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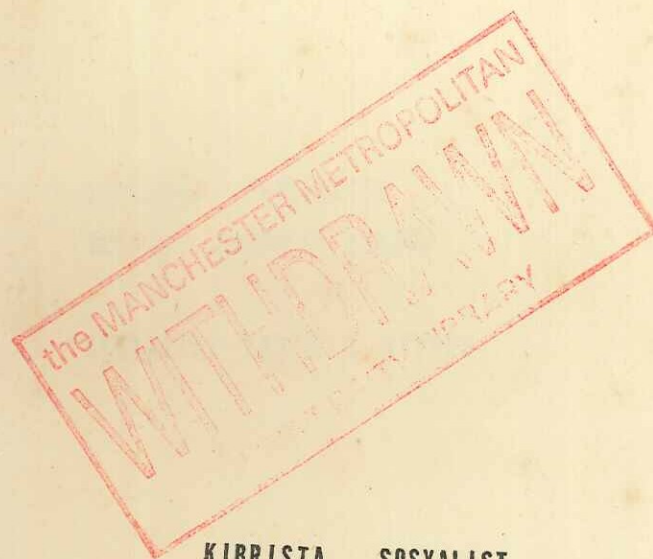
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**SOCIALIST TRUTH IN CYPRUS**

**INDUSTRIAL HISTORY  
IN WARTIME**

**KIBRISTA SOSYALIST  
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# INDUSTRIAL HISTORY IN WARTIME

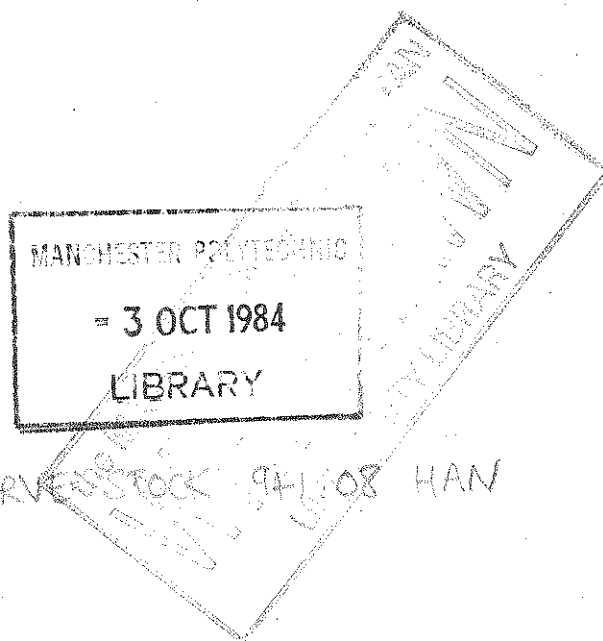
*INCLUDING A RECORD OF THE  
SHOP STEWARDS' MOVEMENT*

by  
WAL HANNINGTON

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## INTRODUCTION

INDUSTRIAL history in its widest sense covers two main subjects: (1) the record of changes and developments in the processes and structure of industry; (2) the record of the struggles which have taken place between the working class and the employing class on the issue of conditions of employment and the status and rights of the workers in economic society. It is with the latter subject—the story of the struggles between “master and man”—that this book deals.

In the main it deals with a section of industrial history about which very little has yet been written—namely, the period covering the last World War of 1914–18, especially the struggles of the miners and engineers and the development of the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement.

It is exceedingly important to study this phase of industrial history and to note the similarity in the present industrial conditions.

To-day, when the present war situation has led to such sweeping changes in the industrial conditions of the workers, involving demands by the employers and the State for the sacrifice of most of our established trade union rights and practices, it is extremely important that the workers should understand something of the history of their forefathers in the trade union movement and the struggles which they went through to win the conditions and rights which the present generation have had handed down to them. I have therefore included a chapter dealing briefly with the conditions of child labour at the beginning of the nineteenth century and one on the early trade union movement, in order to

provide a background to our study of present-day conditions.

The chief value of a study of industrial history lies, not only in knowing what has happened in the past, but in learning the lessons of past events and using them as a guide to the future.

WAL HANNINGTON.

*July, 1940.*

## CHAPTER I

### CHILD SLAVERY IN EARLY CAPITALISM

NOTHING more clearly reveals the nature of a system of society and the attitude of its ruling class than the manner in which it treats its child population. Let us therefore take a glimpse at the way in which the children of the working class were treated by the early capitalists. The conditions of the workers in the early industrial system at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century were indeed brutal and horrible in the extreme. With the rapid extension of trade, the British capitalist class were merciless in their exploitation of the workers. Their greed for profits led them to adopt the most callous behaviour towards the workers. Not only men, women and youths, but little children of the tender age of six and seven were driven into terrible conditions of employment. To say that the workers were treated like cattle would be paying the capitalist class a compliment. Human compassion towards the workers simply did not exist amongst the capitalists. They trampled ruthlessly on everybody and everything that threatened to curb or hinder their drive for increased power and wealth. They hated trade unionism and ruthlessly persecuted its sponsors. They violently opposed every attempt to extend education amongst the common people. Their attitude on education was clearly expressed by one of their spokesmen, Mr. D. Giddy, President of the Royal Society and a Member of Parliament. In a speech in 1807, opposing elementary education for working-class children, he said: "However specious in



theory the project might be, of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would in effect be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants on agriculture and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them; instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them factious and refractory, as was evident in the manufacturing counties; it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity; it would render them insolent to their superiors; and in a few years the result would be that the legislature would find it necessary to direct the strong arm of power towards them, and to furnish the executive magistrate with much more vigorous laws than were now in force."

At the same time as they drove the workers into appalling conditions of poverty and denied them education, they meted out terrible punishment to any worker who committed the offence of stealing. Private property was sacred—even though it represented the results of the robbery of the workers in industry. For petty offences of stealing, even little children were torn from their parents and sentenced to transportation to convict settlements in the British colonies. In 1800 a boy of ten years of age was sentenced to death. In 1817 two boys aged ten and thirteen were sentenced to death. A woman whose husband had been transported for felony committed the same offence in the hope of joining him in exile, but the judge thought it necessary to "make an example" of her and she was hanged instead.

In the early factory system, especially in the textile factories, terrible conditions of child slavery existed. Children at the tender age of five years were set to work in the factories. Parliament condoned this child slavery and in 1796 William Pitt, Chancellor of the Exchequer,

actually stated, when introducing a Poor Law Bill, that all children of the poor should be set to work at five years of age. In urging this, he said: "Experience has already shown how much could be done by the industry of children, and the advantages of early employing them in such branches of manufacture as they are capable to execute." The factory children of that period fell into two classes: (1) children, known as apprentice children, supplied to the factory owners by the parish Poor Law authorities, and (2) children known as free-labour children living at home with their parents.

The worst scandals were amongst the parish apprentice children. These children numbered many tens of thousands because, as was pointed out by a Government Committee of Inquiry in 1815, "Poor Law relief was seldom bestowed without the parish claiming the exclusive right of disposing, at their pleasure, of all children of the person receiving relief."

The factory system drove vast masses of handicraft workers out of small business, and when they were starving and compelled to apply for Poor Law relief, the parish authorities seized their children and placed them in bondage to the very factory owners who had taken away their livelihood.

Premiums were actually paid by the parish to the employers for the children consigned to them, and it was even stated by contemporary writers—Romilly, for instance—that not a few cases occurred in which the factory owners murdered their "apprentice" children in order to obtain fresh premiums from the parish for new "apprentices."

In 1802 it was estimated that there were 20,000 parish children in the cotton mills alone. Children were taken in cartloads to the factories and handed over to the employers to suffer the most cruel conditions of employment. They were housed in foul places attached to the

factories known as "prentice-houses." It was not uncommon for the hours of labour to be seventeen a day, and there are cases on record where children started work at 3 a.m. and continued, with the exception of short breaks for food, until 10 p.m. Children were often beaten by employers and overseers if they did not do sufficient work or if they fell asleep at their task.

The conditions of children in coal mines were even more dreadful than those in the cotton mills. As late as 1842 a report by a Government Commission stated that children as young as five years old, girls as well as boys, were employed in the pits and the hours of labour were not uncommonly fourteen and fifteen hours a day.

The children seldom saw daylight. They descended the pits before the sun had risen and remained in the blackness of the pit until long after the sun had set.

The younger and weaker children were employed as "trappers." Their job was to open and shut the ventilating doors that guided the draught of air through the mines. For fourteen and fifteen hours they sat in the darkness holding a string in their hand, opening and shutting the air trap doors as the trucks of coal passed through.

Boys and girls of eight years and upwards were usually employed dragging the trucks of coal to the pit shaft. The Children's Employment Commission Report in 1842 spoke of these children as follows: "Chained, belted, harnessed like dogs in a go-cart, black, saturated with wet, and more than half naked—crawling upon their hands and feet and dragging their heavy loads behind them—they present an appearance indescribably disgusting and unnatural."

Children from the workhouses were sent to work in the coal mines as apprentices just the same as they were in the cotton industry. These children suffered the worst treatment. They were often driven into dangerous places

where the men who worked in the pits would not let their own children go.

Women also worked in the mines and wore the "guss"—the harness fastened to their bodies for drawing the trucks of coal hewed by their men-folk. Cases are on record of women giving birth to babies in the pit.

The wages paid to the men as well as to the women and children were so terribly low that the parents were driven to placing their children in these foul industrial conditions at very early ages in order to supplement their own inadequate earnings. At the best, they lived a life of squalid penury and distress.

Such were the conditions of early capitalist society, and it was to combat these conditions that trade unions were organised. This right to combine in trade unions had to be won in the teeth of bitter opposition from the ruling class. The workers paid dearly for every step forward which they took. Terrible persecution was meted out to those who dared to organise and fight for a decent existence.

One thing stands out plain and distinct in our study of industrial history—namely, that everything which we can speak of to-day as our liberties, rights and standards has had to be literally wrung from the ruling class by the organised struggles of our forefathers. Nothing has ever been willingly granted to the workers by the capitalist class out of any desire on their part to improve the conditions of the common people.

## EARLY TRADE UNION STRUGGLES

GREAT BRITAIN might well be described as the mother-nation of trade unionism. It is so because this country was one of the earliest industrialised nations. As the industrial system arose, replacing feudalism and the system of handicraft production, so the first forms of modern trade unionism appeared. With the development of the industrial system and the sharpening of the class division between employer and worker, the need of the workers for trade unions became increasingly urgent.

The earliest forms of real trade unionism can be traced to the beginning of the eighteenth century. Before that period we find evidence of small sporadic organisations amongst various groups of handicraftsmen, but these can hardly be described as trade unions. They were chiefly friendly benefit societies and not organisations created for the express purpose of conducting united efforts against employers for better conditions of employment.

Trade unionism proper commenced in those trades where large numbers of skilled workers had become wage-earners and no longer had any real opportunity to become masters of the tools of production. The creation of a definite wage-earning class was the basis of trade unionism, but the right to combine in trade unions was only established by our forefathers as a result of long and bitter struggles against the employers and the Government.

During the latter part of the eighteenth century,

trade union organisation was rapidly extending amongst the workers, in spite of victimisation and persecution. The workers realised that the foul conditions of employment, especially in the new factory system and in the mining industry, could only be combated by organised action through trade unions. The great mass of the common people was denied the franchise, and therefore they saw no hope for improvement through Parliamentary action. They placed their faith in the creation of strong trade unions to secure amelioration in their working conditions, and amongst the more highly skilled craftsmen in various trades organised action compelled the employers to make numerous concessions.

In 1799, during the Napoleonic War between Britain and France, the London engineering employers petitioned Parliament to outlaw trade unionism amongst engineering workers. The Government promptly responded and used the war situation to argue that there was a state of emergency which justified drastic action to suppress trade unionism. A measure known as the Combination Act was introduced in June, 1799, by William Pitt, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and passed by Parliament, making trade unionism in any trade entirely illegal. Even friendly societies and clubs which were not strictly trade unions were also outlawed by this Act. It forbade the workers to conduct strike action or even agitations for increases in wages, shorter hours or better working conditions, and it made all participants in such actions liable to severe terms of imprisonment. A further Act was passed in the following year.

Pretending not to be actuated by class motives, the Government declared that employers' organisations were also included in the ban, but they took good care never to enforce it against the employers. During the whole period of repression under these Acts, lasting twenty-five years, thousands of workers suffered for

attempting to combine in illegal trade unions, but there can be found no case on record of an employer being punished for the same offence, although they continued to maintain their organisations in spite of the Acts.

It only required an employer to notify the magistrates that certain workers in his establishment were combining together to effect changes in working conditions for them to be arrested and charged with conspiracy. Often they would lie in jail for months awaiting trial and then, on the flimsiest of evidence, they would be sentenced to years of imprisonment. One of the judges who became notorious for the savage sentences which he passed upon workers for trade union activities was Sir John Sylvester. Because of his brutal attitude towards the workers who stood before him in the dock, he earned for himself the nickname of "Bloody Black Jack."

The Combination Acts did not succeed in wiping out trade unionism, they simply drove it underground. The tyranny practised against the workers under these Acts failed to break their spirit. They persisted in organising in illegal trade unions and conducting agitations and strikes for better conditions. Twenty years after the passing of the Acts, the agitation of the workers for their repeal was still being maintained, and in an effort to quell this the Government in 1819—the year of the Peterloo massacre in Manchester—passed what were known as the "Six Acts." These Acts suppressed what little free speech remained, forbade the holding of public meetings, enabled the magistrates to search any worker's house for arms, subjected all working-class publications to the crushing "Stamp Duty," which made it practically impossible to issue any working-class literature, and, further, rendered more stringent the law relating to seditious libels.

The desperate nature of the workers' struggles under the Combination Acts is seen most sharply in the record of what is known as the Luddite Movement. This was a

movement that had for its sole purpose the wrecking of the machines in the big textile factories, in the belief that such wrecking could check the growth of the factory system which had thrown masses of small handicraft workers out of work.

The Luddites, as they were called, were secretly organised into bands of machine-wreckers who would suddenly descend upon a factory, force an entrance—often at night-time—and do as much damage as they could to the modern textile machinery. This movement reached its highest point in the years 1811–12. Fierce conflicts took place, and often the military forces were despatched to a locality to suppress the Luddites. Savage punishment, including death, was meted out to Luddites who were caught by the authorities. The Luddite Movement, of course, failed to stop the industrial revolution from hand-work to machine-manufacture. It was not the machine which was wrong, but the system of ownership. The machine, which could be the means of lightening the workers' toil and raising their living standard in a system of society based upon Socialist or Communist principles, produced the opposite effect under capitalist society. The violence of the Luddite Movement was the result of the terrible conditions into which the textile operatives and framework knitters had been plunged by a ruthless rising capitalist class.

After twenty-five years of brutal endeavour to suppress trade unionism, the stubborn resistance of the workers compelled the Government to repeal the Combination Acts in 1824. Immediately following the repeal, trade unionism took a great leap forward and the next six months witnessed widespread strike action to secure increases in wages in nearly every trade throughout the Kingdom. Local clubs developed into national unions and federal bodies. The movement swept forward at a rapid pace. Several attempts were made to create

all-embracing organisations, such as one big union for all workers. But these efforts failed. Craft trade unionism was still predominant and opposed to any form of organisation which embraced anyone who was not a craftsman.

The most outstanding example of the all-embracing union was the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, formed in 1834 under the leadership of Robert Owen. Within a few months of its formation it claimed to have enrolled half a million members, including tens of thousands of farm labourers.

In the years following the repeal of the Combination Acts the employers did not cease their resistance to trade unionism, and although trade unionism was legal, thousands of workers were still being prosecuted and imprisoned for their trade union activities. The employers repeatedly declared lockouts against the workers to break their organisations. One method widely used was that of demanding that all employees should sign a document renouncing trade union association. Big struggles took place over the document and the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union had to face many costly conflicts. A year after its formation it collapsed.

The case of the six Dorchester labourers who were sentenced to seven years' transportation in 1834 for having attempted to form an agricultural lodge of the National Consolidated Trades Union is one of the outstanding struggles of early trade unionism. Their crime was that of organising in the union to raise their wages from 7s. a week to 10s. They were charged with conspiracy and with uttering unlawful oaths of initiation to trade unionism. The fact that these men could be so charged and sentenced shows very clearly that, although the Combination Acts had been repealed ten years previously, the same repression as had been practised under the Acts was continuing against trade unionism.

These six men were sent to the convict settlement at Botany Bay, Australia, and they became known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs because they came from the village of Tolpuddle in Dorchester. Their sentence aroused a powerful storm of protest amongst the workers throughout the whole country and after four years of continual agitation the Government was compelled to "pardon" them in the fourth year of their sentence, and they returned to England in 1838.

After the collapse of the Robert Owen Union, craft trade unionism held the field alone until 1888, when a new campaign for the extension of trade unionism to the semi-skilled and unskilled workers was launched. Three men were outstanding in the leadership of this, namely, Tom Mann, John Burns and Ben Tillett.

In May, 1889, they organised the Gas Workers and General Labourers' Union, and thousands of unskilled workers quickly took up membership. They demanded from the three London gas companies a reduction in the working day from twelve to eight hours. The employers, no doubt impressed with the strength and spirit of the new union, quickly conceded the demand in full, including an increase in the wages.

Four months later Mann, Burns and Tillett were leading the Great Dock Strike for 6d. an hour for all dock labourers. It lasted four weeks and resulted in a complete victory for the men.

The immediate result of the gas workers' and dockers' successes was a widespread demand for trade union organisation amongst the vast masses of unskilled workers who hitherto had been regarded as being outside the pale of trade unionism. The next few years witnessed the formation of many unions throughout the country catering for unskilled labourers. This important surge forward in trade union organisation became known as "the New Unionism" and from it some of the most

powerful unions have been built. To-day there is no section of workers for whom trade unionism does not cater.

One thing we must never forget—especially at times when we are asked to forgo our trade union practices—that the right which we enjoy to-day to combine in trade unions is a right which had to be won from the ruling class by hard and bitter struggles. Thousands of our forefathers suffered terrible persecution for the part which they played in laying the foundations of modern trade unionism. They have handed on to us a heritage which we must jealously guard and defend and carry forward.

The whole history of trade unionism over the past 150 years shows that all that we have to-day in the form of wages, hours and working conditions is the accumulated result of past struggles. From the foul conditions of the early industrial system, our present standards have had to be won in defiance of the ruling class. Whether it be in the form of agreements between the unions and the employers or legislation passed by Parliament, every single improvement in the conditions of the workers has had to be fought for against a ruling class which has always disputed the claims of the workers for a better life.

If we understand this historical fact, we shall have no difficulty in knowing what our attitude should be to those who would deprive us of these gains.

## CHAPTER III

## WHAT HAPPENED IN 1914?

FROM the earliest days of international conferences of the Labour and Socialist Movement the attitude of the workers to war has been an outstanding issue. Whilst there have been differences in these international conferences on the methods to be employed in resisting war, there has been general agreement on the principle that war was a creation of capitalism, that it was inimical to the interests of the workers of all countries and should be denounced and stopped by the organised action of the working-class movement. In opposition to the periodical slaughter of capitalist wars, the Labour and Socialist Movement advocated international working-class solidarity. The declared policy was that the first step to freedom and the stopping of war was the defeat of the enemy at home, namely, the capitalist class.

This question of the attitude of the international working-class movement towards war was the central issue in the International Socialist Congress held in 1907. There were differences of opinion about method, but a resolution was carried unanimously, of which the final wording was as follows:

“If war threatens to break out it is the duty of the working class in the countries concerned and of their Parliamentary representatives, with the help of the International Socialist Bureau as a means of co-ordinating their action, to use every effort to prevent war by all the means which seem to them most appropriate, having regard to the sharpness of the class war and to the general political situation.



"Should war none the less break out, their duty is to intervene to bring it promptly to an end, and with all their energies to use the political and economic crisis created by the war to rouse the populace from its slumbers, and to hasten the fall of capitalist domination."

In the days preceding the 1914 World War, when it was apparent that war was imminent, the Labour and Socialist movements of the world opened an intense campaign of public meetings and demonstrations against war.

In Britain the following Manifesto was issued:

*Manifesto to the British People*

The long-threatened European war is now upon us. For more than 100 years no such danger has confronted civilisation. It is for you to take full account of the desperate situation and to act promptly and vigorously in the interest of peace. You have never been consulted about the war.

Whatever may be the rights and wrongs of the sudden, crushing attack made by the militarist Empire of Austria upon Serbia, it is certain that the workers of all countries likely to be drawn into the conflict must strain every nerve to prevent their Governments from committing them to war.

Everywhere Socialists and the organised forces of Labour are taking this course. Everywhere vehement protests are made against the greed and intrigues of militarists and armament-mongers.

We call upon you to do the same here in Great Britain upon an even more impressive scale. Hold vast demonstrations against war in every industrial centre. Compel those of the governing class and their Press who are eager to commit you to co-operate with Russian despotism to keep silence and respect the decision of the overwhelming majority of the people, who will have neither part nor lot in such infamy. The success of Russia at the present day would be a curse to the world.

There is no time to lose. Already, by secret agreements and understandings, of which the democracies of the civilised world know only by rumour, steps are being taken which may fling us all into the fray.

Workers, stand together therefore for peace! Combine and conquer the militarist enemy and the self-seeking Imperialists to-day, once and for all.

Men and women of Britain, you have now an unexampled opportunity of rendering a magnificent service to humanity, and to the world!

Proclaim that for you the days of plunder and butchery have gone by; send messages of peace and fraternity to your fellows who have less liberty than you. Down with class rule. Down with the rule of brute force. Down with the war. Up with the peaceful rule of the people.

(Signed on behalf of the British Section of the  
International Socialist Bureau),

J. KEIR HARDIE.  
ARTHUR HENDERSON.

In spite of the protests, war commenced, and then we witnessed a rapid transformation of attitude on the part of the official Labour Movement in all the belligerent countries. With the exception of revolutionary left-wing Socialist bodies, notably the Bolshevik Party of Russia and sections led by Karl Liebknecht in Germany and John McLean in Britain, the various sections of the International Labour and Socialist Movement forgot all about international working-class solidarity, betrayed the principles to which they had formerly declared allegiance and lined up in their respective countries with the capitalist class for the prosecution of the War. They each preached the justice of their own national cause and co-operated with their respective capitalist Governments in whipping up the spirit of patriotism.

Having once made the fatal mistake of supporting the War, the leaders of the British Labour and Trade Union

Movement inevitably found themselves entering into co-operation with the Asquith Government and the employing class in hamstringing their own organisations and tying them to the war chariot. Without consulting the rank and file of these organisations they committed them to a policy of sacrificing wage standards, working conditions and liberties which had been won only through generations of hard and bitter struggles, in order to help the capitalist class in continuing the war.

Writing on this in his book *The History of Trade Unionism*, published in 1920, Sidney Webb said:

"From the beginning of the War to the end, the Labour Party, alike in all its corporate acts and by the individual efforts of its leading members (other than the minority already mentioned), stuck at nothing in its determination to help the Government to win the War."

Of the trade union side of the Movement he wrote:

"From first to last the whole strength of the Movement was thrown on the side of the nation's effort."

The Government and employing class demanded big sacrifices from the workers in much the same manner as they are doing to-day, and in order to facilitate this policy the Government lost no time in bribing many of the principal trade union and Labour leaders with Government positions and turning the heads of others by suddenly bestowing upon them the status of experts who must be consulted. Sidney Webb's book states it in this way:

"This enormous draft on the patriotism of the rank and file could only be secured by enlisting the support of the official representatives of the Trade Union world—by according to them a unique and unprecedented place as the diplomatic representatives of the wage-earning class."

Mr. Arthur Henderson, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, was made a Privy Councillor, appointed to a post in the Government as President of the Board of Education, and further honoured by being made President of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, on which sat three other Labour leaders along with Liberals and Tories. The man who had signed the "Manifesto to the British People" urging "Down with class rule!" "Down with the war and the rule of brute force," away with the "greed and intrigues of the militarists and armament-mongers," was now a mouth-piece of the war machine. When Mr. Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister, Arthur Henderson moved up another rung on the ladder of capitalist fame and became a member of the small War Cabinet with the nominal office of Paymaster-General.

This evolution—or should we say revolution—of the Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party did not take place in opposition to but with the approval of the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress leadership. There were many other leaders who accepted "elevation" into the counsels of the capitalist class, amongst whom were Mr. G. N. Barnes (Amalgamated Society of Engineers) who became Minister of Pensions, Mr. John Hodge (British Steel Smelters Society) Minister of Labour, Mr. J. R. Clynes (National Union of General Workers) Minister of Food, and three other leaders who received minor Ministerial posts in the Government, namely W. Brace (South Wales Miners' Federation), G. H. Roberts (Typographical Society), and James Parker (National Union of General Workers).

From the moment that war was declared the Labour opposition in Parliament ceased to be an opposition and declared a political truce with the class enemy of the workers. Before the fateful month of August, 1914, had expired, the National Executive of the Labour Party

held an emergency meeting and passed the following resolution:

"That in view of the serious situation created by the European War the Executive Committee of the Labour Party agrees with the policy of the Parliamentary Party in joining in the campaign to strengthen the British Army, and agrees to place the central office organisation at the disposal of the campaign, and further recommends the affiliated bodies to give all possible local support."

Whilst the Labour leaders were collaborating with the capitalist class food prices were rapidly rising. By February, 1915, the cost of living had increased by 23 per cent., and protest agitations were developing in the country amongst the rank-and-file workers. A series of district conferences representing the local Trade Union and Labour Movement were called in the month of February at which resolutions expressing "deep indignation" against the Government were passed. These conferences were held in such important centres as London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bradford, Cardiff, Leicester, Portsmouth, etc. The Manchester Conference carried a resolution urging "a complete cessation of work" unless the Government took action to bring down prices and prevent any further increase in the cost of living.

Unrest in the factories and pits was developing in spite of the trade union leadership. The employers were taking it into their own hands to break existing trade union practices and working conditions without any consultation with the workers. In December, 1914, the engineering employers approached the unions with proposals for dilution of labour in the engineering shops. They wanted the right to classify certain classes of work which had always been skilled work, as unskilled and semi-skilled. They wanted the right to decide what class

of labour should man certain machines and carry through certain processes. They wanted female labour and unlimited overtime. The unions replied with counter-proposals and offered to negotiate. The employers cynically replied that they were prepared to confer with the unions, provided the unions first conceded all their demands.

The employers were in a truculent mood. The Labour Party and T.U.C. leadership had shown willingness to prostrate itself before the God of War, and to the employers this was interpreted as readiness to allow them to do what they liked in their factories. Resistance against this was considered to be unreasonable. They thought they had the unions in their pockets. Well, they certainly had some of the leaders, but not all, and they apparently forgot that a union head without the body was not much use. The rank and file of the unions were still loyal to the spirit of trade unionism and in the absence of any agreement were ready to fight against encroachment by the employers on their working conditions, and for higher wages to meet the rise in the cost of living.

The first big struggle in the engineering industry commenced on the Clyde, on February 16th, 1915. The details of this are important for consideration, because in some respects a similar position exists in the trade to-day in regard to the question of wages.

At that time the Amalgamated Society of Engineers had an arrangement whereby the initiative in wages movements and the final acceptance or rejection of employers' offers rested not with the National Executive of the union as it does to-day, but with the district committees of the union. At the same time, however, the districts were not entirely self-governing in relation to disputes; they were bound by a national agreement between the Employers' Federation and the union known as the "provisions for avoiding disputes," which involved

a long-drawn-out process of negotiation from local to central (or national) conference before taking strike action. This agreement (York Memorandum) still exists to-day in the Amalgamated Engineering Union and is used to much advantage by the Employers' Federation.

The Clyde, like other districts, had its own agreement with the employers before 1914. In January, 1912, the Glasgow engineers had entered into a three years' agreement with the employers under which a standard district rate of wage of  $8\frac{1}{2}d.$  an hour was laid down. This agreement was therefore due for revision in December, 1914. In June, 1914, with the approach of the expiration of the agreement, the district committee of the A.S.E. decided to put forward to the employers an application for a wage increase of  $2d.$  per hour.

During the three years for which the Clyde agreement stood, engineers in other districts and workers in other trades had secured considerable wage increases. It was also a period of good trade on the Clyde and the engineering employers had made big profits. But the workers on the Clyde had adhered to their agreement and therefore when the war broke out in August, 1914, they found themselves in a considerably worse position than engineering workers in many other districts. In honouring their agreement with the employers they no doubt expected fair treatment in the form of a substantial wage increase when the agreement expired. They were soon to learn that in the class war the conduct of the employers is not governed by rules of fairness and justice. You don't get better treatment from the capitalist class by being amenable to it. The whole of industrial history proves that the workers get from capitalism no more than they are ready to organise and fight for.

The rapid rise in the cost of living, following the commencement of the war in 1914 and the inadequacy of the  $8\frac{1}{2}d.$  an hour wage rate of the Clyde engineers, left

the employers quite unmoved. When the men on December 16th, 1914, asked the employers for a reply to their pre-war application for  $2d.$  an hour increase, they were kept waiting until December 30th before they received a reply, which was a blunt refusal of the claim on the grounds that it was "unreasonable."

This delay in replying on the part of the employers was a deliberate piece of trickery. They knew that by this move they would prevent the claim of the men from being considered at the Central Conference under the "Provisions for Avoiding Disputes" Agreement which was to be held at the beginning of January, 1915, and meant the postponement of the case until the next conference, due on February 12th, during which time the men were expected to continue working on the terms of the three years' agreement which had expired in December, 1914.

The men of course saw through this manoeuvre and were highly indignant at such treatment. They saw no reason why they should be bound by the "Avoidance of Disputes" agreement which was simply serving the ends of unscrupulous employers. The district committee of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers therefore ordered its members, failing a satisfactory reply from the employers, to cease work on January 20th, 1915. This scared the employers and called their bluff and they agreed to holding a local conference to consider the claim on January 19th. At this conference the employers made the insulting offer of  $\frac{1}{4}d.$  an hour increase at once, and a further farthing three months later. The men's representatives of course spurned such an offer and the negotiations were adjourned until January 22nd, when the employers came forward with a new offer of  $\frac{1}{2}d.$  an hour immediate increase which the men rejected. The matter then stood adjourned to the Central Conference of February 12th.

The employers had succeeded in their delaying tactics, but the feeling of the men in the shops was rising every day over the insulting offer of the employers and the unreasonable delay. The shop stewards from the principal factories held a meeting and demanded a special Central Conference without delay, and declared that all overtime would immediately cease until the employers agreed to this. To the astonishment of the men, the A.S.E. district committee and National Executive advised against this course of action, their fear being that the employers would treat the refusal to work overtime as a stoppage of work in violation of the "Avoiding Disputes" agreement and would refuse to negotiate further. This fear did not bother the shop stewards and the rank and file. They were not interested in preserving an agreement which enabled the employers to bandy about four months an issue which was vital to them and their families. Neither were they interested in keeping the door open for further negotiations if the employers were only intending to repeat their insulting offers.

The lead of the shop stewards was followed by the men and overtime ceased in all the principal shops on the Clyde, but the Central Conference did not take place until February 12th. On this occasion the employers made a new offer of  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. an hour increase, but stipulated that this was not to be treated as a permanent increase but only as a war bonus. The National Executive of the A.S.E., to the surprise of the men, agreed to recommend acceptance of this offer. They had no power to make a settlement, but they agreed to submit it to a ballot of the Clyde district. This offer of the employers was both unjust and dangerous. Dangerous because it was establishing a new principle in connection with wages in the industry, namely that of giving a period bonus instead of an increase in the basic rate. Yet the Executive of the A.S.E. recommended acceptance. They further

exasperated the men by fixing a date for the return of the ballot papers for March 9th, nearly a month ahead, thus postponing the issue again, although it was very certain that the rank-and-file ballot would reject the terms.

Bitter indignation existed in the shops and the shop stewards decided to have no further fooling about on the question. They called for immediate strike action and on February 16th the stoppage began. It rapidly extended from shop to shop on the Clyde until over 10,000 men were out. Disgusted with the official leadership the shop stewards created a new authority of their own known as the Central Withdrawal of Labour Committee, which took control of the strike movement. This was essentially a rank and file movement. It was representative, not only of the craft union, the A.S.E., but the men of all unions connected with the trade. This committee repudiated the policy of the official leadership and demanded that all future negotiations with the employers should be carried on by this committee and not by the A.S.E. Executive. The Executive were alarmed and tried to pacify the men and to get them back to work. They brought forward the date of the ballot to February 24th and the result was a decisive rejection of the employers' terms by 8,927 votes to 829.

Then the Government intervened. On February 26th representatives of the employers and the unions concerned were summoned to meet the Industrial Commissioners and the chief Industrial Commissioner at this meeting handed to both parties the following letter:

"SIR,—From enquiries which have been made as to the position of the disputes in the engineering trade in the Glasgow district, it appears that the parties concerned have been unable to arrive at a settlement. In consequence of the delay the requirements of the nation are being seriously endangered.

"I am instructed by the Government that important

munitions of war urgently required by the navy and army are being held up by the present cessation of work, and that they must call for a resumption of work on Monday morning, March 1st.

"Immediately following resumption of work arrangements will be made for the representatives of the parties to meet the Committee on Production in Engineering and Shipbuilding Establishments for the purpose of the matters in dispute being referred for settlement to a Court of Arbitration, who shall also have power to fix the date from which the settlement shall take effect. I am, yours faithfully,

"G. R. ASKWITH,  
"Chief Industrial Commissioner."

This letter was undoubtedly intended to intimidate the men. It had the opposite effect of arousing their anger still further. The wording of the letter was such as to convey the impression that it was a command to the men to return to work, but its command had no binding force. But it was quite enough to scare the Executive Committee of the A.S.E. into proceeding at once to the Clyde and calling for an immediate resumption of work. They used every possible argument and persuasion, but without success. The shop stewards declared that the Government's letter amounted to an ultimatum and that they were not prepared to be intimidated by this.

In order to defy the ultimatum they agreed to recommend a return to work on March 4th, three days after the expiration of the Government's ultimatum, and further recommended that in the factories a policy of *ca' canny* (go slow) should be practised until the employers or the Government made a satisfactory settlement. The men followed the leadership of the shop stewards and returned to work on March 4th.

Two days later another Central Conference with the employers and the union took place but no agreement

was reached. At the request of the Government the matter was then referred to the newly established Committee on Production under which the engineers' claim should be settled by arbitration. The employers accepted the Government's proposal and the A.S.E., in accordance with its rules, took a ballot vote of its members on the Clyde, for or against accepting the Government award as final. The ballot was in favour of acceptance. The Withdrawal of Labour Committee (shop stewards), however, decided to continue permanently in existence.

On March 24th, the Government Committee issued its award in the following terms:

"We have given full consideration to the arguments advanced by the respective representatives and to all the circumstances of the case, and our finding is that in settlement of the application for an advance the wages of the workers in the trades represented should be increased as follows, viz.: 1d. per hour or 4s. per week (according to the custom of payment in the various shops) on time rates, and 10 per cent. on piece rates, the advances to come into operation as from the beginning of the first full pay week after February 22nd, 1915, and to be regarded as war wages and recognised as due to and dependent on the existence of the abnormal conditions now prevailing in consequence of the war."

The award created considerable discontent, both in regard to the amount granted and because it amounted to a war bonus and not an increase on the basic rate. When we take into consideration the fact that the cost of living in April, 1915, was 25 per cent., according to official figures, above July, 1914, it will be seen how inadequate the award was. In fact, the original demand of the men for twopence an hour increase would hardly have been sufficient to compensate for what they were losing by rising prices.



Yet the daily capitalist Press subjected them to a torrent of abuse for having taken strike action. One national capitalist paper had a leading article headed "For Shame," and had the impudence to talk of the strike as being an "indelible stain on the honour of Scotland." No attempt was made to give a fair report of the men's case to the general public through the columns of the capitalist Press. Instead they hurled abusive remarks against the strikers and tried to convey the impression that they had been earning very large wages and had no reason to complain. Yet, if they had worked the whole clock round, day and night, seven days a week at the rate of 8½d. an hour, they would still not have had very large wages.

I mention this Press campaign because it is important to remember that during industrial struggles in wartime the Press of the ruling class is even more vitriolic towards the workers than it is in peacetime.

The Clyde workers stood up against it. They fought the employers, showed strength when the union leaders showed only weakness, they defied the Government ultimatum and they infused the workers in other parts of the country with a new spirit of confidence in the strength of rank-and-file action under the leadership of shop stewards which led to very important developments later. Moreover, not only were they guarding the conditions in the factories and ship-yards, they were also actively associated with the great Rent Strike which occurred in Glasgow in February and March, 1915, and which led to strike action to prevent evictions. As a result the Government was compelled to introduce the Rent Restrictions Act, legalising pre-war rents for the period of the War and for six months after.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE INFAMOUS TREASURY CONFERENCE

THE CLYDE ENGINEERS' strike in February, 1915, lasted eighteen days and was the most important industrial dispute which had taken place since the commencement of the World War, but it was not the only struggle during that month. Wages, cost of living, and encroachments by the employers upon working conditions gave rise to several other important disputes.

Seven hundred labourers in Edinburgh struck for fifteen days on a wages issue. Four thousand carpenters and labourers working on army huts on Salisbury Plain took action against penalty wage deductions for bad time-keeping arising from difficulties of transport to the job. In Dundee, four thousand jute workers struck work for six days on a wage issue. Five thousand London dockers struck for a week to enforce better arrangements for engaging dockers at the dock gates. Over two thousand miners at Merthyr Tydvil struck work for two days against the employment of non-union labour. Five hundred engineers at Sandbach, Cheshire, struck for better wages and trade union recognition. Two thousand dockers at Birkenhead made four week-end stoppages against new terms of employment imposed by the employers, and 1,500 London stevedores stopped work for five days over a wage dispute.

At the big engineering firm of Armstrong-Whitworths, in Manchester, the workers tendered notice to cease work unless the management stopped the increasing practice of introducing unskilled labour on to skilled jobs. The

introduction of these unskilled workers was a breach of working agreements committed without consultation with the union representatives. This firm was engaged almost exclusively on important war work for the Government, and the threat of strike action scared the management. An immediate conference was arranged between the management and delegates from each shop in the works. As a result of this conference strike notices were suspended and a provisional agreement favourable to the men was made, pending the whole matter being referred to a central conference between the unions and the Employers' Federation.

This provisional agreement conceded several important principles demanded by the men as follows: (1) No new engagements of unskilled men on skilled jobs. (2) On all such jobs the existing unskilled workers immediately to receive the trade union skilled rate of wages. (3) That the unions be allowed to inspect the credentials of all new employees and inspect the actual work done by them. (4) That the unions be supplied by the management with a complete list of unskilled men who had been engaged. (5) That a guarantee be given that all those new workers classified as dilutees would be dispensed with at the end of the war.

When the case of the Armstrong-Whitworth dispute came under the consideration of the Central Conference with the Employers' Federation several weeks later, no specific settlement was arrived at because by then a new situation had arisen in the form of a national agreement between the Government and the unions affecting the whole industry.

The question of dilution of labour and the employment for this purpose of Belgian refugees led to trouble at a number of firms. A strike in February, 1915, at the Wolsingham Steel Works, Durham, was due to this cause. Unskilled Belgians had been put on skilled work

without receiving the proper rates of pay, but after a short stoppage the issue was settled to the satisfaction of the British and Belgian workers by the firm having to pay the standard rate of wage to the Belgians.

A more serious case arising from the employment of Belgian refugee labour occurred during the engineers' strike at Sandbach. In this case the Belgians were compelled by the relief committee to remain at work during the strike. The Chairman of the Government Departmental Committee for the Employment of Belgian Refugees was drawn into the dispute and the matter was settled satisfactorily by the Belgian labour having to cease work during the strike.

The Government were alarmed at the rising tide of struggle amongst the workers in industry. They wanted to forbid strikes during the war, but they realised that to attempt to do so by arbitrary action on the part of the Government alone would provoke more serious trouble. A way round this difficulty had to be found. The Government found it by calling into conference the trade union leaders in the principal industries and receiving their consent for hamstringing the unions for the duration of the war.

This conference, known as the Treasury Conference—because it opened in the Treasury building—took place on March 17th, 1915. It is generally referred to by right-wing trade union leaders and by capitalist Press writers as the "famous" Treasury Conference, but "infamous" is the correct adjective to use.

At this conference the Government asked the trade union executives to enter into an agreement which would be binding upon all workers in the principal industries connected with the war to give up henceforth, for the duration of hostilities, the right to strike when grievances arose and to submit all questions to Government

arbitration and abide by the findings. Further, the Government asked the unions to relax all established trade union customs and practices concerning conditions of employment. This included, especially in the engineering industry, the following sacrifices: (1) Unlimited introduction of "dilutee" labour on to any class of work which the employer considered suitable. (2) The removal of all trade union restrictions concerning employment of women, girls and youths. (3) The ending of all reservations of particular jobs, or particular machines. (4) To assist and encourage speed-up in production. (5) To give up all definition of a normal working day, all restrictions on overtime, night-work, or Sunday work. (6) To give up many of the Factory Act prohibitions by which the health and even the safety of the workers had hitherto been protected.

All the union leaders, with a few exceptions, accepted the sacrifices in the name of their members without consultation, and signed the agreement.

The Miners Federation of Great Britain withdrew from the Conference at the end of the first session on the grounds that it was unwilling to give a pledge to surrender the strike weapon and submit to compulsory arbitration. The miners therefore never signed the Treasury Conference Agreement, and they proved to be a serious thorn in the side of the Government later on when certain repressive legislation was introduced.

The representatives of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers also refused at first to sign the agreement, but for different reasons from the miners. They were ready to offer the sacrifices which the Government was calling for, but they were dissatisfied with the safeguards of the Government concerning the restoration of conditions at the end of the war.

The attitude of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was a matter of vital concern to the Government if its

plan of putting the unions to sleep was to be carried through. Mr. Lloyd George, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Asquith Government, was in charge of the negotiations. He was highly disturbed about his failure to get the A.S.E. representatives to agree. He called a further conference with the A.S.E. representatives on March 25th, and at this meeting the engineers gave their consent on condition that the following further statements made by Lloyd George at the conference were placed on record as a Government pledge, to which, of course, Mr. Lloyd George readily consented.

(1) That it is the intention of the Government to conclude arrangements with all important firms engaged wholly or mainly upon engineering and shipbuilding work for war purposes, under which these profits will be limited with a view to securing that benefit resulting from the relaxation of trade restrictions or practices shall accrue to the State.

(2) That the relaxation of trade practices contemplated in the agreement relates solely to work done for war purposes during the war period.

(3) That in the case of the introduction of new inventions which were not in existence in the pre-war period the class of workman to be employed on this work after the war should be determined according to the practice prevailing before the war in the case of the class of work most nearly analogous.

(4) That on demand by the workmen the Government Department concerned will be prepared to certify whether the work in question is needed for war purposes.

(5) That the Government will undertake to use its influence to secure the restoration of previous conditions in every case after the war.

The Treasury Agreement was hailed with delight by the whole of the capitalist Press. That fact alone was a

clear enough indication that the workers had been dished. This capitalist Press praise of the Agreement took various forms. Some were so blunt and plain as to leave no doubt that they understood it as a great victory of the employers in the class war. They wrote of it in glowing terms as the beginning of the end of "the tyranny of trade unionism." Others wrapped their sentiments up in more diplomatic terms and flattered the trade union leaders by describing it as a new step towards the "full recognition of trade unionism by the State," and as "partnership between the unions and the State in the control of industry."

Mr. Lloyd George was also delighted! He had put his job across successfully and he spoke of the conference as "opening up a great new chapter in the history of Labour in its relations with the State." He also said, "If Labour works this thing in a broad and generous spirit and not in a haggling spirit this document that was signed on Friday ought to be the great charter for labour."

A Labour Advisory Committee, consisting of seven trade union leaders, was set up to advise the Government on questions connected with the organisation of labour.

In the Agreement the Government conceded the point that where dilutees were introduced on to skilled work they must be paid the rate of pay which had formerly been paid on such work. This was an important safeguard on paper, but in practice the employers violated the rule over and over again, especially in establishments where trade unionism was weak and where shop stewards were lacking in vigilance and fighting spirit. The Government which gave the safeguard did nothing to impose it on unscrupulous employers who deliberately set out to evade it. Further, in giving this safeguard, the Government knew that it would not be difficult for the employers

to get round it because of the rapidly changing methods of production. By schemes of reorganisation and subdivision of labour the employers claimed that new processes came into the category of semi-skilled and unskilled work upon which they were entitled to employ dilutee labour at corresponding rates of pay. Such practices were frequently challenged by the men in the shops and sometimes became the subject of long-drawn-out negotiations between the unions and the employers whilst all the time the new practice continued and became established.

The sacrifice of the right to strike gave the employers the advantage over the workers every time. The unions could talk but they could not act, and therefore any action which might arise on the part of the rank and file would be of an unofficial character with the Union Executives lined up with the Government and the employers ordering the men back to work and declaring that such action was a breach of the Treasury Agreement.

Sidney Webb, who supported the war policy of the Labour leaders, wrote:

"Nor did the Trade Union Movement make any serious revolt when the Government found itself unable to fulfil, with any literal exactness, the specific pledges which it had given to organised Labour. The complications and difficulties of the Government were, in fact, so great that the pledges were not kept."

That is surely a clear admission of the Government's breach of faith in regard to the Treasury Agreement, and coming as it does from one who praised the patriotic spirit of the trade union signatories, it certainly cannot be called a prejudiced or exaggerated criticism. On the contrary we see a rather weak attempt to excuse the

Government on the grounds of "complications and difficulties." The plain fact is, however, that the Government gave pledges which it never attempted to honour because the people who stood to gain from the breaking of these pledges was the class whose interests the Government served.

The very important pledge which the engineers secured, to the effect that the Government should take steps to prevent the employers from using the workers' sacrifice of working conditions as a means of increasing their profits, was not even honoured. The Government gave a clear field to the employers to profiteer as much as they could during the whole of 1915, then when public opinion became restive about the matter it proceeded in 1916 to introduce a measure known as the "Munitions Levy," which was a complete travesty of its pledge to the engineers.

This "Munitions Levy" laid down that the employers were entitled to make a profit of 20 per cent. above their pre-war profits and on any excess beyond that, 80 per cent. of the excess should be paid to the Government, which meant that even in respect to the excess profits a further 20 per cent. could be taken by the employer. But that is not all, because the employer was entitled to claim liberal allowances for increased capital and extra exertion—wear and tear of existing machinery and tools and purchase of new machinery and factory extension. By manipulation of these allowances the employers were able to cheat the national exchequer out of the excess profits duty. Patriotism, which they constantly exhorted the workers to display, had little consideration in their own behaviour where profits were concerned.

But even this generous Munitions Levy measure was not to the liking of the employers. They did not want any trappings at all which threatened to spoil their game of

reaping fortunes out of the bloody business of war, so a year after it was introduced, in flagrant disregard of the pledge given to the unions, the Government abolished the levy.

## THE MUNITIONS ACT

WHILST the Treasury Agreement tied the hands of the unions which had signed, in regard to strike action, it did not succeed in preventing applications being made for wage increases, neither did it prevent the rank and file from taking unofficial action.

The Postal Workers' Association in March, 1915, petitioned the Postmaster-General for a war bonus. For several weeks they had to wait for the reply; when it came it stated:

"The Government have decided that the rise in the cost of living is not by itself a sufficient reason at the present time for increasing the wages of their employees. They regard this rise as a burden which must be shared in common by all classes in the country."

It is interesting to note the similarity of the arguments which the Government is using to-day in regard to wages and prices.

The postal workers in 1915 were indignant at the Government's reply and demanded that the matter be referred to arbitration without delay. The Government, however, persisted in delay, but finally agreed that it should go to arbitration, but added the proviso that the Government would resist the claim before the arbitrator. Despite the Government's resistance, the case of the postal workers was so strong that the claim for a war bonus had to be conceded.

At the beginning of April, 1915, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain put in a claim for a national wage

increase of 20 per cent. to meet the increased cost of living, and asked for a national conference with the mine-owners to discuss the claim. The owners rejected the request for a national conference, but stated that they were ready to confer locally through the ordinary local wage negotiation machinery. They claimed that it was not possible to make a national settlement because circumstances differed from district to district. This refusal of the mine-owners to negotiate a national settlement was a long-standing grievance of the men in the mining industry and it persists to this very day. The owners have a national organisation—the Mining Association of Great Britain—but they continue to insist upon separate and varying district agreements with the unions.

Whatever the differing district circumstances of the mine-owners may have been in 1915, one thing stood out clearly concerning the wage demand of the men, namely, that the increase in the cost of living was a uniform national increase and did not differ from district to district. Further, the Government cost of living index registered at that time an increase of 26 per cent. over pre-war prices, so that the miners' application, if granted, would still have left them 6 per cent. worse off than before the war. The attitude of the mine-owners led to a deadlock and the miners prepared for strike action. The Government, anxious to avoid a stoppage, stepped in, and under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister a national conference of the miners and the owners took place.

The owners then offered a national wage increase of 10 per cent., to be followed by local negotiations for further advances. The Miners' Federation rejected this offer and finally it was agreed to leave the matter in the hands of Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, for a decision. After considerable delay he came down on the side of the mine-owners with a ruling that the whole question



had to be decided locally, with a reference to arbitration where the miners and owners failed to agree upon a settlement.

The district conferences between the owners and the miners resulted in settlements being made on varying terms. Northumberland and Durham coalfields got a 15 per cent. war bonus on the standard wage rate, which in effect meant less than half of their original demand for 20 per cent. on total earnings. South Wales and Scotland got  $17\frac{1}{2}$  and  $18\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. bonus respectively on the standard rate, but Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire, Midlands and North Wales received 15 per cent. bonus on total earnings. The full 20 per cent. demand was not granted in any district. The settlements were everywhere regarded by the men as unsatisfactory, and widespread unrest persisted especially in the South Wales coalfield where the Miners' Federation had already tendered a three months' notice to terminate the existing agreement and had asked for a conference with the owners to discuss a new working agreement.

Disputes also arose in other trades mainly around the issue of wages and cost of living. Municipal workers and textile workers demanded a war bonus, and 7,000 London tramway workers came out on strike for nineteen days. They did not succeed in winning their demands at the time, but they put up a splendid fight which had its effect upon the authorities and influenced them in making concessions later on.

These struggles, coming as they did close upon the Treasury Conference Agreement, made the Government realise that for all its cleverness in getting the unions to sign the Agreement they had not succeeded in clamping down the workers and destroying the will to fight for better conditions.

The Government, therefore, proceeded to frame a new repressive measure known as the Munitions Act. This

was passed in Parliament on June 2nd, 1915, but it had hardly reached the Statute Book before the South Wales miners took up the challenge and smashed right through the Act.

In introducing this legislation the Government claimed that its purpose was to mobilise the industrial resources of the nation for the successful prosecution of the war. That was intended to sound very patriotic and grand, but it did not deceive the workers in regard to the true nature of this measure, which was actually industrial conscription.

Mr. Lloyd George was appointed as Minister of Munitions in June, 1915, and he cleverly pursued the policy of calling the trade union leaders into consultation in drafting the Munitions Bill. He had their measure exceedingly well. Not only did he find them amenable, but he even succeeded in getting the National Labour Advisory Committee, which had been set up at the Treasury Conference, to participate in the actual drafting of the Bill. He then called a full conference of trade union leaders in the principal industries connected with the war and placed the terms of the Bill before them for endorsement. Miners and cotton operatives refused to attend. Those who did, accepted the terms of the Munitions Bill by a large majority, but a minority dissented over certain clauses.

The Government felt safe with the majority of trade union leaders but not with the rank and file, so in order to stifle public discussion and prevent organised opposition to the Bill amongst the workers, the results of the conference with the union leaders were not made public until the Bill was introduced in Parliament and rushed through almost before the country was aware of what was happening. It was scandalous that an Act of Parliament having such far-reaching results concerning the liberties of the workers should have been dealt with

in such a manner. It was even more scandalous for trade union and Labour Party leaders to acquiesce in such a procedure and in the conditions laid down by the Act.

The following are some of the outstanding points of the Act which clearly reveal how serious was the blow which the Government was striking against the status, liberties and rights of the working class.

It not only made the decisions of the Treasury Conference enforceable by law, but it went much farther in imposing harsh regulations. It laid down severe penalties for infringement of the Act by individual or collective action of the workers.

Over a wide range of industries classified as engaged on munitions work, it declared that all strikes were illegal and that any dispute which arose between the workers and the employers was subject to compulsory arbitration. Such arbitration was to be carried out either by a single arbitrator appointed by the Board of Trade, or a Court of Arbitration consisting of an equal number of representatives from employers and workmen, with an "impartial" chairman appointed by the Board of Trade.

The Act was so worded that compulsory arbitration could be imposed on other trades which did not come within the definition of munition work. All that was required in such a trade to make a strike illegal was for a proclamation to be issued, signed by the King, declaring that compulsory arbitration was "expedient in the national interest." This could be done merely by proclamation, without any reference to Parliament.

Not only was strike action made illegal, but any action in the workshop which the employer could claim had the effect of "restricting production" made the person or persons committing such action guilty of offence under the Act and liable to serious penalties.

Clause 3 of Part II of the Act laid down the following:

"Any rule, practice, or custom not having the force of the law which tends to restrict production or employment shall be suspended in the establishment, and if any person incites or encourages any employer or person employed to comply, or continue to comply, with such a rule, practice, or custom, that person shall be guilty of an offence under this Act."

It is not difficult to realise that such a clause constituted a terrible danger to all trade union activities in the place of employment. It gave a free hand to the employer to determine working conditions and made a worker guilty of an offence under the Act not only if he, by his own action, endeavoured to defend his working conditions, but if he encouraged any other worker to do so.

The Act laid it down that firms directly engaged on munition work should be classified as "controlled establishments." A firm became a "controlled establishment" if the Minister of Munitions considered it "expedient for the purpose of the successful prosecution of the war."

Freedom to leave your job was abolished by the Act in all "controlled establishments." Part II, Section 7, Clause 1, read as follows:

"(1) A person shall not give employment to a workman who has within the last previous six weeks, or such other period as may be provided by order of the Minister of Munitions as respects any class of establishment, been employed on or in connection with munitions work in any establishment of a class to which the provisions of this section are applied by order of the Minister of Munitions, unless he holds a certificate from the employer by whom he was last so employed that he left work with the consent of his employer or a certificate from the munitions tribunal that the consent has been unreasonably withheld."

The dangers of such a clause are very apparent. It meant tying the worker to his place of employment no matter how dissatisfied he might be with it, by blacklisting him with other employers and barring him from getting another job. It helped the employers to keep down wages and impose bad conditions by taking away the freedom of the worker to choose employers who offered favourable terms. Any worker making a false statement for the purpose of evading any provision of the Act was deemed guilty of an offence under the Act.

The Minister of Munitions had power to lay down regulations "with respect to the general ordering of work in the establishment with a view to attaining and maintaining a proper standard of efficiency." If any worker acted in contravention of such regulations or failed to comply with them he was guilty of an offence.

The Act made provision for the raising of a voluntary body of skilled workers who would undertake to work under special Government control. Trade union leaders took a leading part in helping the Government to enrol over 100,000 such workers. The enrolment bound such workers for six months to work wherever the Government chose to send them. Any worker who enrolled and then failed to comply with the orders of the Government was guilty of an offence.

Supervision and enforcement of the terms of the Act rested with what were called "Munitions Tribunals." The personnel consisted of an "impartial" person appointed by the Minister of Munitions, "sitting with two or some other even number of assessors," one half representing the employers and the other representing the workmen. All these assessors were chosen by the Minister of Munitions from a panel of names drawn up by him from nominations submitted by the unions and employers. This procedure was no doubt intended as a safeguard against any known militant trade unionists

getting on to the tribunals. The real power, of course, in the tribunal rested with the odd man—the "impartial" person appointed by the Minister. The others were merely assessors. If a difference of opinion arose between the two assessors they cancelled themselves out by their equal representation and the impartial person "laid down the law." The Government having got the co-operation of trade union leaders in putting the Act over were also able to find assessors to function on the tribunals in the name of trade unionism. But things did not run smoothly with them. The real trade unionists were most bitter in their opposition to the Act and all its implications.

The tribunals had power to fine any worker or group of workers guilty of an offence under the Act, and in the event of the fine not being paid, to cause the employer to deduct it from wages.

Every worker who went on strike contrary to the Act could be fined £5 for each day or part of a day during which the strike lasted. For the mere failure to comply with any regulation in a controlled establishment a workman could be fined £3 for each offence of which he was charged. If the contravention of the Act was considered to be of a highly serious nature he could be fined up to £50 in respect of each offence, and in the event of his refusal to pay the fine he could be sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Many fines and terms of imprisonment were imposed under this Act during the War.

Only a few days after the Act became law two cases arose on Clydeside. Trouble had occurred at the Parkhead Engineering Works over the question of employing non-union labour. The shop steward was charged under the Munitions Act with "slacking and causing others to slack." He was sentenced to three months imprisonment. The other case was that of a

group of Fairfield shipwrights who, conforming to union instructions, had refused to do a job under certain conditions. They were summoned before the Munitions Tribunal and fined £10 or thirty days imprisonment. Three of the men refused to pay the fine and were sent to prison.

These cases caused widespread unrest on the Clyde and there was a demand amongst the rank-and-file workers for strike action, but this was delayed and prevented because the cases were taken up through the official union procedure. In the first case the agitation compelled an early release, but some shipwrights completed their sentence whilst the unions were still discussing the matter with the Government.

The Act had hardly reached the Statute Book before the South Wales Miners' Federation showed how united working-class action could smash through such reactionary measures.

Complete deadlock had been reached in the efforts of the Federation to negotiate a new working agreement owing to the owners refusing to meet the men. The Federation announced its intention to take strike action throughout the whole coalfield commencing on July 15th, 1915, unless the mine-owners conceded their demands for a new agreement. The mine-owners remained adamant, and on July 13th, two days before the strike notices expired, the Government "proclaimed" the South Wales coalfield under the Munitions Act. This meant that if the Federation went on with its intention to stop the coalfield, every official of the Federation and every miner who struck work was liable to the penalties laid down under the Munitions Act.

This attempt of the Government to intimidate the miners completely failed, and on July 15th the whole of the mine-workers of South Wales ceased work. The Government had the power to fine and imprison every

participant in the strike. To imprison two hundred thousand miners was no small job, but if the Government intended to operate the law it must face that task. The miners, fully aware of their position, had struck solidly in defiance of the law. The next move was with Mr. Lloyd George, the Minister of Munitions, and his Government. What did they do? They promptly gave way and compelled the mine-owners to make a settlement which conceded most of the terms which the miners had demanded, and after a five day strike the men returned to work on the new agreement without any attempt being made by the Government to impose any penalties for the breaking of the law.

A month later the dispute broke out afresh over the mine-owners' interpretation of the settlement. The Government gave a ruling against the men, but in face of a renewed threat of strike action hastily reversed their decision in the men's favour.

The South Wales miners had shown the whole working class how by determined and united action the reactionary laws of the capitalist class could be defeated in wartime.

## CHAPTER VI

THE RISE OF THE  
SHOP STEWARDS' MOVEMENT

THE SUCCESS of the South Wales miners' strike proved that action, in spite of the Munitions Act, was the only way to compel the ruling class and its Government to concede the just demands of the workers. The Miners' Federation had refused to commit their men to the Treasury Conference Agreement and therefore could not be charged with breaking any pledge. But in other industries where the union leaders had signed the Agreement a quite different situation existed. They had voluntarily given up the right to strike before the Munitions Act had made strikes illegal and so they were hardly likely to defy the Act, as the Miners' Federation had done, when disputes arose between the employers and the men. This meant that no official strike would be called by the union leaders no matter how acute the grievances of the men may be.

In the engineering industry new problems had to be faced almost every day because of the rapidly changing workshop conditions involving new methods of production to the disadvantage of the established engineering workers. The employers were breaking down long-standing trade customs and practices and undermining wage standards by extensive dilution of labour. Especially in shops where trade unionism was weak the employers were violating the clause in the Treasury Agreement which stipulated that the admission of new workers into the industry should not be the means of

lowering the wage rates on the various classes of work on which they were engaged. The employers were doing very much as they liked in regard to working conditions and raking in huge profits as a result. The only people who were fully aware of the changes which were being imposed were the men in the shop who saw and felt them. If they were not checked or challenged by the workers, then the employers had a free hand to establish the changes as normal working conditions. Frequently they were challenged and gave rise to disputes in the factory, much more so of course in factories where trade unionism was strong.

It became imperative for the workers to have their spokesman on the job who could represent them in their dealings with the management and conduct negotiations without delay. This function naturally fell to the trade union shop steward in establishments where stewards existed.

The system of shop stewards was recognised by a number of unions long before 1914, but it was not in operation in the factories to any large extent. Throughout the engineering industry only a relatively small number of factories had their shop stewards. The unit of trade union organisation was, in the main, the local branch, built on a geographical basis, not on the factory. This is still the case to-day, although the system of shop stewards is much more extensive.

Further, before 1914 the functions of the shop stewards, even where recognised by the unions and the employers, were very routine and limited. Their duties mainly consisted of periodical inspection of the contribution cards of their respective union members to see that they were not falling in arrears; approaches to non-unionists to join the union; and reports to the union branch or district committee concerning conditions in the shop. In the matter of negotiation with the management over

wages and workshop practices, the rule was for the steward to leave that to the full-time union organiser after submitting a report on conditions in the shop as a guide to him in the negotiations. There were a few exceptions to this in certain large establishments, such as Woolwich Arsenal, where the shop stewards conducted direct negotiations with the management before the union organiser was called in.

War conditions, plus the Treasury Conference Agreement, put an end to the limited functions of the shop stewards, and thrust upon them the main responsibility for the protection of trade union standards and for direct negotiation with the employers. The Treasury Conference Agreement had made the development of a rank-and-file movement in the shops inevitable. Many of the union leaders were too bigoted to understand the new development and too limited in their outlook to realise that by sacrificing trade union rights to the warmongers they had themselves sown the seeds of a rank-and-file movement. They failed to realise that in the class war if the workers cannot conduct their struggles officially—that is with the official backing of their unions—they will conduct them unofficially and devise the necessary means for doing so. Many of the trade union leaders fumed against the development of the Shop Stewards' Movement and denounced it as "unconstitutional," but they were powerless to arrest its progress. By their own hands they had effaced themselves and were now complaining because a new force had arisen to replace them in the leadership of the struggle.

Modern wars have become wars of machines and high explosives. This mechanisation of warfare places the engineering industry in the position of being the foundation of military action. In the base of operations the engineer holds the centre of the stage. Therefore it is not surprising to find that the rank-and-file Shop Stewards'

Movement found its strongest development in the engineering factories, although strong unofficial movements were also created amongst the miners, railwaymen and builders.

The Clyde strike of February, 1915, led entirely by the shop stewards, had set the example. Their refusal to be intimidated by the Government and union leaders, who had ordered them back to work, had made a deep impression amongst their fellow tradesmen throughout the country and awakened a new sense of power amongst the men on the job, untrammelled by agreements, rules and constitutions.

After the Treasury Conference, the Munitions Act and the South Wales miners' strike, the Shop Stewards' Movement developed throughout the engineering centres and took the leadership in every industrial dispute which arose in the trade. All the strikes which it led were of course "unofficial," and in most cases the union executives used their endeavours to persuade the strikers to return to work and allow them to conduct negotiations in a "constitutional" way with the employers and the Government. It is important to remember that in those cases where the rank and file submitted to the policy of their union executives, and the negotiations resulted in concessions for the men, it was not so much the negotiating ability of the union leaders which secured the concessions, as the power for action which lay behind it in the Shop Stewards' Movement.

The committee which led the 1915 Clyde strike decided to continue in existence under the name of the Clyde Workers' Committee. Similar bodies consisting of delegates from the factories were soon formed by the militant shop stewards in other engineering centres. During 1916 these committees were linked up nationally under the name of the National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement and financed through

an associate membership card with an individual contribution of one penny a week.

I have sometimes heard it said that this movement was built in opposition to the trade unions. That is not true. It certainly did not receive the blessing of the trade union executives. They accused it of usurping their authority and that charge no doubt gave rise to the false impression mentioned above. The movement was frequently in opposition to the policy of the trade union executives but never at any time was it an opposition movement to the trade unions; on the contrary, it became the real driving force in the factories for the building of the unions, and through its activities unorganised shops became union shops and many tens of thousands of new members were recruited to the unions. Shop stewards were always, without exception, union men, and one of their chief functions was that of approaching new employees for inspection of their trade union cards and taking steps to get them joined up if they were not already members.

Did the Shop Stewards' Movement attempt to usurp the power of the trade union executives? The answer to that depends upon the interpretation one places on the question. The fact was that the union executives had by their own hands surrendered their power to the employers and the Government when they signed the Treasury Agreement. The shop stewards took up the gage of battle where the union executives had laid it down. They fought in defence of the fundamental principles of trade unionism, and sought to carry forward its best traditions. They dared to continue the fight against capitalism when the union executives had thrown in the towel. They contended that the gains handed on to them from the past struggles of the trade unions were theirs to defend, not to surrender. If such actions can be described as "usurping the authority" of the union

executives, then the Shop Stewards' Movement can indeed say "guilty, and proud of it."

If, however, this charge is intended to imply that the Shop Stewards' Movement attempted to take the power of leading the struggle away from the executives, then it is completely untrue. One of the main complaints of the shop stewards was that the executives of the unions refused time after time to lead the workers and give them official support in their struggles against the employers, hence the workers were compelled to create their own leadership through the shop stewards' committees.

If the word "usurp" is taken in its true literal sense, namely, "to seize and hold possession of by force and without right," then again the charge is false. The shop stewards never attempted to usurp office in the trade unions. On the contrary, they always observed the constitutional procedure in respect to administration within the unions and untiringly gave unpaid service in the routine work of the union branches and district committees, and kept the Union informed of their factory activities.

The lines of organisation of the Shop Stewards' Movement were simple and straightforward. The stewards were elected by the workers in the various departments of the factory and they composed what was known as the workshop committee. In very large firms there would probably be several shop stewards in a department representing various classes of workers. These would be known as the department committee, and representatives of these committees would compose a plant or works committee.

The Movement opposed—and to a large extent broke down—the old form of shop stewards representing each group of workers according to the unions that they were in. The new form was the election of stewards irrespective of the particular trade union to which they belonged.

Considering that there were about fifty separate unions catering for engineering workers at that time, this was an important step towards eliminating the union sectionalism which was rife in the industry.

The workshop committees then elected representatives to a local or district committee which would therefore be representative of the factories in a given area.

From these district committees representatives were elected to a National Administrative Council, which was responsible for supervising the work of the whole movement.

The workers in the factories, in addition to their trade union membership, became associate members of the Shop Stewards' Movement and contributed one penny a week to the shop or works committee. These funds were used to meet delegation expenses, issue literature, and to pay an affiliation fee of one penny per month per associate member to the shop stewards' district committee. The district committees then affiliated to the National Administrative Council on the basis of one penny per quarter per associate member. (See Appendix (1), pp. 105-6, for Rules and Constitution.)

In the factories the shop stewards were ever alert to prevent encroachment by the employers on wages and working conditions. They resisted all attempts at individual bargaining between the workers and the employers, and became the recognised medium for conducting negotiations on workshop grievances. Any proposed change in existing shop practices and conditions in the various departments had to be notified to the workshop or works committee. If this led to a dispute with the management, a mass meeting of all the workers in the factory would be convened, a report submitted, and the opinion of the workers taken on the course of action to be pursued. The grievance might be raised

with the shop stewards' district committee and made an issue for all the factories in the district. When the union officials were brought into the negotiations with the management at the firm where the dispute arose, the shop stewards always insisted upon a report being submitted to the workers before any terms of settlement were accepted.

The shop stewards published two periodical newspapers, *Solidarity*, which circulated mainly south of the Tweed, and *The Worker*, organ of the Clyde shop stewards, which had its main circulation amongst the engineering workers in Scotland.

Many disputes arose during the war, but because of the power of the Shop Stewards' Movement and the urgency of munitions production they were quickly settled by the employers in order to avoid strike action.

The employers in many cases preferred to negotiate direct with the union officials, and frequent attempts were made to avoid recognition of the shop stewards and to impede them in their activities, but in the main they did not succeed in these efforts.

Several strikes took place over the refusal of the employer to recognise the shop stewards and negotiate with them. The biggest of these occurred on the Clyde at Parkhead Forge in March, 1916. It arose out of a dispute as to the privileges of the convener of shop stewards in that establishment to visit any department where trouble arose, and the right of stewards to leave their department to report to the convener. Negotiations between the stewards' committee and the management failed to produce a settlement, and strike action was then taken. Immediately five stewards, who were the recognised leaders of the works committee, were arrested by order of the Government and deported from Glasgow to Edinburgh and Aberdeen, and the condition laid down that they would be arrested and imprisoned



if they returned to Glasgow at any time during the war.

Next morning three more of the biggest engineering firms on the Clyde ceased work in support of the Parkhead men. Further arrests and deportations followed, bringing the total number of deportees up to nine.

The strike lasted eighteen days and was then terminated only after extreme pressure had been used by the union executives to get the men to return to work. Big agitations were conducted for a long time to compel the Government to cancel the deportation order. It was not until May 30th, 1917, that the Government announced that the deportees would be permitted to return to their home town, Glasgow. By this time, however, most of them were working in other towns and the issue was no longer a burning question.

The biggest strike led by the Shop Stewards' Movement took place in May, 1917, and extended over the greater part of the engineering centres throughout the country. It arose mainly out of the extension of dilution and against the Munitions Act.

It started on May 10th and spread each day to more factories. The Government were seriously alarmed and ordered the men to return to work. This order was defied and the Government ordered the arrest of eight leaders of the Shop Stewards' Movement. Although the strike was unofficial, negotiations were opened between the Government and the unions, and a settlement was arrived at on May 19th to the satisfaction of the men. The shop stewards who had been arrested were released on May 23rd, on accepting the terms of settlement.

This strike severely shook the Government over the prosecution of workers under the Munitions Act. Government publications on the work of the Munitions

Tribunals had shown that up to July, 1916, 1,006 workers had been convicted for strike activities in fifty-six strikes, and 10,645 workers had been convicted for breaches of the Munitions Act concerning working conditions. In most cases fines were imposed.

The Government carefully avoided publishing figures for the later period of the war, but it is safe to say that the prosecutions under the Munitions Act were considerably reduced in the period following the May strikes which had shown how deep and bitter were the feelings of the workers against the whole process of this Act.

By making strike action illegal; by using the law to enforce working conditions which were a violation of established trade union practices in the shops; by widespread prosecution resulting in fines and imprisonments for breaches of this law, the Government thought it could intimidate the workers and prevent industrial struggles taking place. They were mistaken. Not only was the Munitions Act defied over and over again, but many times the Government was compelled to refrain from using its powers of prosecution under the Act for fear of aggravating the situation and causing the trouble to extend in a more serious form.

The following statistics on strike actions in engineering, shipbuilding and coal mining, clearly show the failure of the Government to prevent industrial struggles in war-time by either the Treasury Conference or the Munitions Act. The workers not only continued to assert their right to defend their wages and working conditions, but the number of workers taking part in strike actions actually increased in each year of the war, as shown by the following figures. There were only five months of war in the year 1914 and the number of disputes was small during those months, but I include the figures of 1914 for the purpose of comparison:

	<i>Number of strikes started.</i>	<i>Number of workers striking.</i>	<i>Total number of strike days.</i>
ENGINEERING INDUSTRY			
1914 . . .	90	18,795	878,247
1915 . . .	97	24,930	222,500
1916 . . .	58	52,068	263,300
1917 . . .	94	316,499	2,427,900
1918 . . .	132	101,532	462,400

	<i>Number of strikes started.</i>	<i>Number of workers striking.</i>	<i>Total number of strike days.</i>
SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY			
1914 . . .	87	17,632	127,213
1915 . . .	46	6,856	49,000
1916 . . .	26	20,980	74,700
1917 . . .	49	40,091	326,000
1918 . . .	168	51,401	377,700

	<i>Number of strikes started.</i>	<i>Number of workers striking.</i>	<i>Total number of strike days.</i>
COAL-MINING INDUSTRY			
1914 . . .	158	271,242	3,718,387
1915 . . .	77	296,064	1,643,700
1916 . . .	61	57,018	287,400
1917 . . .	116	267,045	1,098,400
1918 . . .	165	380,238	1,273,800

It will be seen from the above figures that the peak year of struggle in engineering was 1917. During the first half of the year 1918 there was a lull in disputes during the big German offensive, but in the last three months of the war the curve of struggle rose again very steeply and brought the actual number of strikes in engineering higher than in the previous four years, and with the exception of the year 1917, the number of workers involved was higher. In shipbuilding the year 1918 was the peak year of struggle. In every respect—number of strikes, number of workers involved, and number of strike days—the figures were higher than the previous four years. In mining, in 1918, the number of

strikes and the numbers involved was the highest for the war years. The total number of strikes in all trades in the year 1918 reached 1,252, with 1,096,828 workers involved and 6,237,100 aggregate strike days.

From the foregoing figures we can see how unsuccessful were the efforts of the Government and the employers, even with the assistance of certain Labour leaders, to suppress industrial struggles in the last war. They used the law, imposed fines and sent men to prison; their Press poured out invective, abuse and slander, branding those who struck work in defence of their conditions as agents of the enemy; they beguiled the trade union leaders into signing away the rights of trade unionism, and some they bribed with remunerative Government posts into becoming their lieutenants, in preaching peace in industry and sacrifice for the war. But with all that, they were unable to destroy the spirit of the workers to organise and fight in defence of their standards and liberties. To the workers, if not to the right wing trade union and Labour leaders, the class war was a real living issue which did not disappear in the heat of imperialist war, but was intensified with the waste and havoc wrought by war. The workers knew that whilst they were constantly being called upon to make sacrifices, the ruling class were making huge profits out of the war.

As Lord Buckmaster said in the House of Lords' debate on February 18th, 1919, when speaking on the subject of labour unrest:

"The war did something else. It produced as an object lesson for all industrial classes to see, the most amazing profits that this country has ever witnessed . . . above £400 million of profits made owing to the war and during the war and in excess of the profits made before the war."

In face of such evidence, who is there that could dare to declare that the workers were misguided and unpatriotic

when they took strike action during the war in defence of their standards and conditions?

The ruling class were alarmed because, after winning many of the responsible trade union leaders over to their camp, the workers continued to fight the class war in spite of those leaders. Lord Islington bemoaned that fact in these words: "We see repeated day by day the unmoral attitude taken up by sections of the workers of repudiating their own appointed leaders and refusing to abide by the results of collective agreement."

Our noble Lords had to swallow a bitter pill. They were made to realise that the Trade Union Movement is not necessarily lost when some leaders lose their way, but that from the rank and file a new leadership arises where the boss class least wants it—at the point of production itself—in the form of the Shop Stewards' Movement.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE GOLDEN DAWN WHICH NEVER CAME

THE SUCCESS of the Shop Stewards' Movement lay in its direct association with the grievances in the workshop as they arose, and its unfettered power for quick and decisive action. The employers, try as they would to avoid recognition of shop stewards and to evade negotiation with them, simply found that such an attitude was unsuccessful and created further discontent amongst the men in the shops. They therefore decided that it would be wiser to recognise the shop stewards and endeavour to tame them by an agreement with the trade union executives which would establish definite rules of procedure for the shop stewards and bring them under the closer control of their union leaders.

On December 20th, 1917, the Engineering Employers' Association signed an agreement with twelve of the unions under the title of "Regulations regarding the Appointment and Functions of Shop Stewards." (See Appendix (2), pp. 107-10, for copy of agreement.)

In brief, this recognised the right of the workers to elect shop stewards in all "federated" establishments, i.e. firms belonging to the Employers' Association. The names of elected shop stewards were to be officially notified to the management by their respective unions.

The shop steward was to be afforded facilities for dealing with questions affecting the workers in the shop, and negotiating with the management for a settlement of grievances. If no settlement could be reached between the steward and the management, a further meeting could be arranged at which there could be in attendance

a deputation from the workers directly concerned, along with a union official and a representative of the Employers' Association.

If no settlement could be arrived at by this meeting, the matter in dispute was to be submitted for further consideration in accordance with the terms of the agreement previously explained, known as the "provisions for avoiding disputes." No stoppage was to take place until the question had fully passed through the procedure of this agreement, which could mean interminable delay.

To secure this latter point the employers no doubt considered it wise to enter into the agreement for recognition of shop stewards. They hoped by this agreement to take the power of strike action out of the hands of the stewards and to exert discipline upon them through the agreement with their unions. The stewards had won recognition, but the employers failed to prevent their pursuing a militant policy and leading strike actions in spite of the "provisions for avoiding disputes."

Another important move to check the spirit of struggle amongst the workers took place in the year 1917 with the backing of the Government. This was known as the Whitley Council Report.

As early as 1916 the Government realised that the war machine had reached such dimensions, that when peace did come and this machine had to be stopped, it would give rise to serious post-war problems and possibly grave industrial disturbances. Also, in order to maintain working-class support for the war, which was allegedly a war for democracy, it was necessary for the Government to hold out inducements to the masses in the form of big democratic reforms in the post-war period.

Vast social and economic reconstruction after the war was the declared aim of the Government, and in an effort to convince the workers that the Government meant

what it said, a Ministry of Reconstruction was established, and long before the war ended there were numerous reports prepared by committees of this Ministry setting down the lines of procedure for dealing with the aftermath of war. Most of this work, however, was mere window-dressing, and after serving its purpose was cast into the limbo of forgotten things when the war was over. In the matter of suffrage and education the Government found difficulty in completely evading its promises, and the result was an extension of manhood suffrage and the enfranchisement of women over thirty years of age by the Representation of the People Act of 1918. In education the "Fisher" Act of 1918 abolished the half-time system of employment of children in the textile industry and extended the provisions for higher education to working-class children. It was an improvement indeed, but it still left many anomalies and defects in our educational system.

The question of industrial conditions after the war was, however, the main social problem to be tackled. This question was referred to a Committee on the Relations of Employers and Employed, under the chairmanship of Mr. J. H. Whitley, a Liberal Member of Parliament. Its terms of reference were as follows:

- (1) "To make and consider suggestions for securing a permanent improvement in the relations between employers and workmen."
- (2) "To recommend means for securing that industrial conditions affecting the relations between employers and workmen shall be systematically reviewed by those concerned, with a view to improving conditions in the future."

In March, 1917, an interim report was issued in which the committee expressed the opinion that it was "vital that after the war the co-operation of all classes shall continue." Such an expression would almost lead one to

believe that there had been perfect harmony between the classes during the war. The committee could hardly have had the rank-and-file workers in mind. It must have been thinking of the right-wing trade union leaders who had been so ready to co-operate in sacrificing trade union conditions in the interest of the warmongers.

The report recommended the establishment of Joint Standing Industrial Councils, composed of representatives of employers and employed in the principal industries. These national councils were to set up district councils representative of the trade unions and the employers' associations in the district, and in the factories works committees were to be formed representing the management and the employees.

The report gave a list of questions that might be considered by the district councils and works committees, with the proviso that such consideration should not interfere with any existing national agreements between the unions and the employers' associations.

In view of that proviso it seemed strange that the committee proposed that amongst the questions to be included in the considerations of the district councils and works committees of the Whitley scheme should be the following:

(a) The settlement of the general principles governing the conditions of employment, including the methods of fixing, paying and readjusting wages, having regard to the need for securing to the workpeople a share in the increased prosperity of the industry.

(b) The establishment of regular methods of negotiation.

(c) Means of ensuring to the workpeople the greatest possible security of earnings and employment, without undue restriction upon change of occupation or employers.

(d) Methods of fixing and adjusting earnings, piece-work prices, etc.

(e) Technical education and training, industrial

research, the improvement of processes and machinery, and the encouragement of invention.

(f) Proposed legislation affecting the industry.

It is certainly difficult to see how such subjects could be discussed and decided without encroaching on the independent work of the trade unions.

Many of the union executives saw this danger and became exceedingly sceptical of the scheme. It came before the Trades Union Congress in September, 1917, and there were strong divergent opinions, and a direct vote on the issue was evaded by the scheme being referred to a sub-committee for consideration. At the T.U.C. in 1918 a motion in favour of its application to State services was carried.

The Whitley reports gave rise to an interesting situation. The union executives were mainly opposed to the application of the scheme in their own industries—those that were favourable were very lukewarm about it—because they feared that it might undermine the independent status of the unions.

Many of the employers were unfavourable to the scheme because they feared that it might trespass upon their managerial rights. The Employers' Parliamentary Council therefore declared their opposition unless very definite restrictions were placed upon the freedom of trade union action. This council also demanded that if this scheme was applied the employers should be free to repudiate their pledges about the restoration of trade union conditions after the war. The Federation of British Industries issued a memorandum which extended a very cautious approval of the scheme on certain conditions which made it clear that the employers would not permit interference with their control of industry.

In the engineering industry the Shop Stewards' Movement agitated strongly against the Whitley Council

scheme on the grounds that it aimed at undermining the influence of a militant shop stewards' movement and that the whole scheme was an attempt to compromise the workers into accepting class collaboration to the advantage of the employing class; that it was intended to tie the workers' hands in the class war; that it was a red herring to draw the workers away from the real struggle for workers control in industry; that it perpetuated the class division in society and left the whole profit-making system of capitalism intact.

One of the most remarkable sequels to the Whitley reports was the attitude of the Government itself. Whilst it endorsed the Whitley proposals and recommended their application to others, it stubbornly opposed the repeated requests of the workers in the Post Office and Civil Service for the principles of the scheme to be applied in Government employment. The T.U.C. recommended the Whitley scheme in the State services where the same grounds of opposition could not be advanced as in the case of private enterprise. It was not until long after the war that the Government resistance was broken down and Whitley Councils were established in the Civil Service.

Elsewhere, in private enterprise, the scheme completely misfired. In all the principal industries it was completely rejected, with the exception of the building trade in which an effort was made to apply it, but failed owing to the attitude of the employers. In a few of the smaller trades joint national councils were set up, but there was a significant absence of any effort to create the joint workshop committees which had been an essential part of the Whitley scheme.

One useful outcome, however, of the Whitley Council controversy was that the Government were driven into passing the Trade Boards Act of 1918, which extended the system of trade boards to many new trades and

brought several million workers under the protection of a legal minimum wage and thereby improved the position of many of the worst paid sections of workers. In 1922, under the excuse of trade depression, the Government made an attempt to destroy the powers of these boards to protect wages, but the effort met with strong opposition from the trade union and labour movement and was defeated.

From the end of the war in November, 1918, to the autumn of 1920, a short trade boom was experienced. The capitalists were jubilant. They had made vast fortunes out of the war and many were continuing to do so in the peace. But the boom was only a bubble, as any careful student of the economic conditions could discern. Many of the right-wing trade union leaders were, however, quite willing to continue their policy of class collaboration after the war and readily became partners in a great publicity campaign launched by the big industrialists for increased production. Huge posters appeared on the hoardings in every town in the country bearing the photographs of prominent trade union and labour leaders, calling on the workers to work harder and earn an increasing share in industrial prosperity. The outstanding caption on these posters ran: "Produce more—the gate to More is Increased Production." Then followed the messages of captains of industry and the labour leaders declaring that the era of plenty for all was within reach if harmony reigned in industry and the workers enthusiastically co-operated in increasing production. The golden dawn was about to break over the land! The workers, providing they worked harder, were about to enjoy the fullness of the fruits of their toil! So ran the propaganda of the capitalists and their right-wing labour henchmen. Dinner-hour lectures were arranged in many of the big factories at which speakers associated with this campaign talked of the benefits to be

derived from increased production. They conveniently forgot that many examples could be quoted in the history of capitalism to show that workers had been stood off work, put on short-time working, and thrown completely out of work simply because they had produced a surplus of commodities.

The speakers, of course, never mentioned the striking example of the lockout of one hundred thousand Lancashire cotton operatives in 1878 to enforce a reduction of ten per cent. in wages on the grounds that there was over-production in cotton goods. The operatives made several offers for settlement, amongst which was one proposing to accept a four day working week or a 5 per cent. wage cut if they were permitted to work a five day week until the "glut in the markets" had been removed. The employers were adamant, and after locking the operatives out for ten weeks they starved them into accepting their terms. Such was the reward for producing too much.

I clearly remember one of these well-paid "produce-more" lecturers addressing a dinner-hour meeting—with the permission of the management, of course—at a large firm in north-west London where I was employed in the early part of 1920. In the course of his speech, to my amazement, he had the temerity to quote Lenin on the importance of increased production, without drawing the fundamental contrast between production in a socialist state and a capitalist state. He did not, however, succeed in getting away with it, and before he finished he had good cause for wishing that he had not so lightly under-estimated the intelligence of the workers. That little scene cost me my job in the land of free speech.

To what extent the costly produce-more campaign achieved results I do not know, but one thing is certain, the class-conscious workers had no illusions about increased production under capitalism, and many were

the rude remarks made in the factories about the labour leaders whose faces peered at them from the hoardings on their way to and from their work.

Almost before the paste on those placards was dry the prosperity bubble had burst, and in a short time three million workers had been plunged into the vortex of unemployment and poverty.

The deluge of unemployment washed the Shop Stewards' Movement out on to the streets, and many of the ex-shop stewards quickly found a new field of activity in leading the struggles of the unemployed and building the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, which has since played such an important rôle in working-class history by rousing this nation over and over again with its persistent and fearless agitations. That, however, is another subject, and for a study of it I must refer the reader to my books *Unemployed Struggles 1919-1936* and *Ten Lean Years*.

Let us now turn to a consideration of how the employers honoured their pledges to the workers in return for the sacrifices imposed during the War.

## THE FIGHT FOR THE SHORTER WORKING WEEK

IN THE SHORT boom period following the end of the War in 1918, the capitalist class continued to reap enormous profits, whilst at the same time it resisted the demands of the workers for better standards of living.

During the war years the workers had compelled the employers to grant wage increases, but these increases never caught up to the rising prices, with the result that although the productive power of the workers had been enormously increased by schemes of rationalisation and speed-up, their real wage basis left them at a lower standard than in 1914.

At the end of 1918 the general cost of living had risen by 120 per cent. (food alone rising by 134 per cent.) above July, 1914, whilst money wages had risen by only 95 per cent. It is therefore not surprising that widespread industrial unrest existed at the end of the War and developed during the following three years on a vast scale.

The employing class, especially in the engineering industry, indulged in reckless financial deals which provided a cover for the enormous profits which they were making.

Amalgamation of firms were arranged in which reserves were used to buy out other concerns at inflated prices. The "watering" of capital by the issue of bonus shares to existing shareholders became a common practice, thereby cloaking the enormous profits that were

being made. For instance, to issue a bonus share for every share held, meant not only over-capitalising a firm, but it enabled such firms to show a dividend of only 20 per cent. when in actual fact it amounted to 40 per cent. The more the firm increased the bonus shares the more they deceived the general public about the real dividend. Many firms were carrying a load of dead share capital upon which dividends were apportioned, without it appearing that excessive profits were being made.

The financiers took their corner by inflated rates of interest on loan capital, and this, along with high depreciation charges on over-valued factories and plant, was charged as "costs" before profits were reckoned at all, and was used to justify low wages and high selling prices.

A striking example of this whole racket of amalgamation and bonus share capital is seen in the case of the big engineering firm of Vickers. In 1919, Vickers acquired practically the whole of the capital of the Metropolitan Carriage, Wagon and Finance Company. The ordinary capital of this company, amounting at that date to £3,000,000, had been doubled in 1917 by a bonus share of 100 per cent., the original capital having been only £1,500,000. In order to buy this capital, Vickers issued in exchange to the shareholders of Metropolitan Company £4,900,000 in ordinary shares, and £6,860,000 in 5 per cent. tax-free preference shares, a total of £11,760,000. Thus Vickers paid seven times the worth of the capital of this concern, thereby enormously inflating the share capital and increasing the exploitation of the workers. This was no isolated example. Vickers used their reserves to buy up other firms at inflated prices. This was reflected in the value which was placed on this firm's holdings in their balance sheets. In 1915 these holdings stood at under £5½ million; by the



end of 1919 they stood at over £17 million, and even at the end of 1920, when the slump had set in, they had risen to over £18 million. Many more examples of firms which did the same as Vickers can be found in the records of the Labour Research Department.

The promises made by the engineering employers and the Government to restore the working conditions which were suspended during the War were never kept. New machinery and new processes of production had been rapidly applied and had considerably complicated the claims of the workers for the restoration of the *status quo*. The conditions introduced with the new processes had no precedent in many cases, and the employers held on to the advantages which they had gained from the wartime relaxation of working rules.

The Government which had promised to see that pre-War conditions and practices were reinstated was unwilling to make any move to compel the employers to observe that promise. After much delay, however, it made a pretence at honouring its pledge to the workers, by passing the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act 1919, enabling a worker to proceed in the law courts against his employer for the restitution of pre-War conditions of employment. Such a measure was, of course, a downright evasion of responsibility on the part of the Government. It knew that the workers were unlikely to resort to such individual action involving legal process against their employers. Moreover, the Act laid it down that if such a course was taken and the employer lost the case, the restoration of pre-War conditions was to be obligatory only for one year. Such was the value of the Government's pledge to the workers.

One of the outstanding demands of the trade union movement after the war was for a shorter working week, and in many trades the employers were compelled to

concede a forty-eight hour week early in 1919 in place of fifty-two and fifty-four hours which had been the previous custom.

An outstanding event in the workers' struggle for a shorter working week was the Clyde strike commencing at the end of January, 1919, for a forty-hour week. Every factory on Clydeside came out, and the call was also responded to in Belfast and Edinburgh. During this strike, which lasted two weeks, tremendous meetings and demonstrations of the strikers took place in Glasgow. During the first week of the strike a deputation from the Strike Committee interviewed the Lord Provost of Glasgow and he agreed to convey the strikers' demand for a forty-hour week to the Government in London. It was arranged that the deputation should meet the Provost two days later—Friday, January 31st, to receive the Government's reply. They received it all right! Fifty thousand strikers assembled in George's Square outside the City Chambers. Whilst the deputation was inside the building, the police at the back of the crowd suddenly launched a savage attack against the workers, batoning them down right and left for no apparent reason. It seems certain that such an action had been ordered by the Government to strike terror into the workers and break their determination to continue the strike. The workers were bitterly indignant and fought back ferociously, after they had recovered from the surprise of the first police assault. Mounted and foot police repeatedly charged the strikers, inflicting terrible injuries. Even the members of the deputation were clubbed down as they came out of the City Chambers. This brutal assault upon a peaceful demonstration inflamed the strikers with such a sense of injustice that they fought back with terrific determination. The Sheriff came to the entrance of the City Chambers and read the Riot Act, and next morning, under orders of the Government, troops with war

equipment marched through the streets and took over control of the City of Glasgow.<sup>1</sup>

After two weeks the strike was called off, and although it had not succeeded in winning the forty-hour working week, it gave a tremendous impetus to the shorter hours movement which swept through most industries during 1919. It had also shown how the Government authorities which had preached class collaboration during the War and had promised that if the workers made sacrifices they would be suitably rewarded with improved conditions after the War, now had no hesitation in adopting the most ruthless measures of repression against the workers.

The duplicity of the Government was to be revealed still more clearly in the mining industry. The miners, like the engineers, had been asked to make special sacrifices in their working conditions to help to win the War, and had been promised that their claims for big improvements in wages and hours of labour would be favourably considered at the end of the War.

In January, 1919, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain put forward a programme which included increased wages, shorter hours and the public ownership and democratic control of the mining industry.

The Government was not only faced with the threat of strike action in the coalfields, but the railwaymen and transport workers who had formed a triple alliance with the miners were also likely to stop work in sympathy.

The Government decided to play for time and it offered to set up a Royal Commission on the coal industry and to abide by its findings. Believing that the Government would honour its word, and knowing how

strong their own case was, the miners agreed to suspend their strike notices and await the report of the Royal Commission.

This Commission sat under the chairmanship of Lord Justice Sankey and became known as the Sankey Commission. A tremendous stir was created by the evidence submitted to the Commission by the miners' representatives. Day by day the Press featured the testimony of the miners, revealing the dangerous and arduous nature of the occupation, the poor living conditions of the mining communities, the huge profits which had been made by the mine-owners for many years, the toll levied on the industry by the landowning class in the form of royalties, and last, but not least, the grave inefficiency and waste caused by the private ownership of the mines.

The Commission issued an interim report on March 20th, 1919, which conceded a wage advance of two shillings a shift, and a reduction of the hours of labour for underground workers from eight to seven per shift. The report also strongly expressed the opinion that, even on the evidence already taken, the existing system of private ownership of the mines stood condemned and ought to be replaced by a system of public ownership under State control.

The Miners' Federation accepted the terms of this interim report, and the wage increases and shorter hours came into operation immediately and the danger of strike action throughout the coalfields was thereby averted, but not for long. The mine-owners were not adhering to the spirit of the settlement and trouble developed over the readjustments of wages and hours. It resulted in the whole of the Yorkshire coalfield ceasing work in July. The Government left no doubt about whose side it was on. Troops and naval ratings were quickly despatched to the coalfield and put on pumping

<sup>1</sup> William Gallacher, M.P., was one of the strike leaders. He was arrested along with others after the George's Square battle, and imprisoned. He gives a detailed account of this struggle in his book *Revolt on the Clyde*. (Lawrence and Wishart.)

and other maintenance work. By a display of military force the Government tried to overawe the miners and break the strike. It failed to do so, however, and after a few weeks' stoppage was compelled to make a settlement with the Miners' Federation for all the coalfields, which removed most of the grievances which led to the dispute.

## CHAPTER IX

## THE GREAT LOCK-OUTS OF MINERS AND ENGINEERS

AFTER its interim report the Sankey Commission continued its enquiries into the management of the mining industry, and in June, 1919, the final report was issued. This gave a verdict against continuation of private ownership in the mining industry and in favour of nationalisation of the mines with a certain measure of participation in the control by the workers in the industry.

It now remained for the Government to honour the pledge which it had given when the miners withdrew their strike notices, to carry out the findings of the Royal Commission. This pledge had been very specific. It had been declared in negotiation with the miners' leaders and repeated in the House of Commons by Mr. Bonar Law on behalf of the Cabinet. It had also been placed in writing in the following letter addressed to the Secretary of the Miners' Federation.

11 Downing Street,  
Whitehall, S.W.

*21st March, 1919.*

DEAR SIR,

Speaking in the House of Commons last night I made a statement in regard to the Government policy in connection with the Report of the Coal Industry Commission. I have pleasure in confirming, as I understand you wish me to do, my statement that the Government are prepared to

carry out in the spirit and in the letter the recommendations of Sir John Sankey's Report.

Yours faithfully,

A. BONAR LAW.

With such a letter on record it seems almost incredible that the Government could refuse to abide by the Commission's findings. Yet it was so lacking in honour, that on August 18th, 1919, the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, calmly announced in the House of Commons that the Government rejected the Commission's report and would take no step towards the nationalisation of the mines. The Government had deceived and betrayed the miners in return for the sacrifices which they had been asked to make during the war. Such low-down dishonourable conduct by a capitalist class Government should have its lesson for the workers to-day. The Miners' Federation and the Trades Union Congress endeavoured to persuade the Government to honour its pledge but without success. The Sankey Commission had been a means of delaying strike action and the time had been used by the Government to prepare its resistance. The Government made it clear to the miners' leaders that it would have no hesitation in employing the military forces against the miners if they took action. A special Trades Union Congress was summoned in December, 1919, to consider the situation and decided to embark upon a big propaganda campaign on behalf of the miners to exert public pressure upon the Government to carry out the Sankey Report. The Congress reassembled again in March, 1920, with the Government still adamant. The miners pressed for general strike action, but the Congress by a large majority rejected this proposal and decided in favour of political action, which in effect meant the end of the struggle for nationalisation of the mines.

Worse was to follow for the miners. The control over the mining industry which had been exercised by the Government as a war measure had been extended after the war and was due to expire on August 31st, 1921. The wages and hours agreement based upon the first report of the Sankey Commission was a temporary agreement and was due to terminate on March 31st, 1921. During the previous month, whilst the unions were negotiating for a new settlement with the mine-owners, the Government suddenly announced its intention to terminate State control of the mines on March 31st, five months before the date laid down by the Coal Mines Act of 1920. It was subsequently revealed that the mine-owners were aware of this decision long before the announcement and had actually entered into an agreement with the Government behind the backs of the miners for safeguarding their own financial position.

It was quite apparent that the Government announcement about decontrol was a nicely arranged signal. The mine-owners abruptly ended the negotiations with the unions for a new settlement and immediately announced drastic reductions in wages, and, while the Decontrol Bill was still before Parliament, lock-out notices were posted throughout the coalfields. The lock-out commenced on March 31st, the day that State control was ended. The cunning and infamy of the Government and the mine-owners was plain for all to see.

Immediately the lock-out commenced the Miners' Federation appealed to its partners in the Triple Alliance—the Railwaymen and Transport workers—to come to its aid. On April 8th they made a decision to take sympathetic strike action commencing four days later. The Government, without waiting for the action to commence, announced a "State of Emergency" under the Emergency Powers Act. Extensive military

preparations were brought into action, reservists were called to the colours and a special "Defence Force" enrolled.

The few days' delay in the strike notices of the rail and transport workers' unions were fatal days for the miners and the whole working class. The Government with its characteristic cunning opened negotiations and succeeded in dividing the members of the Triple Alliance, with the result that the strike notices were withdrawn and the miners left to fight the battle alone. The lock-out lasted four months and ended in the miners submitting to the terms of the mine-owners, involving terrible reductions in wages and worsening of working conditions. The defeat of the miners was the beginning of a general offensive by the capitalist class against the living standards of the workers in all industries.

It is not within the scope of this book to deal with the history of the numerous industrial struggles which occurred in this period, but in order to conclude the lesson on workers' sacrifices and employers' promises in wartime, I must return to the case of the engineers.

Quite apart from the savage wage reductions amounting to an average of 32s. a week imposed upon the engineering workers by the employers during the years 1921-2, there was the question of working conditions which had been sacrificed during the war.

In 1920 the Executive of the Amalgamated Engineering Union reviewed the whole question of the rating of machines and recommended a system of classification and minimum rates for various classes of machines. The employers rejected the proposals of the union, and as there were forty-seven unions catering for engineering workers besides the A.E.U., the employers cleverly played off the unskilled unions against the skilled.

The trouble over working conditions came to a head

in the autumn of 1921, when the engineers rejected an agreement demanded by the employers. The main issue was whether the employers should be given sole discretion in regard to the working of overtime, or whether, save in emergency, overtime should be worked only by mutual consent.

When the engineers rejected the employers' proposal for sole discretion in this matter, the Employers' Federation thereupon accused the A.E.U. of interfering with the management of their businesses, and delivered an ultimatum not only insisting on the acceptance of the overtime terms, but also that the A.E.U. should sign a definite undertaking not to interfere with the "managerial functions" of the employers. These, remember, were the employers who had so readily sought the co-operation of the unions during the war years for the abrogation of all the normal working rules and conditions which were of benefit to the workers. They had got much of what they wanted on the pledge of restoring conditions after the war, but now that that stage had been reached and the engineer was no longer such an indispensable factor, the employer arrogantly displayed his contempt for co-operation, spurned the pledges which had been given, and told the unions not to dare to trespass on his right to manage his business irrespective of the interests of those employed in the establishment. Like the case of the miners, it was a striking example of the employers' strategy in the class war and a clear answer to those right-wing trade union leaders who advocate that the workers should suspend their claims and relax their working conditions during an imperialist war.

The employers' ultimatum was rejected, and on March 11th, 1922, all the members of the A.E.U. were locked out. The employers then delivered a similar ultimatum to all the other unions in the industry, and when they

likewise rejected it, the lock-out notices were extended to their members also.

In the third month of the lock-out the employers made an unsuccessful attempt to break the unions by re-opening the shops and announcing that workers who were ready to accept the terms could restart employment.

The brutal attitude of the Employers' Federation was further revealed during May when it sought to prevent the families of the locked out men from receiving poor law relief, thereby intensifying the starvation process. It issued a letter, dated May 16th, 1922, to the employers in every district, quoting a decision of the Attorney-General in 1900 against the Merthyr Tydvil Guardians on the question of poor law relief to destitute families of men on strike. This letter continued as follows:

"In certain districts the Boards of Guardians, acting on the principles laid down in the Merthyr Tydvil case, have either decided, or are proposing to, refuse relief to able-bodied men who refuse to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by the opening of works. I am desirous to suggest that your association should watch carefully the action of the Boards of Guardians in your district, and that in the event of any Board proposing to give relief contrary to the principles of the Merthyr Tydvil case, an arrangement should be made for a number of the ratepayers intimating to the Board that they object to the course which they are taking.

"If thought advisable they might also state that at the next half-yearly audit they will object to any items in the accounts which represent relief to able-bodied men who have refused to avail themselves of the opportunity of employment afforded by the opening of the works."

The men continued to fight on in face of such disgraceful intimidation, but on June 2nd the employers succeeded in taking advantage of the forty-seven union

divisions and managed to get all of them, with the exception of the A.E.U. and two others, to accept their terms, slightly modified, and make a return to work. A few days later two more unions followed suit, and the A.E.U. was left to fight on alone until June 13th, when it also submitted to the employers' demands after an heroic struggle which had lasted thirteen weeks.

During the lock-out Sir Allan Smith, the President of the Engineering Employers' Federation said: "The employers claim the right to do what they like with their own." He repeated this claim in the following words in 1927: "It is necessary in the interests of the industry that the employers' right in respect to managerial functions should be maintained; it is a cardinal principle of the present industrial system."

That has been the attitude of the employers in the engineering industry right through the years of peace from 1920 to the present day. They have taken advantage of unemployment in the industry to insult the workers by repeatedly reminding the unions that they are the bosses and that the unions must keep their place and not expect to tamper with the managerial rights of the employers. They have sneered at the unions in the conference room and have rejected over and over again the just demands of the unions for better conditions, with the result that during this past twenty years they have turned the skilled engineer into one of the worst paid workers in the country, frequently receiving less than unskilled workers in other trades.

The engineering workers would do well to remember this past conduct of the employers now that they are once again asking for co-operation and calling upon them to make unlimited sacrifices in their trade union practices and customs.

To-day, the engineering workers again occupy a position of influence and power, and the employers

must concede the status and living standards which they have hitherto denied them. Further, let them prove, if they can, that their past dishonourable behaviour towards the engineering workers will not be repeated when *this* war is over.

## CHAPTER X

## PROFITS, PRICES AND WAGES

HISTORY bears testimony to the fact that during wars between nations the capitalists do not relinquish the class war. They continue to pursue their profit-making practices and many of them actually treat the war situation as a convenient opportunity for intensifying the exploitation of the workers in their own country and making pecuniary gain out of the patriotism of the workers.

In past wars enormous profits have been made by the capitalist class at the expense of the workers. In the World War of 1914-18, vast fortunes were made by the big industrialists and financiers. They apparently felt no shame about doing it; it was their golden harvest. In peace or in war, they live by exploitation and firmly believe they have a moral right to do so. Therefore, in the War, they saw nothing wrong in increasing their profits to the highest possible point whilst millions of working-men were sacrificing their lives on the battle-fields for the principle of making the world safe for democracy. The following statements written by a man whose official capacity in that War enabled him to know what was happening are worth restating as evidence of the lengths to which capitalists will go, even in wartime, to make profits.

Sir Leo Chiozza Money held the posts of Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Shipping and Chairman of the Tonnage Priority Committee and of the National Maritime Board during the World War of 1914. After the War—in 1919—he wrote the following

startling statements in a series of Press articles which were subsequently printed in booklet form entitled *Fifty Points about Capitalism*:

"During the War, trade interests opposed themselves to public interests and public safety. Even while British soldiers were dying for their country, British commercialism was sending iron ore to 'our friends Messrs. Krupps,' or making huge profits out of exporting commodities which we ourselves had good need to put into stock against the terrible submarine danger. I have special knowledge of these matters, because I diligently served on war committees which were concerned with them."

Sir Leo, in those articles, also exposed the scandal of the tea famine in this country during that War. He gave figures which showed an enormous increase over the pre-War figure in the export of tea from the United Kingdom during the first two years of the War, and he pointed out that "*much of that increased export went to enemy countries.*" He wrote, "It was my action which finally stopped the export of tea, but I did not succeed until enormous quantities had been sent out of the country." He made this specific charge:

"The British people ran short of tea in the War because British profiteers sent it out of the country."

In respect to the export of fats from Britain during the War, he wrote:

"In April, 1916, when the submarine menace was gathering strength, I made strong representations to the then existing Government protesting against the exportation by profiteers of invaluable food supplies, for lack of which we might soon be brought to starvation. . . . Commercial men were sending out of the country for profit, in

spite of the deadly peril of the time, food which we sorely needed ourselves. My representations had effect, but not before commercialism had deprived us of valuable stocks. My words proved only too true. We came to sore need, which was due entirely to private profit being opposed to public interest."

These, and many similar statements by Sir Leo Chiozza Money, constitute a terrible indictment against the capitalist class, and although he declared in 1919 "there ought to be a public inquiry into all these matters," the Government and the ruling class conveniently avoided the challenge.

He exposed the enormous profits made during that War by the ship owners and stated the following:

"If the War had not occurred, the profits of ship owners in the first two years of the War would probably have been less than £20 million. But, as a consequence of the War, the actual profits realised by the ship owners in the first two years of the War amounted to about £300 million."

In the light of such statements the reader can hardly accuse me of exaggeration or misrepresentation when I declare that the capitalists take advantage of war periods to increase their exploitation of the workers, and to enrich themselves at the expense of—and to the danger of—the common people.

On the basis of such statements, which the Government never attempted to refute, we are entitled to charge the capitalists who committed these acts with something more than profiteering. It was surely downright treason! They not only deprived their own people of necessary foodstuffs, but they sent to the armament makers of the enemy country raw materials for the manufacture of arms and explosives to slaughter their own countrymen.

We are living under the same economic system which



induced such conduct in the last War, and while that system remains we cannot feel secure against such disgraceful practices.

In a war period the propaganda machine of the capitalists class is put into top gear. The workers are repeatedly cajoled and warned that they must be ready to make sacrifices in order to prosecute the war successfully. As a means of securing these sacrifices the capitalist class express a new found respect for the workers' movement in order to induce it to accept the sacrifices without resistance. Trade union and Labour leaders are invited to join in consultation with the employers and the Government in order to speed up the war machine and to avoid industrial stoppages. They are offered a voice in the councils of State: they are given certain limited control in the economic war committees: they are mentioned favourably for State honours and Government posts. The purpose of all this is to facilitate sacrifices from the rank and file of the trade union and Labour movement by securing acquiescence of the leaders to the policy of keeping the workers quiet whilst their standards of living are being reduced, whilst their trade union customs and practices are being violated, and their exploitation intensified.

Press censorship in wartime adds to the difficulties of the workers in attempting to defend their conditions. News of the class struggle is deliberately discounted and if possible hushed up. If strikes occur they are either not reported at all in the Press, or if they are of a character which makes it impossible to maintain Press silence, the workers' case is grossly misrepresented and subjected to abusive suggestions that such action in wartime is the work of "hot heads" or even agents of the enemy. No effort is spared to create the impression that strikes in wartime, no matter how deep the grievance involved, are actions against the interests and safety of the community,

as though the community were some precious thing apart from the workers.

To-day the workers are being told that wages cannot be allowed to rise to keep up with rising prices. That, said Mr. Chamberlain, would be a vicious spiral! He presents the "vicious spiral" argument in such a way as to imply that if the workers demand higher wages they are responsible for rising prices; that the order of movement is, higher wages followed by higher prices. That is a false presentation of the case, and Mr. Chamberlain knows it! The very opposite movement takes place. Prices continue to rise before any change takes place in wages, and ultimately the workers are compelled to make demands for wage increases in an effort to avoid a constantly falling standard of living. In short, it is not a question of prices chasing wages but wages chasing prices and never catching up.

In mining, railways, engineering and certain other industries essential to the war, small wage increases have been granted after prices had been rising rapidly for months. But those increases fell far short of the rise in prices at the moment they were granted, and consequently the workers, even in these key industries, have been left much worse off than they were before the war, and with each week that passes the gap widens between wages and cost of living.

In the case of the engineers the wage demand for a 10s. a week increase was a long-standing claim made before the war, which the employers had cynically ignored. It had nothing to do with the wartime prices, but was based upon the pre-war claim that wages in the trade were scandalously low. It was not until five months after the war had started and cost of living had risen by several shillings in the pound that the engineering employers agreed to concede 5s. a week rise, which was just half of what the unions had asked for, and which

left the engineers much worse off than they had been when they had lodged their demand before the war.

Even this concession of the employers was only given in the form of a war bonus and not an increase on the basic wage rate.

This question of granting war bonuses instead of flat wage increases was a feature of the last War and one which suits the employer very well because it treats the increase as only a temporary concession which the employer is entitled to take away when the war ceases.

In many cases, however, the militancy of the workers immediately following the last War compelled the employers to merge some of the War bonuses into the hourly or weekly wage rate. But in the case of the engineering workers the employers stubbornly refused this and for the past twenty-two years we have had the unsatisfactory, and, one might say, ridiculous position of one-third of the engineers' wages still paid in the form of a bonus. Even the small increases which the unions have secured in the past ten years have been given by the employers only as bonuses. It has been a studied form of insult to the unions by the Engineering Employers' Federation. It may surprise many people to know that to-day the London district rate for highly skilled engineers is only 1s. 1d. per hour, plus 27s. a week bonus to time workers, and 25s. a week to piece-workers, and that includes the 5s. granted in February, 1940.

In his broadcast speech in April, 1940, Sir Walter Citrine, abusing and misrepresenting the Communists, said, "They demand an end to the 'industrial truce'—by which they evidently mean the negotiations for increased wages which the unions have successfully carried on without strikes." Such a statement is a very mean and cheap distortion.

Citrine knows very well that the Communists do not "demand an end" to the negotiations for increased

wages, but they do demand an end to a policy which prevents the workers fighting for the defence of their standards and conditions.

Further, where are these successful negotiations for increased wages of which Citrine speaks? Can he give one example of any body of workers getting wage increases which has maintained their standards against the rising cost of living since the war? No! Can he deny that even the increases which have been granted to the miners, railwaymen and engineers have been given grudgingly by the employers only because these workers are now vital to war production and might take action without official trade union leadership if their claims continued to be spurned by the employers as they had been for years past?

The Knight of Transport House is surely forgetting the history of trade unionism when he suggests that wage increases are the result of union leaders impressing the employers with smart arguments. I do not deny the importance of having able negotiators to represent the workers, but surely the real strength of those negotiators lies not in clever debating points but in the organised power that stands behind them and the readiness to use it if the other side refuses to recognise a just claim. To deny that is tantamount to rejecting the whole experience and history of trade unionism. Give up the right to strike under capitalism and you forfeit the fundamental basis of trade unionism. When the union leaders discard the strike weapon, they deceive themselves if they imagine that the capitalist class takes heed solely of their ability to talk. If they come out of the conference room with successes, it is because the employers know that the rank and file workers may act in spite of them.

## SHOP STEWARDS ADVANCING AGAIN

EXTENSIVE dilution of labour is again being applied by the engineering employers. On August 28th, 1939, before war was declared, the leaders of the Amalgamated Engineering Union signed an agreement with the Engineering and Allied Employers' Federation for the "temporary relaxation of existing customs as to employment of skilled men members of the A.E.U. to provide for peace time emergency conditions."

This agreement (see Appendix No. (3) on pp. 111-12) gives the employer the right, if skilled workers are not available, to utilise semi-skilled labour on machines previously operated by skilled men, and to utilise semi-skilled labour for the purpose of working alongside skilled men or under their direction.

On September 11th, 1939, after the declaration of war, a second agreement was signed endorsing the first for the duration of the war and making provision "that steps shall be taken where found necessary to ensure that production is not restricted, the parties undertake to review the operation of the Agreement at necessary intervals for the purpose of ensuring that the intention of the Agreement is fulfilled."

The workers in the industry, on the basis of past experience, have very good grounds for doubting the extent to which the employers will honour the terms of the Agreement at the end of this war when the engineer is no longer indispensable. The promises to restore conditions after the last war were never fulfilled. They are being freely offered again by the same employing class

now that the worker occupies a strong bargaining position once again.

Speaking at Manchester in January, 1940, Mr. Winston Churchill said:

"Millions of new workers would be needed and more than a million women must come boldly forward into our war industry, into the shell plants and munition works and into the aircraft industry. If trade unionists from patriotic or international motives lay aside for the duration of the war any of the special craft usages which they had so carefully built up, they need have no fear that these will not be fully restored to them after the war is won."

Bold words, Mr. Churchill! But we have heard them before with the same note of sincerity from your class and its Government, only to discover that such promises were a sham. Nothing has happened since then which gives us cause for a new faith in such words. On the contrary, the whole record of this National Government has been one of mean deception and downright opposition to the interests of the workers for the past ten years. No sweet promises for the future can erase that foul-stained record.

Even to-day, while they speak of the need for co-operation in industry, they post up in engineering factories Emergency Powers Act proclamations designed to intimidate the workers with such clauses as the following:

*Literature*

No person shall without permission distribute or deposit or cause to be distributed or deposited or offer for sale any such literature, handbill or other printed matter of any description.

*Notices*

No person shall without permission display or affix any notice, poster, bill or sign of any description, or inscribe

words or signs on any wall or pavement or elsewhere, or shall remove, alter or deface or otherwise tamper with any notice, poster, bill or sign displayed by or with the permission of the approved authority.

#### *Assemblies*

No person shall without permission cause or attempt to cause or assemble a meeting of any number of persons or shall address such persons.

#### *Processions*

No person shall within a protected place without permission organise or take part in any procession within the said protected place.

The effect of such prohibitions on shop stewards and trade union activities inside the factories is very obvious. Not only does it mean that factory meetings are illegal except with the consent of the management, but the posting or circularising of trade union notices in the factory and the selling or distribution of working-class literature, are illegal. Is that the way to create a spirit of co-operation in industry?

The engineers are alive to the dangers of the situation. They are moving forward again with the building of a powerful Shop Stewards' Movement in conjunction with the machinery of the trade unions, to defend their conditions and compel attention to their just demands.

On the week-end of April 6th and 7th, 1940, a national conference of shop stewards assembled at Birmingham from all parts of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. There were 283 delegates from 107 factories and shipyards representing 217,492 workers in the engineering and allied trades. The conference decided to establish a provisional committee for the purpose of co-ordinating a shop stewards' movement on a national basis.

Speakers at the conference were insistent that the time had come for the engineering workers to take the offensive against the employers. They called for the election of shop stewards in every section of the engineering works throughout the country. The conference also declared its determination to work for the creation of a 100 per cent. trade unionism throughout the industry.

A resolution was adopted which included fourteen demands covering wages, workshop conditions, and the defence of democratic practices inside the trade unions.

In respect of wages, it was decided to launch a campaign for £1 a week increase in the basic rate. (For a full copy of the conference resolutions, see Appendix (4), pp. 113-19.)

The conference revealed a keen fighting spirit amongst the engineers. The delegates' speeches indicated a readiness for action to resist encroachment by the employers on working conditions and rights of organisation. Delegate after delegate declared that the time had come to end the industrial truce and take every measure to protect the interests of the workers in the factories.

This conference undoubtedly marks the real beginning of a powerful national movement in the engineering factories once again for safeguarding the interests of the workers wherever they are endangered. It will not only have far-reaching results in the engineering trade, but will set an example for similar developments of organisation on the job in other industries. The Shop Stewards' Movement will again show that, despite the collaboration of the right-wing trade union leaders with the Government and the Employers' Federation, and despite the repressive legislation of the Government, the workers can fight in wartime in defence of their conditions. The tide of working-class struggle will rise again as it did in the last war in defence of standards and liberties against

the ruthless capitalist class which robs and exploits the workers in peace and war.

We have before our eyes to-day the painful lesson of France. The victory of the German fascist military machine over France began long before German troops set foot on French soil, and long before they invaded Holland and Belgium. Those victories commenced when the French ruling class suppressed the freedom and liberty of the common people of France; when they outlawed the French Communist Party; when they arrested and imprisoned the Communist members of Parliament, county councillors, and other working-class leaders, and suppressed the French trade union movement. The ruling class which committed these crimes against the French workers have betrayed the French nation to Hitler-fascism rather than see France under the leadership of a workers' government which would rally the nation to resist fascism from without and within.

The promise of German military victory against France commenced when Spain and Czechoslovakia were betrayed, when the unity against fascist aggression proposed by the powerful Soviet Union was rejected by the reactionary Governments of Daladier and Chamberlain.

To-day, when we are called upon by the British ruling class to sacrifice hard-won trade union rights and traditional British liberties in order to prosecute the war, we must remember that the men of Munich, who built up Hitler and made this war possible, are still holding leading positions in the British Government. We dare not consent to surrender our trade union rights to the same type of men in Britain as those who have betrayed France.

The workers by their organised strength in the factories, pits and depots must guard the future, and fight the system which creates such disasters. The trade

union and labour movement is faced with its supreme test. It must be strengthened and improved to meet the vital issues which confront it to-day. The building of the Shop Stewards' Movement gives a bed-rock basis to trade unionism. It should receive the support of every trade union leader who genuinely desires to see the power of the workers increased and the cause of trade unionism advanced. Those who would deny the importance or the necessity of a powerful Shop Stewards' Movement as part of trade union organisation have already lost touch with the conditions at the bench and machine. They fail to understand the nature of modern industrial conditions and the character of the class struggle which rages in industry.

Trade unionism is now faced with a situation which calls for loyal, clear-minded and bold leadership. Those leaders who falter with the class enemy in this hour of trial will forfeit the trust of the workers for all time. They will be swept aside by the advance of the workers towards the goal of international working class solidarity and the building of a socialist order of society which alone can bring lasting peace, security, and an abundance of life to the toilers of all lands.

APPENDIX (1)

RULES AND CONSTITUTION OF

NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS'  
and

WORKERS' COMMITTEE MOVEMENT DURING THE 1914-18 WAR

STRUCTURE

The unit of organisation shall be the Workshop Committee, composed of the stewards elected in the various departments.

Stewards shall be elected irrespective of the particular Trade Union they belong to.

The Plant Committee shall be composed of representatives from the department committee.

The Local or District Committee shall be composed of representatives from the various Plant Committees.

The National Administrative Council shall be composed of an agreed upon number of representatives who shall be elected by ballot of the whole of the affiliated Local Committees.

No committee shall have executive power, all questions of policy and action being referred back to the rank and file.

PRINCIPLES

Direct representation from the workshop to committees.

The vesting of control of policy and action in the rank and file.

OBJECTS

To obtain an ever-increasing control of workshop conditions, the regulation of the terms upon which the workers shall be employed, the organisation of the workers upon a class basis to prosecute the interests of the working class until the triumph of the workers is assured.

## FINANCE

The contributions of Associate Members shall be one penny per week to the Shop Committee.

The affiliation fees of the Plant Committees to the Local Committee shall be on the basis of one penny per month per Associate Member.

The affiliation fees of the Local Committees to the National Administration Council shall be on the basis of one penny per quarter per Associate Member.

## SHOP RULES

The employers shall have no jurisdiction over the election of any Shop Committee.

The Stewards shall be the recognised medium to conduct any negotiations on workshop grievances.

No individual bargaining shall take place between the workers and representatives of the employers.

Any proposed changes to existing shop practices and conditions in the various departments shall be first notified to the Stewards of the department through the Secretary of the Works Committee.

Stewards and the requisite officers shall be elected for six months, and may be eligible for re-election.

There shall be frequent shop meetings to report progress.

All questions involving dispute shall be referred to the rank and file for mandate.

## APPENDIX (2)

## SOCIETY OF AMALGAMATED TOOLMAKERS

## SHOP STEWARDS' RULES AND REGULATIONS

Copy of Memorandum of Agreement between Engineering Employers' Association

and

Steam Engine Makers' Society.

United Machine Workers' Association.

Society of Amalgamated Toolmakers, Engineers and Machinists.

U.K. Society of Amalgamated Smiths and Strikers.

Electrical Trades Union.

National Society of Amalgamated Brassworkers and Metal Mechanics.

Union of Journeymen Brassfounders, Fitters, Turners, Finishers' and Coppersmiths' Association of Great Britain and Ireland.

Amalgamated Society of Coremakers of Great Britain and Ireland.

Workers' Union.

National Union of General Workers.

National Amalgamated Union of Labour.

National Amalgamated Union of Enginemen, Firemen, Mechanics, Motormen and Electrical Workers.

REGULATIONS REGARDING THE APPOINTMENT AND FUNCTIONS  
OF SHOP STEWARDS

London,  
December 20th, 1917.

It is mutually agreed as follows:

With a view to amplifying the provisions for avoidance of disputes, it is agreed:

(1) The workmen who are members of the above-named Trade Unions employed in a Federated establishment may appoint representatives from their own number to act on their behalf in accordance with the terms of the Agreement.

(2) The representatives shall be known as Shop Stewards.

(3) The method of election of Shop Stewards shall be determined by the Trade Unions concerned. Each Trade Union parties to this Agreement may appoint Shop Stewards.

(4) The names of the Shop Steward and the shop, or portion of shop in which they are employed, and the Trade Union to which they belong, shall be intimated officially by the Trade Union concerned to the management on election.

(5) Shop Stewards shall be subject to the control of the Trade Union, and shall act in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Trade Union and Agreements with employers, so far as these affect the relations between employers and workpeople.

(6) In connection with this Agreement, Shop Stewards shall be afforded facilities to deal with questions raised in the shop, or portion of the shop, in which they are employed. In the course of dealing with these questions they may, with the previous consent of the management (such consent not to be unreasonably withheld) visit any other shop, or portion of a shop, in the establishment. In all other respects they shall conform to the same working conditions as their fellow-workmen.

(7) Employers and Shop Stewards shall not be entitled to enter into any agreement inconsistent with agreements between the Engineering Employers' Federation or Local Associations and Trade Unions.

(8) The functions of Shop Stewards, so far as they are concerned with the avoidance of disputes, shall be exercised in accordance with the following procedure:

(a) A workman or workmen desiring to raise any question in which he or they are directly concerned, shall in the first instance discuss the same with his or their foreman.

(b) Failing settlement, the question shall, if desired, be taken up with the management by the appropriate Shop Steward and one of the workmen directly concerned.

(c) If no settlement is arrived at, the question may, at the request of either party, be further considered at a meeting to be arranged between the management and the appropriate Shop Steward, together with a deputation of the workmen directly concerned.

At this meeting the Organising District Delegate may be present, in which event a representative of the Employers' Association shall also be present.

(d) The question may thereafter be referred for further consideration in terms of the provisions for avoidance of disputes.

(e) No stoppage of work shall take place until the question has been fully dealt with in accordance with this Agreement and with the "Provisions for Avoiding Disputes."

(9) In the event of a question arising which affects more than one branch of trade, or more than one department of the works, the negotiations thereon shall be conducted by the management with the Shop Stewards concerned. Should the number of Shop Stewards concerned exceed seven, a deputation shall be appointed by them, not exceeding seven, for the purpose of the particular negotiation.



(10) Negotiations under this Agreement may be instituted either by the management or the workmen concerned.

(11) The recognition of Shop Stewards is accorded in order that a further safeguard may be provided against disputes arising between the employers and their workpeople.

(12) Any question that may arise out of the operation of this Agreement shall be brought before the Executive of the Trade Unions concerned, or the Federation, as the case may be.

## APPENDIX (3)

## MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN

ENGINEERING AND ALLIED EMPLOYERS' NATIONAL FEDERATION  
and  
AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING UNION

Temporary relaxation of existing customs as to employment of skilled men members of the A.E.U. to provide for peace time emergency conditions.

It is hereby mutually agreed:

(1) In order to supplement skilled manpower in the Industry, where it can be shown that skilled men are not available and production is prejudiced, it is agreed that an alternative class of worker may be employed on jobs hitherto done by such skilled men under reservations to be mutually agreed.

(2) Supplementary to this, semi-skilled labour may be utilised for the purpose of working with skilled men or under their direction, or performing such duties as may supplement the work of the skilled men.

(3) In the case of machining, the employer shall be allowed to put men of a semi-skilled character on to machines previously operated by skilled men under reservations previously referred to.

(4) These reservations shall include that a register of standard type shall be kept of changes made under this agreement and an undertaking given by the Company that as and when skilled labour becomes available restoration to the pre-agreement practice shall be made.

(5) The procedure for operating this agreement shall be as follows:

(a) An application for a change of practice shall be referred to a local joint Committee representative of the local Employers' Association and local representatives of the A.E.U. whose agreement shall be subject to confirmation by the executive bodies.

(b) Failing agreement by the local joint Committee, or confirmation by either executive, the matter shall be referred for consideration by the executive bodies, i.e., representatives of the Federation and the Executive Council of the A.E.U.

(c) Changes made under this agreement shall be registered by the employer on a standard form and a copy of such registration supplied to the worker or workers affected and to the local representative of the Union and the Executive Council of the A.E.U.

Signed on behalf of  
Engineering and Allied  
Employers' National  
Federation.

{ CHARLES CRAVEN, *President*.  
ALEXANDER RAMSAY, *Director*.  
W. G. CAMPBELL, *Secretary*.

Amalgamated Engin-  
eering Union.

{ J. C. LITTLE, *Chairman*.  
FRED A. SMITH, *Secretary*.

London,  
28th August, 1939.

## APPENDIX (4)

### RESOLUTIONS PASSED

AT THE NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS' CONFERENCE  
HELD IN BIRMINGHAM, APRIL 6TH AND 7TH, 1940

#### MAIN RESOLUTION

This conference of Shop Stewards and Workshop Representatives elected to represent a total of 217,492 workers employed in 107 works in Aircraft, Ship Building, Ship Repair, Motors, Radio, Electrical Equipment, Arms Manufacture, and other sections of the Key Industry to-day, the engineering and allied trades, affirms its determination to extend and build that solidarity which is essential in the fight to defend and improve our wage rates and working conditions built up through long years of Trade Union effort and the sacrifice of millions of Trade Unionists in the struggle against the employers.

The unity of all sections of the engineering and allied trades, irrespective of the Trade Unions to which they belong, is more than ever necessary to-day.

The engineering employers, both Federated and non-Federated, taking full advantage of the war, and the National Government propaganda for sacrifice, are intensifying their normal peace-time attacks upon our conditions and standards.

#### KEYNES AND WAGES

Established customs and practices, through the plans of the Government and employers, stand in danger of being swept away. These conditions can only be maintained by vigilant shop organisation.

The purchasing power of our wages lessens as the cost of living rises. The Keynes Plan of "Deferred Payments" or

Compulsory Savings (which we condemn as wage cuts) further threaten our earnings. The Keynes Plan "Family Allowance" proposals, strikes at the roots of Trade Unionism and the Trade Union method of establishing wage rates on work performed, and puts our earnings on to a "Means Test." We deprecate the voluntary savings scheme in the factory as detrimental to future wage demands.

#### ORGANISE THE "NONS"

Dilution plans of the Government on a scale never before known, are being discussed in secret. It is obvious from what has been published that large numbers of women and youths are to be forced into the industry at low rates of pay. The wage rates and working conditions of the organised factories are presented with the dangers of rates being undercut by the putting out of work to unorganised sub-contract factories.

Trade Unionists everywhere should do all in their power to organise our fellow workers in these factories, to assist and bring within the orbit of organisation, our womenfolk and youth in the factories. The utmost vigilance should also be exercised in the operation of all such schemes, in order to safeguard the status of all workers in the industry, so as to avoid, as far as possible, a repetition of what took place after the last war.

#### IN WAR AS IN PEACE

These problems brought to the forefront by the present war make essential a united stand by all engineering workers. The experience of the French workers has shown how rapidly the gains of previous struggles and elementary rights of organisation have been destroyed by the wartime offensive of the French Government and employers.

The Chamberlain Government and the employers of this country can be equally as ruthless as the French Government and employers. Its recent armed attack upon Indian and Rhodesian strikers and its close friendship and collaboration with the French Government must be a warning to us.

Taking our stand on the basis of working-class solidarity, in wartime no less than in peacetime, we proclaim our determination to resist all such attacks and to fight unreservedly for the interests of the working class in every field.

#### WORKERS ARE FIGHTING

There is increasing evidence that the worker in the shops is continually fighting by strikes and other actions to defend Trade Union standards and Trade Union principles, to protect their Shop Stewards and active Trade Unionists against victimisation by employers who are greatly profiting by the War.

In most cases, these efforts of the Trade Unionists are not supported by the Executives, whose policy of support for this war has caused them to abandon the defence and advancement of the members' interests. Their policy endangers the very existence of our Trade Unions. It is therefore the men, women and youths in the shops, who must take up the struggles to preserve our Trade Unions, to greatly strengthen their Trade Union organisation, to elect Shop Stewards in every department and section of the works, so that we may get our Trade Unions serving the purpose for which they have been built, for which we pay our contributions, and to which end—the defence and advancement of the members' interests—policy must be directed.

#### WHAT WE WANT

This conference therefore resolves to do all in its power to:

- (1) Establish 100 per cent. Trade Unionism of male and female workers of all ages.
- (2) Secure the election of Shop Stewards in every section in engineering works throughout the country.
- (3) To fully maintain the individual rights of all members of the Trade Unions, to preserve and extend the democratic practices inside the Trade Unions.

(4) Campaign in the respective unions for an increase of £1 per week on our wages, preferably on the basic rate, and fight for wage increases and a shorter working week in the shops.

(5) Get a minimum rate of wages which shall be not less than 90 per cent. of the skilled male workers rates, for all adult male and female workers not engaged in skilled work. That all substitute labour, semi or unskilled, male or female, to be paid the rate for the job irrespective of ability on the principle of "Equal Pay for Equal Work."

(6) Resist every attempt to introduce compulsory savings under any guise.

(7) Establish, through our Trade Unions, a better control of overtime.

(8) Secure the observance of Trade Union Agreements where such are in the workers interests.

(9) Gain adequate ventilation, lighting, heating, A.R.P. (including real Bombproof shelters), Canteens, Tea-making facilities, adequate Transport facilities and other improved working conditions.

(10) To co-ordinate the activity of all Shop Stewards through a national Shop Stewards movement.

(11) To fight for higher dependants allowances and rates of pay for members of the armed forces.

(12) To press for the rigid control of the price of essential commodities.

(13) For the rigid adherence to the Factory Acts.

(14) The existing procedure of the York Memorandum has proved itself to be detrimental to the interests of the members and we demand the settlement of grievances on the job.

These things will only be accomplished on the basis of how we build and strengthen our Trade Union organisation in the factories.

#### RESOLUTION ON THE YOUTH

Among both adults and young workers in the engineering trades there is a growing understanding of the importance of Trade Union organisation, of a recognition that the interests of youth and adults coincide, especially during the present war.

The employers will bring yet more youth into the industry as the war progresses, not only that more adult workers may be conscripted into the armed forces, but also in order to still further increase their record profits by the exploitation of badly paid youths.

As each Shop Stewards' Committee gives assistance to the organisation of the youth into the Trade Unions and helps the youth to form their own Youth Factory Committees, so will we add to the organised strength of the workers in the factory and the development of the workshop movement to gain better working conditions. We should also remember that the youth of to-day will be the future leaders of our movement.

Where employers refuse to recognise youth organisation, of the right of Shop Stewards to represent youths, the youth demands can be achieved mainly through action and solidarity in the shops with the full support of the Shop Stewards and all adult workers.

The willingness of the youths to fight for their rights was most clearly shown in the youth strikes in 1937, starting on the Clyde, spreading with lightning-like rapidity throughout the country, gaining in a few short weeks a measure of trade union recognition which forty years of negotiations had failed to secure.

Shop Stewards and active Trade Unionists everywhere should therefore assist and encourage the youth to fight to gain:

(1) Higher basic rate for youth and apprentices.

(2) Youths and apprentices under 18 to receive 50 per cent. of adult increases and those over 18 to receive full adult increases.

(3) That all youths shall get the adult rate on reaching the age of 20 years.

(4) Maintain the apprenticeship system where it exists and fight for adequate technical training in the employers' time and variation of work where no apprenticeship system exists.

(5) Abolition of all overtime for those under 21.

(6) Abolition of all night work for those under 21.

(7) The gaining of 100 per cent. Trade Union organisation and setting up Factory Youth Committees.

(8) Rigid observance of Factory Acts.

(9) All youth in the industry exempt from service while dilution exists.

(10) Co-ordination of Factory Youth Committees in Area Youth Committees alongside Area Shop Steward Committees.

#### STATEMENT ON WOMEN WORKERS

Thousands of women are in the engineering and allied trades, many doing skilled jobs, receiving inadequate rates of pay and practically wholly unorganised, used by the employers as cheap labour.

This war period now faces the industry with the entrance of 1,000,000 or more women, which the Government and employers hope to use to help undercut our wages and conditions.

Women are on night shift and working excessive hours of overtime and the 1937 Factory Act covering women and young people is rapidly going by the board.

Women have not yet received equivalent wage increases as recently won by the males.

Therefore this conference resolves to take the necessary steps to defeat the objective of the employers and to draw into the organised working-class movement all female labour in the industry by:

(1) Shop Stewards to initiate immediately a campaign for extensive Trade Union recruitment into the existing Unions catering for females.

(2) Campaign within A.E.U. for its ranks to be opened to females.

(3) To rapidly increase the number of women Shop Stewards and to draw them into the shops committees, establishing the utmost unity.

(4) To give the maximum assistance to obtain the outstanding demands for wage increases for females.

(5) Females substituted for males to receive the same rate for the job, and for all other jobs, the highest possible rate to be achieved in relationship to local circumstances, endeavouring to raise the status of women to the level of the men.

(6) Opposition to extension of night-shift working.

(7) Opposition to overtime working.

(8) Maximum assistance and education in Trade Unionism to be given to females to enable them to become a force in the workshops, side by side with the males.