(From a lecture given at the Workers' Hall, Benoni, on the 12th ult., by S. P. Bunting.)

The Russian Trade Unions of to-day are hardly | COULD AND MUST LEARN TO EXERCISE | mean that industry ran itself. On the contrary, with which these Bantu attempts, are more comparable date from long before 1917. They developed, originally out of benefit or burial societies, especially in the western border provinces now cut off from Russia. In those days strikes, and in fact Trade Unions, were illegal, and the only unions tolerated were scab unions formed by the police (like the Italian Fascist unions to-day) or those which, like the Rand Underground Officials' Union according to its former reputation at least, kowtowed to the employers—electing them as honorary members, for instance, as a among these tame unions—and strike funds were built up, with illegal organisations for that purpose; and the great strikes of 1905 bred quite a big family of Trade Unions, though a short-lived one, for it was soon afterwards practically exterminated by the Tsar, and did not come to life again until he was deposed in March, 1917.

REVOLUTIONARY FROM THE OUTSET.

it from the classic British type, is that it was lagainst employers. Indeed, it became the work-OF THE DELIBERATE STRUGGLE OF THE TALISM. It, never confined itself to the mere turn came to be looked upon as so much sabotage reformist demands of particular sections. It was on the working class. The "Star" the other day always a class movement, born of conflict and thought it had scored quite a point by quoting nurtured in class consciousness. In particular the Trotzky in favour of more and cheaper producidea of a "non-political" trade union was from | tion; but of course this means one thing when the the first foreign to it. On the contrary, ITS | working class is struggling against a capitalist exexisting trade unions, in Russia the trade union ITSELF. In the former case the greater effi-Throne; the workers never dreamt of singing the Tsar's "national" anthem, they just COR-DIALLY DETESTED HIM and all his gang.

INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM.

with no overlapping or "poaching."

WORKERS' CONTROL, WORKERS' OWNERSHIP.

The Menshevik revolution of March, 1917, finally lifted the legal ban, and Trade Unions sprang up all over Russia, with a huge membership, and an All-Russian Council, within a few months. It was not long before the doctrine of agreement and negotiation gave way before the demand for by the vast majority who maintained that they FLUOUS in modern industry. But that did not TIME BE AN ACCOMPLISHED FACT.

- older than the native trade unions, such as they IT-AS THEY ARE NOW DOING. The con- the greatest task of the revolution has been the are, of this country. Both began, more or less, in trol first contended for was control by factory building up of public bodies to manage, direct, and develop industrial production. In this task f in Russia" that showed the South African native "hands." Against this, an "abomination" to the Trade Unions, SO FAR FROM IN THEIR them as the shop stewards were to our Chamber | organisation. However, the Russian rudiments of Mines, the owners resorted to sabotage, closing down "their" factories rather than let the workers "usurp" such power. But the only effect of this was to increase the workers' demands politically to a cry for "all power to the Soviets" and industrially for "workers' OWNERSHIP of all the means of production." On these slogans huge strikes took place throughout industrial Russia; the conflict became, as it is becoming in After all, the state itself, the supreme adminis-Labour and Capital; the workers took up arms TRADE UNION STATE—and it is the only and seized the factories, and simultaneously avoided the error of the Italian workers in 1920 Russian shop assistants' union did early in this by seizing political power. The outcome was the century. Nevertheless strikes occurred—even "Bolshevik" revolution of November 7, 1917. Except for a few unions like commercial and bank employees, printers, and higher grades of Government employees, THE WHOLE OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT WAS BEHIND THIS REVOLUTION.

THE NEW UNIONISM: NO BOSSES.

The revolution entailed a complete change in the function of Trade, Unionism. Capitalism hav-The outstanding feature of this history of Rus- | ing been deposed from power, trade unions ceased sian industrial organisation, which distinguishes to be concerned principally with the struggle throughout A PRODUCT AND EXPRESSION ers' turn to condemn strikes. It was a workers' state, and all industry had in principle become WORKERS AS A WHOLE AGAINST CAPI- | the workers' concern. Consequently strikes in their lapse of production bequeathed by the old regime.

HOW THE BOURGEOIS FORCED THE PACE.

It had indeed been the intention of the From one other weakness of the British unions | triumphant revolutionary party, as Marx and | the Russian unions were also free. They were Engels had laid down, to wrest all capital from with its 8,000,000 (nearly 100 per cent.) memberalways FORMED ON THE BASIS NOT OF the bourgeoisie "BY DEGREES"; but the ship, has undertaken the function of socialist re-CRAFT BUT OF INDUSTRY. They were sabotage of the owners compelled them, in order construction, organisation and administration, unions of the workers who worked in a given to continue production, to take over everything with the special direct task of improving the confactory, irrespective of grade or tools used. It at one gulp rather than allow factories to remain ditions of labour and the material as well as culwas one industry—one union, and one factory— | closed down. The reversion, since peace has been one factory-committee or branch of the union, restored in Russia, to a modicum of private enterprise, under the "new economic policy," is thus, distinct from the technique and responsibility of as Lenin stated at the Fourth Congress, really only a closer approximation to THE ORIGINAL PLAN OF CAMPAIGN, to take over "by degrees" as the proletarian state found itself able to do so; which is broadly the policy now being carried out, under "proletarian state capitalism.

THE TRADE UNION STATE.

TURN BECOMING SUPERFLUOUS WITH THE END OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE, have played, and still play, a very leading part. Although no longer directly entrusted with the task of administration of industry, they are strongly represented in all the Government Departments and organs—the Council of National Economy, the Factory Management Boards, the "Trusts" and so on—which now fulfil that task. trator of production, might almost be called A state in the world so far which in an industrial dispute takes the side of the workers and PUTS THE PRIVATE EMPLOYERS (instead of "the niggers') "IN THEIR PLACE"!

THE UNION AS GENUINE "NEGOTIATUR."

The factory committees have become branches or units of trade union organisation, as well as scentres of the political and educational life of the workers concerned, maintaining libraries, clubs, schools, restaurants, etc., etc. They are under the centralised control of the union as a whole, which in turn is under the direction of the All-Russian Trade Union Congress und the "state" as such. The direct task of the unions and their branches is to champion the interests of their members in case of conflict with the interests of the workers as a whole or the state as such. For instance, if a particular body of workmen want more wages, the question has to be settled between them and the Government Department concerned (to omit intervening arbitration stages), how much can the industry, or the state, afford to pay, with INSPIRATION WAS ALWAYS POLITICAL. ploiting class in power, and quite another when it due regard, NOT TO PRIVATE PROFIT AS Instead of a "Labour party" being formed out of is itself in power, and is as it were EXPLOITING THE "STAR" WOULD LIKE TO REPRE-SENT, but to the requirements of all OTHER movement was the child of the pre-existing party, | ciency is obtained at the EXPENSE of the work- | WORKERS equally "deserving," as well as of the the Social Democratic Party, out of which the ers; in the latter, for their BENEFIT. So it was in advancement of industry and the population gener-Communist party eventually sprang. Hence too it Russia. The forecast of the "Communist Mani- ally, state enterprise, public services, army, edualways laid stress, and spent a big proportion of festo" was verified. Democracy—real democracy, cation, etc.—things which, in modification of the its funds, on THE EDUCATION, BOTH | not the bourgeois fake of that name with which | individualist slogan "to every worker the fall LITERARY AND POLITICAL, OF ITS MEM- | we are familiar—having triumphed, "the prole- | product of his labour," have to be provided out of BERS; and note that Russian political education | tariat used its power to wrest by degrees all capital | the general labour of society for the general benehas always been facilitated by a comparative from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments fit of society. The strike is still an available ABSENCE OF POLITICAL DOPE-the ruling of production in the hands of the State (i.e., of weapon, but except where the employer is a class preferred ruthless repression to sinister the proletariat organised as the ruling class) and private capitalist, it is, BEING A STRIKE sophistication—and especially, among the work- to increase as rapidly as possible the total mass of AGAINST FELLOW-WORKERS, little likely ing class, by a complete absence of loyalty to the | productive forces''—especially in view of the col- to be used. On the other hand, "NEGOTIA-TION" BECOMES FOR THE FIRST TIME A GENUINE AFFAIR BETWEEN EQUALS HAVING THE SAME PARAMOUNT INTER-ESTE AT HEART, and in a milieu where yellow unions or leaders cannot exist.

> In short, Trade Unionism in Russia to-day, tural level of the workers (INCLUDING PRO-MOTION OF LABOUR LEGISLATION), as management or inspection.

The unifying and inspiring force behind all has unquestionably been the Communist Party. THE HARMONY BETWEEN THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE RULING PARTY IS THE KEY TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION. IF THE TRADE UNIONS OF BRITAIN, GER-In any case, experience proved, what had always MANY, OR SOUTH AFRICA WENT WORKERS' CONTROL of factories, mines, etc., been maintained by Socialists, that owners as EQUALLY HAND IN HAND WITH COMand those who declared that the workers were in- | owners (a different thing from administrators or | MUNISM, THE WORKERS' VICTORY IN capable of exercising such control were overborne technical experts) turned out to be SUPER-THESE COUNTRIES TOO WOULD BY THIS