indices we shall see that the owning class is not at all displeased with the record and tendencies of the Labour Party.

Levels of all stocks and shares remain constant. With the talk of a return to the Gold Standard, there has been an amazing boom in gold mining shares, from which many people have made large sums of money free of income tax. The heads of the banking trade have made very little protest at the nationalisation of the Bank of England, and the following passage from *The Economist* shows the attitude of industrialists towards the question of nationalisation:

"Sir Clive Baillieu, President of the Federation of British Industries, has made an important speech in Manchester about the attitude of industrialists towards the Government's nationalisation programme. That it was so moderate and co-operative a speech would have seemed far more surprising if the country had not had four months in which to grow accustomed to the cooing of the opposition around the offspring of Government pigeon holes . . .

Sir Clive stated that industry must operate within the framework of Government policies, and that whatever political views it might hold, industry would not be obstructive nor adopt go-slow tactics; that the control of industry was no longer — solely and exclusively — a matter for the proprietors.

'We believe Britain's future can only be assured if we reproduce in the days ahead the close and intimate understanding which linked Government and industry together in the war'."

Steel magnates undeterred

A concrete example of how little terror the prospect of nationalisation holds for industrialists is given by the announcement of Dorman Long, one of the largest steel combines in England, that, in spite of the probability of the nationalisation of the steel industry, they intend to embark on the building of a mill for universal beams, to cost £8,000,000. *News Review* reports one of Dorman Long's officials as saying: "We are not deterred by any considerations of ownership".

Indeed, there seems very little reason why capitalists and industrialists should be really perturbed by the prospect of nationalisation. The example of the Bank of England shows that sufficient bonds will be issued to ensure that they experience no financial loss, while there seems every likelihood that those of the present owners who actively control their own undertakings will remain as managers when nationalisation has taken place. In fact, it is already evident that nationalisation, by paying off the inactive shareholders and installing the really active industrialists in dictatorial managerial positions, is really consolidating the old individual capitalist class into a new and more efficient class of

managers to run the monopoly enterprises of totalitarian state capitalism.

A new protector for capitalists

Thus it seems evident that, in spite of the clowning to the gallery by Tory MPs, the capitalists are gaining a new protector in the Labour Government, a protector that will save their money and guarantee their jobs and power in its totalitarian regime. But what of the workers? How far is the Labour Government considering their interests? What do they stand to gain by nationalisation? The answers to these questions are not encouraging.

There is a tendency among individuals of the more intelligent left wing to admit that the Labour Government is not showing up too well, but to contend that, after all, we have a 'working class' party in power at last, and, that we should not embarrass them with criticisms at a time when they are being subjected to attack from the right.

Our answer to these contentions is, firstly, that the Labour Government is, in fact, a middle class set-up of lawyers, officials and trade union officials, and not a working class government at all, and, secondly, that our criticisms are entirely from the point of view of the workers and cannot be held back merely because the Conservatives are mounting a policy attack on the Labour Government. Our criticisms are fundamental, for we have always maintained that the Labour Party, even because it is a party and has struggled for power, cannot represent the true interests of the workers. Further, we now contend that the record of its months in office has only gone to prove our contentions.

Labour Government's black record

It is not merely that the Labour Government's nationalisation policy represents the salvation rather than the death of capitalism. A whole additional list of accusations against the Labour Government must be recorded. It has continued the attack on working class freedoms which was maintained during the war. Conscription, both military and industrial, is continued, and millions of men are kicking their heels in the demoralising futility of military life owing to the slowness of demobilisation. The prisons and detention camps are filled with thousands of men and women, held under inhuman conditions, who would never have been there but for the war, and to whom the Labour Government refuses to grant an amnesty. The police are beginning once again

to behave with insolent interference towards working class militants, and the Labour Home Secretary does not interfere. Aneurin Bevan, who when out of office stood up for freedom as a sponsor of the Freedom Press Defence Committee, now announces that identity cards are to remain for the present, thus perpetuating the main feature of wartime docketing and regimentation of the workers. While the militant dockers, gas workers and building workers are striving for something better than starvation pay, the Labour Government not only refuses to act on their behalf, but sabotages their efforts by using soldiers as strike breakers. In Germany millions of workers are starving to death, and the Labour cabinet refuses to take any adequate measures to save them from a deadly winter. In Indonesia and Indo-China the Asiatic peasants and workers are struggling for freedom, and the Labour Government sends British workers in uniform to shoot them down.

The list could be extended *ad nauseum*, but it would do no more than prove what has become evident to us already. The Labour politicians are as much enemies of the workers as any other group of the ruling class, but they are even more dangerous than the rest because they maintain the pretence of being 'working class' in constitution and aims.

It is time that the workers learnt once and for all that they will never serve their interests by helping politicians to Westminster, but only by direct action in the expropriation of managers, capitalists and politicians and the establishment of real freedom based on the workers' control of all the means of production. The only way to workers' freedom is the way of anarchy.

15th December 1945

The Mines Nationalisation Bill

The much heralded bill for the nationalisation of the coal mines passed its second reading in Parliament the other day and provided the House with the opportunity to stage a Parliamentary battle. The Press effectively splashed detailed accounts of the political clash that ensued, when, in a display of shadow boxing, the Tory

opposition (?) challenged the Government. Ignoring for the moment the fact that the Tory challenge is completely exposed as a political sham, by the obvious delight of the big coal combines at the news that their industry is in the process of being taken over by the State, it is, I think, necessary to refute the Tory claim to being champions of freedom, the miners, the domestic consumer, and representatives of the nation's true interests in relation to coal.

At the risk of being suspected of belabouring the stinking carcass of the proverbial dead donkey, it should be sufficient to recall that, on the technical side alone, the majority of reports, inquiries and commissions, on various aspects of the coal problem since 1914 have, beyond any shadow of doubt, condemned the Tory ideals, of 'free' enterprise, of private ownership and control of the mines.

It did not require the tragicomedy of a General Election to make known the views of the working class in this country, who have long desired the common ownership of all things, including the mines, a desire which has in fact been prevented from realisation by the suppression, frustration and diversion practiced by their Labour and TU 'leaders'.

The only really genuine consideration of, and effective opposition to, the Government's plan for Nationalisation of the pits, must come from within the ranks of the working class movement, whose true interests the Government, like the so-called Opposition, falsely claims to represent. This authentic criticism of the powers that be finds its expression in its clearest form in the viewpoint of Anarcho-syndicalism, which alone can establish a workers' case against state control. It is not surprising to find hostility among the miners, who are traditionally militant workers and independent thinkers, to the Nationalisation Bill. It is, therefore, as a miner attempting to interpret the confused and officially misled feelings of those who are, relatively speaking, most directly affected by the nationalisation of the coal industry, namely the miners, that I wish to examine the proposals of the government.

After many years of agitation by the miners for the rejection of private ownership and control, represented by the syndicalist miners' movement of 1911-12 (See *The Miners Next Step*) and the demand, *The Mines for the Miners*, the militant mine workers have now been led to believe by their politically aspiring Union bosses that through nationalisation there would come the realisation of the miners' age-old demand for Workers' control. Many miners

are now beginning to see and point out that nothing could be further from the truth. In a prelude to the second reading of the Bill, the Minister of Fuel and Power, Shinwell, openly admitted in a speech given to a meeting of colliery and union representatives in Glasgow, on the 17th January, that "Nationalisation is not primarily to benefit the miner". This statement alone should serve as the miners' yardstick whereby they may measure the sincerity of the Labour leaders' promises for great benefits under nationalisation. What other section of the community is entitled to prior consideration in any scheme for the complete reorganisation of the mining industry, if not the miners who have given, are giving and will give their very lives in hundreds yearly, during the course of their productive efforts? No, despite all the official soft soaping, it is apparent that the industrially martyred miner will continue to be sacrificed — in the past at the behest of colliery owners — now by State decree.

Turning to the Government's proposals, we learn that a National Coal Board is to be set up, that this Board will be made up solely of technicians, coal experts and specialists and will be empowered to deal with the whole of the industry. A tribunal will also be brought into being to decide upon 'fair compensation for the colliery owners'.

It is interesting to note the admission by the Labour spokesmen that the scheme for nationalisation is based on the Reid Report. Officially known as the Coal Mining Report of the Technical Advisory Committee, this report may be described in a few sentences. First reviewing and condemning the past chaos in the mining industry, the committee recommended drastic changes in control and administration, and advocated the further mechanisation of the industry, the complete replanning of underground haulage, etc., and where possible the electrification of pits. The Government has apparently adopted the report, which was originally intended as a recommendation to be applied under capitalism, to meet the needs and requirements of State Capitalism.

To the working miner this report is, because of its effort in trying to shift some of the blame for the state of the coal industry on to the miners and demanding 'proper discipline' in the mines and trade unions, a classic example of the sorry condition of the technician cut off from the workers. This unhealthy divorce of technician and worker is created mainly by virtue of the technician's tendency towards managerialism, i.e. the assumption

of executive functions and by this means becoming part and parcel of the controlling power, thus creating within the industry an 'élite' governing body. In this detachment of technician and worker may be found the cause of countless everyday instances of technical schemes and improvements going astray, sometimes with disastrous effects, when put into practice in the pits.

The schemes, then, show faults which would have been obvious at a glance by one who had any practical experience in mining. In the implementation of the Reid Report it may be easily recognised that the Government has not 'primarily' the interests of the miners in mind, when it announces its intention to speed up the large scale modernisation and mechanisation of the mines. The aims of the Government are to be concerned with the raising of the coal production level in order to meet the industrial needs of the country, so that the increased output of the factories may meet the demand for increased exports. All this, no doubt, is necessary, apart from other reasons, for the payment of interest and dividends on Government bonds issued as compensation to ex-shareholders of the nationalised industries.

The mining community to a man is opposed to compensating the colliery owners. Miners argue emphatically that the original capital invested in the industry has been repaid many times over at the expense of miners' lives and limbs. The existing means of production, pit, plant, etc., are the accumulated proceeds of years of exploiting succeeding generations of miners and therefore rightly belong to the workers. Why, they ask, should they have to continue sweating blood, toiling to produce wealth that will primarily keep their late oppressors in parasitical idleness? If the workers are the sole means whereby wealth is created, then all wealth should be retained by the workers. Under nationalisation, the big coal combines are to get Government bonds, which the Government, using all the means at its disposal, will ensure are honoured by keeping the miners and the rest of the workers hard at their toil. What, on the other hand, will the miners receive by way of benefits? Nothing but the time-honoured carrot dangling on the end of an ever-receding stick, promises of a rosier *future*, promises of better conditions *to come*. The Government hasten to cap their promises with the proviso that it all depends on increased production.

When we recall that the largest contributory factor in the decline of coal production is the shortage of miners and the inability of the industry to offset the yearly deficiency in numbers of workers by

attracting sufficient newcomers to make up the loss resulting from deaths, disablement, illness and retirement, we are unable to perceive how new promises are to work the oracle in this respect. A large percentage of the existing miners are in fact so dissatisfied with the present day conditions that, it is officially admitted, if the Essential Works Order were lifted they would immediately seek other employment. It therefore seems most improbable that non-miners will find these same conditions any inducement to becoming miners.

The official dilemma reminds one of a dog chasing its own tail, for the better conditions depend upon increased production which in turn can only be obtained by a rapid intake of new men, who will obviously fail to be attracted by anything other than good conditions, high wages, etc., which brings us back to where we started. Miners know, only too well, that men will enter the pits either owing to attractive conditions etc., or because the alternative to taking up mining is so awful that workers are virtually compelled to become miners.

Through the medium of the recently appointed highly salaried Mines Recruitment Officer, Noel Newsome, the Government calls for 100,000 men, immediately, to arrest the present downward trend in production, a yearly intake of 30,000 young lads, miners of the future, to replace the 50,000 miners leaving the pits, and a reduction of the latter figure by 20,000. Unless the Government possess the power to raise the dead, replace missing limbs, rejuvenate the aged and convince sufferers of silicosis, nystagmus and the many other miners' complaints that their disease is merely a figment of the imagination, we fail to see how the numbers of the last group can be reduced by as much as two fifths. It is to be suspected that the Government intends to come down hard on such 'malingerers' by miners.

The figures quoted above, failing any improvement in the miners' working conditions, can, however, be met in the event of the existence of widespread unemployment or alternatively the re-introduction of industrial conscription. In view of the Government's partiality for compulsion there is every likelihood of their resorting to the latter method of recruiting men for this, the most arduous and dangerous of all occupations.

To sum up this examination of the Coal Mines Nationalisation Bill, we are convinced that, with such a measure coming into effect, the immediate result will be a rapid rise in the size of the bureaucracy, the industry becoming inundated with place-hunters,

but few miners. There being no direct voice in the management of their industry for the miners, they will, as one man, soon expose the inadequacy of such a scheme and reject the same. Because of its very nature, and by reason of the methods used, the State will be unable to settle satisfactorily the problems of miners' conditions, the man-power position and the production question. State control, ministerial edicts, will not in themselves produce one pound of coal extra, but rather, if our knowledge of recent history is correct, tend to produce chaos and mismanagement. chronic abuses of dictatorial powers that will make those of the past appear small, and resultant misery for the workers.

23rd February 1946

TOM CARLILE

The Nationalisation Queue

There has hardly been a more farcical episode in recent English politics than the behaviour of the London Stock Exchange during the first two months of the Labour Government. But in this tragi-comedy the stockbrokers and their clients have apparently more reason for laughter than the British people. After the 'bombshell' of the fall of the Churchill Government and the access to power of an administration pledged to a socialist programme, quotations went steeply downwards — at first almost indiscriminately; but after a few days of panic the decline concentrated on industries with a high 'nationalisation priority' while other shares recovered more or less the lost ground. Only a few weeks ago, an improvement in railway shares was attributed by so good a judge of Stock Exchange mentality as the London *Economist* to the fond hopes of the buyers "that in the Labour nationalisation programme transport might have the privilege of being eaten last rather than first".

Bank of England stock slumped on the announcement of the impending nationalisation of the Bank. After repeated assurances of the pleasant relations between the Governor of the Bank, Lord Catto, and the socialist Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Hugh