

# **The Struggle in England.**

The Tory Government, the Labour Party and the Proletariat.

By J. T. Murphy.

The attack of the Tory Government on the working class comes at a time when the British Imperialists are engaged upon one of the most far reaching imperialist adventures of its history. It comes at a time when scores of thousands of troops have been landed in China for the purpose of shattering the Chinese Revolution, and the partitioning of China as a colony of the Imperial powers. It comes at a time when war is actually being waged without the declaration of war, when defenseless towns are bombarded and the masses of workes and peasants of China are being subjected to a frightful terrorism. Twelve months ago the great mass actions of the British workers, beginning on May the first, held off this great robber campaign. But the treachery and cowardice of the labour leaders in the succeeding months and their open support of this imperial brigandage present us with a situation wherein the British Government has been left, and is being left free to pursue its offensive in all directions almost unhindered.

The government, recognising that great resentment was developing among the masses against its policy in relation to the Chinese Revolution, determined to have its hands free for action. It therefore launched its trade union legislation with a two-fold object in view. It calculated that it would act as a

means of diverting the labour movement from attending to the issues of the Chinese Revolution on the one hand, and on the other, it could fetter the trade unions against mass action of any kind before it would be possible for sweeping changes to be made in the leadership of the trade unions.

Its calculations were well founded. It knew the British labour leaders thoroughly. It had taken the measure of their cowardice in the General Strike and the Miner's Lockout. It had got the measure of its control over the minds of the labour leaders and their loyalty to capitalism on every issue which had been raised during the last year. It knew quite well, nay more its leaders openly taunted the labour movement. For example, **Lord Birkenhead** publicly told its followers not to be alarmed at the stage fight which would be prepared and not to be perturbed by the great noise which would be forthcoming. He said that **Mr. Wheatley** would walk across the stage clumsily with **Mr. MacDonald**, but that all this talk and noise did not really mean that they would offer a real resistance to the Government. The Government had taken the measure of the Opposition and would go ahead with all that they had planned.

The plans and the taunts of the Government have been amply justified. On April 29th, a special conference of the Trade Union Executives met in London to prepare their plans of opposition to the Trade Union Legislation. The Labour Party representatives were there to re-inforce the General Council of the Trade Union Congress. **Mr. Hicks** marched across the platform followed by **Mr. Citrine**, **Mr. Henderson** and **Mr. Bevin**. One and all declared that the legislation was a conscienceless effort to disarm the workers' resistance against the lowering of their standard of life. They censured the efforts of the Government to damage the Labour Party. They stuttered and spluttered against the Legislation. They called upon the workers to show energetic resistance to all these efforts to deprive them of the rights given by Law. But did they consider a single suggestion as to how the workers should manifest this resistance? Not in the least. Indeed, when **Gossip** of the Furnishing Trades attempted to move an amendment to the cowardly resolution of the General Council and the Labour Party, so panic-stricken was the conference of bureaucrats at the slightest possibility of repeating the May Day decision of 1926 that before his resolution could be read, without even having heard what the resolution was, they were voting it down.

The demands of **Gossip**, **Cook** and **Brown**, that this resolution should be discussed was pooh-poohed. The bureaucrats had made up their minds to continue the policy of cowardly betrayal which had become their characteristic policy since the General Strike of 1926. All that they could offer was a resolution of protest against the legislation and a transfer of the fight to the Parliamentary Labour Party. It was a complete capitulation before the Government, a surrender to all its demands in the beginning, a turning of its campaign into a hot air campaign of propaganda for the next general election. All the talk of defending the rights of the trade unions has been answered by a surrender of the trade unions and a complete confession of the bankruptcy of the trade union bureaucracy before the attack of the government. To the deeds of the government they have answered only with words, and the government is unperturbed.

But still greater is their crime. Instead of using this Conference to explain to the workers the relation of this attack to the policy of the imperialists on all fronts, to expose the attack upon the trade unions as a part of the attack of imperialism upon the workers of China and the Soviet Union; instead of using the Conference as a means to mobilise the masses to stop the war upon China and to bring the government down, it refused even to discuss the war on China. Their crimes of treachery which they committed in 1914 in relation to the Imperialist war have thus been repeated openly and deliberately in an unpardonable manner. Their phrases about international solidarity which they uttered on May 1st, are a mockery of everything for which the working class movement strives and endures. Their opposition to the deeds of the government is a wordy opposition, their deeds are the deeds of capitulation.

Nevertheless, May Day in England witnessed a tremendous mass activity. Never before have the organs of the Labour movement been brought together so completely even for demonstrative purposes. Millions of workers participated in the demonstrations. The Communist Party and the Minority Movement have answered the government with the only answer that

was possible. They challenged the Trade Union Conference with the demand that it should prepare to answer the government's repudiation of all strikes by giving them the taste of a **well prepared General Strike**. They appealed to the conference to unite the campaign against the trade union legislation with the campaign for the stopping of the war on the Chinese Revolution. They urged that the campaign should not only take the form of words but should be a campaign of deeds, that the Opposition in Parliament should not simply be a wordy opposition but an opposition that would obstruct all business until the Bill was withdrawn and the Government stopped its war policy upon the Chinese Revolution.

Through the organs of the Party, Minority Movement and the Left Wing Movement and by great leaflet distribution all over the country this message has been delivered. Conferences have been organised in the most important towns, the subject of which has been the above campaign for decisive action against the government. May Day will therefore be witness to this campaign of our Party and the Minority Movement surging into all the labour demonstrations. Try as they may to exclude the revolutionary forces on this occasion they will not succeed. The revolutionary forces are persistently exposing the treachery of the labour leadership, its capitulation before the attack of the government and insistently demanding that a mighty drive be made to transform the mass sentiment against the Trade Union Legislation and the war on China into decisive mass action.

May Day, 1927, in Britain has witnessed millions of workers on the march, but it was the Communist movement alone which held aloft the banner of international class solidarity.

---