Rank and file unite to KILL THE BILL

All out on Tuesday

THE NATIONWIDE STRIKE on Tuesday is the most important political and industrial action by the labour movement for 25 years and more. Hundreds of thousands of workers from every industry and every part of Britain will down tools and demonstrate their determination to kill the Tories' anti-union Bill.

The millionaire press, the Tory leaders, Labour's right wing and the TUC General Council have all condemned the strike. With such company against us, we are more than ever convinced that the strike is right.

The press shrieks about 'an attack on democracy', about a small minority trying to overturn the wishes of the majority. They tell us that the Tories have a mandate to introduce their harsh penalties against trade unionists.

They forget to tell you that the Tories were elected on a minority vote last June. No mandate! But that's not to say we think a Labour government today would be acting any differently to the Tories.

Opened the door

It was the Wilson government that opened the door for the Tories by attempting to force through its infamous document in Place of Strife that differed only in details from the Tory Bill.

There are other minorities the press don't tell you about. The financiers and moneylenders who export capital and deliberately create a crisis every time the most timid of Labour governments is elected. Are they friends of democracy?

The captains of industry, the bosses of GEC-AEI for example, who close down factories and throw thousands onto the dole queues. No one elects them, yet they have more power than 500 MPs put together. Are they friends of democracy?

Ignore all the ranting about 'democracy'. On Tuesday we are countering the democratic decision to strike by hundreds of thousands of workers to the right of the 2 per cent of the population that owns 80 per cent of the country's wealth to take away our hard-won trade union rights.

Fine strike leaders

These 'democrats' want to fine and even jail strike leaders, smash the closed shop, ban sympathy strikes and break the back of shopfloor organisation. We have to mobilise to stop them.

Tuesday is the beginning, not the end of the struggle. We must prepare for bigger strikes and demonstrations in the New Year. We must demand that our union leaders declare now that they will fight the Bill and even if it does become law will refuse to co-operate with it.

Working class action in other countries shows that massive defiance can make such laws unworkable. What will the British employing class do - jail nine million trade unionists?

We have a big task on our hands, to convince millions more working men and women to join the fight. And that fight must be a political one, against the Tories, the Labour fakers and the whole rotten capitalist system, not just the Bill.

But 8 December is a great start. To all those striking and marching on Tuesday, we say: Well done - and go on fighting.

LONDON MARCH 8 DECEMBER: assemble Tower Hill 8.30am. March via Fleet Street to Speakers Corner. Lobby parliament from 3pm. SOGAT rally Central Hall, Westminster, 2.30pm
Councils of action must lead the fight

THE TORY ATTACK on the unions is an attack on the whole working class. It demands a response by the whole working class. The experience of workers faced with anti-union laws, both directly and indirectly, has led workers to conclude that the only effective policy to defeat the laws is to be prepared to break them and to support all who come up against the laws. Nothing else will be good enough.

Each such policy cannot be sustained simply by fine resolutions and bold slogans. In every locality, we must strive to get together all those trade unionists and members of industry - whoever that agreement - who are against the laws.

We need COUNCILS OF ACTION whose aim is the destruction of the powers of the laws.

What sort of body must these be? They must be authentic working-class organisations. To mean anything, they must be composed of delegates from the factories and branches and districts. These delegates must agree on one central question: the urgent need to fight against the introduction of an operation of these laws, with all the weapons in the working-class arsenals.

Their guiding principle must be: we do not respect laws introduced by the bosses to attack the working class.

One thing they must not be is talking shops. That is why we propose the trade unions and the socialism by workers movement must be made clear that their industries are ready to contribute to meaningful action to defeat the laws. There must be no bowing-ties to individuals because they are full-time officials. All workers must be represented who pledge themselves to assist an action must be invited to take part.

What must the Councillors of Action do? They must, firstly, organise among the rank and file in the factories, schools, and the legislation and the need to oppose it. This means organising public meetings, leafleting industrial areas, and lobbies to factories and depots, comparatively high wages in return for job security with a pension at the end have contributed.

In 1969, however, three years of productivity bargaining and the effects of a Labour government culminated in the first official POST Office strike, in 1964.

Speed-up, loss of job satisfaction, ill-thought-out and even more badly implemented in branch and depot to protect these policies to maintain the pressure on the national union leadership.

The need for these Councils of Action to fight in defence of working-class organisations is immediate. The Tories are pushing ahead with their policies. We must not let them set the tempo.

THE CASE FOR SOCIALIST POLITICS

The introduction of anti-union laws is forcing many workers to see the need for political action as well as trade union action. The reasons are simple.

In recent years the unions have seen many of their members join movements that have enabled them to keep up with rising prices. The nature of the government's own measures is witness to this. After all, in the 1930s the existence of the Ministry of Labour and the policy to keep wages down - mass unemployment did the trick much more effectively.

Such a situation could take place then without meeting much resistance. Now, however, employers try to buy off such resistance with the蝇矢 leaflet, the deal to avoid industrial action.

But not all sections of workers have enough power to keep up with inflation. Some, like bussen or teachers, cannot simply hit profits when they work hard and set the pace for the bosses. And those who cannot work - the old, the sick, the unemployed - suffer as prices rise and their benefits do not. The Tory attack on the welfare state has made these workers' lives worse.

Political action by workers is needed to resist anti-union laws, support groups of workers, change their job conditions, challenge the political policies to keep wages down - mass unemployment did the trick much more effectively.

People like Harold Wilson and Barbara Castle, pioneers of anti-union laws only eighteen months ago say now that only by voting for them in the next election can the workers' laws and welfare cuts be ended. But workers do not need to wait five years for the privilege of putting a cross on a piece of paper for a candidate who, when elected, will ignore the wishes of ordinary workers.

When groups of workers went on strike to demand improved working conditions, the factories had to halt their work. Workers are trying to impose policies in the interests of the mass of the population on the government. The 8 December strike is a political action. Again, it involves an attempt to make the working class feel about the world at work and at home.

It is this kind of political action that will defeat the anti-union laws and welfare.

But millions of workers who will fight to defend their own economic conditions are not yet prepared to support such political action. Even among those striking on 8 December we many who believe that politics means democracy on the parliamentary Labour Party.

That is why a revolutionary organisation has to be built within the working class. In every factory, every office and building site there needs to be militants, who, at the same time defending the economic interests of particular groups of workers, agit for united working-class action - in the short term to defeat the Tory measures, in the longer term to carry through a complete transformation of society.
The lessons of the 1920s

The 1920s - a decade of workers' militancy and determination broken by the concession of trade unions to employers and cowardly trade union leaders. As the British labour movement prepares to meet the new Tory-employer offensive, a re-analysis of the 1920s will help to arm us for the vital struggles ahead.

The coming anti-union legislation is the most serious attack on the working class movement since 1927. The Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act, it was 20 years before this Act was repealed by the post-war Labour government.

What made possible the savage 1927 attack on the trade unions by the government and the employers? It was 20 years to defeat the new Tory plant.

Militants should take heart from a historical comparison which suggests that the working class movement is today in a far stronger position to repel the offensive of the capitalist class.

The 1927 Act - known as the 'blacklegs charter' - was brought in after the shameful capitulation to the employers by the Council of the TUC in the General Strike of 1926.

Through the Act, the government made illegal not only the future general strikes but also all sympathetic strikes which the courts judged were designed to support the strike.

The Act also forbade mass picketing and arrested ordinary picketing by applying to it the blanket term 'intimidation'.

A restricted clause suggested that it might be illegal for anyone unrepresented in the strike to refuse employment on the terms of the employer.

Unions of state employees and the government were forbidden to affiliate to the TUC or the Labour Party. The Act also protected suits from disciplinary action by their unions.

Heavy fine

Any trade union leading or taking part in a so-called illegal strike was liable to a heavy fine of imprisonment of up to two years.

Union treasurers were made liable for civil damages by the employers, which removed the immunity granted by the Act of 1906.

Finally, a blow at the right of having a political voice, the TUC or the Labour Party. The Act also helped suit from disciplinary action by their unions.

The Act was described as the 'most reactionary measure of British trade union legislation placed on the statute book since the evil Combination Laws of 1799'.

The trade union movement in 1925 was already on the defensive after its defeat in the General Strike. There was little industrial resistance to the Act.

It was a far cry from the high tide of working class militancy that swelled up after the First World War, and threatened to sweep away the capitalist system throughout Europe.

The period immediately following the end of the First World War in 1918 was one of apparent prosperity of sharply rising prices and wages and of a rapid increase in trade union and Labour Party membership.

In these boom years which lasted until the end of 1920, the working class was on the offensive against the employers. The course of this period the struggle centred mainly around the organisation of strike action.

In almost every trade, the unions demanded the eight-hour day on the 24 hour, and in most organised industries these demands were won during the first part of 1919.

In January 1919, major strikes over hours were fought on the Clyde and in Belfast, extending over a number of months. Both the strike were declared in both these centres.

On the Clyde, the movement was in full swing in the summer of 1919 and was under the leadership of the Clyde Workers' Committee.

On the eve of the 20s: the red flag flies in George Square, Glasgow.

Workers raised the red flag, the unions waved the white...

Part one of a new series by SABBY SAGALL

Troops march to restore order in Glasgow in February 1919

It was met by a large display of military force by the government. Neither the Clyde nor the Belfast strike was supported by the national trade union leaders, who were afraid to isolate both struggles.

Meanwhile, the miners were preparing for battle. In January 1919, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain drew up a programme of demands, including a 50 per cent wage increase, a 24 hour day, and nationalisation with a measure of workers' participation.

Mutual aid

The miners voted by 615,164 to 105,282 in favour of strike action to win these demands. In 1914, the Triple Alliance had been created by the unions of miners, railwaymen and transport workers. Formed on the initiative of the Miners' Federation, it was to under pressure of their rank and file militants, it promised to be a powerful alliance for mutual aid.

The miners' leaders were now consulting with the leaders of the transport and railway unions, who had themselves put forward a programme of demands. The government faced the possibility of a general strike with revolutionary potential.

Prime-Minister Lloyd George managed to stave off this threat with a Royal Commission on the miners, the famous Jenkins Commission, which recommended nationalisation. But when the government broke its promise to implement the Commission's findings, the moment of greatest crisis had passed.

The government had bought time by using the Royal Commission as a safety-valve.

In the autumn of 1919 came the railwaymen's strike, denounced by Lloyd George as an 'anarchist conspiracy'. Within a week, a settlement favourable to the railwaymen was secured. There were to be no wage-cuts, as had been threatened, existing wage-rates were stabilized, and the lowest grade won an increase.

There had been complete unity amongst the railwaymen, and the London and North Eastern were not divided into tabling by the separate commission of their own demands.

There was considerable support for the railwaymen's struggle, but the left-wing Labour movement was not united. It was not until after the General Strike of 1926 that the miners' leaders had the opportunity to bring their militants to a point of readiness to be called upon to support the miners.

VITAL READING FOR ALL MILITANTS

The Employers' Offensive

Productivity deals and how to fight them by TONY CLIFF

The Struggle for Socialism

The case for revolutionary politics by GERRY PRESTON

NEXT WEEK: 1926

—the great betrayal
THE GOVERNMENT is looking with concern at the strength of the 8 December strikes against their plans for anti-union laws. They know that they can dismiss even the most vociferous placards of the trade union leaders no more than verbal cannonballs but if the mass of workers really decide to take action against the threat to their hard-won rights and living standards and make the factories and the streets the battleground, then the Tories could find themselves on a loser.

It is clear that the Tories would lose with parliament as well as without. Then they would have to be implemented. As a Tory Minister at the Department of Employment, Mr. P. B.茅 ssly, has said, the Industrial Relations Bill would ‘hardly be effective’ unless there is some way for it to co-operate. The action they so badly need is that of some of the union leaders, men who can be bribed to sit on the new National Industrial Relations Court and the local Industrial Tribunals and who will support management by ‘cooling off’ periods and compulsory ballots.

It is no doubt that many union officials would be quite happy to see this legislation go through and accept the worst paid jobs that go with it. Those officials that are only too well aware of their pay when they come down and tell us to get back to work the ‘you’ve got all there is to get! brigades, those who reject militant action at every step. Tory laws would give them all the excuses they need to knuckle down to the boss.

by DAVE LAWSON

Transport and General Workers’ Union

In an interview following the publication of the Tolles’ plans, Les Cannon, the electricians’ leader, found it almost impossible to find fault with them.

Lawrence Cooper of the General and Municipal Workers has come out against a boycott of the new Tolles’ machinery. His members, he says, will accept the law.

Yet if it comes to it, the strength of rank and file action in opposing the laws will decide whether any union leaders do collaborate with the Tolles-Lord George could ride the Pilkington storm because it was only an isolated section of workers in revolt. A broad-based revolt over the union laws would stop him in his tracks.

While many workers turn naturally to the TUC to give a lead in fighting the attack on the unions there can be few who really believe that the TUC has either the will or the ability to launch an effective fight against the laws.

The plans for a rally at the Albert Hall on 12 January will hardly cause Robert Carr to lose much sleep. The main speaker is to be that well-known champion of union rights – Harold Wilson.

At the same time Vic Feather has been putting forward the idea of a meeting of employers willing to drop its legislation if the TUC were to support the workers – would agree to a wage freeze, he’s like going into battle holding a white flag.

Many TUC spokesmen view the problems of industry in much the same way as the Tolles. Unofficial strikes are seen as attempts instead of indications of workers’ determination to win themselves a little justice in a glaringly unequal society.

We are opposed to compulsory trade unionism and the defence of shop stewards. We are against anti-trade union laws and any steps taken to make these law effective.

We are for a 100 per cent trade union defence and the defence of shop stewards.

We are for the nationalisation of banks, banks and major industries without compensation.

We are for the introduction of a planned economy in which resources are distributed according to social need and not to profitability.

We are opposed to all ruling class policies and organisations. We are opposed to all policies and management with the support of the Labour Party and the New Party.

The struggle for socialism is the struggle for a better life for young workers.

Workers power and a world based on human rights will only come about when the majority of men can control their own lives and not be the victims of others’ power.

Hugh Scallon

In the last few years we have seen changes in leadership in the major unions – Hugh Scallon and the AEEF, Jack Jones and the CWU and Lawrence Daly and the miners’ movement. But these have been the most important breakthroughs.

At the TUC last week, Hugh Scallon of the AEEF called us to pledge from us that there would be no anti-union laws – unacceptable if they become law. Such a pledge would strengthen the fight to stop the laws.

Lawrence Daly has been far too embarrassed by his failure to lead the majority of miners who voted for strike action over their pay claim to come out strongly for a really effective fight against the laws.

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clear from the outset that the case must be argued. An attempt by the Tory government to reduce economic expenditure on the mines shows clearly, the party is divided, on basic issues whenever the rank and file begin to move. So where is the new politics to come from?

To answer this we must understand why the Tories and Labour before them are trying to attack the workers’ organisations. It isn’t just out of the old Tory spight against the unions. That’s nothing new.

The Tory attack is due to the changes which make many think the capitalistic system is different to that of the 1930s.

The Tories aren’t stupid. They know full employment has led to a shift of power to the shop floor, with the growth in the strength of shop stewards and unofficial rank and file organisations. That is what their Bill is all about. It can only be built on the basis of a political understanding of the fact that in this particular the employment class needs to attack workers’ organisations.

ORGANISATION

The new politics in the labour movement can only come from a political organisation of a new type, that sees the struggle as a total one to change society.

The domination of capitalism and capitalist ideas make most workers accept the system most of the time through the unending routine of a lifetime of factory work, the pressures of the school, the family, the press and television.

Only through struggle against the employing class can workers gain a sense of their collective power. But these struggles are doomed, fragmented, uneven. Their lessons are easily lost, forgotten, or never clearly understood.

Because the workers’ only strength is in their collective power they cannot leave the job of seeing society as a whole to a small specialized group. The capitalist class can do this.

Their power lies not in their numbers but in their ownership and control of wealth and the means of producing it. So each worker has the right to follow their own private interests, and leave it to the employers and the state’s politicians to manage their collective affairs.

The problem of all the pressures of capitalism the working class has its militants with a knowledge of the traditions and history of the workers’ organisations. The only difference between Tory and Labour is over how best to do this in the interests of the employed.

But if these alternatives are not grouped in a common democratic and centralised organisation their power to carry the rest of the class with them is weakened and the ruling class, with its centralised state, will carry the day.

Such a workers’ organisation can pool the separate experiences of each of its members is different sections of the working class, together with the skills and abilities of socialist intellectuals. Only within such an organisation can the militants get an overall view of capitalism society as a whole, as it changes, and as the strategy of the employing class changes.

THE STRUGGLE

By STEPHEN MARKS

NEW POLITICS MUST SPEARHEAD THE STRUGGLE

by Stephen Marks

Socialist Worker’s ‘sad spectacle’

by Stephen Marks

THE SAD SPECTACLE OF LAWRENCE DALY

Perhaps the saddest spectacle of the last week was that of Lord Lawrence Daly being protected from the anger of strikers, a line of policemen. Even more pitiful was his weeping face with its0000

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WHAT WE SAID ON 21 NOVEMBER

Lawrence Daly on Socialist Worker’s ‘sad spectacle’

YOUR EDITORIAL: ‘The Sad Spectacle of Lawrence Daly’ (21 November) was a stunning rebuke of the attitude of some sections of the Socialist Worker. You describe as witch-hunting my condemnation of intimidation and violence by a small minority of miners, but in this was the unison of the view of the executive of the NUM right, left and centre, because it happens to be true.

If a very small minority of miners who indulged in such tactics did a disservice to themselves and to the others who participated in the lobby. Does Socialist Worker approve of these tactics or does it not? Public opinion will be correspondingly judged by those miners who may read it.

Prior to my election, and since, I advocated selective strikes at the official policy of the union. That, however, rests on a very small minority view. It is true that, whilst saying last year’s strike was one of its worst grievances on surface hours, I did not say it wasn’t. It is not because it was premature but because, as secretary, I have no authority to support an official strike.

The government has opened its campaign and, then, more recently, for an unofficial strike is ‘permissible within the confines of the NUM’. I am afraid, because of the confusion of abysmal ignorance. Gwynn West said: ‘They had a duty to fight for a stoppage after a majority vote in its favour’. We could not do so, as a national strike requires a two-thirds majority by rule, but some of us did advocate selective official strikes and freedom ourselves heavily outnumbered (though, of course, as you are probably not aware, I am not)

What is the alternative? ‘R没了 over principles’ says Gwynn West. ‘A breach of faith on one side, which ought not to be allowed by those in power’.

The disaffection of the Doncaster miners takes more than just generalisations by their representatives. Mr J. McMahon, in a recent press report, ‘the International Socialists were getting in a bad name and we are well rid of them’. They have a responsibility only in the way of supporting those trade-unionists on the left, foot, regardless of the nature of the terrain. A sad spectacle indeed — for Socialist Worker.

— Lawrence Daly, secretary, National Union of Mineworkers, Eston Road, London NW1.

DONCASTER INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS REPLY

NO, MR DALY, we do not con

done of the brutal violence on

the miners, but neither are we aware of any. Despite the frantic efforts of the Tory press, Brian Robins and conservative leaders of such organisations as the National Union of Mineworkers at Eston Road, Doncaster, we have no evidence whatever to support these charges.

We trust it goes without saying to the miners who are carrying out the strike that we are not responsible for what it will.

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We trust it goes without saying to the miners who are carrying out the strike that we are not responsible for what it will.

The workers’ struggle is born on its own soil and the miners who are carrying out the strike are the ones who will bear the brunt of it. We are not responsible for whatever the consequences may be.

Harold Wilson

Late convert to union cause

Only through such an organisation can a counter-strategy be worked out and carried into effect in each section of the working class, to make workers conscious of their collective power and how it can be used to match every move of the employers. The clear-cut aim of such a party must be the struggle for a socialist society based on workers’ control.

Such a party does not yet exist. But the employers and their government are creating the conditions in which it can be built as they teach us the lesson that to fight the employers is to fight the state.

If the workers’ movement is to respond and go back on the offensive, it must learn that lesson better than the other side.

To do that job the tools we need are a party of a new type, rooted in a national rank and file movement. The International Socialists exist to help bring both into being.
HOME SECRETARY’S LINKS WITH FINANCIAL RACKETEERS

MR MAULDING’S NASTY FRIENDS

by PAUL FOOT

MR REGINALD MAULDING, the Minister for '+301' in charge of the very important matter of the disgrace of unidentified others because of the constant embarrassment caused him by a highly unidentified alien—Mr Jerome D. Hoffmann.

Mr Hoffmann is the founder of an ‘off-shore property fund’ called International Financial Group, and the success of the fund was due almost entirely to the ‘big names’ originally associated with it.

These included former Belgian Prime Minister Paul-Henri Spaak, former New York Mayor Wagner and the late President of P.A.C. Hoffman’s biggest prize, The Right Hon. Reginald Maulding.

RECOMMENDED

Maulding fled from the presidency as soon as the Sunday Times queried its rating but he still held 50,000 shares in the company. He also recommended the fund to investors worldwide in highly-publicised statements.

Today he still owns his shares (he can only sell them to the company, and the company will not buy them back).

In the meantime, the fund has virtually disappeared. Hoffmann’s office has run to Rome. The bailiffs have moved in on his London offices and the Board of Trade is investigating the company documents.

This must be the first occasion in history where the second senior minister in the land holds a substantial shareholding in a company investigated by the Board of Trade.

The Maulding affair, however, is only the first chapter in the sad and sordid saga of offshore properties.

The operation works like this. A speculator buys a building or a group of buildings in a foreign country. He needs only about a quarter of the price of the investment in local currency. He pays the rest in mortgage.

He then pays off the mortgage by raising money outside the country. The money comes from the ‘committee of experts’ in a ‘mutual fund’ whose security is the London pound. The fund flows in, the property he buys—And so on.

There is, however, a major difficulty. Most countries of the world have rigid exchange control regulations which bar the export of money to a foreign bond.

SMUGGLE

So the money for the funds either has to be raised in areas where the exchange control regulations are very weak—the unstable states of emerging capitalism like Kuwait and the other Arab sheikdoms—or they have to break the law to smuggle private funds out of their country of origin.

Secondly, the funds are very susceptible indeed to attack as a ‘long in confidence’. The moment a selling wave starts in one offshore property fund, it causes the whole series of pieces in a matter of months.

The exchange control regulations which at its peak had built up more than $10 billion in this country and the portfolios of the greedy rich all over the world despite being banned.

MAULDING in the company of fascists and run-padding salesmen in America, was driven to run this summer by a selling wave.

What stopped its final disaster was its very size. So vast had IOS become that capitalism itself could not stand so great a bankruptcy.

So in an orgy of wheeling-dealing, and after sacrificing the wrecked crooked-turned-millionaires who had started IOS off, the respectable banks of international capital moved in to insure IOS against final collapse.

Soon after the IOS disaster came another, Gramco. Gramco had been started by Cuban exiles, supporters of Batista, who had set up shop in fascist Spain.

The ‘big names’ on which it sold its prestige were those of the entourage of the late President Kennedy: his press secretary, Pierre Salinger; his staff assistant, Charles Daley; William Mahoney, Kennedy’s Ambassador to Ghana; Ivan Vestiburg, Kennedy’s Health and Welfare Under Secretary and many others.

PIRATICAL

These weapons of the New Frontier joined a band of fascists and practical run-padding salesmen in large and small offshore property bubbles.

Last month, the bubble burst. Gramco salesmen were paid off in the hundreds and the directors had to be bailed out all their Kennedy-speak talk to explain to their investors the level of the disaster.

The collapse of Gramco was followed almost at once by the collapse of Hoffmann’s Law Maulding IOS, whose salesmen had had much less success than their rivals in the other two bigger operators.

Reading the various Business News accounts of these operations is like reading sophisticated sports pages. For financial journalists and experts it is all a game. The workers, they can safely assume, will never be able to tell their way through the financial jargon in which the game and its rules are described.

ROBBERY

Yet the vast fortunes which are amassed for countries, needless wealth quickly from offshore properties do not materialise out of the sale of the atmosphere. They represent the robbed labour of workers all over the world, most of whom can scarcely make enough for themselves and their families to survive.

The same men who urge workers to work harder for less reward and who seek to create a ‘framework’ in which trade unions can be fixed and humiliates the capital in the course of the same men who indulge in and explain away the piracy of the offshore property funds. They are the framework for all manner of vandals and thugs to make fortunes from such funds remains secure.

The spectacle of the deputy-leader of the Conservative Party hopelessly seeking to dissociate himself from a fund which he had formerly recommended, while not uttering a word against the methods which such funds employ, is symbolic of the reality behind his government’s now almost constant about ‘pride’, ‘discipline’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘individualism’.

Don’t miss this important pamphlet

How to fight the Tories

by PAUL FOOT

The meaning of Marxism

A weekly column by Duncan Hallas

ROBERT OWEN, in his earlier years, was a typical big capitalist of the first half of the 19th century. He was a self-made man, son of a small shopkeeper. Starting as a shop assistant he became manager in a Manchester cotton mill earning 12s. a week, then a partner in the business. By the age of seven years, owner of the largest spinning mill in the world, New Lanark.

New Lanark Company was first a partnership and then a limited liability company. Big as it was it produced only a small fraction of the total output of cotton yarn. Owen had no control over the prices he paid for raw materials and machinery, nor over the prices he could charge for his products.

Imperial market forces ensured that prices kept close to values. No one capitalist could seriously affect these.

Competition ruled supreme and capitalists like Owen obeyed the dictum of ‘survive or perish’. The banking system was in the hands of the Bank of England, and the Bank’s directors were in the hands of the large capitalist companies. The capitalist class dominated Parliament.

The world of tens of thousands of competing enterprises was the world of the economic theories of all schools, classical, marxian and neo-classical. In fact the very idea of an economy, and how it works, depends on the assumption that capitalists as well as workers are guided by consideration of certain ways by forces over which they have no control.

The United States Steel Corporation is a typical capitalist of today. It is not a little man at all but a vast complex organisation.

The men who control its policies are wealthy but they do not control more than a tiny fraction of the enterprise they control. The vast majority of the owners of modern factories have about as much influence on company policy as you do of.

Dominate

Nar are actual controllers of US Steel in the matter of price policy.

J K Galbraith discusses the situation as follows:

The Corporations of the US Steel industry, do have authority to raise the prices they charge for their own steel. When they do this, the effect is not on the rest of the industry normally follows.

The same executives make decisions as to what they will do with the profits they make. They can pay out dividends, they can pay off debt, they can buy new equipment, they can pay for new research.

They have latitude on all these matters; they are not the automata of those economic laws which work with the great care of American industry. They have their own authority too.

A comparatively small number of large firms control the national, dominate production and these giant firms do more than simply respond to the market forces. They can, and do, seriously influence it. Indeed Marx, like the orthodox economists before him, saw the inevitability of commercial combination as the item leading to international monopoly capitalism.

One capitalist always kills many”, he wrote. “Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this exportation of many capitalists by few, develops... the tendency to form an economic net of the world market and the international character of the capitalist regime.”

Collapse

The facts that remain that Marx’s economic analysis assumes effective competition and that “price wars” that away and the whole structure collapses.

This point was first made by the German Social-Democrat, Professor Eduard Bernstein, in 1899. He drew attention to the simultaneous growth of giant firms and cartels and the increasingly mild character of the depression which, according to Marx, was to follow the 20th centuries. He looked forward to the growth of an increasingly ‘organised’ capitalism on a world scale which would reduce the severity of depression and could eliminate the system’s instability.

He also pointed to the increasingly extensive connection between the largest firms and the state. The "night-watchman" state of the mid-19th century was giving way to a state that was heavily involved in supporting and regulating the economy, a development particularly marked in the USA.

The same facts were noted by Lenin. This transformation of competition into monopoly, he wrote in 1913, was a stage in the development of modern capitalist economy... For with the growth of the 'new industrial capitalism' of the state "becoming merged more and more with the all-powerful capitalist combine". Lenin described the opposite conclusion from Bernstein. Monopoly and state monopoly capitalism, he argued, are not merely less stable than competitive capitalism.

Struggle

Economic crisis and war—which ‘Bernstein thought’ organised capitalism would abolish—will become more frequent and severe. There is little doubt that the history of the first half of the 20th century proved Bernstein wrong and Lenin right. Whatever else it did, the growth of monopoly capitalism has stabilised the system.

In Lenin’s words ‘monopoly, which has grown out of free competition, does not abolish the latter. Though the giant firm is no longer a puppet of the market it is engaged in a constant struggle with other giant firms to amass more and more surplus value to expand its capital. The penalty for the failure is no longer bankruptcy; the big firms do not go bankrupt—it is takeover. The controllers of the big combine have great power but not the power to put out of this struggle. Competition is raised on a higher level and because of this Marx’s analysis is still relevant.

Why then did the growth of monopoly capitalism come to a halt? The lesson of stumps is Lenin’s explanation, the export of capital, has now to be examined.

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6 Century Gardens, London E2 8DN.
Seize The Time, the story of the Black Panther Party by Bobby Seale

America in 1970 is the richest society in the world. It is also the sickest.

In spite of its relatively democratic beginnings, American society has been built up on decades of racial oppression and exploitation. Like a cancer, this disease has been growing within the fibres of this powerful society until today. America is in a virtual state of siege, siege from within by its own black inhabitants.

As Malcolm X said when President Kennedy was killed: 'The chickens are coming out of the coop.' But even he would have been surprised at the aptness of his words today, five years after Kennedy's assassination.

Authentic voice

Bobby Seale's magnificent book traces the brief history of one part of this development, the breakaway revolutionary Black Panther Party.

This is an account of its small beginnings on the West Coast, the Black Panther growth, its mass movement, and what it is today -- the authentic voice from within the movement. Below we present excerpts from Seale's book on America and the Panthers' revolutionary movements.

American justice

The power and effectiveness of Seale's book is matched only by Judge Hoffman's vicious and famous courtroom tragedy of the trial of the Chicago Eight. Hoffman ordered his police to be manhandled and gagged in a courtroom scene which at one blow effectively showed millions of Americans both black and white just what American 'justice' meant.

To cap it all, Hoffman sentenced Seale to four years in jail for 'contempt of court.' In this way he thought he would be able to silence Seale. But Hoffman's action was the greatest possible proof of correctness of Seale's revolutionary philosophy. Seizing the Time in a book that should be read by anyone who wants to understand contemporary America. In simple, straightforward language, Seale speaks of the revolutionary need for his party, applying and developing marxism within the environment. The book should be on the bookshelves of all revolutionaries.

Martin Tomkinson

NOTICES


Camden Institute, 15 public meeting on antibiotics, 4th May, 6.30pm, Fri, 5th May, 8.30pm, Sat, 6th May, 1.30pm, Sun, 7th May, 8.30pm. All venues, Kings Cross (Swiss Cottage), Euston and Camden Town. For info. 751 7577.

Cross Country to share flat. Ring 02/346 7353.

A Discourse on Discourse. May 14th. Red Cross Pub, High Street, Friday 7.30pm. For info. 590 3253.

Lambeth ISYVL debate: The struggle for a socialist state in China. May 14th. Lambeth Library, South Island Place, 10am.

Germ's Eye View. Number 8 out now. Order a copy at 73a Rowan Avenue, Manchester M1 3AP.
ST HELENS: A dispute between Rowlin- son's firm and the shop stewards is now in its eighth week. The men supp- ported a demonstration by sacked Pitkington workers in October and were dismissed when they returned to work on the council site in the town centre. Management claimed they had not been told that the men were stopping work in support of the pit strikers, but the shop- stewards in the case admitted that this was not true.

ICF breaks agreement to push price up...

by ROB CLAY

TEESSIDE: 200 members of the AEF, the engineering union, are on strike at ICI's giant Wilton complex.

The AEF has refused to negotiate the Weekly Staff Agreement productivity deal and has put in a straight 22 per week pay claim. WSA proposes a major threat to shop-floor organisation and threatens massive sack- ing.

The decision by the AEF was a severe blow to the company's determination to force WSA through. The engineers have one of the industry's best workforces throughout Britain to step up the fight against the productivity deal.

Last week, the Witton management moved against the AEF. In a blatant attempt to break the AEF's union and declared they would no longer work to rule and workers of the change to the agreement and the Electrical Trades Union.

The agreement laid down that the shop stewards would be recruited equally from both firms. It also stated that the agreement would be terminated with the new agreement.

But the management is now using WSA grading agreements to 'secure' union acceptances. The AEF has not been

AEF insist explicitly by blacked all-union agreements and shop stewards and the company have now blacked all-union agreements and shop stewards agreed.

Last week, the 'all' meetings on Monday day to stay out and not to meet again for a week.

The AEF district committee is giving the 'all' meetings on Monday day to stay out and not to meet again for a week.

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'COLLISION'

Management hit by taking these AEF off pay who had refused to do blacking.

AEF have a meeting with the company to discuss the terms of the pay claim and the effects on the company.

Ford stewards thin strike fight to Tory laws

SW Industrial Correspondent

TWO HUNDRED Ford shop stew- ards representing 48,000 manual workers issued a call for joint political and industrial action on 8 December when they met in Coventry last Monday.

Jack McCan, a Dagenham convenor, moved a successful motion that called on Ford workers to support Tories in the workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by demanding pension with the other workers' right to strike by 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