

THE TASKS BEFORE THE MINORITY MOVEMENT CONFERENCE

By HARRY POLLITT

THE best indication of the effects of the capitalist decline in this country is to be found in the entire change of the official attitude and policy in the Trade Union Movement as far as democracy is concerned. It was once the boast of the British Trade Union leadership that in contradistinction to the Continental Trade Union Movement, there was a place for everyone inside our unions, irrespective of political opinion. This may be said to have been true in the period of the expansion of capitalism, and perhaps during the few years of the post-war trade boom; but since 1920 with the beginning of the economic depression which represents the decline of British capitalism as far as its basic industries are concerned, there has been a continuous attack on the revolutionary workers which has increased in proportion to the growing inability of British capitalism to recover its pre-war status.

The decline of the basic industries of this country has raised very sharply the rôle of trades unionism in the class struggle, and in the new period the trade unions have to recognise the inescapable fact that the simple trade union struggle of pre-war days has gone for ever, and the issue now is a revolutionary issue.

All the light and airy talk of the prospects of capitalist stabilisation glosses over the incontrovertible fact that whatever partial stabilisation has been achieved within the last two or three years has been achieved at the expense of the workers. The basic problem now facing the unions is either to resist by direct action on a united scale any further attempts at stabilisation (which inevitably mean new attacks on the workers) or to go down on a scale that will make the defeats of the past five years seem petty and insignificant.

It is because the present leaders of the Trade Union Movement, as exemplified in the General Council, see quite clearly that the challenge thrown out by capitalism is a revolutionary challenge, that they have completely surrendered the trade union fight for better conditions and the propaganda and organisation to achieve Socialism, which we have been informed were the ultimate objectives of trades unionism.

The new stage of rationalisation and industrial peace, now the order of the day, has been entered upon at the termination of a definite stage in the capitalist offensive. This first stage culminated in the defeat of the General Strike, miners' lock-out, and the subsequent adoption of legislation to cripple and destroy the political and economic rights of the trade unions. Every trade union leader of the reformist school to-day is extolling the virtues and necessity of rationalisation: it has become the stock-in-trade phrase of everyone of them, particularly when they are most anxious to cover up some impending attack on the working class.

Rationalisation requires peace in industry in order to facilitate the launching of new attacks on the workers. Peace in industry requires a leadership that will surrender the trade union fight, and then resort to the inevitable result of such a policy—an attack on the revolutionary workers. Even though this attack on trade union rights involves the destruction of age-long traditions as far as the British Trade Union Movement is concerned, the General Council leaders of the Trades Union Congress have proved themselves even more ready to embark upon this new policy than the most reactionary Continental leaders. The more they have compromised themselves with Mondism, the more they have attacked the revolutionary workers, not hesitating (as the logic of their position necessitates) to break trade union rules and constitutions in order that this can be done.

They will go further, as they are bound to, for their present policy of discrimination against the revolutionary workers in the trade unions is but the forerunner to the expulsion and dismissal from the factories and workshops of all known revolutionary workers, once the employers and General Council come together in the National Economic Council, despite all the lip service

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that is being paid to trade union recognition, &c. There will be no machinery used for preventing such workers from being victimised, as this victimisation will not be carried out under the leadership of Mond, but under the leadership of Bevin, Thomas and Citrine.

Yet it is perfectly clear that even with all these measures the capitalists have not solved their basic problem of being able to regain for this country its pre-war status of the workshop of the world, and new attacks are obviously being prepared. These attacks are going to take place in those sections of industry where leaders like Bevin and Thomas have been labouring under the delusion that their surrender to Mondism would stave off such attacks.

It is interesting at this stage to point out how completely the existing leaders misrepresent the position in order to cover up their treacherous conduct. Bevin, for example, speaking at Swansea on April 28, 1928, was reported in the *Daily Herald* as follows:—

The members of the T.U.C. were now engaged in discussions with a representative group of employers on a wide range of problems. They were asked: How can you go into conference with people who tried to beat you in 1926, people who have fought you? His answer was that he regarded the change of attitude of these people as an indication that Labour won the first round.

The members of the Transport and General Workers' Union can take this statement at its real value, and prepare for a new attack upon their existing conditions.

Even more barefaced was the speech recently made by Thomas at the annual general meeting of the N.U.R. at Bristol on July 3, when he said, in supporting a resolution in favour of endorsing the action of the General Council in meeting the Mond Group:—

Do not let us waste our time talking about Capitalism, a new social order and a change of system. When the workers make up their mind for a change they will get it by using their intelligence at the ballot box.

He was immediately followed by Cramp, who said:—

There were some people who still believed in a senile theory of Socialism which says the issue lies between the employers and the workers. It did not. It might have done before the war.

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Minority Movement Conference. This year's Minority Movement Conference will surpass its previous conferences in its ability to face up to all the implications of the existing situation. It has already, by its work since last August, consolidated and solidified the revolutionary opposition in the British Trade Union Movement. The visible testimony to this fact can be found first in the vehement nature of the attack upon us, and secondly, in the fact that Cook and Maxton have taken a public stand, while other waverers on the General Council are being compelled to define publicly their position one way or the other.

Readers of the *LABOUR MONTHLY* who have any influence in their organisations should see to it that delegates are sent to the Fifth Annual Conference of the National Minority Movement. This is necessary in order that the decisions arrived at may form the basis of a representative fighting programme that will not only compel the Swansea Trades Union Congress to hesitate before it commits itself to a further period of surrender under the leadership of those who now dominate the General Council, but by intensified work in the factories and in the union branches, Trades Councils and district committees, will win new adherents to the Minority Movement. Such a volume of mass support will cleanse the Movement from the existing Mondist leadership and ensure that British trades unionism will work in close conjunction with the revolutionary political party of the working class, thus forging the weapon that will prevent further stabilisation taking place at the expense of the workers. Only thus will the workers be enabled to march steadily forward to the conquest of political power and the establishment of workers' control of industry.