

**THE  
COMMUNIST REVIEW**

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## HELP THE MINERS.

There is no need to tell you that the miners need *financial* help. This appeal for help is no charitable cry. The miners refuse to have their existing starvation level lowered. Their fight is the fight of the whole working class.

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The Communist Party has pledged its wholehearted support to the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.

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16 King St., Covent Garden  
and help to swell the Communist Party's "Help the Miners" effort.

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# THE COMMUNIST REVIEW

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## REMEMBER THE PRISONERS

And don't forget the men and women behind the prison bars who have been jailed for helping the miners and other workers to secure decent living conditions.

Besides the remaining five Communist Leaders of the twelve jailed last November **Inkpin, Gallacher, Hannington, Pollitt and Rust**, another **100 communists** are in jail out of the 1,200 workers imprisoned during the strike.

### Their Dependants

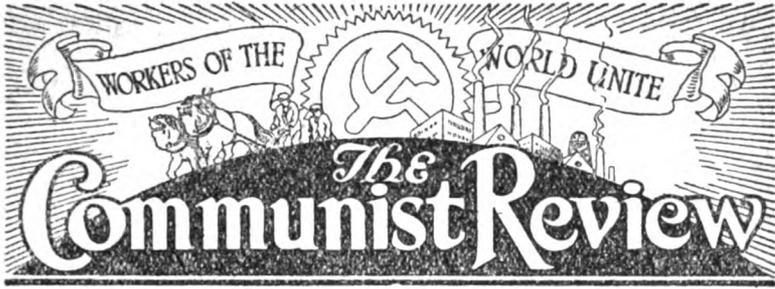
must not be allowed to starve. The International Class War Prisoners Aid society has been doing splendid work in providing legal advice and financial help for all working class fighters no matter what are their politics, religion or occupation.

There will be many cases yet to attend to before E.P.A. is lifted, that is why we **are asking for help now.**

Send all donations to H. Lovell (I.C.W.P.A.) 10 Fetter Lane, London.

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## THE EDITORIAL VIEW

**W**E have to apologise to our readers for the late appearance of this issue of the "Review." In the savage and vindictive attack by the Government on our Party, a raid was made on our printer's establishment and vital parts of the machinery taken away. Only after considerable inconvenience and difficulty was our printer able to secure the return of such parts as enabled him to get on with his ordinary business. On the other hand a number of MSS. intended for this issue fell into the hands of Jix's brigade, compelling us to secure fresh articles from comrades already up to the eyes in work associated with the strike. The MSS. of a particularly interesting article on Trades Councils promised in our last issue met the fate of others.

From those of our readers who were looking forward to a continuation of the important discussion on Trades Councils—rendered doubly important in the light of experiences during the strike—we crave indulgence, feeling sure that all our readers will accord to us the same, having regard to local experiences in connection with the printing of strike bulletins under the eye of E.P.A.

\* \* \* \* \*

The first general strike in the modern working class movement of this country is now a matter of historic fact. Let Right-wing leaders of the trade unions and Labour Party—the labour lieutenants of capitalism—prate as they may, the general strike has been shown to be realisable. Moreover, it was no fainthearted affair on the part of the workers generally. Everywhere, the inevitability of the general strike as the only way to meet the capitalist attack on the miners—the preliminary to an attack upon all other sections of the trade unions—was accepted with an equanimity, en-

thusiasm and confidence that baffled capitalists and Labour leaders alike.

For years, moderate Labour leaders like Clynes, Thomas and company have done their best to discourage any kind of strike policy; politicians of the I.L.P.—MacDonald, Snowden, etc.—and trade union renegades like Frank Hodges and George Barnes, have shed gallons of ink to prove the futility of active struggle against capitalism. But, as is now evident, all to no purpose. Over the heads of all of these the workers have triumphed. They have forced their leaders, who have always been unwilling to toe the line and lead a general strike, incidentally reminding those of the ruling class who seek to disrupt the Labour movement by bribery, that while the talents of pen and tongue of self-seeking traitors may be bought, the soul of the working class movement remains yet undefiled. Elsewhere in this issue some of the important experiences of the strike are discussed, here we propose to underline some of these even at the risk of repetition.

First of all, we make no apology for criticism or castigation of personalities. We know it is customary for our enemies to gloss over their blundering mistakes and, in some cases, clear treachery, by stigmatising the Communist Party whenever it seeks to examine experiences, as disrupters and mud-slingers. But there is no escape this time. During the strike our Party membership and machinery was thrown wholeheartedly into the fight. In many districts our members were to be found side by side with known reactionaries, working day and night in the Councils of Action; in other districts where the lack of preparation or incompetence found the local strike areas in a state of hopeless confusion our members had to bear the brunt of the struggle, while in not a few districts the Communists had to break through the stupid conception of the general strike held by local Labour mandarins, as an extended Bank Holiday. The one thing that does challenge contradiction is any suggestion of disloyalty of the Communist Party to the workers while the active struggle was on.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let the facts speak for themselves. The first day of the strike our Party published a daily paper (10,000 copies) which was only limited in the numbers of its first issue and its discontinuance by the unprecedented action of the printers in standing by the strike.

Thereafter we issued a "Workers' Bulletin" in nearly every centre in the country, sometimes as the official "Bulletin" of the local Councils of Action, and at other times as a purely Party organ. But all of them, without equivocation, supporting the workers in their struggle. Our Party speakers and trade union workers were to be found in all centres actively participating in the fight. As a result almost every Party centre including our

Head Office was raided by the police, typewriters and duplicating machinery being confiscated. Out of the 1,200 arrests made all over the country, 100 of these were members of the C.P., including our General Secretary and Editor. No other Party has such a record.

But these are not the main reasons for a justification of criticism. After all acute struggles it is only cowardice that refuses to face the experiences of the past, with its failures and successes. In this, our first general strike, where the workers revealed a discipline and loyalty to their leaders, and where we have seen an inexplicable surrender or abdication of leadership which, had it occurred on a military battlefield would have meant some heads lost, the workers have a right to ask questions and to place responsibility for failures.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the Congress of Trade Union Executives called for June 25th—not at all a genuine court of trial, as the most important unions in question will pack the court—the leaders will not have the classic excuse generally used when a policy of militant action is urged on them, viz., “they had no mandate.” This time the General Council not only had *carte blanche* to lead the strike, but the confidence and discipline in the ranks was unexampled. The bald fact is that the generals refused to lead.

In what way then can we describe the capitulation of a general staff when an army is standing intact and straining at the leash? It can only be described in one word—betrayal. Again, should a leadership which refuses to accept responsibility when faced with acute problems be simply whitewashed? Clearly, to do that is to invite a repetition of the last debacle. And when we get open declarations like that of Mr. Cramp of “Never again,” of Mr. MacDonald, “no more industrial alliances,” and the ridicule of any kind of strike action generally by the moderate Right-wingers, there is one important thing to do, and that is to sack the generals.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let us not be misunderstood. Our Party first raised the question of a general staff for the Trades Union Congress in 1921, with the slogan of “More power to the General Council.” In criticising the mistakes of the Council we will fight against those who argue to abolish or restrict the powers of the Council. The principle of a General Council is correct. What remains to be done is to strengthen the apparatus by closer organisational contacts with the unions and a more militant leadership.

In this task of re-forming the front preparatory for the next time, there is much hard work to be done. Many workers will be disappointed. There will be disillusionment regarding leaders.

But there are some fundamental things we must do if we are not to be caught napping the next time. First we must have 100 per cent. trade unionism in the factories and shops. Secondly, we must overcome the splendid isolation of the districts by strengthening and broadening the functions of the trades councils.

Thirdly, we must study the experiences arising from the difficulty of communications between centres and localities and prepare our Workers' Defence Corps.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not the least important of our tasks is the organisation of the Left-wing sentiment, the minority sections inside the trade unions, the I.L.P. and the Labour Party. We know, and have repeatedly said in these columns, that amongst Left-wingers there is always hesitancy, vacillation and weakness. We had examples of that in the General Council itself, the majority of whom, by the way, are I.L.P.'ers. There are innumerable examples in the localities and districts. But that only means it is more important than ever to crystallise that sentiment, especially those elements who stubbornly refuse to recognise the correctness of the Communist Party's policy. The one thing clear to all is the united front of MacDonald, Clynes and Thomas with "Jix" and Simon against any serious challenge to capitalism.

Just as the Left-wingers in the trade union movement must face and accept their responsibility and challenge the leadership of the T.U.C., so must MacDonaldism be challenged on its chosen ground of the parliamentary field. Here is concrete work for Wheatley, Maxton and other Left-wingers in the I.L.P., and the Labour Party. Generalities about "new forms of organisation" are worthless. The concrete questions are, are you prepared to challenge MacDonaldism seriously and clean it out of the Labour Party? are you willing to work openly for unity of all the working class organisations, including the Communist Party, upon a militant working class policy of challenge to capitalism? That is the issue before all Left-wingers.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is clear that the capitalists will make the most of their opportunities, and try to force upon all the workers lower standards of living, in the hope of trying to stabilise their power. The workers must compel their leaders to resist **now** and make preparations for the next general attack. If the miners go down, this new offensive will open upon all other workers. The experience of the general strike has shown that volunteers and blacklegs of the O.M.S. type are useless before the power of the workers in industry. Let us prepare **now** for the next time.

# The Decrees of Fate

## THE NEMESIS OF IRRESOLUTE LEADERSHIP.

By DR. ROBERT DUNSTAN.

**T**HE Great Strike has come and gone. To-day we ponder over the stirring incidents of the greatest battle in the history of the British working class. We turn with pride to the men and women who stood firm and solid, risking their all in the heroic fight against the whole weight of the capitalist State. Proletarian poets will write of their valiant spirit, which carried the struggle within an ace of victory for their mining brothers, of how when thrown into confusion by the cowardly surrender of their leaders, they rallied and so stoutly fought a series of rearguard actions that they repelled the counter-attack upon their unions and taught the master class that, though leaderless, their unity and power survived. All honour to the workers who fought heroically throughout.

### A Revolutionary Period.

Long will May, 1926 live in history. It will be written that in this epoch-making month the class struggle was laid bare and that the British workers entered upon the revolutionary period of their long struggle with British capitalism. Roused to mass action by the offensive against the miners, and the threatened general attack upon wages, the workers gave an immediate response to the summons of the General Council. Those called out rushed to man the trenches and those held in reserve were with difficulty restrained from joining their comrades in the front lines. Never before in the records of the British movement had the rank and file displayed such enthusiasm or such solidarity.

Out against this spirited movement of the working class the Government marshalled its forces to crush the revolt. Within a few days the streets teemed with police, special constables and aristocratic polo players, there to enforce "law and order." The Emergency Powers Act was put into operation for the suppression of working class propaganda and for the summary arrest and imprisonment of those leaders bold enough to cry "Advance!"

The O.M.S. was mobilised, tanks prepared, whilst armoured cars with guards mounted and on foot marched to the docks and warships took their stations at the ports. The State as an organised force for the suppression of the workers was exposed in

all its naked ugliness before the masses. The unarmed toilers saw and understood and as the oppressors soon discovered, the lesson was well taught and learnt. The warning of the Communist Party was fulfilled to the letter.

### **The Capitalist System Paralysed.**

In spite of this display of force, the workers stood firm. They held the country in a grip of iron. Strive as the Government did, sweat as the blackleg corps might, the Industrial system was rapidly heading for paralysis. Archbishops prayed for peace, great lawyers prostituted their legal talents, but to no purpose; the workers stood as solid as an age-old rock.

### **The "Dutch Courage" of the T.U.C.**

Whilst the rank and file of the trade unions showed the utmost determination their leaders in the T.U.C., from the very first, took up a timid, negative attitude. They published daily in their official organ that "The workers were solid," but they gave no resolute lead. Every word they wrote had to pass not one but a whole file of censors with eyes glued to E.P.A., and so fearful were they that the news of the arrest of well-known Labour leaders was suppressed lest working class passions should be inflamed. Even on the Tuesday night (11-5-26) when the T.U.C. was preparing for an unconditional surrender the "British Worker" in widespread headline announced "No Slackening," and yet within a few hours the leaders were going, cap in hand, to Mr. Baldwin, genuflecting before that great hypocrite, who with becoming grace thanked his God for the surrender, though he might with truth have returned thanks to the Right Honourable "Jimmie" Thomas and the fainthearts of the General Council.

### **The Strike a Challenge, not a Demonstration.**

Whilst the workers were intent upon victory and the Communist Party gave bold leads, baffling the police in the widespread publication of the "Workers' Bulletin," the official elements of the industrial and political movement were determined that the conflict should remain a *mere demonstration* in favour of the miners and not become a challenge to the Constitution, *i.e.*, to capitalism. In this they showed themselves "lieutenants" for the boss class.

Two tried and trusted Privy Councillors, to wit, James Ramsay MacDonald and J. H. Thomas, Esquire, immediately on the outbreak of hostilities, gave the Government the lead for the undermining of the T.U.C. Both these worthy gentlemen, who held with the hare but ran with the hounds, took pains in the House of Commons to show that the strike was nothing more

than an ordinary industrial dispute, enlarged it is true beyond customary limits, but nevertheless quite constitutional, and in this contention they secured the support of the wildest of men, Mr. Lloyd George.

The Cabinet at once recognised the fallacy of this assertion and rightly surmised (even if the whole affair was not collusive), that here lay the weakness of the workers' leadership, the heel of Achilles whence the rebels' strength might be bled to death. The Government at once declared that the strike was an attack upon the Constitution of a free democratic country, in fact, a revolutionary movement which they, as patriots, were bound to resist and defeat.

### **The Two Authorities.**

The unfortunate General Council failed in not boldly taking the challenge up, saying, "Well, if the miners cannot get justice under *your* Constitution, to hell with it and we'll fight you to the bitter end." Instead of this obvious reply, the leaders plaintively complained that they had no wicked intentions, that they did not seek to substitute an unconstitutional government (*i.e.*, a working class regime), in place of the "democratic" institutions of the country. Yet whilst so pleading circumstances compelled them to send their orders to the unions, issue permits and run their transport service "by permission of the T.U.C."

For the period of the strike undoubtedly there were two authorities existing alongside one another, in antagonism, ordering and counter-ordering, a constitutional authority against a rebel one. There was the Cabinet using the whole force of the State, and the workers' Council directing the industrial power of the unions, feebly it is true, for the maintenance of the strike in order that it might enforce its terms upon the Government. It is clear that this was no mere demonstration but the first real battle in the British workers' struggle for power.

### **"The Workers' Faith."**

The raising of the Constitutional issue in no way disturbed the workers. They saw the masters flying the Union Jack on the few blackleg buses and trains that run, and turned aside to say: "There is the exploiters' flag." They were batoned by special constables, constitutionally enrolled, who shouted "Up the College" when charging unarmed men and women. They looked at the armoured cars and seeing the power of the capitalist State muttered: "It will not always be so, the lads behind the guns are of our flesh and blood, the time will come when they will not shoot their kith and kin."\* Indeed, the evident fact that the workers

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\* See "The Soldier's Conscience," *Id.*, at 16, King Street, W.C.2.

were battling in the class war only whetted their appetites and increased their ardour and determination.

What had they to do with a Constitution which protected their enemies and crushed them down with armed force, ordered the miners to face death in the pits for a starvation wage, huddled the masses into the slums and destroyed their children by dearth and disease? The workers were class conscious, fully persuaded that they were fighting their own battle against their hereditary foe, and, what is more, that they were predestined to carry the fight on to a final victory.

### **A Reed Shaken by the Wind.**

It was sadly otherwise with the General Council. The men's leaders saw quite clearly that to go forward was to challenge constituted authority and worse still, for if they gained their point it meant that they, in the name of the workers, would have to dictate terms to the defeated Cabinet, and that in the dictation of those terms, power would pass to the organised workers. They saw themselves constituted as a Provisional Government, responsible to their rank and file alone for the re-organisation of the industries of the country and that it would be their duty, under a dictatorship of the proletariat, to crush down reaction and to use the power of a Workers' State for that purpose.

There was only one escape from the dilemma, the fates decreed and they could not avoid their doom. In face a set of lions, but with hearts of deer, they did what only could be expected of them. They made an abject surrender, called back their unbeaten army, deserted the miners, and threw their followers to the wolves of capitalism. They secured their place in history, they did their work by showing the masses the need of a strong and courageous leadership. The reed broke and fell.

### **The Fatal Day.**

On that fatal day, the 12th of May, the workers united, strong and determined, the "heroes of unwritten story," hailed the news of the calling off of the strike as a great victory. Had they not been told to stand firm to the last for the miners, and knowing their own strength how could the contest end other than in the surrender of the Government? Slowly the news of the great betrayal leaked out. The disgraceful interview between the leaders and the Prime Minister went broadcast through the land and the men and women who had fought so hard hung their heads with shame that their chieftains should have cringed before the masters' man.

The General Council had not only abandoned the miners to their fate, but had also broken their solemn pledge that there

should be "no general resumption of work until all agreements were fully recognised."\*

On the Thursday, the workers baffled and confused returned to work and found the doors shut and with degrading new conditions for entry posted up. They turned in their anger to fight with dour courage their rearguard actions. Their resolute conduct so took the capitalists by surprise that there was a slump on the Stock Exchange and the mealy-mouthed Prime Minister called off the engagement and declared that he would not countenance any general reduction of wages as a term of re-employment. And so the workers even in the hour of their betrayal won a great victory. But this outstanding achievement was in part undone by the craven weakness of their sectional leaders who proceeded to sign new agreements in which they degraded themselves by declaring that they recognised that the strike was a "wrongful act," and that it should not recur. In this they added insult to the injury done by their great surrender.

### **Never Again.**

"Never again," cried the reactionary account-keeping Mr. Cramp, of the N.U.R. "Never again," comes the answer of the workers, "never again under such leadership, but again and again till the victory be ours."

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\* See Final Paragraph of the T.U. Orders calling the Strike.

# Our First General Strike

By "OBSERVER."

## 1. How the Government Prevented Black Friday.

**T**HE miners' delegate conference assembled on Wednesday, April 28th, and reaffirmed its adherence to the "three points"—no reductions in wages, no increase in hours, no district settlements. On Thursday, April 29th, the Special Conference of Trade Union Executives met and endorsed the General Council's efforts "to secure an honourable settlement," and instructed a continuance of negotiations on condition of a withdrawal of notices. This resolution omitted all reference to the terms of any settlement; but it did not prevent a joint sub-committee of the General Council and the miners (according to the "Daily Herald" of May 1), presenting to the Premier the next day (April 30) a demand practically repeating the miners' resolution. This was adopted over the head of J. H. Thomas, who from the first stood for wage reductions. Both conferences met during the day, but were repeatedly adjourned, to allow of negotiations; the joint sub-committee reply mentioned above was the retort to a proposal made by the mineowners through the Government, providing for a reduction of the standard percentage on basic rate from  $33\frac{1}{3}$  to 20 per cent. and an 8-hours day. In the afternoon, the King signed the Emergency Powers Proclamation, while Bevin and Citrine drafted for the General Council the memorandum laying down lines for the General Strike.

### Looking for Formulas.

In the evening, during negotiations between delegations representing the Cabinet, the General Council and the miners, a very important event took place. The Government were pressing the miners to accept the Coal Commission's Report, as a basis of settlement; the miners were objecting on the ground that it committed them to a reduction in wages; the General Council were doing their utmost to find some formula that, while conceding the Government's point, *i.e.*, making some reduction in wages certain, might seem to meet the miners' point by postponing the reduction for some time.

In the course of these discussions Herbert Smith incautiously offered "to examine the whole Report, page by page, together with the owners, and to abide by the result." One can only surmise that he had made a mental resolution that "the result" would not include wage reductions: the General Council instantly made

the mental reservation that it would, and seized upon this phrase as the long-sought for "formula." The Government, however, was not taken in, and called the General Council's bluff by asking the miners to pledge themselves, under the Coal Commission's Report, to accept reductions as soon as the Government had shown satisfactorily that it intended to "initiate" re-organisation. The General Council protested that this was unfair, that the miners must not be asked to give up a bargain weapon beforehand, etc., but to no purpose, and the negotiations broke down. At the Special Conference, to which the General Council delegates adjourned, both Thomas and Pugh made much of this "insult" to the miners, this "breakdown over a phrase," etc. The object was to commit Herbert Smith for all time to an interpretation of his statement which would imply readiness to discuss even wage reductions, *i.e.*, to a departure from the repeated declarations of the Federation. "Not a cent, not a minute," which were the real obstacles to an agreement.

This statement of Herbert Smith's was repeatedly made use of by the General Council during the later struggle, at the end of the General Strike, to force wage reductions on the miners.\*

#### No Victimisation Pledge.

The Special Conference, after hearing the General Council's communication (at 1 a.m.), adjourned until 2 p.m. the same day (Saturday, May 1st). In the morning the Miners' Conference met, and endorsed the unyielding attitude of the Miners' delegates, particularly cheering (according to a Press Statement issued by Cook the next day) Smith's declaration that they could not tolerate a penny reduction. During the morning, also, the various Executives met and decided their attitude to the Memorandum granting full power to the General Council, establishing the system of calling out the unions as "first line," "second line" etc., making the Local Trades Councils the representatives of the General Council, and *pledging mutual support against victimisation* (no union to return until full guarantees against repressions were received by all).

The Special Conference reassembled at 2, and it was announced that the figures were: For, 3,650,000: Against, 49,000: Not voting, 300,000. It was announced that the General Strike would begin not immediately, as generally expected, but on Monday midnight—obviously to permit of further negotiations. This was indicated still more clearly by the speeches of Bevin and MacDonald, who pleaded for "reconsideration," until Herbert Smith, endeavouring to correct his mistake of the previous night, only repeated it by saying 'he did not promise

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\* Mr. MacDonald again quoted this phrase in the debate in the House of Commons, Tuesday, June 1st.

to accept the Report, only to examine it, and abide by the results.'

The tone of the delegates (all members of Trade Union Executives, not even the ordinary T.U.C.) was subdued, but firm: while conscious that they were doing an unprecedented thing, they obviously felt the pressure of the workers upon them. This was shown on two occasions: when an electric shock ran through the Conference as a cheering May Day procession passed by the Hall, and when at the end they spontaneously rose and sang the "Red Flag."

The spirit of the workers on this day was magnificent, as shown by the vast May Day demonstrations in London (unprecedented since 1919) and elsewhere.

#### **T.U.C. Still Hesitating.**

Immediately after the Conference closed, the Miners' Conference and Executive, including Herbert Smith, left for their homes, and everyone thought that the fight was ready to begin. The Negotiating Committee of the General Council resumed negotiations almost immediately, however, continuing on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. They first approached Cook, asking for a meeting with the miners, and were much incensed to find that the latter had gone home. They made Cook telegraph for them immediately, and meanwhile endeavoured to persuade him to "be reasonable" (according to his speech at Porth on Sunday, May 23) and accept a reduction. This he flatly refused, on the ground that the Conference decision still stood. He issued a similar statement to the Press ("Workers' Daily") that afternoon, in reply to a story, obviously based on Herbert Smith's ambiguous declarations, that the Miners were preparing to climb down. In the evening the General Council Committee met the Miners' officials, and endeavoured to force upon them the notorious formula, drafted by Lord Birkenhead in consultation, apparently, with J. H. Thomas (about whom it is reported that he said the miners "would bloody well have to accept it"). The formula was that the lock-out notices would be suspended, and the General Strike withdrawn, and the subsidy continued for another fortnight, the General Council undertaking that the miners would come to a settlement within a fortnight, "it being understood that this involved a reduction in wages." The Miners flatly rejected this again. The General Council nevertheless went to negotiate once more, and things looked very much like a new Black Friday. It is noteworthy that already, in these final discussions, there was a united front between J. H. Thomas and John Bromley.

#### **Tory Ultimatum.**

An entirely new situation was created, however, by the

Government's decision that (Sunday) evening to force matters to an issue by its ultimatum demanding the cancellation of the General Strike notices as a preliminary to any further negotiations. (The ultimatum was clinched by all the members of the Government going home to bed). The pretext was the stoppage of the "Daily Mail," but this cannot be treated seriously. According to *Lansbury's Weekly*," this step was forced on Baldwin by the threatened resignations of Churchill, Amery, Chamberlain and other Ministers: but this is quite likely a story spread by the Tories to keep Baldwin's reputation as "a man of peace" unblemished. There were too obvious advantages in forcing a General Strike under leaders opposed to or afraid of it—namely, certain collapse and possible disruption of the Labour movement—for the Government not to see them, without any divisions in the Tory camp being necessary to explain it.

This decision of the Government's took the General Council completely by surprise. The Right Wing, particularly Thomas (and MacDonald, who was playing an active part), were thrown into a panic, at the thought of the untold consequences within the Labour movement if a General Strike really began. The Left Wing had never for a moment believed that the Government would do otherwise than it did in July, 1925, *i.e.*, grant financial aid to the industry. They had never seriously contemplated the General Strike, and had talked about it for purposes of bluff. Hicks now also joined the ranks of those who attacked Cook for landing them in this "misfortune." Unfortunately for the General Council, they were so deeply committed by their pledges prior to and at the Conference on Saturday, and the whole working class was so enthusiastic for the fight, that they could not retreat.

#### **T.U.C.'s Last Efforts.**

They did their utmost to reopen negotiations on Monday, following a pleading letter to the Premier at 3.30 a.m. on Monday morning: but in vain. MacDonald in Parliament made the most unscrupulous use of Herbert Smith's "magnificent declaration," hinting that the miners were ready to discuss reductions in wages. Churchill countered by jeering reference to the "grim fact" that, whatever the General Council said, the miners steadfastly refused to accept any reductions, and cited Cook's declarations. Henderson went to Churchill privately to begin informal talks, but (according to "*Lansbury's Weekly*") was cut short with the information that, if he had not come to say that the General Strike notices were cancelled, there was nothing to talk about. In spite of every effort, negotiations were not resumed, and the General Strike began at midnight on Monday, May 3.

It is characteristic of the General Council's state of mind that, although the two Miners' members could not function

(Smillie retired to Scotland while Richards was too ill), they refused to co-opt Smith and Cook as deputy representatives, while admitting MacDonal and Henderson to all their deliberations.

## 2. The Three Camps During the Struggle.

From the first moment of the General Strike, the Government acted with irreproachable firmness, directness and consistency, as real generals of the capitalist army. They knew exactly the weakness of their opponent generals, and struck hard. Using the Emergency Powers Act, they established a complete capitalist dictatorship in less than no time, Parliament dropping completely to the background. As strike-breakers they recruited between 300,000 and 400,000 middle-class "volunteers," who were used in three principal directions: (i) as "technical aid"—to man power stations and printing presses, to drive a skeleton service of trains (mostly suburban services around London, while the bulk of the country was cut off), and to drive omnibuses and mechanical transport generally (again chiefly in London and on the main lines of communication); (ii) as unskilled labour, chiefly in the Docks and food depots; (iii) as auxiliary police—about 150,000 "special constables" (armed only with a truncheon), and a much smaller number (about 40,000) of "civil constabulary reserve," equipped in addition with steel helmets, and recruited from ex-officers and members of the Territorial (volunteer) force, *recommended by local Territorial Committees*. Full use was made of battleships, submarines, troops, armoured cars, etc., to overawe the workers in important industrial centres and ports. Police raids, arrests, and summary sentences of imprisonment were dealt out lavishly (over 1,200 during the fortnight following May 3, including over 100 Communists).

## The Legal Weapon.

The Government issued a series of declarations to blacklegs, guaranteeing them first safety and then immunity from trade union persecution, loss of benefits, etc. after the strike. Similarly, it issued a guarantee to soldiers against any criminal liability for actions they might have to take "in aid of the civil power" *i.e.*, it engaged to defend them against the charge of murder to which under British law they are liable if they shoot down a crowd, even under orders from an officer. The Government placarded everywhere a speech by Sir John Simon, one of the highest legal authorities, to the effect that the General Strike was illegal, not provided for by the Trades Disputes Act of 1906, and therefore rendered the leaders liable in their own persons and property for the losses incurred. The Government threatened to stop money aid for strikers coming from abroad. Finally, this threat was brought a step nearer by the decision of a Judge that, as the General Strike was illegal, the officials of a certain trade

union had no right to call a strike without a ballot or to issue strike pay.

### **Propaganda.**

*By way of propaganda.* At the outset the Government took over all broadcasting, and ran the wireless service in its own interests, even suppressing, for example, an appeal for compromise of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It published the "Morning Post" as the "British Gazette" (an incredibly lying propaganda organ issued in hundreds of thousands of copies), under Churchill's editorship, and commandeered all stocks of paper to issue it, even announcing that papers sowing disaffection (obviously aiming at the "British Worker") would not be granted paper. Towards the end, the Government effectively set going rumours about forthcoming further repressive measures, such as the arrest of the General Council, the sequestration of Trade Union funds, the repealing of the Trades Disputes Act, the calling up of the Army Reserve, etc.

The workers remained very little impressed by all these measures throughout. The wholeheartedness with which they had responded to the General Council had astounded the latter body more than anyone. Despite the usual lies in the "British Gazette" and the few scab flysheets issued by the capitalist newspaper proprietors, the returns to work were absolutely infinitesimal. In the smallest railway stations, the most remote and insignificant ports, the least industrial country towns, railwaymen, dockers, busmen, printers came out and remained as solid as a rock. On the very eve of the Capitulation of May 12, the engineers, shipbuilders and ironmoulders came out in full strength in response to the call of the General Council for the "second line."

From the outset the workers betrayed a healthy contempt for legality. While there were few direct fights with the police, and none with the soldiers, during the nine days of the strike there were innumerable cases of blackleg lorries and buses stopped and dismantled, smashed or burnt. Numerous arrests were made on this charge even in the most out-of-the-way towns, ordinarily considered to be havens of sleepiness and respectability.

### **Workers Firm.**

Everywhere the active elements amongst the workers showed the greatest enthusiasm in building up their own organs of authority—generally called Councils of Action, sometimes called Central Strike Committees (distinguishing them from the strike committees of the unions), and sometimes Trades Councils, but all composed of delegates from the trade unions under the leadership of the Trades Council Executives, with or without delegates from co-operatives, Labour Parties, the other working class parties, etc.

The Councils of Action immediately began creating an embryo rival apparatus of government—transport committees (to issue permits for traffic), propaganda or publicity committees (issuing duplicated strike bulletins, which played a great part in the Strike, owing to the absence of newspapers), food committees (frequently in consultation with the co-operatives) and some form of defence committee. On the latter issue there was most hesitation: but it was just on this that considerable propaganda had been done by the Communist Party and the Minority Movement.

There were still comparatively few cases of provocation from the bourgeoisie, and consequently the movement did not have time to develop very deeply: but in a large number of industrial centres 'mass pickets' under a 'picketing department' were organised, while in a fair number there were 'workers' defence corps,' 'vigilance corps,' 'maintenance of order corps,' 'volunteer reserve pickets,' etc. In several areas—Lanarkshire, Northumberland and Durham, Manchester, London—actual Conferences of Councils of Action were held, and central bodies set up. Although the machinery and resources of these bodies were, of course, very small compared with those of the capitalist State apparatus, and although they were for the most part in the hands of confused or hesitating workers (many trade union officials)—with usually a small minority group of Communists giving a lead, often occupying the post of secretary or chairman—the gulf in society was complete: on the one hand the capitalist class and most of the middle class, looking to the Government's emergency apparatus, and on the other hand the working class, looking for guidance and inspiration to the Councils of Action.

#### **News of Surrender.**

When the news of the General Council's surrender first appeared in the afternoon of May 12, the workers simply refused to believe it: then gradually their disbelief changed to bewilderment, as the news was confirmed, and finally to anger and disappointment. A noteworthy feature of this anger was the spontaneous decision everywhere, on the Thursday morning (May 13), as soon as the new capitalist offensive made its appearance, not to return to work. There was further strong disappointment when the terms of the railway and transport settlements became known: but old-established union discipline prevailed. It is significant of the lessons learnt since 1921 (and of the difference created by the existence of the C.P.G.B. and the Minority Movement as an organised influence in the unions), that there are so far very few indications of any widespread tendency to leave the unions.

Between the resolute capitalist class and the equally resolute working class the General Council, which was irresolute and unwilling to enter upon the General Strike, was in a state, first of

amazement of the size of the task it had undertaken, then of timorousness lest the task should slip out of its hands and finally of panic. Officially all the members of the General Council were broken up amongst various committees—interviewing, transport, publicity, negotiating, strike, etc. These committees got to work, and, aided by an improvised service of communications (volunteer cars and motor cycles), succeeded in maintaining technical control of the General Strike up to the end. But unofficially there was an unwritten distribution of functions: the Left and Centre confined themselves to detail work, while the Right Wing displayed the greatest energy and activity in sabotaging the effective conduct of the struggle and in undertaking new negotiations and peace feelers.

### **The Press.**

For the first two days the General Council put itself in the absurd position of stopping the Labour press as well as the capitalist press, out of consideration for craft traditions. When at last this was overcome and the "British Worker" decided upon, it was put under the control of two Right Wing members of the General Council, with the publicity officials of the *Labour Party* as effective editors, and throughout its existence was the most miserable and shameful production imaginable. Not only did it give prominence and approval, naturally, to the appeals of and to several compromise suggestions, involving ultimate wage reductions from sections of the bourgeoisie but it suppressed the overwhelming bulk of news about Government repressions, arrests, imprisonments, etc. (*e.g.*, there was no word in the "British Worker" about the Saklatvala case), on the ground that this was "political matter," it hid the greater part of the news of international solidarity displayed, and it even deliberately avoided the use of the name "Council of Action," using "Trades Council" throughout, in order to emphasize that this was a "purely industrial dispute," and to show that the General Council would have nothing to do with any "Communist idea." With the assistance of the I.L.P. head office, the General Council also got out 3,000 copies of a typewritten news bulletin for trade union head offices and district offices daily.

### **Conduct of the Strike.**

Having adopted the policy of calling the workers out in 'waves,' the General Council hesitated for nine days before calling out the second. The most glaring case of indecision was on the question of the power station men, who were never called out, in spite of repeated threats and decisions. The workers in the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich, who stopped work of their own accord, were actually ordered back! The General Council had before its eyes throughout the fetish of "vital services," although its own experience of Government blacklegging forced

it, half-way through the strike, to call out all the transport workers who were at first left working in one 'vital service'—food supply.

### Defence.

The General Council not only did not attempt to put the facts of this "purely industrial dispute" before the soldiers, but ordered the workers to "keep away" from their neighbourhood and thus avoid incidents. This was a needless precaution, incidentally, as everywhere the soldiers were kept away from the workers. No attempt was made to organise the workers' self defence: although Purcell boasted that during the week-end before the Strike ended the General Council had decided to raise a force of 50,000 "workers' police," nothing more was heard of this. The utmost the General Council did in the sphere of defence was to nominate its own successors in the event of its members being all arrested.

### Supplies.

Typical of the General Council's spirit was its refusal to accept money from the Russian workers, while accepting it from other foreign organisations, for fear of "public opinion." On this question there was a united front between the Right, Centre and a section of the Left-wing against acceptance of the first cheque for £25,000. The General Council suppressed the fact for a day or two, until it had leaked out into the capitalist press: then printed it in an obscure position in one edition of the "British Worker," without stating the reasons and the amount. The indignation amongst the workers, particularly the miners, was so obvious that, when the telegram announcing the second instalment of £200,000 was received, the General Council decided to say nothing about it, and not to reply. They were relieved of their embarrassment by the Government's decision to stop the cheque when it arrived. The General Council throughout the General Strike showed its fear of effectively and energetically conducting, not merely "a struggle against the Constitution," but the very 'industrial' *i.e.*, economic struggle which it was advertising.

### 3. The General Councils' Demoralisation Surrender.

From the day the General Strike began, Thomas and others were constantly meeting unofficial mediators—Lord Ashfield, Liberal M.P.'s, etc. But the real negotiations only began when Sir Herbert Samuel, chairman of the Coal Commission, returned from Italy on Friday, May 7th, and immediately got into touch with the Negotiating Committee. On Saturday morning, May 8th, the General Council passed a resolution laying it down that negotiations between individuals were entirely unauthorised, and none could be entertained unless they were begun with the Negotiating Committee. On Sunday, May 9th, the Negotiating

Committee attempted to persuade the Miners' officials to accept the principle of wage reductions. Once again the Miners' officials refused, and their refusal was confirmed in the morning, by an overwhelming majority, at a meeting of their full Executive. It was during the negotiations with the Negotiating Committee, on Sunday and Monday, on a first draft submitted by Samuel, that Thomas spoke of the streets running with blood, that Bromley threatened to send the locomotive men back to work, and that Hicks and Purcell did their utmost to plead with the Miners to accept a 10 per cent. reduction, 'in the interests of the movement.' After long wrangling, meetings with Samuel, etc., it was agreed that the General Council would try to find a new draft, acceptable to the miners, the next day (Tuesday, May 11). In the morning, the Miners' Executive met, and reaffirmed, by an overwhelming majority again, its opposition to any wage reductions: in the afternoon, replying to a Press story containing the essence of the Samuel proposals, Cook announced the decisions taken in the morning. At 8 p.m. the Miners' Executive met the full General Council, and were handed the new draft of the Samuel Memorandum, with the information by Pugh that this had been adopted *unanimously* by the General Council, and that this was their last word.

The Samuel Memorandum in effect followed the lines of the Coal Commissions' Report—a mass of reorganisation promises to gild the pill, a Wages Board including a "neutral element" and an "independent chairman" to "draw up a new wages agreement," a guarantee of 45s. per week to the lowest paid men, and no "revision" of wages rates, of course, without "sufficient assurance" that the re-organisation measures would be "made effective." They also informed the Miners that they had a "gentlemen's agreement" that the Government would accept the Memorandum and extend the subsidy to enable pre-strike wages to be paid for a period long enough to enable the Wages Board to come to a decision.

**Thus the General Council had reverted to the original "Birkenhead formula," accepting beforehand, in effect if not in form, a reduction in wages, and were prepared to force this on the miners on May 11 as they were on May 2. The essential difference in the situation was that on May 2 the Left-wing in the General Council were still using the enthusiasm of the masses to bluff the Right-wing and the Government, whereas on May 11, after eight days' strike, their bluff had been called and they were afraid to leave the masses out on the streets any longer.**

#### **Miners Adamant.**

The Miners told the General Council they would never accept these terms, which brought down more threats, arguments and entreaties. The meeting was adjourned to enable the Miners to

prepare a reasoned reply. This reply was a dignified document, reminding the General Council of the consequences of the Samuel Memorandum, and of the millions of workers who were out in the belief that they were fighting against wage reductions for the miners, rejecting the terms, and throwing all responsibility for calling off the General Strike on the General Council. The General Council were just as thunderstruck to find that the Miners had accepted their challenge as they had been on May 2 when the Government did the same. Their tactics had been to involve the Miners' leaders in the surrender, as in 1921, so that they could turn round to their own workers and say: "How could we go on fighting when the miners themselves had accepted the terms?" The refusal of the Miners' leaders meant that every worker would have before his eyes the spectacle of the miners still locked out, and this must inevitably force up in his mind the question: "Why has the General Strike been called off, then?"

The Left Wing, in particular, were horrorstruck at the prospect of the miners' continuing out, and pleaded with them to reconsider, as "we shall be ruined." The miners were obdurate, and only asked Thomas and Bevin what guarantees they had for their own men. They were told to mind their own business. **It is quite possible that the Right-wing calculations were that, if their own men were pre-occupied with victimisation troubles, they would be less likely to concern themselves with the question of the miners.**

Following their refusal, the miners were told that the General Council would go to the Prime Minister the next morning and declare the strike ended. As a last resort, however, it was decided to leave the miners until the next morning (Wednesday, May 12) to think it over. The Miners' Executive met the next morning, and, by a majority still more overwhelming than before (only one dissident), reaffirmed its refusal to accept the Memorandum, and decided to summon a delegate conference for the next Friday (May 14). During their session the final deputation arrived from the General Council, including Pugh, Ben Turner, Bevin and Purcell (Swales refused the "honour"): but all their tears and entreaties not to 'split the movement' were futile. They left shortly before 12, and the General Council immediately went to the Prime Minister. It is noteworthy that, both in the "British Worker" of that evening and in the telegram sent out to all districts, the General Council did not mention the fact that the miners had rejected the terms as involving reductions in wages.

The abject character of the General Council's surrender and the falseness of the story about a Government pledge soon became apparent, when the correspondence between Samuel and the Government was published, and still more when Baldwin pre-

sented his own terms (providing for a first cut of 10 per cent., with further cuts later, imposed by a Wages Board under an independent chairman, with power to enforce his decisions) on Friday. Whether it was Samuel, who lied to the Negotiating Committee, or Thomas, or the Negotiating Committee who lied to the General Council, is of little import: the fact is that, after a ten days' fight of tremendous bitterness, the miners were left stranded without any guarantee even of the lockout notices being withdrawn. The Miners' Conference, after adjournment until May 20, and full examination of the Baldwin terms (in which it became clear that the guarantee to lowest paid men had been whittled down from 45s. *per week* to 7s. 6d. *per day*, which meant a real wage in most cases of 32s. to 38s. *per week*), rejected them unanimously, and decided to continue the struggle.

But the workers almost immediately had a new object lesson of the results of the General Council's policy, in the simultaneous attacks on the railwaymen, dockers, road transport workers and printers which were launched on Thursday morning (May 13). At first the universal demand was for wage reductions, but finally the companies 'contented' themselves with extorting humiliating confessions that the General Strike was a "wrongful act" (railwaymen and printers), promises not to strike again without exhausting the possibilities of negotiation (railwaymen and transport workers), and agreements that the men were to be taken back as required, without "victimising" the blacklegs (road transport workers). The railwaymen still had such a high percentage out at the end of the second week after the strike that the railway unions signed (May 22) a second agreement suspending the guaranteed week "*until mutually agreed,*" introducing a system of distribution or rotation of work so as to produce *three days' pay* for every worker, allowing railwaymen to be transferred or to travel to other stations for work *at their own expense, and exempting from this regulation men who remained at work during the strike.*

The General Council, under pressure from several unions, has decided to summon a Special Conference of Trade Union Executives to hear a report: but the date (unpublished) fixed for the Conference was June 25, by which time it was hoped that the miners would be "safely out of the way."

### **The Lessons for the Workers.**

What are the chief lessons to be drawn from the strike?

i. Upon the fate of the workers in every large section of industry, and particularly upon that of the miners, hangs the fate of every other section of the working class. Every campaign of the Communist Party calling for class solidarity behind the miners (for Councils of Action, Factory Com-

mittees and All Power to the General Council) has been justified.

ii. Where an attack upon a section of the workers, preparing the way for a general attack is concerned, there is no cleavage in the ranks of the capitalists, and the capitalist State becomes simply a naked weapon of their dictatorship. Every campaign of the Communist Party calling for working class preparation for self-defence—Workers' Defence Corps, Tell the Truth to the Soldiers, an Arrangement with the Co-operatives—has been justified.

iii. The workers of the world have learned from their own bitter experience that the cause of one section is the cause of all, and the time is fully ripe for an All-inclusive International Federation of Trade Unions. Every campaign of the Communist Party for world trade union unity through a World Unity Congress has been justified.

iv. The leaders who are afraid to fight for Socialism against capitalism, and are ready to persecute those in the workers' ranks who want such a fight, will be incapable of conducting even a struggle for wages to a successful conclusion, let alone a fight for Socialism (which the General Strike was not). The Left-wing leaders who are afraid to associate themselves openly with those who fight for Socialism (the Minority Movement and the Left-wing), will be afraid of insisting on a Left-wing point of view even in a fight for wages. Every campaign of the Communist Party for a powerful organised Minority Movement winning the leadership of the unions, for a powerful organised Left-wing winning the leadership of the Labour Party, has been amply justified.

v. It was not the General Strike which failed, but the leaders. The workers have been forced to retreat without being beaten. This is only encouraging the capitalists to further attacks, which the workers must fight and defeat. In order that they can do so, and in order to be able, not merely to beat off attacks on wages, but to go forward for better conditions and for Socialism, the workers will have to find new leaders who will lead *forward* instead of *backward*. Such leaders they can only find in the sole Party whose campaign of preparedness, organisation and mobilisation during the last 18 months has been justified up to the hilt—the Communist Party. A strong Communist Party is not only the best guarantee of a fight for Socialism in the Labour Party and the trade unions, it is the only guarantee of a united, clearheaded and effective resistance to the capitalist offensive against the workers' standards of living.

# Cowardice or Worse ?

By T. H. WINTRINGHAM.

**W**E are already in the midst of the deluge. A few weeks more and the history of the greatest crisis in British Labour's struggle will be so overlaid with "disclosures," "secret history," "stories from behind the scenes," charges and counter-charges, excuses and explanations, that it will be almost impossible to pick our way through to the facts that matter. While the main outline of events is still fresh in our minds, let us try to sum up the outstanding results, which no revelations can alter, of Britain's first General Strike.

In "Lansbury's Labour Weekly," and in the "New Leader," immediately after the strike, there appeared attempts to describe the way in which that strike was carried on and the reasons for which it was called off. We are not doubting the sincerity of these attempts when we say that they do not carry complete conviction. They are admittedly based largely on personal experiences and hearsay; they contain contradictions, and facts are stated which until they are admitted by the men whom they affect or proved in other ways can only be accepted as hypotheses, as possible explanations which must be tested by our commonsense and compared with other alternative explanations before the tribunal of probability.

This applies in particular to the reasons given for the most startling occurrence in the strike, its ending.

It will be better at the present stage to take only the admitted facts and the statements that the General Council cannot deny—their own, from their own paper, the "British Worker," and their own letters to the press.

These facts and statements, taken together with the known and acknowledged political and social aims and outlook of the most powerful Labour leaders, give us plenty of grounds for an explanation of why the strike was called off far more convincing than any of the "revelations."

In the first place it is known to everyone that the resolutions carried at the Conference of Trade Union Executives on April 30 and May 1 were resolutions prepared and submitted by the General Council itself.

On April 30 the most important resolution was to the effect that the first thing to be done was to secure the withdrawal of the

lock-out notices on the miners, without which nothing could be done by way of negotiations.

On May 1 it was agreed that "we should definitely declare that in the event of any action being taken, and trade union agreements being placed in jeopardy, it be definitely agreed that there will be no general resumption of work until those agreements are fully recognised."

On May 12 the strike was called off without either of these two resolutions being honoured. Why? That is the question that matters.

The results of the "crawl off" are simple and unmistakable: the miners are still locked-out, every other important union has had to accept terms that (officially) make any sympathetic action of any sort whatever impossible in the future, the railwaymen have lost the guaranteed week until the companies choose to give it back to them, and many thousands of workers in all trades have been victimised. What forces, what pressure led to the act that has had such miserable results?

#### **Some Explanations and Queries.**

Let us take the explanations given in the capitalist press, in the Labour Party and I.L.P. press, and in the statements of General Council members, one by one. All of them can be disposed of by comparing them with the files of the "British Worker" and the "Daily Herald," and the acknowledged facts.

1. *The strike was weakening; men were beginning to drift back and those of the "second line" were unwilling to come out.*

Only Mr. Thomas and the meaner millionaire papers sponsor this lie. The General Council cannot, for in its organ the "British Worker," published on the evening before the end it states that "all is solid among the transport workers," "the printers stand firm," "not a single area has weakened is Mr. Cramp's report" (N.U.R.) and there are over a dozen similar messages from various trades and places. While as to the "second line"—turn to the number of the "British Worker" that announces that the strike is over. The inner pages, made up before the end came, give reports from over a score of important centres where, in the words of the headline "Engineers enthusiastically obey call to join ranks of strikers."

There cannot have been one member of the General Council who honestly believed the strike was weakening.

2. *The General Council were afraid of arrest and the seizure of trade union funds.*

This, if true, was, of course, personal cowardice. To believe that the Government would have tried, some day, to arrest all the strike leaders, national and local, is permissible, but the result

would have been not the breaking of the strike or any great harm to the Labour movement, it would have been the break-up of the Government. A provocative act of this kind by the Government would undoubtedly have aroused such a storm of indignation throughout the whole of the working class movement and brought such pressure to bear upon the Cabinet (including the resignation of Cabinet Ministers, for there are cowards amongst the ruling classes also), as to force the Government to resign.

Fear of arrest may have played its part. We cannot believe that it was really a vitally important factor in the minds of many of the leaders.

3. *The General Council were afraid of revolution.*

Lansbury's paper stresses this. It is absurd. Ten days of general stoppage without a shot fired, in spite of violent provocation by Churchill and "Jix." No riots worth mentioning. The fight universally accepted as a defensive fight, to win the withdrawal of the lock-out notices and the scrapping of the wage cut proposals.

Certainly, the Communist Party was putting forward—and getting to the masses—an obvious deduction from an obvious fact, viz., that, as the Government had definitely and completely lined up with the mineowners and was trying to smash the unions, the way to get the lock-out notices withdrawn was to hold tight until the Government admitted it was beaten, resigned and made way for a real Labour Government. But the Communist Party knew, as the T.U.C. leaders knew, that this was not the time for anything but solid resistance to a deliberate attack.

The General Council will not dare, when it condescends to explain its action, to allege that it was in such a hurry to escape an imminent revolution that it must needs call the strike off without waiting to get a pledge against victimisation, or any hint from the Government that it would see that the lock-out notices were withdrawn pending negotiations.

4. *There is some reason for the General Council's act that will be available some day, and will justify it.*

Swales, Hicks and Tillett say something to this effect; referring to the interpretation of the act as a surrender they say, "How meanly false this cowardly travesty of the truth is will be obvious in a few weeks, if not in a few days." Ben Turner in his letter to the "Sunday Worker," says "it is wise to know more before guessing too much," suggesting thereby that there are facts as yet unknown to those who criticise the General Council.

What unknown facts can there possibly be? And what reason can there be for keeping them still in the dark? The only connection in which such facts can exist is the series of events connected with the negotiations with Sir H. Samuel. But if there was any trickery here, or any folly, beyond the trickery and folly

obvious on the face of it, let it be known. Will the General Council tell trade unionism: "Samuel was a bigger swindler and we were greater fools to trust him, than appears from the published documents"?

We can dismiss these unknown facts; those known are quite enough. Any new facts in regard to these negotiations will only strengthen our conclusions.

5. *The General Council were really satisfied that they had secured for the miners terms on which a satisfactory settlement could be made.*

This is the basis of all official statements. The "British Worker" stated on May 12 that the Council was "satisfied that the miners will now get a fair deal," that "a satisfactory basis of settlement in the mining industry can now be formulated."

It is also the idea underlying the statements of four members of the General Council. Ben Turner says: "I took the word of men of honour that the miners' notices would be withdrawn immediately the general strike was called off." Bevin, Walker and Findlay write "the terms of the Memorandum were put forward to the General Council and finally accepted in good faith by them on the definite assurance that they would be accepted by the Government as a basis for negotiations. On that understanding the General Strike would be declared off and the lock-out notices withdrawn."

(In the second number of the "British Worker," the General Council reply to Baldwin's claim that the strike must be called off unconditionally, that they are ready to resume negotiations at any moment without conditions: "It is obvious however that at this stage, with no knowledge of the subsequent line of policy that the Government intends to pursue, the General Council cannot comply with the Prime Minister's request for an unconditional withdrawal of the strike notices." Presumably, therefore, when the General Council did withdraw unconditionally, it must have believed that it **had** some knowledge of the policy the Government intended to pursue.)

Questions arise: who were the "men of honour" who assured Ben Turner that the notices would at once be withdrawn? Who gave Bevin, Walker and Findlay a "definite assurance" to the same effect? The miners had already pointed out that the Samuel Memorandum did not bind the Government in the least. Sir H. Samuel in his letter published with the Memorandum says: "I have made it clear to your Committee from the outset that I have been acting entirely on my own initiative, have received no authority from the Government, and can give no assurances on their behalf." He has since again denied consultation with Baldwin

or the giving of any assurance to the union leaders that the Government would withdraw the notices.

If these statements of Samuel's are incorrect surely some member of the General Council would have so far forgotten their manners as to call him a liar, before this.

### **Hypnotism or Deceit?**

There is only one possible explanation: either there were no "men of honour," no assurances whatever in any shape or form that the notices would be withdrawn (since Sir Herbert had given none) or else the "men of honour" from whom the assurances came must have been certain members of the General Council itself.

Cowardice, to some extent, a lack of faith in the men and the movement they were leading, a belief in compromise every time on every thing, may have sufficed to get the majority of the members of the General Council to accept the Samuel terms (with an assurance of the withdrawal of the notices), as a satisfactory basis for negotiations; although those terms gave no guarantee as to wages or hours and included a scheme that amounts to compulsory arbitration. A pathetic belief in the benevolence of Baldwin and the kindness of employers as a class may have led them to omit the commonsense precaution of seeing that (in the words of their own resolution) "there will be no resumption of work until trade union agreements are fully recognised." Only deliberate and despicable deceit within their own ranks can account for the fact that many of them seem to have been honestly persuaded that the lock-out notices would at once be withdrawn on the instance of the Government.

It is the only hypothesis that fits the facts. Certain union leaders and certain politicians (whom we believe to have included J. H. Thomas, J. R. Clynes, Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden) must have given their colleagues to understand that while the Government could not give official assurances, those assurances had been given unofficially, and given to them.

Why put forward this theory? Why pick on these particular people? The answer is to be found in a phrase already used: "the known and acknowledged political and social aims and outlook of the most powerful Labour leaders." Without taking these into account it is hopeless to try to explain what happened.

These "men of honour" have always opposed openly the use of the strike weapon. In particular they have put up a frenzied and continuous struggle against the idea of the General Strike. Their political future depended not on the success of the strike but on making it clear to everyone that the strike was a complete failure.

### **The Penalty of Liberalism in the Ranks.**

Two endings to the strike were possible; failure, or the winning of grudging concessions from capitalism that would have increased capitalism's difficulties. They preferred failure for two reasons: success would have made the workers believe that by the use of this weapon they could at any rate win something, an increase in capitalism's difficulties would make their own plans for gradual reform under a recovering and gently re-organising capitalism more obviously futile than they are at present.

When the Government was forced to make a truce, after Red Friday last year, Mr. MacDonald protested angrily that they had "handed over the appearance of victory" to the forces in the Labour movement who believe in fighting and not in gracefully camouflaged retreat at any crisis. How he must have feared the success of the strike: it would have meant the handing over of the reality of victory to those forces!

None of the members of the General Council are sucklings, to believe implicitly in fair words from Samuel, vague appeals to goodwill from Baldwin, or to take at their face value the threats of the only participant in the Gallipoli campaign who suffered nothing from it. They must bear their own responsibility for weakness, they will have to admit that on several points they were deceived. But these others who desired the failure of the strike because of their political prestige, their ridiculous and puerile hopes of reform—these men who secured the most ignominious climb-down that Labour has ever suffered, by the most dirty methods—what is the use of trying to find words to fit them or their actions?

They acted according to their creed. Liberalism—that compound of hypocrisy, treachery, compromise and deceit—led them inevitably to this. It is because the Right-wing leaders of Labour are Liberal reformists through and through that "Yellow Wednesday" occurred.

# The Fascist Adventures of Chamberlain & Mussolini

## THE PARTITION OF ABYSSINIA.

By P. JEBB.

**T**HE last independent State in Africa and a full member of the League of Nations, is Abyssinia. According to the "Times" Chamberlain and Mussolini have reached an agreement which is "definite" concerning its future, without, of course, consulting Abyssinia. The nature of the agreement remains a secret, but from the "Times" report some form of partition is clearly contemplated by which the greater part of the country will go to Italy while Great Britain reserves to herself the north-eastern parts around Lake Tsana, the source of the Blue Nile and indispensable for the control of the Nile basin and the vast new irrigation works in the Sudan.

This, apparently, is the first fruit of the new Fascist colonial policy. Triumphant at home, Mussolini wishes to make for himself an empire in Africa, like the Cæsars whom he so fondly imagines that he resembles. He has just made a triumphant journey to Libya, the seat of ancient Roman colonial power in North Africa, and his voyage was preceded by some remarkable pronouncements in the official Fascist press.

In order to create a "Colonial conscience" in the Italian people, April 21st, the anniversary of the foundation of Rome has been decreed "Colonial Day," and a public holiday. In connection with this the following amazing statement appeared in the "Impero":

"The meaning of this Colonial Day must be haughtily declared to other nations. They must learn across the frontier that Italy will not make war in any dillettante spirit, but because she is ready to undertake it in order to realise her colonial aspirations."

This blustering pronouncement is left far behind, however, by the "Corriere d'Italia," which, in all seriousness, utters the following threat to the peoples of the world:

"We have won the national battle, but this success cannot be final unless it is completed by victory on all fronts. A longer and more difficult battle is upon us now—that against the foreigner. Fascism is expanding its lungs. After the phase of national re-assertion, it is putting itself forward as a universal critical and reconstructive element."

So the real message of Mussolini on his Libyan tour is that the world must tremble and prepare to accept him as its critical and reconstructive deliverer. Meanwhile just to show us that he

means business he will begin on—France?—England? No,—Abyssinia. That “insolent” and mighty African power, with the help and blessing of Chamberlain, is to be “reconstructed” by Fascism!

### **The Basis of the Pact.**

How does British Imperialism come to be Mussolini’s ally and instigator in this contemplated act of brigandage? To get the full story we must go a long way back, but meanwhile it will not be out of place to reflect here on the triumph of Zaghlul Pasha and the Nationalist Party at the recent elections in Egypt. That the puppet Ziwar must fall and a Nationalist Government come quickly to power again was clear to the Foreign Office as far back as November. Now one of the main planks in Zaghlul’s programme is evacuation of the Sudan by the British and the control of the Nile, on which the very life of Egypt including the Sudan depends.

But the Sudan is an essential part of the Empire cotton scheme, vast quantities of English capital are sunk in its irrigation works and the British Imperialists, as MacDonald told Zaghlul in 1924, are determined never to surrender it to anyone. The partition of Abyssinia will render it still more secure by controlling the outlet of the Blue Nile from Lake Tsana, and, at the same time, take away some of the force from the Egyptian argument that the Sudan is starving Egypt of water, since a barrage on the Blue Nile would greatly increase the facilities for irrigation in both Egypt and the Sudan.

Moreover, there will be a second, even more potent argument—if the Abyssinians offer military resistance to the Italians and the frontier is disturbed it will become “militarily impossible” to evacuate the Sudan. In fact on the pretext of “pacification” or “suppression of the slave trade” England will be able to make a substantial increase in her forces and secure her hold on the Sudan.

What is the reason that Abyssinia has remained independent, while all the rest of Africa has submitted to Imperialist “law and order”? The reason lies in the fact that the “Roman valour” of which we hear so much to-day failed disastrously in 1896 to conquer the Abyssinian armies led by the great Emperor Menelik. Previous to this the Italians by the Treaty of Uccialli (1889) had asserted some kind of protectorate over the country, which Menelik, as soon as his power was secure, promptly overthrew, completely destroying the Italian army and teaching the robber powers such a lesson that not one of them dared lay a finger on Abyssinia again so long as he reigned.

### **Those Spheres of Influence.**

In 1906, England, France and Italy, without consulting Menelik, drew up a Tripartite Treaty defining their spheres of

influence and pledging themselves (the usual preliminary to division) to respect the integrity of Abyssinia. Menelik answered at once that they might make treaties to their hearts content, but that these "would in no way limit what we consider to be our sovereign rights." Unhappily, two years later the old Emperor was stricken with paralysis, and before abdicating gave permission for the French to construct a railway from their port of Jibuti on the Red Sea to his capital Addis Abbaba.

From that day the eventual partition of Abyssinia became certain. Only a strong Emperor like Menelik was capable of keeping the unruly feudal chiefs, or Rases, in order. Once his strong hand was removed it would be comparatively easy to create that state of "anarchy" which would form the pretext for intervention. Only a lucky series of circumstances has prevented it up to now. In 1912 and 1913 Italy was engaged in the disastrous Tripolitan expedition. In 1914 the war came. (It is worth noting that in 1916 a British Mission visited Lake Tsana and then tried to come to some arrangement with the Abyssinian Government for the construction of a barrage, but the Abyssinians, always jealous of foreign interference, refused.)

After the war a creature of the French, the Ras Tafari, was made Regent and afterwards "King of Kings" and the independent state of Abyssinia was admitted a full member of the League of Nations. The various colonial rebellions against French Imperialism have nevertheless weakened this country's influence, and, this year, England and Italy have concluded their partition agreement without consulting her, though doubtless they have since offered France some "compensation" elsewhere for the loss of the booty.

The sudden defeat of Abd El Krim may have upset their calculations somewhat, and with France's hands free in North Africa the "compensation" may have to be considerably increased, perhaps in the shape of some re-arrangement of the International Treaties governing the administration of North Africa.

We shall probably see Italy, thirsting for glory, left to do the fighting while Great Britain piously proclaims that her only interest is the suppression of the slave trade and the pacific work of developing the upper reaches of the Blue Nile.

The Ras Tafari may be bribed to accept some form of control by England and Italy under a mandate from the League, but it is certain that the unruly Abyssinians under their restless feudal chiefs will not submit to the bondage that this would imply. They will resist, being well armed and brave, and the consequences of a bloody and prolonged struggle will be serious and far reaching.

#### **Somaliland Too.**

Before Italy can make an advance into Abyssinia she must

subdue her own colony of Somaliland. The Somalis are bold mountaineers who have hitherto defied their enemies and they will give the Fascist legions as much fighting as they want. In British Somaliland it will be difficult to escape trouble, for in 1919 the British kidnapped and exiled the popular chief Mohamed Ali Shirrah, and, since that time, the Somalis have been waiting for an opportunity to take their revenge for this act of treachery.

A successful resistance to Italian aggression in Somaliland and Abyssinia would mean a terrible flare-up which would extend even to the Sudan, at present uneasy under British military oppression.

To conquer Abyssinia is a different matter from the subjection of the Riff and if a military leader as resolute and skilled as Abd El Krim is found, this nation of 8,000,000 people will not only preserve their independence but inflict a crushing military defeat on Fascist Imperialism. Such a defeat would be bound to have very serious consequences in Italy, where already the beginnings of an economic crisis are being felt. It might well mean the final overthrow of the Fascist Dictatorship.

Though the hazards of Mussolini's latest adventure are great, both for Italy and England, it cannot be denied that it has possibilities of success, for the Abyssinians are divided by the rivalries of the great feudal chiefs, and though they are a warlike people there is at present no sign of a military leader capable of uniting them. Nevertheless it is more than likely that the Anglo-Italian aggression will bring such a man to the front and then the two powers may look out for squalls.

### **The Danger of War.**

The danger for the English working class of this new insolvency of Chamberlain lies in the certainty that defeat of the Italian forces will inevitably mean British military intervention on a large scale, just as defeat of the Spanish armies in Morocco forced the hand of French Imperialism and entailed a long and costly war.

Abyssinia with its army of more than a quarter of a million is a different matter from the 18,000 Riffis who have so bravely held at bay the combined armies of France and Spain. The workers of Britain must demand that Chamberlain's new adventure stop now before British money is spent and British lives lost to secure cotton lands and minerals for Italian capitalism and bring greater dividends to the English cotton magnates who have interests in the Sudan. We must demand the publication of the agreement with Mussolini, full support for the Egyptian Nationalist Government and the evacuation of Egypt and the Sudan by British troops. Only so can this new and sinister Fascist adventure of Chamberlain and Mussolini be prevented.

# Mr. MacDonald's Challenge to Organised Labour

By EMILE BURNS.

**M**R. RAMSAY MACDONALD is the leader of His Majesty's Opposition, and he hopes some day to be once more the leader of his Majesty's Government. During his last tenure of office he surprised some sections of the Labour movement by his failure to carry out the policy in regard to Russia which had been repeatedly laid down at Labour Party conferences, trade union congresses and indeed by every section of organised Labour. This was not the only point at which he failed, but it was, perhaps, the most glaring example. He did not approach the Russians as a representative of a working class government, anxious to develop the links with the Russian workers which might have helped both them and British workers in their struggle with capitalism. In this instance at least, there was no question of being unable to carry through a Labour policy in the face of a hostile majority; the spirit in which he approached the negotiations, his refusal even to extend the export credits scheme to Russia (which could have been done by an administrative act), showed that he was acting along lines chosen by himself and not by the movement which put him in power.

The Emergency Powers Act, which was bitterly opposed by the Labour movement, when first brought up by Lloyd George in 1920, and which is universally recognised as the most naked use of the State machine against the workers, would have been put into force by MacDonald in March, 1924, had the London transport strike continued.

Mr. MacDonald, therefore, showed by his actions—and perhaps even more clearly by his inaction—that he did not regard himself as a servant of the organised Labour movement, but as an independent man, deciding his own plans, following the traditional lines of policy laid down by His Majesty's capitalist Governments in both home and foreign affairs.

Lest it might be thought that his independence when he was last in office was merely due to the weakness of a minority government, Mr. MacDonald has kindly made his position clear in a recent number of the "Socialist Review":

"With the growth of the parliamentary power of the Labour Party is an increasing tendency for bodies and committees outside to give us our policy and our programme. . . . It is a great temptation for conferences and committees to prepare schemes and proposals, pass them in the frame of mind of a public meeting or a propaganda council, and by the votes of delegates who will never have to explain or defend them in the teeth of hostile criticism and down to the minutest detail, pass them and then hand them over to a body of unfortunate Members of Parlia-

ment, and especially Ministers, like orders issued to subordinates by military commanders. *It will never work, and now is the time to make that plain to all whom it may concern. . . .* No Parliamentary Party worth its salt will allow its work to be settled for it by bodies who will not have to face the Parliamentary attack. We know as well as any other coterie the spirit of the Socialist movement and its goals, and we shall not allow our battlegrounds and our marchings to be dictated to us against our judgment."

Here we have the leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party saying in language clear enough for the common herd, which put him where he is, to understand, that the rights of the organised Labour movement end at the point where, by its personal efforts and its finance, it has secured the return of Labour Members of Parliament. At that point the Parliamentary Labour Party—and especially Labour Ministers—carry on in complete independence of any "schemes and proposals" passed by conferences. The Annual Conferences of the Labour Party may come and go, they may lay down a policy, they may lay down a definite line of action; but Mr. MacDonald and his associates have their own views of the Socialist movement and its goals, and refuse to be dictated to. In fact, in Mr. MacDonald's view, the Parliamentary Labour Party is the supreme authority (at any rate, so long as he controls it).

This is a curious application of Mr. MacDonald's "democratic" principles; but it is the view which actually dominates not only the Labour Party in Parliament, but also many of the Labour Party groups on Borough Councils, Boards of Guardians and other local authorities. It is, fundamentally, the revolt of an "independent" against organised control; it is the refusal of the piper to play the tune for which he has accepted payment.

Of course, Mr. MacDonald may argue, with some justice, that as the Labour Ministers are paid by the Crown (or by the "Community"), they are acting in strict accordance with their duty in playing only tunes which will not displease the Crown or the "Community." But this line of argument would only emphasise the point that, at least when he assumes office, Mr. MacDonald claims the right to discontinue any allegiance he may previously have had to the organised Labour movement.

In such circumstances, the organised Labour movement, and especially the trade unions, may well ask what is the use of annual conferences, discussions of programme and policy, if Mr. MacDonald and his friends have already made up their minds that they will ignore any instructions and will settle for themselves what they will do and what they will not do, on what grounds they will battle and when they will march. For example, the Weir houses are condemned by the Trades Union Congress; but Mr. MacDonald decides to prevent any opposition to them in the House of Commons. Follow this a little further, and you will find Mr. MacDonald, as Labour Prime Minister, refusing to give credits

to Russia, and generally refusing to carry out any measures demanded by the Labour movement. He is in effect claiming to exercise a royal veto on any Labour demands, if in his judgment they are not suitable.

When the organised Labour movement comes to realise that this is the attitude of their future Prime Minister, they may ask not only whether conferences are any use, but whether Mr. MacDonald is any use. His conceptions of achieving power through Parliament really apply to himself; *he* is to achieve power, but as long as he remains in power the Labour movement is to be kept out of power. For the Labour movement to put him in power is, therefore, equivalent to handing over power to a dictator with views already widely diverging from those of the movement from which he gets his strength.

Mr. Jowett puts this point in his reply to Mr. MacDonald: "If Mr. MacDonald means that the whole method of the approach to Socialism must be decided by the Parliamentary Labour Party, we contest his view completely. That would be an intolerable dictatorship."

But Mr. Jowett does not examine the whole position of the Parliamentary Labour Party in the light of Mr. MacDonald's statement. The simple fact is that the Parliamentary Labour Party accepts its present leader, and shares (with honourable exceptions) his view that it is in some mysterious way invested with more authority than the Labour Party Conference or the Trades Union Congress; that in some mysterious way it has more insight into practical affairs than the organised Labour movement. Because of this, it represents "the Community," as against the "narrow interests of a section."

Yet the Parliamentary Labour Party has grown to its present stature on the money of the unions and on the efforts of the organised workers. That money and those efforts have been expended for a definite purpose—to secure the interests of the working class, not of "the community." If the interests of the working class are going to be decided by a small group, definitely refusing "dictation" from the organised working class, then the money and the efforts have been spent in vain.

Mr. MacDonald's challenge must be taken up. At the last Labour Party Conference, a resolution that—

"All future Labour Governments or representatives occupying important public positions shall be under the direction and control of the Labour Party Executive"

was got rid of by moving the previous question. After Mr. MacDonald's declaration of independence the trade unions themselves must see that this resolution is adopted, and that no person who refuses to accept such direction and control is eligible as a Labour candidate.

# The Victory of Pilsudsky & the Working Class

By KARL RADEK.

[As we go to press it is announced that Pilsudsky declines to accept the Presidency, and in a sulky letter to the Seim and Senate declares he has no confidence in them. The following article from Karl Radek, who is a well-known authority on Polish affairs, is an informative and interesting flashlight upon a corner of the map that is a veritable hornet's nest for the bourgeois diplomats of Europe.—Editor.]

Moscow : 15th May, 1926 : The Witos Government and the President of the Polish Republic, Wojciechowski have recognised that they are defeated, and have abdicated.

“**W**HAT has happened at Warsaw?” asks the Socialist paper “Robotnik.” “Neither a demonstration, nor a mutiny, but the revolt of the military democracy against the domination of the big landed proprietors and the capitalists.” That is what “Robotnik” writes, which, on the first day of the rising, had spoken about a “Revolution of indignation.” In Poland there has been more than one thing to give cause for indignation, but “a revolution of indignation” is a literary expression which does not allow one to see exactly who is indignant and who, pushed forward by this indignation, has undertaken a rising. “A revolution of the military democracy” is a more exact expression.

In reality, there has taken place in Warsaw, a rising of that part of the officers who belong to the old volunteers of Pilsudsky, against the domination of the professional officers supported by the Government of the capitalists and big landholders. Thanks to the very grave economic crisis which is going on now in the Polish Republic, the rising of Pilsudsky's partisans has found an echo among the mass of the soldiers.

The P.S.P., which is afraid of nothing so much as a real popular revolution, has summoned the workers to a General Strike, at the very moment when Pilsudsky was already victorious, when the Government was in flight, and when the strike could be nothing else but a short-lived demonstration. But already on May 15th, the P.S.P. curtly pronounces itself against any further intensification of the class struggle. It refuses the proposition of the Communists to form a united front in the fight against

reaction; it publishes an article entitled "Down with the Communists!" in which it brings together in a heap, all those libels so lavishly spread by the usual advocates of capitalist and land-owning reaction against the Communists.

### **Socialists Refuse United Front with C.P.**

The refusal of the P.S.P. to form a united front against the big landed proprietors shows that this Party is again helping the class of big landowners to defend the possession of their estates. Half of Polish industry is at a standstill. The Union of Soviet Republics offers it some relief, but the P.S.P. cries "Down with the Communists, the agents of Moscow!" and is going to send once again its Diamonds in search of new loans and fresh help from European capital. Thirty per cent. of Polish imports are made up from articles of luxury destined for the upper strata of the bourgeoisie and the nobility. To refuse to form a united front is to leave Polish industry helpless through lack of raw materials. The P.S.P., in short is afraid of the struggle of the working masses against commercial capital, against speculation, the struggle for a monopoly of foreign commerce, for a slogan put forward by the Communists.

The Polish partisans of compromise are convinced—and the P.S.P. shows it clearly—that it is enough to replace the former member of the P.S.P., Wojeiechowski, by Pilsudsky, also a former member of the P.S.P. as President of the Republic, and to put Bartel in the place of Witos in order that everything should become calm again. That is how M. Pilsudsky pictures things to himself. The first evening of the rising, this dictator declares to the journalists that he is tired, physically and morally, and that this physical and moral fatigue makes a fight against reaction impossible for him. He demands from the masses energy and faith in an improvement in the situation. But this energy exists neither in the P.S.P. nor in Pilsudsky.

### **A New Factor in Polish History.**

For the first time in the history of the Polish Republic, the army is in a state of civil war. For the first time it is not little groups of officers, but whole regiments which have participated in the civil war. This has profoundly shaken these simple soldiers who must have asked themselves the question: "For Pilsudsky or for the Government?" Such events don't happen without leaving traces behind them. Pilsudsky, who has arrived at power by proclaiming that the interests of the people must be protected against the capitalists and against the big landowners, will not defend them. He will not be able to bring about the sub-

mission of the army to his orders in the name of the constitution, since he has taken the power by means of a military rising. Pilsudsky promises justice to the white Russians and to the Lithuanians, but there is no justice possible without the liquidation of the big Polish landowners. He will not fight against them, but the masses of Ukrainian, white Russian and Lithuanian peasants will strengthen their fight against the Polish "Schlachta." The working masses connect the conquest of power by Pilsudsky with their hope for an improvement in their existence. But what improvement in their lot is possible without a profound change in this devastated Poland?

Pilsudsky and the P.S.P. are afraid of these deep changes, for they are afraid of entering into a struggle against the bourgeoisie. The workers are going to present them with their own demands and will expect them to fulfil them. Marshal Pilsudsky has returned to the Belvedere. The first time it was with the permission of the bourgeoisie; this time it is as the result of a civil war and at the head of revolting regiments. That is not the same thing. So the second entry of Pilsudsky to the Belvedere will have different consequences from the first.



# BOOK REVIEWS

## THE RISE OF MODERN INDUSTRY.

**The Rise of Modern Industry**, by J. L. and Barbara Hammond, 280 pp. 10s. 6d. net. Methuen.

The common impression that the circumstances of the British worker have always, however bad, been better than those of the unfortunates in other benighted countries, is effectually dispelled by this book. The account of the living conditions imposed upon the English masses during the industrial revolution is so shocking that one is depressed by something near to despair that a different sort of revolution was not quickly provoked. The Russians, under Czardom, or the French peasantry before 1789, were not so oppressed, while the common people of ancient Rome lived like gentlemen in comparison.

This is one of the most striking facts demonstrated by Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, for they not only precede their analysis of the origins and development of capitalist industry by a discussion of commerce and industry in Roman times and during the Middle Ages, but frequently contrast the condition of the new masses with the old. The comparison is one which denies progress.

"The typical figures of the early Roman Empire would have been astonished to learn that in the districts of South Wales, where men had arisen in a few years to such wealth as would have rivalled the wealth of Atticus or Herodes, the poorer classes had to go a mile for water, waiting in a queue a great part of the night, that the chief town of this district had neither public lighting nor drainage. Rich men in the Roman Empire spent their money

on things that were for common enjoyment as such men in the Middle Ages spent their money on things that were for common salvation. But in the England of the early industrial revolution all diversions were regarded as wrong, because it was believed that successful production demanded long hours, a bare life, a mind without temptation to think or to remember, to look before or behind. . . . The purpose of man's life was not to fight or to pray, to contemplate or to create, to enjoy or to become, but to make profits, profits for himself, if a master, profits for another, if a servant. . . . Everything turned to profit. The towns had their profitable dirt, their profitable smoke, their profitable slums, their profitable disorder, their profitable ignorance, their profitable despair. The curse of Midas was on this society."

No country suffered so much as England, because, as the authors explain, the period was preceded by social changes which left everything ready for unfettered oppression and exploitation. The raw material for the proletariat had been created by the ruthless destruction of the rights of the peasantry in the villages, and the beggaring of the artisans in the towns. The gospel of liberty which had won victory for the peasantry of France, was translated into "Liberalism" in England, the doctrine of freedom to rob, freedom to oppress, freedom from all interference with profit-making.

It is a terrible story, and it has seldom been presented so concisely but effectively as in this work. Mr. and Mrs. Hammond rarely comment, they relate, but by virtue of their literary excellence they produce a real readable book, stimulating and thought-provoking.

The survey, which does not con-

tinue beyond the middle of the nineteenth century, the liquidation of the worst abuses by the work of the trade unions being merely mentioned, ends on a note of vague optimism, pious rather than justified. The student, however, amply enlightened as to the roots of capitalism, will form his own conclusions in regard to the task of uprooting it.

J.M.

### British Imperialism in East Africa.

Prepared by the Labour Research Department, 162, Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1. Price 1s. Trade union edition, 6d.

Most British workers understand, from more or less bitter experience, the workings of capitalism and the methods of exploitation employed in this country. But few workers are acquainted with the conditions that obtain in East Africa.

How the African natives had their land taken from them and were forcibly conscripted and held in virtual slavery to work for British capitalists, and how the economic position of the East African worker has its effect on the British worker, is clearly explained in "British Imperialism in East Africa."

Capitalism in this country utilises the resources produced by the native to reduce the standard of the worker in this country. To-day it is demonstrably true that as the industrial struggle develops in Britain, so British capitalism will turn more and more towards the cheap labour of the colonies. The struggle of the African workers, therefore, is essentially the same as that of the British workers at home.

The complete story of exploitation showing the British financial interest in East Africa is ably set out, and all workers who want further facts on the intricate workings of capitalism are advised to secure a copy of this interesting booklet. B.

### DISARMAMENT.

"Disarmament," by Prof. Noel Baker, Hogarth Press. 12s. 6d.

Bourgeois "humanitarians" have had continual attacks of nervousness ever since the discovery that the end of the war merely gave a fillip to murder-machinery. Lewisite,

fast tanks, mammoth bombing planes, every development seems to make certain that the next war will wipe out civilisation rather completely unless the working class take steps to prevent it.

Says Prof. Baker:

"The gas bomb is by far the most effective weapon for use from aircraft . . . This form of attack upon great cities such as London or Paris might entail the loss of millions of lives in a few hours. The gas bombs employed would contain gas in liquid form, the liquid would be released on impact and expand to many hundred times its volume. The gas clouds so formed would be heavier than air and would thus flow into the cellars and tubes in which the population had taken refuge. As the bombardment continued, the gas would thicken up until it flowed through the streets of the cities in rivers. All gas experts are agreed that it would be impossible to devise means to protect the civil population from this form of attack."

The shadow of this nightmare has resulted in a plethora of disarmament schemes, drawn up by various "experts," such as Lord Esher, and occasionally dallied with by governments keen on window dressing, or when they have found it necessary to manoeuvre for position, as at the Washington Conference.

This work is a handbook of such formulae, mostly centred on the League of Nations, but Prof. Baker's claim that "no difficulty has been consciously avoided," is absurd in view of his glaring omission of the fundamental one, the nature of capitalist economy, which necessitates war as an essential factor of its system. He limits himself to merely mentioning the evils of private enterprise in arms, with the consequent activity of the big armament firms to provoke wars.

One can discern, however, peeping through the author's conclusions, the vague realisation of the impossibility of disarmament under capitalism, when it becomes clear that the unregenerate war-mind can trick every attempted fetter somehow. The loophole of all the schemes is obvious in the chapters on aerial and chemical warfare. The ideal commercial plane is the perfect bomber, and the chemical industry is capable of immediate conversion to the large-scale production of

poison-gas or high explosive "without even the knowledge of the workers engaged."

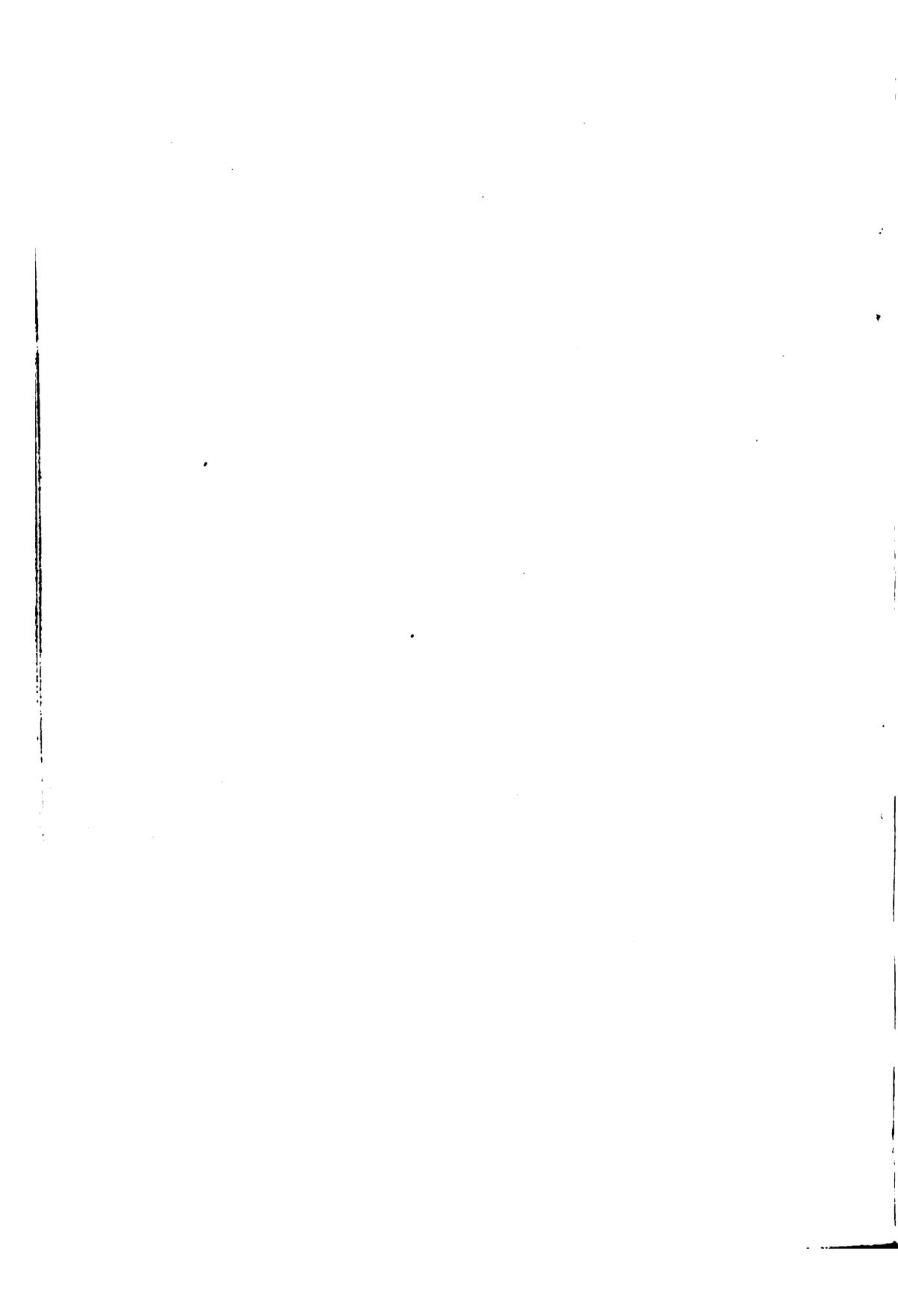
In consequence, Prof. Baker's book, so well-documented and comprehensive, proves really the bankruptcy, even if not the danger, of this "Liberal" talk of disarmament. Pacifism is a "dud" cause, unless used solely as a tool to uproot the fundamental cause of war—capitalism.  
J.M.

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**Imperialism—The Last Stage of Capitalism.** By N. Lenin. Published by C.P.G.B., 16, King St. Covent Garden, W.C.2. Price 1s. 6d.

At last we have a complete English translation of Lenin's great study of Imperialism. An American edition appeared some time ago, but for some obscure reason, the important political conclusions of the end chapters were omitted. In this new companion volume to the Lenin Library issued by the Communist Party, the book is complete.

The appearance of this translation direct from the Russian edition is timely in view of the critical stage all the imperialist countries are passing through at present. Next month we will have a full review in our July issue from Arthur McManus. But readers should not wait. Get the book now. B.



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## **Recruits Wanted--Now**

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**I**T is many years ago since Karl Marx declared that trade unions work well as centres of resistance to capitalist oppression, but that they fail from limiting their activity to merely questions of wages and partial demands.

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