

# WAR *For Anarchism* COMMENTARY

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MID-APRIL, 1944

TWOPENCE

## Bevin declares war on Miners

BEHIND A RAMPART of glasses in the ostentatious luxury of the Dorchester Hotel Mr. Ernest Bevin, trade union boss and His Majesty's Socialist Minister of Labour declared war on the striking miners last week. Not, of course, alone against the miners is the declaration made, but also against the engineering apprentices, the Belfast engineers and any other body of workers who may object to the servile conditions of their employment.

But Bevin's emphasis upon the miners whilst making his threats is in the tradition of the British employing class. Attacks against the working class, or attempts of that class to improve the condition of labour, have most often begun with a battle between the miners and the employing class and its government. In 1926 and 1921, in the wage struggles of 1910 to 1914, in the fight for a shorter working day, the struggle against the truck system, in the contest to establish the right to combine, the miners' fight has been the opening battle of a series. The defeat or victory of the pitmen has ever been the forecast of the defeat or victory of the working class. So, in the threat of Bevin, although aimed especially at the miners, we see a general attack on the workers.

In a style reminiscent of J. H. Thomas's, "As God is my witness" Bevin declared, "I can stand with my hand on my heart and say that the miners have achieved everything in the last four years that they have fought for since 1912."

Everything except the expropriation of coal royalties and wayleaves, the complete abolition of district agreements, the six hour working day (the miners' working day is now longer than it was twenty years ago) a certain standard of wages (now lower than twenty-five years ago) and a host of other items. On the other hand, certain conditions enjoyed by the miners for many generations are, as

in the case of the Yorkshire house coal dispute, now being attacked.

### "WORSE THAN AN AIR RAID"

In the Bevin scale of values a strike for a higher wage is worse than an air raid on a working class city. "What has happened this week in Yorkshire is worse than if Hitler had bombed Sheffield and cut our communications," said Bevin, as reported in the *Daily Express*, April 5, 1944.

It is evident that the trade union leaders regard strikes with even greater apprehension than do the employers. Bevin's threat is a continuation of the Essential Works Order and the other anti-working class legislation of his régime and represents not only the interest of the employing class but, also, the interest of the trade union bosses. The Trade union bureaucracy, both Social-Democratic and Communist, welcome such measures which strengthen their hands against a revolting rank and file and back up their anti-strike activity with the harshest threats and power of the law.

Ever since 1922 the trade union bureaucracy (to which the Communists had not attained until three or four years ago) has fought against strikes—remember, *every* strike is "unofficial". The Trades Disputes Act of 1927 strengthened them in this fight. The wartime labour legislation consolidated their position. Now against the mutterings of a rising storm they insure themselves in the only possible way—by further incorporation of the trade unions into the state apparatus and the legislation of their dictatorship within the unions. Now that the Communists have succeeded in capturing a number of trade union bureaucrats' jobs after years of longing and striving, they, too, joined with their one time rivals for power in the attempt to make bureaucracy all powerful in the trade unions.



### THE BRITISH NAZI LABOUR FRONT

The immediate aim of the trade union bosses is to secure by collaboration with the employers' State and in return for "sacrifices" by the workers the legal enforcement of their programme of:

1. Compulsory enrolment of all workers in a trade union with enforced stoppages of trade union contributions.
2. Plenipotentiary power; full power to negotiate agreements without consulting unpaid executives or the rank and file and the complete enforcement of such agreements by the full power of the State without discussion or ballot by the members of the unions.
3. The establishment of the principle of permanent officials with the use of State power against all opposition, either in the unions or in industry.
4. To outlaw strikes, in wartime or peace, by the most severe penalties short of the death sentence.
5. To incorporate the trade unions into the State machine as a sort of extra Civil Service.

All these aims are principles of that German Nazi Labour Front which the German trade union leaders asked to join in 1933. If any doubt of the truth of this assertion is felt, let the reader review the events of trade union history of the past few years and look out for such developments in the near future. Bevin's speech at the Dorchester certainly carries the bureaucracy a long way towards their totalitarian goal.

"He will demand that the leaders get the permission of their members to act as full plenipotentiaries in negotiations with the Government and the owners. If they make an agreement, it must stand without further reference to the membership to ballot on its acceptance or rejection."

He wants an absolute guarantee that the miners will not strike, whatever their grievance, for the duration of the war."

*Daily Express*, 5/4/44.

Bevin and the other trade union bosses, with the owners, are willing to use any brutal weapon to accomplish their aim. The *News Chronicle* of April 8, 1944 forecasts a penalty of ten years penal servitude for organising strike action, while the *Daily Express* of April 5, 1944 reporting Bevin, hints at "some form of military control of the coalfields."

### ONCE AGAIN—THE RED SCARE

It seems that the Trotskyists are to be the first scapegoats of the Government's coal muddle. It is significant that the *Daily Mail*, which used to run a perennial anti-communist scare, attributing to the C.P. the cause of events entirely out of the control of the tiny Communist Party, is the leader of the anti-Trotskyist scare. The *Daily Mail* has always been run on scares and "menaces". Now that the Communist Party has adopted the policy of the *Daily Mail*, the Rothermere Press puts up another straw man and gallantly knocks him down.

We have nothing in common with Trotskyism. Trotsky, the co-architect of the present Bolshevik slave state, was as great an enemy of the Russian workers as were Lenin and Stalin. Trotsky, as Bolshevik boss of the railways, introduced the complete militarisation of the railway workers, abolishing their committees and soviets. Trotsky murdered the Kronstadt sailors and workers, flower of the Revolution. Nor can we agree with the British Trotskyists' statement: "We support the War of the Soviet Union." (Statement of the London D.C. of the Revolutionary Communist Party—4th International, April, 1944).

Anarchism does not support a war in defence of the interest of the Bolshevik ruling class, or an imperialist war for the extension, or retention, of territory in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland or elsewhere.

Nevertheless, we call upon the workers to rally in defence of the Trotskyists for this is only the beginning of sharp and ruthless attacks upon the working class. In this case, first the Trotskyists, next, maybe, the Anarchists or I.L.P., then, swiftly, the miners, engineers, dockers and the rest.

So-called "agitators" do not cause strikes. Strikes are the result of deep resentment against unjust and harsh working conditions. They may imprison the "agitators", but strikes will go on so long as capitalism exists. Bevin and the employing class know this and as well as schemes against Trotskyites, Anarchists and I.L.P.'ers they have well laid plans of terror against any body of industrial workers who dare to question the contents of their pay packets or the authority of the trade union leaders. But we cannot win the main battle if we deliberately lose the first skirmishes. That fight is now on. Rally!

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# ANARCHIST COMMENTARY

## A POLICE STATE?

THERE has arisen a popular superstition, a species of modern folk-lore, that, presumably owing to some peculiarity in the climate or the atmosphere of an island, persecution for religious and political motives is impossible in this country. Some naïve people believe that because Britain is at war with a police state, Germany, it cannot therefore turn the same way itself. The use of freedom and liberty as popular slogans by politicians has grown to such an extent during the war that many are on the point of believing them. It appears that events may disillusion them, for "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance", and unless the people of this country are determined to preserve their liberties under whatever government, and not trust to politicians' promises, even those we have will soon be filched from us.

In the February *War Commentary* we ventured to prophesy that the Government, which was releasing fascists one by one (since the danger of invasion by foreign fascists was past) would turn to persecute revolutionaries in place of reactionaries, since its fear is now one of international revolution. From the standpoint of realistic politics, there was no point in attacking anti-fascists in 1940: its main concern was to attack the fascists who stood by the tenets the ruling-class had forsaken in order to defend their interests from others of like creed. In a coming international crisis, a possible prelude to social change, the fascists will be useful to the ruling-class, and they must prepare to attack anti-fascists.

The attack has begun. It naturally begins on the industrial field. International unrest is always expressed in the places of work, and not in the debating halls or in Parliament. Scotland Yard is to discover who is "creating" strikes. Unfortunately the Home Secretary, Mr. Morrison, has forgotten the little socialism he ever knew; if he will rack his brains for a few moments he may recall the first lesson of socialism that so-called "agitators" do not create strikes or disturbances; conditions create them. In the majority of instances there are no agitators; there may be an element more militant than another, but no one person or set of persons responsible. Scotland Yard must seek its clues in economic textbooks, if it is not out merely to select some known to be anti-government, and follow the classical Nazi method of singling them out.

The fact that at the beginning the Government singles out the so-called "Trotskyites" rather than other revolutionaries makes no difference. The reason it attacks them is simply because the Communist Party has prepared the ground for it for over ten years past. The Communists have spent time and energy explaining that the "Trotskyists" (who everyone of any political knowledge at all knows perfectly well are ex-members of the Communist Party) are Fascists. A pretty poor advertisement for the C.P. to have turned out so many, if they believed it were true. But of course they don't: they merely wish to split the workers with the internal dissensions of Russian politics. In this instance their long-prepared campaign of calumny of Trotskyists makes it reasonably easy for the Government to begin by attacking the Trotskyists. They are able to gain that "left progressive" veneer, to a reactionary and fascistic policy.

## PALESTINE RIOTS

TROUBLE is once again threatened in the "Holy Land." It is reported that members of the "Hagana", the illegal New Zionist movement of "Revisionists" (Jewish Fascist organisation which claims some 70,000 members) are carrying

out secret military manoeuvres in the desert by the Dead Sea, and their extremists are once more active.

The list of explosions and attacks in the past few weeks cannot be overlooked. It seems as if the extreme Zionist nationalists hope to provoke Arab-Jewish disturbances during the occasion of the Passover holidays, in order to rally the Jewish community there to their fascist programme.

Liberals in this country and more especially in America seem quite inept at realising the essentially fascist nature of the Revisionists, though it could not be clearer if they had used the name and done with it. Only the association elsewhere of fascism and anti-semitism prevents that. Apart from being a secret military organisation that drills its members in preparation for the taking over of power; apart from being extremely nationalistic and desiring a State in which one race only shall be the *herren-volk*, the Revisionists have a completely totalitarian programme, and though they have long since forsworn their earlier praise of Mussolini, the imprint of fascism bears itself upon their reason for existence, their aims for getting power, and the manner in which they propose to run their State. Many British soldiers have seen this in the past few years; without necessarily being supporters of British imperialism themselves they have marvelled at the nature of this opposition, imagining fascism could not originate among even the reactionaries of a race that had suffered so much from it in other forms. It is *not* progressive anti-imperialism that impels the Revisionists to attempt to bar from synagogues Jewish soldiers in the British Army, as has happened in some instances, according to the tales of soldiers arriving home. Even "Christianity" does not go that far!

In the struggle between British imperialism and Revisionism there is no choice we can make. Nor do we support the bourgeois Arab nationalists, forever safeguarding their own position without considering the interests of the masses: who bargain away Arab lands with the richer Jewish community and hope to get it back by political jerryandering with the authorities.

## ZIONISM

ZIONISM has become reactionary because instead of being a scheme for immigration, as many at first thought it would be, it became a scheme for colonization, and therefore of imperialism. If there are now differences between imperialism and the more impatient nationalists, we may see it paralleled in South Africa in the struggle between Smuts and imperialism on the one hand and Malan and the Afrikaander Nazis on the other, who certainly cannot be termed "progressive" by their "friends at court".

We hear many voices in this country urging that the scheme for a totalitarian Zionist State in Palestine should be helped to succeed because it would assist the Jewish people to a homeland of their own. It is pointed out that in so vast a portion of the world they are persecuted and need a haven of refuge. With this we are not disposed to agree, for these plans are suggested for after the war, when presumably it is taken for granted that persecution and anti-semitism will continue. This may well be the case, but it is the duty of all to prevent this state of affairs by making the social revolution that will end persecution for all peoples, which is not only a more humane, but an easier, task, than rooting thousands and millions from their native homelands and settling them in a few miles of desert knowing full well of the dissension of those already there.

The greatness of the Jewish people never made itself manifest when it was an imperialism, a compact tribe of warriors inspired with the idea of a God personally re-



sponsible for fighting its battles against all the nations of the world, framing severe penal codes for itself and despising the rest of the world. Nor was it manifest in the years it was constricted to the ghetto and forced into trade and usury. Its greatness came with the Diaspora, in its spreading civilisation amongst the nations; most of all when the French Revolution broke down all barriers, and its apostles of freedom arose like Heine who were cosmopolitans and not narrow nationalists. Fortunately no Revisionist racial bar prevented Freud, Spinoza, Zamenhof, Mendelssohn, Einstein, Marx and others from merging their gifts among the nations.

## PENNIES OF THE POOR

AT the Annual General Meeting of the Prudential Assurance Company on the 30th March it was reported that the Company's 'total assets now exceed £400,000,000 having increased during 1943 by nearly £16,000,000'. This information will, of course, come only as a surprise to those who think there are no profits being made in this war.

## THE TRUSTS WIN

THE figures quoted above for the Prudential Assurance Company give some idea of the power wielded by the big business combines in this country. An even more impressive proof of their international power is given by the postponement of the trial of Imperial Chemical Industries and the great American armaments firm of Dupont de Nemours under the Sherman anti-trust laws. The trial, which included accusations of co-operation with German chemical firms in South America, was called off at the express request of the American War Department, in circumstances which seem to indicate that the two companies had made the most effective use of the great political and financial power they undoubtedly wield on both sides of the Atlantic. The effect of this will of course be that the trusts will be free from any hindrance in making the greatest profits they can out of the war—and afterwards, who knows what will happen?

## HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS

FOR those who still have any belief in the virtues of our 'constitutional democracy' the recent events in Parliament over the amendment to the Education Bill must have brought a bitter disillusionment. The clause, proposed from the floor of the house and supported by a mixed group of radical Tories, Labour Party men, Liberals and Commonwealters, provided for the payment of equal salaries to men and women teachers. The government refused to accept the amendment, and in the division were defeated by one vote. According to parliamentary practice in this country, the Government should have resigned or, at the very least, the responsible Minister should have been dismissed. Instead, however, of accepting the censure implied on this particular issue, Churchill decided to defy the principles which have long been regarded as underlying the British constitution. After issuing an urgent summons to all his supporters who had been absent about their own business or fun when the defeat took place, he

held a special meeting at which he demanded a vote of confidence, adopting all the airs and graces of the offended *prima donna* in the manner he has perfected in the many crises of this type through which he has been before. The dupes fell for the act, and there is little more despicable in the history of the British Parliament than the way in which the Tories and Labour Party men who had played at rebellion came to heel when the whip cracked over their heads. Of the valiant 117 who had outvoted the Government on the first occasion, only 23 dared to repeat their act. The rest cringed and licked the master's hand like the servile curs we had always imagined them to be. The upshot of the whole rumpus is that the Government does not resign, the Minister for Education does not resign, and the women teachers do not even get their equal pay, *despite the fact that it was voted to them under the constitution of the country*. With this event should pass away the last illusion that the 'Mother of Parliaments' is anything more than an institution to applaud the decisions of the dictator, distinct from the German *reichstag* only in the way it occasionally allows the disgruntled to shout into a vacuum in order to keep them out of mischief.

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(per V.R.)	1	0	Swindon: M.B.	1	2
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Oxford: G.H.P.	4	0	London: V.R.	5	0
London: N.W. F.F.P.					
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Liverpool: J.W.	2	0	Previously		
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# THE PORTER AWARD

## As seen by a Miner

THE WAVE OF strikes which is sweeping the British coalfields to-day is the result of the bad conditions existing both prior to and since the Porter Award.

The miners, who have always been the victims of slave conditions, made up their minds when war broke out that this was their chance to improve their lot, and when one considers that their average wages were then £2 16s. 9d., which meant that many thousands were not receiving £2 10s. 0d. for a week's work, one can appreciate that the miner was in a fighting mood.

In this situation the miners found that their Communist leaders were in reality their most bitter opponents. These leaders have on every occasion sabotaged the demands made by the rank and file for increased wages and better conditions.

The betrayal of the miners was signed by the leaders when they accepted the Government White Paper on Control in the Mining Industry, without a mandate from the rank and file and, incidentally, against the advice of the Miners' M.P.'s. They hailed it with joy, saying, like Lawther, "We have now secured control of the Mining Industry".

The White Paper made provisions for Arbitration on all questions, and the miners know to their sorrow what lengthy arbitration means to them. It means in effect that wages or conditions will not be improved, and it also means that the miners' greatest weapon, the strike, will be hampered because it now becomes unofficial and will not have the backing of the Miners' Union. The miners' leaders of the time must have been foolish if they thought for a moment that Churchill was giving any power to them by his creation of the Ministry of Fuel, Pit Production Committees, etc. Has he not always proved himself the friend and spokesman of the Coalowners and the arch-enemy of the miners?

Under this sham control, it was little wonder that the production of coal soon began to fall steadily, because the Coalowners could not be expected to co-operate in the operation of any system that might eventually be of harm to them. From that period until the summer of 1943, the miners were being blamed by the Government, the Coalowners and their Communist leaders. They were to blame for the fall in output. Hardly a day passed but there were some pits on strike, and we had the spectacle of the leaders acting the parts of strike breakers.

All the time resolutions were pouring in to the Union headquarters from the branches, demanding that the leaders get busy for substantial increases or else call a strike if their demands were refused.

Then the Government, knowing a dangerous point had been reached in the falling output, submitted some proposals to the Miners' Federation in order to increase production. These were considered and rejected, and a Special Conference of the delegates of the M.F.G.B. was called in London on the 25th and 26th September, 1943, to consider the mining situation. Some plain talking was done, the leaders being blamed for the position they had put the men in. Here is a quotation from a speech made by A. Sloan, M.P., representing the Ayrshire miners in a bitter attack on Lawther, the chairman of the M.F.G.B.

"People who from the platform to-day are making these violent speeches to this Conference were the people who forced this Control upon the mining industry of this country. They were warned when the White Paper was introduced that it could not produce

a single ton of coal extra, and would not settle the position of the mining industry. So what did they do? The Chairman (Lawther) for instance told the country that the country had now secured control of the mining industry. You have now secured increases of wages, production committees, and that if the coal was not now produced it was the fault of the men working down the pits. I shall be glad to know now that you made a fatal blunder and are now prepared to take your share in this campaign to have something better introduced into our industry."

The Conference decided after a vote to accept the recommendation of the Executive, to arbitrate for an increase of wages, etc. South Wales, Lancs. and Cheshire voted against this. Evidently they realised that nothing much can be gained by Arbitration, when there is no strike weapon used as a threat. Eventually the case for an increase of the national minimum from £4 3s. 0d. to £6 per week for underground workers, £5 10s. 0d. for surface workers, increased overtime rates and a revision of the holiday pay, was taken to the National Reference Tribunal, of which Lord Porter is Chairman, hence the award being known as the Porter Award.

The Press of the country, who were the first to be given details of the Award, carried out a campaign suggesting that the miners had received an all-round increase of wages, in order to deceive the general public, who know nothing about the mines and who generally assume that since they pay big prices for house coal the miners must be making big wages. It was suggested by the press that since the minimum wage had been fixed at £5 per week for underground workers and £4 10s. 0d. for surface workers, all had now received big advances in wages, and in the case of the underground workers the advance was 17/- per week, as the previous minimum was £4 3s. 0d. per week, which was inclusive of War Wages, Greene Award and Attendance Bonus.

The miners were quick to realise that the only people who were to benefit were a few miners under the age of 21, and a few "on cost" workers, because all piece workers (coal strippers, brushers, machinemen) were paid in excess of the minimum and therefore there were no increases for these classes of workers. There was an immediate wave of strikes all over Britain. Lancs., Cheshire, Durham, Notts, Ayrshire, stopped work and, in lesser degree, other districts followed suit. The strikers were denounced by their leaders, Lawther, Horner, Moffat, Pearson, etc., who, as usual since Russia entered the war, are more concerned with licking the boots of the coalowners and the Government, than with fighting for more wages for the men they represent. It is worth noting that the districts who were on strike first were those which are not controlled by Communist leaders.

All sorts of statements were made by the leaders to get the men to return to work, among them being a statement that a new attendance bonus to the extent of 5/- per week would now be paid. This offer was made by the coalowners, and, as events have shown, the coalowners were prepared to pay provided the Government would foot the bill. Needless to say, this was intended as a bait, as the Government have stated they are not prepared to pay this. It was also stated that the miners had received increased overtime rates. Admitted, but only a small percentage work overtime, and everyone knows that the miner cannot stand up to six days per week, let alone work



overtime. It is also true to say the holiday pay is improved, but as matters stand at present the interpretation the Coalowners are putting on the Porter award demands a national strike immediately instead of the policy of the leaders, which is "work away and let us settle the anomalies".

The coalowners are at present deducting the difference between the cheap coal that is supplied to the miner and the price at which it is supplied to the public, contending the difference is a part of their wages and is additional to any increase they may come under. They are now basing the week on seven days in regard to men who work seven days per week instead of six days (pumpers, enginemen, etc.).

The miner realises the only weapon he has is the withdrawal of his labour, i.e. the strike, and that weapon would be effective if he had the co-operation of the leaders, but since they have committed themselves to the acceptance of the White Paper, which says there will be no strikes, no changes of working conditions, arbitration of all disputes, etc., they have become his greatest opponent. They denounce all strikes, play the part of strike breakers, collaborate with the capitalist press in order to discredit before the public all opposition they meet in their own ranks. Here is Pearson of Scotland speaking of this opposition at the Conference on 26th September:

"Those elements are I.L.P., Trotskyists, Labour Left, Anti-Party and Syndicalists, and they go on to describe their intention to organise these groups everywhere in the coalfield in order to defy the leadership and authority of this Union. Unless we are alive to

this situation then anything can develop in the coalfield. Unless we are prepared to take off the gloves with these people and fight them at the pits, then anything can develop within this coalfield of ours."

Pearson did not mention his intention of taking off the gloves to the coalowners or the Government. No, he is more worried and annoyed at the miners, hence his arrogant boast that he will fight them. He might at least, for decency's sake, have mentioned that any man who is not a member of the C.P. will probably be in sympathy with some of the 'elements' he mentions as his opponents.

This should clearly prove to all miners that their leaders are not prepared to fight for them, but are prepared to force the miners to accept the anti-strike policy of the C.P. Therefore the writer suggests to all miners that it would be in their own interests to find new leaders who are prepared to take the gloves off to the owners and the Government, demand immediate nationalisation of the mines, with the operation of the mines in the hands of the producers, substantial increases in wages and the withdrawal of miners from the forces.

The power of the British Miners behind these demands would be sufficient to force any Government to accede to them, and the miners could, with the knowledge that the control and operation of mines was in their hands go forward to organise the industry for the workers' benefit providing good wages and healthy working conditions in every way and a secure future for all.

★

We publish the above article because it is interesting and first hand information from the coal face, but we are bound to express disagreement on two important points.

1. "... find new leaders who are prepared to take the gloves off, etc."

So long as workers look for leaders they will be let down, sold and betrayed in the manner described by our miner comrade. New leaders are just like old leaders. Arthur Horner and Pearson were elected to leadership on just such an appeal as the above. What is wrong is the Fuehrer principle. Workers must look to themselves and when spokesmen are needed appoint delegates who will be without personal power, act as spokesmen only and be subject to instant recall.

2. "Nationalisation of the Mines, with the operation of the mines in the hands of the producers."

Nationalisation is State capitalism, as in the case of the Post Office, and is just as hard a master as private capitalism. Workers' control of a nationalised industry is a contradiction in terms. Probably on further consideration our comrade would have said socialisation, but it would be impossible to have a socialised mining industry in the midst of a capitalist society.

What we have to do is to extract from capitalism the highest possible wage now and at the same time organise the workers for the struggle for the socialisation of *all* industries by workers' control. That can only be done by revolution.

Nevertheless, we welcome the article of Miner and the discussion of principles it arouses.

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# THE YORKSHIRE COAL STRIKE

*By a Correspondent*

THE SCENE IN YORKSHIRE, grim and serious and yet a glorious reflection of the sturdy, forthright clearness of vision of the average miner. The estimates of seventy pits idle and 90,000 men involved, are figures that are never static and fluctuate according to mood. The majority of the men are in a determined frame of mind and show a greater tenacity and willingness to fight than they have shown in all their turbulent history—this tenacity is proved by the fact that most of them declare that the strike will continue until after Easter if necessary—despite lack of strike funds and refusal of public assistance, so that already families are suffering hardship—unless the government admits defeat and concedes to their demands.

The issues at stake arise fundamentally from dissatisfaction created by the inadequate Porter award. In the first instance the miners demanded £6 and were awarded £5. Most of the miners are inquiring to know "who the hell is this fellow Porter who has the constitutional power to allocate wages?" The capitalist press has dubbed this strike "the home coal strike" because it started as a sympathy strike to demand the removal of a deduction of 3/6d. per week from the wage packets of unmarried men and men between the ages of 18 and 21. This deduction is ostensibly for an allocation of coal which is consumed at home. There are many instances that can be quoted where a miner has four or five sons living at home, and like all unmarried men in such circumstances they do not need the coal allowance, because they are not householders; but the deduction is made for coal plus a deduction for leading. In some pits the men are allowed for coal and merely pay for leading. But in the majority of cases married men are deducted 12/7d. per month, i.e. 8/- for coal plus 4/7d. for leading. At one pit near Wheldale a workman said that he had been in the habit of paying 1/6d. per month for home coal plus cost of leading but that now he understood that he would have to pay 9/6d. per month plus leading. In the areas, notably Rotherham, Barnsley and Wombwell, where many of the pits have been idle longest, the domestic coal supplies are running low. As the miners are unable to procure coal from the normal retail source and have, therefore, to rely upon delivery at the convenience of the colliery owners, transport is denied them while the strike continues. Many men can be seen carrying sacks of coal through the streets for several miles to keep the home fires burning.

An enterprising *Yorkshire Evening Post* reporter, having concluded a tour of the West Yorkshire coalfield, wrote in the issue of March 30th that he found "an inconsistency in the attitude of the miners in this dispute". This observation was substantiated by the fact that he found in many instances pits standing idle while others were working, without any apparent or ascertainable reason.

Government representatives and union officials are baffled by this form of strike action, which springs from groups of men acting on their own initiative. The groups co-ordinate and the strike quickly spreads throughout the whole coalfield. There are apparently no strike committees of any kind; each morning the men wander leisurely into the nearest town and meet in the market-square, in the cafés and the pubs, to reaffirm their decision to remain out. Most of the men refuse to listen to organised coercive meetings, and the adjectives used to describe the activities of Joe Hall, president of the Yorkshire Mineworkers' Association, are unprintable but well-chosen.

At several pits, as in the case of Barnsley on the evening of March 29th, the men decided, by a small majority vote, to return to work; but the following day they failed to carry out the resolution. The reason given by most of the men was that they had been misled by a bunch of paid bosses' stooges, and had subsequently discovered the trick.

Among the men with whom I talked there was in nearly every case as much dissatisfaction with the union as with the Porter Award, and a furious condemnation of the Communist Party that, they maintained, has left them to their own affairs without any support, and had nothing to say on the matter. One man from Barnsley Main Colliery who was very bitter in his denunciations, said that he had a wife and two children to support and only one day's pay to draw, and that after fourteen years' hard work with the Communist Party they had nothing to say—in future he would act alone.

At the Prince of Wales' Pit near Pontefract apparently the only persons on duty were the 300 Bevin boy trainees and many of them were reported to state that they would not lift any coal while the dispute is on. It will be remembered that it is at this pit that D. Coventry, the eighteen years old Bevin-boy *Daily Worker* correspondent, is supposed to exercise such influence.

Commenting on the strike, the leading article in the *Yorkshire Evening News*, March 31st, says: "Politicians appear to be more concerned with the nature and consequences of the unreal debate on the confidence motion than with the grim facts concerning the country's most vital basic material". As always the concern is for material, not men.

The men of the Barnsley main colliery sneer with derision when they hear the name of Joe Hall, Harry Pollitt, or the tale of the C.P. line. They have bitter memories of a five-week strike about two years ago, and they recall the speeches delivered by Joe and Harry from the same platform on that occasion.

A little point of significance showing the remarkable versatility of government officials. Mr. Hudson has paid tribute to the West Riding farmers, and in Leeds on March 31st Tom Williams, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, substantiated the speech by giving statistics and impressive figures of agricultural progress. On Sunday Tom Williams is billed to address the striking miners at Edlington, Oadeby and Askem.

## FREEDOM THEATRE

Many comrades having expressed desire to develop theatre propaganda in the interest of Anarchism, a meeting is to be called to set up a FREEDOM THEATRE.

One act plays, comedy sketches and old and new revolutionary songs will form the first programmes. Later full length plays will be produced. The Theatre is to be strictly anarchist, songs and plays being anti-war, of Syndicalist struggle and of freedom. Those willing to act, with or without previous experience, musicians, artists and craftsmen are needed.

Already a number of songs and one act plays have been written and comrades are volunteering for the various jobs. All interested should write to: Tom Brown c/o. Freedom Press, 27, Belsize Road, London, N.W.6.



## THE WAGES OF SIN



North of Hyde Park, west of Edgware road, lie 600 acres known as the Paddington Estate. Rising with a flourish of pillared mansions off the Bayswater Road, they sink at last into that desert of gabled maisonnettes called Maida Vale.

For of all London this quarter is most notoriously surrendered to harlotry. And the Church—or rather the Ecclesiastical Commissioners—is the ground landlord.

A special committee set up to investigate the sad business has just rendered its report to the London Diocesan Conference. It exonerates the Ecclesiastical Commission.

The report does not deny immorality . . .

And while the commissioners may not have shown energy enough in coping with the evil, they need feel no qualms, the committee consider, at drawing ground rent on notorious houses.

The prostitutes' rent passes through a chain of sub-tenants, tenants and leaseholders before the commissioners get their whack. It may not be more than £3 out of an original rent of £250, and it comes "from lessees whose character is beyond reproach."

In any case, "the existence of immoral conditions on the estate depreciates its value greatly."

*Daily Mail*, 4/4/44.

## WHEN CONSCRIPTION DOES NOT APPLY?

I understand that the shareholders of Power Jets, Ltd., the firm making the jet-propulsion aircraft engine invented by Group Captain Frank Whittle, may be unimpressed by the sum offered to them by the Government, who wish to take over the firm.

"It is very small, and it will be up to the shareholders to decide whether or not to accept it," I was told.

*Star*, 1/4/44.

## ANARCHIST BISHOP?

The Archbishop of York is expected here fairly soon. He may learn when he arrives of the chortle he has just innocently provided for readers of news tickers in this city.

His speech to the Rotary Club at Beverley, Yorks, was not expertly summarised, and it came out like this: Archbishop of York predicted that "civilisation will be stalking through Europe. The result may easily be anarchy, he said."

*News Chronicle*, 25/3/44.

## HEAR, HEAR!

Describing our ancient prison buildings as quite unfitted to the methods of the present age, Mr. Herbert Morrison, Home Secretary, said in Birmingham, yesterday: "I would like to pull them all down, or blow them up."

*Daily Herald*, 29/3/44.

Mr. Morrison might have been thought an anarchist, had he not gone on to explain he wanted newer prisons built.

**Only Six Weeks to go!**

**SOLIDARITY TICKETS**

**Make sure of the**

**15,000 Mark!**

## THE CAMEL AND THE NEEDLE'S EYE

*DAILY HERALD REPORTER.*

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners have accepted the request of Dr. G. F. Fisher, Bishop of London, for a salary cut from £10,000 to £5,000, plus up to £700 travelling expenses.

In return they will take over the burden of maintaining his 70-roomed, centuries-old Fulham Palace, with certain official expenses.

*Daily Herald*, 31/3/44.

Of course, the injunction "Go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor", may not have been intended too literally. Wouldn't *half* do?

# Through

## LOGIC, CHAPLIN & THE LAW



The law says that immorality is not illegal, if a girl, over the age, consents, unless you travel with that girl across the borders of any one of the 48 States of America.

It is a case of lust becoming crime only when it is wanderlust. That is the letter of the law, violation of which is punishable by 10 years'

imprisonment and a fine of £2,000, and in the case of an alien may be followed by deportation.

Thus the whole trial revolves round the question, not whether Barry was ever Chaplin's mistress, but whether she was his mistress in New York as well as Hollywood.

The purity or otherwise of the woman concerned is irrelevant.

*Reynolds News*, 2/4/44.

## THE LION'S SHARE

The South African goldmining industry has had no really serious cost problem since 1930. Wages are the most important cost factor in goldmining. In 1942 the total wages bill amounted to about two-fifths of total working costs. The 47 Rand mines paid £12,700,000 to their 300,000 native employees and £20,400,000 to the 35,000 European employees in that year. By way of comparison, shareholders received £17,500,000 in dividends."

*Manchester Guardian*, 3/4/44.

## BLACK TROOPS FLOGGED

Major Henderson (Financial Secretary, War Office) told Mr. Sorensen (Soc., Leyton) in Parliament to-day that corporal punishment might be awarded to West Africans serving in West African regiments for disgraceful conduct in the face of the enemy.

This conduct included mutiny, sedition, disobedience to the command of a superior officer, neglect to obey general orders, desertion, and absence without leave.

Asked by Mr. Sorensen whether there had been any occasion when British troops had been so flogged:

Major Henderson replied that British troops were not flogged.

Mr. Sorensen.—Why is there this disparity between black troops and white troops?

Major Henderson suggested that that question should be put on the paper.

*Evening Standard*, 5/4/44.



## WHEN A CHAIN IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY

Since he became Mayor of Finsbury almost five months ago, Alderman Harold Riley has not worn his chain of office, which remains locked away in the town hall safe.

And there, so far as Mr. Riley is concerned, it can stay, unless some occasion, such as a royal visit, should arise where the wearing of the chain would be absolutely necessary.

*Star, 1/4/44.*

Mayors of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains.

## the Press

### SOLVING MINING PROBLEMS



A leading London business man tells me that members of the Mining Association are cock-a-hoop at having secured the services of Mr. Robert Foot, the B.B.C. Chief, as their chairman. In the light of his remarkable pre-B.B.C. 13-year record as general manager of the Gas Light and Coke Company, they regard him as a genius

in negotiation and they think he is the one man capable of making peace between the owners and the miners and so staving off the evil day of nationalisation.

That, I suppose, is why they are giving him a salary of £12,000 a year, which is probably the highest wage received by any business administrator in the British Isles.

*News Chronicle, 4/4/44.*

### CAPITALISTS' CALLOUSNESS

Eleven hundred miners of the Rising Sun Colliery, Wallsend-on-Tyne, who struck on Friday because of a dispute about wages, resumed work to-day.

A man was found dead at the pit, and under the belief that it was due to an accident, the men were idle for the remainder of the shift. Medical evidence, however, showed that death was due to natural causes.

In view of this, the management did not pay the miners for one-third of the shift they had not worked. The men contended that they were entitled to payment as they acted in accordance with custom in stopping work when a fatality occurs and they believed it was an accident.

*Manchester Evening Chronicle, 20/3/44.*

When a dead airman's relatives are presented with a bill for his income tax or laundry it is rightly looked on as typical Government meanness. Here is an example of the callousness of private enterprise on the same lines.

### MINERS' LEADERS COMPLAIN

Miners' leaders will criticise the Government and Yorkshire coalowners for making concessions to the miners while they remain on strike. South Wales had recent experience of this, and miners' leaders allege that their old weapon of persuading men to return to work before negotiations on grievances can be opened is weakened by the recent concessions." *Daily Express, 4/4/44.*



The Italian Communist Party has decided to propose to the other Italian opposition parties that they should waive their insistence on King Victor Emmanuel's abdication and proceed forthwith to the formation of a government with the support of all parties.

This decision was announced yesterday by Ercoli, the recognised Communist leader in Italy, who returned to Naples from Moscow via Algiers a week ago after 18 years' exile.

*Reynolds News, 2/4/44.*

Communists are in favour of trying minor war criminals and want to make the German people pay for the war but they leave the King of Italy who brought Mussolini to power, comfortably sitting on his throne.

### FRANCE'S BLACK FUTURE

The State Department has informed the French National Committee three months ago that it has no intention whatever to have dealings with the Vichy Government "as such," thus implying that it does not rule out that the Allied military authorities might, after the landings in France, accept the co-operation of prefects, mayors, and police chiefs, who would until then obey the orders of Pétain, Laval, Darnand and other quislings, in preference to co-operating with the men of the Resistance Movement.

Laws for the government of liberated areas in France after the second front is opened have been published by the French Committee in Algiers, and have been communicated to the British and U.S. Governments. The laws are conditional on Allied permission to put them into operation.

*Reynolds News, 2/4/44.*

### CHURCHILL PRAISED BY FASCISTS

Mr. Churchill to-day is irreplaceable, said the Madrid newspaper "ABC," commenting on the recent confidence vote in the House of Commons, says Reuter.

"Nobody is in any doubt about it," the paper adds, "and no one is trying to take his post."

"Everybody now agrees that he has given his country something more than blood, sweat and tears. The British would be too exigent if they were not satisfied with the work done by the Premier."

*Star, 1/4/44.*

"Birds of a feather flock together."

### WHERE IS TRUTH?



We have at various times been puzzled by our Press. Just at present we are trying to solve the mystery of the Russian front. All the London newspapers report progress of what is happening on the Russian front from their correspondent in Stockholm. Yet, strangely enough, all the Stockholm newspapers report progress of what is

happening on the Russian front from their London correspondent, or more generally from Reuters in London. Strangely enough, both the Stockholm correspondents on the London newspaper and the London correspondents on the Stockholm newspaper are usually identical.

*Tribune, 31/3/44.*



# Why I went on Hungerstrike

By Frank Leech

UPON MY RELEASE from prison, following my 17 days on hunger strike, I was amazed at the amount of interest aroused by my protest. So much so that I feel constrained to put pen to paper on the issue.

My action, though hardly a picnic, was small in comparison with that of hundreds whom I found in prison—men serving 6 months, 1 year and 2 years for desertion and resisting conscription—some doing 10 years for mutiny in Africa. *These men are not "Deserters" of the cause of Liberty.* Their calm acceptance of the punishment and ostracism, which the State inflicts upon them for their refusal to obey, equals in bravery and suffering the deeds of men on the battlefields. And what is more, they are fighting with different weapons for a cause that is worth while. Hundreds of them are buried in prison—their deeds unsung. The solidarity they extended to me in prison gives me further encouragement to continue to work for anarchism knowing there will be a day of reckoning in which these heroes will take their part—the day when tyranny and exploitation will be swept aside and the common people, the working class, will come into their own, the day when prisons will be abolished and their inhabitants, the men in moleskins or other convict garb, the men who have greater human understanding than those in authority, will be free. These comrades are performing greater deeds than mine. Hence my constraint.

However, I will write of my own stand, in the hope that others will be encouraged to be more articulate in their protests against conscription.

I hunger struck because Anarchism and my own experience has taught me that:—

(1) There can be no freedom for the working class until class society has been abolished and an era of economic and social equality has been inaugurated.

(2) Wars to-day are a result of capitalist economy—wars in which the working classes of the respective belligerent countries are engaged in the mutual murder of each other in the interests of their respective masters.

Accepting these premises I could do no other than follow the logic of them and refuse to be used by any ruling class in their wars.

In the early days of 1939, six months before the present blood-bath commenced, the C.P. were clamouring for a "Popular Front" and calling upon "Churchill, Sinclair and Attlee to get together". Shortly before the Clyde apprentices were "On Strike", partly in response to the threat of conscription. We Glasgow Anarchists issued a leaflet calling workers to resist conscription by a General Strike, a call to which there was no response. Ever since, in common with other groups and individual workers, we have fallen back on individual resistance, an individual resistance which is a two edged sword plunging into the heart of the present régime. One side the struggle for our individual liberty, the other by example breaking down the morale of our enemy and uplifting the courage of those who are searching for a way out. We have taken this stand, hoping that before this holocaust ends our individual resistance, with the increasing restrictions and misery, will find a ready response in the many.

Many of us have received persecution at the hands of the state for this resistance: Eddie Shaw (who has been prosecuted again for refusing to go for medical examina-

tion and is now awaiting appeal to High Court at Edinburgh) and myself were arrested in 1940 and charged with inciting young men to avoid military service, but after a two days' trial received a verdict of "Not Guilty". The charge arose out of giving advice to C.O.s and holding Mock Tribunals. Dozens of our members have served twelve months' sentences for refusing M.E. Young Alan Burnett, only 19 years of age, is still in Saughton Prison, Edinburgh, serving twelve months. At the Appellate Tribunal, after serving nearly three months of his sentence, he threw compromise back into the teeth of the Tribunal, and went back to prison to serve the remainder of his sentence. That is the spirit revolutionaries are made of.

We are often told by men in one service or another "We wish we had had the courage to do as you did. If we had our time to go over again we would be C.O.s." Yes, victory or defeat, War is always a tragedy for the working class. War! from which there is only one final escape... Anarchism.

To get back to myself. I am determined that our dictators will only conscript my dead body. Not whilst there is breath in it will I submit to them. If my time and life is to be spent it will be spent in the cause of Freedom—not the hypocritical "Freedom" of the British or any other Empire—but the Freedom of which Anarchists are the exponents. That is why I hunger struck.

Upon entering Barlinnie Prison I was examined by a Dr. Scott, the only medical examination being a cursory glance and the question "Have you any broken skin?" The rest of the examination was certainly not medical. His questions: "Your religion?" "Are you Irish?" led to arguments and cynical repartee which continued every day and only ended with my release. Next procedure was discarding of my own clothes, signature for them, bath and the supply of prison garb or at least what garb could be found that I could get into. Jacket and vest I had to wait for until next day.

At 11.30 a.m. I was ordered into what is known by prisoners as a dog-box, a cupboard 3ft. 6in. x 2ft. 6in. x about 8ft. high with a shelf placed about 2ft. 6in. from the floor for a seat. I was left in here till 4 p.m. During this time I received two visits from warders. To their question "What is your occupation?" I replied, "Anarchist". This found them in a quandary. They ultimately wrote on my cell-door card against occupation: None. Except for "Exercise", which was "solitary" after my third day in prison, and for visits to the "arch" I was confined to my cell. This confinement was anything but monotonous. The visits from Doctor, Sky Pilots, Governor, Assistant Governor, Chief Warders, the verbal battles over the breaking of prison regulations, their questions, put by one after the other, "What would you do if Hitler came here?" kept my faculties alert. The various apologies by the warders for their acceptance of such a job, my appeals to the younger warders to chuck it before the work (sic) made them inhuman, my shout to the first warder on the Sunday morning "Hey McKay what about me preaching the Evening Sermon to-night," bringing a good laugh from the passmen, all left my short prison life anything but monotonous.

I would like here to express my gratitude to the "Passmen" (prisoners who do the cleaning and dish out the grub), especially Wm. Gilliespie, Donald Nicolson and



Alan McLean, whose sentences are now finished, although Alan has since been court-martialled for desertion. The solidarity I received from them is an example of the binding force in human nature that is not to be found amongst politicians. Their solidarity will stand as an inspiration to me as long as I live.

Regarding my physical condition on hunger strike, I felt sick from hunger on the third and fourth days, and had several pains all over. These I massaged away. I exercised every day, thoroughly enjoying it, as it increased the circulation and warmth. On the tenth day I got a chill, which made me feel very uncomfortable. Lying in your cell with the temperature rising and falling, with the change in the weather and sporadic supply of hot water in the heating system, is very likely to bring on Pneumonia. However, next day I picked up a little, but by the twelfth day my gums began to bleed, my mouth swelled and my tongue got very hot and sticky. I asked the Doctor for an enema. He refused this and offered

caster oil or salts. I told him "I would do without". I requested a tooth brush from the Chief Warder. Its use helped my mouth considerably. I increased the amount of water I was drinking. From then till the day of my release although I got weaker and had occasional dizzy turns, my gums did not bleed.

I was released on the 17th day. My friends having paid the balance of fine, £16 10s. and not £25 as reported in the Yellow Press. I lost 1 stone and 6 pounds in weight. I regret that space does not allow me to write of all the incidents that happened and of my impressions of prison life. All I will say is that I confirm the statement made by Comrade Roger Carr upon his release after twelve months sentence in Barlinnie, "to anyone who has been there it holds no terrors". I conclude by showing my appreciation of all the efforts made by Comrades and friends in all parts of the country in their appraisal of my protest.

## A Great Film

THE FILM HAS become one of the most potent weapons in ruling-class propaganda, especially during the present war. It should not be necessary to emphasise this point, at every contact one makes with the cinema the war is driven home through newsreels, Government "shorts", and a large proportion of the full-length films themselves.

It is therefore appropriate that the Anarchist May Day rally this year should include a showing of "Kameradschaft", which in nearly every respect is a complete contrast to the conventional film of the moment. It was made by Pabst, one of the most talented producers, and is considered by critics to be amongst his three best films, the others being *Dreigroschen Oper* and *West-Front 1918*.

The film begins by demonstrating the artificial antagonism between French and German workers. A few German miners are having a night out in a French town just over the border, and an argument develops between them and the French which results in the usual acrimonious remarks which pass in such situations. The next day on the French side of the coalfield there is a pit disaster which traps some of the miners. The Germans have just finished a shift when they hear of it, and some are in favour of giving help. Others ask why they should help the foreigners, but are answered with the argument that a miner is a miner wherever he lives, and when he is in danger it is the duty of his own class to help him. They resolve to form an expedition, and set off with their rescue equipment. Their lorries dash past the bewildered frontier guards and arrive at the pit head in France. During this time the trapped French miners are getting weaker, but they continue to tap on the pipes as a guide to their rescuers. At last they hear answering signals, and soon the Germans are able to reach them. The gas masks and helmets of the Germans are of a different pattern to those of the French, and in his delirious weakness one of the trapped men imagines that he is back in the war, his rescuer approaches as though through a poison gas attack. The Frenchman fights the German, who is forced to fight back.

During the rescue operations it is necessary to break down the steel and concrete frontier which has been erected underground to partition off the spheres of national exploitation. Most of the French are rescued, and when the German party leaves one of their members makes a speech at the frontier, in which he points out

that although there are barriers between them, when they are underground they have to face the same dangers, and that fundamentally their interests are in common.

The film is based on an actual incident when German miners rescued French miners in a pit disaster at Courrières, and throughout the film it retains a very high degree of realism. The revolutionary nature of the subject is reflected in many aspects of the technique. There is no glamorous star, the cast is genuinely and convincingly working-class. The dialogue is in French and German, but even without the English sub-titles one can easily follow the story. There is a slight love story of a French girl and her miner boy-friend, but unlike Hollywood this is by no means the main interest of the film, this incident serves to demonstrate an aspect of the miners life without which the film would not be complete. The boy and the girl are workers, and not the hot-house plants who would be the centre of attraction in an American film.

*Kameradschaft* is a full length film of the highest standard and film connoisseurs will welcome the change from a starvation diet of Hollywood and British trash. We are concerned not only with good cinema but, more especially, with the message of international solidarity conveyed by *Kameradschaft*, a message so appropriate to May Day, 1944.

*This film will be shown at the May Day meeting to be held at the Holborn Hall on the 30th of April (see advt. on p. 2).*

### NEWCASTLE ANARCHIST MEETING

#### BEVIN DECLARES WAR ON MINERS,

#### ANARCHISTS REPLY

Socialist Hall, Sunday 23rd April, 7 p.m.

Speaker: Tom Brown

(A.E.U., Shop Steward)

Chairman: Geo. Tindale

(A.S.L.E. & F.)



## The Tyneside Strike

(continued from p. 16)

"Apprentices, who represent the overwhelming majority of youths who are to be conscripted for the pits must give the lead in organising opposition to the Scheme. THE TYNE APPRENTICES' GUILD has been formed to carry out this job.

"By drafting young workers into the mining industry the Government hopes to solve the chronic crisis in that

industry. We apprentices see in this move a direct threat to our conditions of work and to our careers. Most of us have worked for years for starvation wages, grafting, studying in an endeavour to acquire the necessary skill to become a tradesman. To do this an increasing burden was placed on the shoulders of our parents.

"All the hardships we and our parents have undergone are to be sacrificed to solve the coal crisis, a crisis for which we have no responsibility."

## To the Striking Apprentices

The following handbill was addressed by the Syndicalists to the striking apprentices of Clydeside and Tyneside. It did not attempt to canalise the struggle in any political line but only to give a proof of practical solidarity by making suggestions which

### FELLOW WORKERS,

We, the Syndicalist Movement, convey to you our feeling of solidarity in your struggle against the serfdom of the Bevin conscription for the mines.

Bevin's plan, as you have said, is an attempt to make young workers pay for the incompetence of the Government's coal policy and the greed of the mine-owners. Your struggle has the sympathy of every class-conscious worker, for you are fighting, not only for yourselves, but for the whole working class who are being attacked by this and similar measures.

But certain steps must be taken by you if victory is to be assured.

A strike committee must be formed for every factory or yard; these committees must be federated by delegates from each factory forming a District Strike Committee—the Clyde District Committee, Tyne District Committee, etc. The Districts must be federated so that all are united in a National Council of Apprentices Strike Committees. Such a National Council must cover the whole country and not just the districts at present on strike.

Pickets must be formed and every apprentice brought into activity. Nothing breaks a strike so easily as an over-worked committee and a mass of idle strikers. Every striker to his strike task. No one should be just a looker on.

Sports committees should be formed to organise football matches, concerts, dances and every possible form of entertainment. Boredom is our greatest enemy.

Money is needed for strike pay. We know the trade unions refuse you strike benefit. That is no surprise, but, while the machinery and leadership of the unions are against you, it does not follow that the rank and file of the unions will not help. Circular letters appealing for funds should be addressed to every engineering or ship-building trade union branch. Collections should be made at every shipyard and factory gate. Support should be sought from miners' lodges.

Publicise your case. The capitalist press boycotts or lies about your fights, but there are several working class periodicals which will publish your case if you present it to them. Send speakers to trade union branches. Hold public meetings. Spread the news. To keep the strike to yourselves would mean defeat.

Beware the intimidation and lies of trade union bureaucrats. Boycott their meetings. They can offer you nothing; tell you nothing but "go back". Why then attend their meetings?

Take action against the Communist Party strike-breakers. Our fathers and our grandparents learned by bitter experience that they could not tolerate individual

would render the strike more effective. Many of the methods of struggle advocated had already been adopted by the apprentices who have shown great skill and sense of organisation in carrying on their strike.

blacklegging. How then can we tolerate within our ranks an organised blacklegging—a party devoted to breaking strikes?

If we follow these elementary principles of strike organisation and pursue our aim with single-minded determination and doggedness we shall win, and we shall gain strength to pursue further victories when the unsettled post-war period shall find us fighting as journeymen.

Get all your books through the . . .

**FREEDOM BOOKSHOP**  
132 CHELTENHAM ROAD, BRISTOL.

Books not in stock can be obtained to order. Ask for our list of new books.

A few good books from our large selection:

### SECOND-HAND BOOKS

Fields, Factories and Workshops	P. Kropotkin 2/6
Individual Liberty	Benjamin Tucker 4/6
Rosa Luxemburg	Paul Frölich 2/6
Appeasement's Child	Thomas Hamilton 2/6
What to do with Italy	Salvemini and La Piana 2/6
The Russian Peasant and Other Studies	J. Maynard (2 vols.) 5/-

### NEW BOOKS

The Banned Books of England	Alex Craig 7/6
A History of the Last Hundred Days of English Freedom	William Cobbet 5/-
Chants of Labour	edited by Edward Carpenter 2/6
The Origin of Property in Land	Fustel de Coulanges 3/6
Monkey, by Wu Ch'en-en, translated by A. Waley	12/6

We have secured a few copies of the very interesting pamphlet on Spanish Collectives:

**Social Reconstruction in Spain** Gaston Leval 3d.

Don't forget to include postage:

For books up to 1/- send 2d. postage.  
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# The Homes for Heroes

**By George Woodcock**

IN THE FIRST article on housing in Britain we showed that the four million houses erected between the two wars had done little more than meet the new requirements of the extra families which had appeared during those years. The slums existing in 1918 and the houses which had become obsolete and degenerated into slums or near-slums during the intervening period had not been substantially affected by the new housing which sprawled in unplanned abandon from the outskirts of every city and town. A quantitative sufficiency of housing was almost as far from attainment at the end as at the beginning of the period. It remains for us to examine the quality of the accommodation provided by the speculative builders and the municipal authorities during this time.

With few exceptions it was unsatisfactory, from practically every point of view, whether of appearance, convenience, size or comfort. In an age when, despite the limitations imposed by capitalism, there had been a steady improvement in the mechanical factors of man's environment, the houses in which he lived were little better in most respects and worse in others than those his ancestors built. It is true that there were a few excellent show houses built for the wealthy and, very occasionally, some town council or industrial undertaking would build a well designed block of workmen's dwellings. But the exceptions were scanty, and the new houses in general tended to perpetuate the disadvantages of the old. Craftsmanship had declined, and the workmanship was skimmed and shoddy, so that the new houses fell into disrepair and decay, both superficially and structurally, much more rapidly than the old houses, whose 'solidity' often made people cling to them in preference to the flimsy villas of the new suburban estates.

The new houses, so far as they affected the workers, were divided into two major groups, those built by municipal authorities for renting to the workers and the cheaper types of house or bungalow erected by speculative builders on the housing estates in the suburbs and sold on a hire-purchase arrangement through the building societies. Nearly three quarters of the houses built in the period fell into the latter group.

The criticism of bad workmanship applies to both categories. In the municipal houses the contracting builders struggled to make the last penny of profit by skimping on costs, and the speculative builders, in trying to make attractive bargains at the minimum cost to themselves, put in cheap and poor materials, particularly where they could not be seen. The tendency to shoddiness was often increased by the piecemeal system among the building workers which forced them to work hastily in order to make up a reasonable pay packet at the end of the week. The results became evident in a year or two, when woodwork warped and cracked, draughts and damp appeared, the appearance of both interior and outside became shabby because the 'owner', who was paying as much as he could afford in hire-purchase charges, was unable to pay for redecoration or maintenance, and very often cracks in the walls began to show irremediable structural defects.

The effects of inefficient building were increased in many instances by the use of unsound sites. In one case in Middlesex I saw an estate built over a site where only a few months before there had been a pond and a stretch of low-lying marshy ground. These were hastily filled

and the foundations laid down before the filling had a chance to settle properly. On the outskirts of the river-side residential town of Marlow a field was bought by a speculative builder which was almost useless for farming purposes because it was flooded for long periods every two or three years by the bursting forth of underground springs. The fact was well known in the locality, but the builder erected a small estate and sold the houses. In due course, the springs burst out in a wet summer, the gardens were flooded, the residents had to reach their front doors on duck-boards and the houses became soaked with damp rising up the walls. These are two examples among many.

Even when the houses were structurally sound, they were rarely well planned. An imitative adherence to debased traditions tended to perpetuate the bad features of the old houses, while some of the good features of the best new houses had baths, but very few had anything like adequate provision for storing coal and wood, or for washing clothes, or for safeguarding prams and bicycles without bringing them into the hall or kitchen. Regard for economy in costs cramped the space, restricting the sizes of rooms to little more than the small minima laid down in the overcrowding laws. Almost all the new houses still possess such unpleasant features as the combined bathroom and W.C., and in estates built expressly for workers it is still, according to Mass Observation's survey of *People's Homes*, rare to find wash basins in the bathrooms. This survey also states that most of the complaints of cold come from new houses.

Anthony Bertram's *Design* gives the following instances of bad planning in houses built by public authorities:

"The bathrooms vary a good deal. The worst example I have seen was in rural housing in the West Country. There was no light in the room and a copper with an open fire that was dangerous for children. But then those were extraordinary houses. The larder, for example, locked from the inside only. The blackened wall over the fireplace showed how the chimney smoked. There was a sink draining board eight inches wide . . . I have also seen a very bad bath arrangement in new flats in South London. The water is heated by the copper and has to be pumped over to the bath. It comes in by a pipe at one end, and the cold tap (brass) hangs over the other, so that it is impossible to lay the head back at either end."

Such incompetent lapses in design, and the survival of dust-gathering vestiges like picture rails, wainscots and beadings on doors and windows, all help to make more difficult the life of the working class woman who has to do all the housework herself and can rarely afford such luxuries as vacuum cleaners or sending her washing to the laundry.

The new houses built between the wars were thus, for the most part, eminently unsatisfactory in comparison with what efficient contemporary design could produce. Furthermore, they contributed to the depreciation of the workers standard of living because of the comparatively high rents or hire purchase charges which the occupiers had to pay. The high death rate due to overcrowding in a slum may well be maintained when its inhabitants are cleared to a new site because the greater



rents allow a slighter margin for food and thus increase malnutrition to compensate for the decrease in other ill-health factors.

So far we have discussed the houses in themselves, but we have still to consider the way in which they were planted in the countryside around the cities. However we may condemn the planning of the houses themselves, it was not so bad as the virtual lack of planning with which they spread like an uncontrolled eczema over the land around every town in the country. The endless and monotonous suburban masses of ugly jerrybuilt villas, stretching for many miles on every side of the core of London, the vulgar satellite towns like Slough, the ragged strings of bungalows and shoddy houses along the big main roads out of every large city, the rash of shacks and old railway coaches along the South Coast and in parts of the Chilterns, have been described often enough, and are familiar to most people either from living in them or passing through the areas afflicted by them. Aesthetically the new settlements (they were not sufficiently integrated to be called towns) are repulsive, but they can also be condemned on more practical grounds. To quote *Planning for Reconstruction*, a brochure recently published by the Architectural Press:

"... in rebuilding we thought of little other than quantities of houses. We ignored social life, and what people did outside their homes. The new homes, in contrast to the old, were nearly always far from workplaces, shops and centres of amusement.

"The community buildings, schools, hospitals, clinics, clubs, shops, churches and pubs, often provided as an afterthought, were inconveniently placed in relation to the homes. We were losing our traditional social life; the sense of neighbourhood was disappearing.

"... It was tiresome and expensive to get from home to work; shops were few and far between; children still had to play in the streets."

The great bulges of housing caused by the speculative estates were the worst in their lack of consideration for communal facilities, but the municipal ventures were often little better.

"Seven years after the London County Council had begun to lay out a new town at Becontree, the divided control which three local authorities (besides the County Council) maintained over the estate still caused difficulties. Although 12,000 houses had then been built, the centre of the new town and its public buildings could not be planned because the councils could not agree. Two years later, when more than 17,000 houses had been built on the estate, adequate transport facilities were still lacking... When 18,000 people—a good-sized country town—had settled on the St. Helier estate, the London County Council found that they had no public baths, wash-houses or library, no fire brigade within a mile and three quarters, no hospital within two miles."

*Metropolitan Man.* Sinclair.

Further hardship is caused to the workers by the long journeys they have to take from their suburban homes to their work in the centre. It is estimated that the average London family spends more than £16 a year on travelling to and from work.

"It is not unusual for an outer-Londoner to spend two wasted and unpleasant hours a day and 10% or more of his total income, to say nothing of a great quantity of nervous energy, in travelling between his suburb and workplace. In a famous investigation some years ago into the effect of removing slum-dwellers from the centre of the comparatively small town of Stockton-on-Tees (70,000 inhabitants) to a new suburb on the outskirts, it was shown that

the extra cost, in hard cash alone, of the amount of additional travel required of the workers was such as to lower very definitely the standard of living and to increase quite shockingly the rate of mortality and the incidence of disease."

*Town Planning,* Thomas Sharp.

In yet another way the new housing schemes have meant a loss to the community, for in the years between the wars an area of farming land greater than the whole of Wiltshire has been lost through indiscriminate house building, not to speak of a further area about the size of Bedfordshire which has been swallowed by factories, aerodromes, sports grounds, etc. These areas include some of the best food-bearing land in the country—in particular a great proportion of the valuable market-gardening sites around London have disappeared in the rush of the suburbanites in their crack-brained escape from the town to something even worse.

In spite, however, of the encroachments of the towns, 80% of the land remained rural, devoted to farming, and the 20% of the population who lived in these areas were even less well served in new housing than the town dwellers. Most of the rural cottages which had not been appropriated by week-enders were in an unhealthy and often dilapidated condition, and very little had been done to improve or supplement them. A scheme for the re-conditioning of cottages by the local authorities was set on foot, but Devonshire was the only county in which any appreciable number of the cottages were improved. For the rest, the local councils have built groups of houses here and there about the countryside which are in almost all cases unsatisfactory.

"Most frequently both council and other houses designed for towns are erected in country districts, whereas country dwellings should be specially designed with provision for greater storage space, and for the drying of clothes and the prevention of mud and muck from being brought directly into the cottage."

*Scott Report,* 1942.

While the new houses in the towns followed traditional methods too slavishly, those in the country failed because they disregarded local architectural traditions which were based on genuine practical needs. Moreover, the lack of taste or aesthetic sense among their designers made them ugly and incongruous in landscapes into which the older designs of tradition fitted felicitously.

To recapitulate, the attempts at new housing between the wars were unsatisfactory because the financial motives, the desire on one side to make money and on the other to economise, led both to bad workmanship and to poverty of design. Workers' dwellings, in particular, were planned meanly and carelessly with little consideration for the convenience of the housewife. But, in my opinion, the most serious fault of the new housing was its way of spreading from the cities in formless masses that had no local limits or nuclei to provide the germs of communal life. Broken away from the local interests of his old home, the dweller in the new suburb became virtually isolated in his semi-detached house, cut off in a monotonous waste where there was nothing around which local communal feeling could grow. In such conditions the effect of centralised power became greater because it was unchallenged by local influences, and the inhabitants of the nameless brick wildernesses became victims to mass demagogues and totalitarian ideologies much more readily than did people with strongly marked local loyalties, like the miners of the Welsh valleys or the slum dwellers of Stepney. The neo-Fascist politicians who rule to-day undoubtedly find their blindest supporters in the jerry-built miles of outer London which they complacently allowed to destroy the countryside between 1918 and 1939.

(To be continued).





Dear Sir,

Bill Brown selects a number of quotations from Common Wealth literature so as to present a total picture which bears little resemblance to the reality.

The shortest way of describing the general intentions of Common Wealth to those who are politically educated is to say that we admire the economic democracy which has been achieved in the U.S.S.R.; we want to adapt it to our own somewhat different physical and sociological conditions; and we want to add it to such religious and cultural freedom and to such political democracy as have been achieved in this country,—the which should be improved by Proportional Representation, by the Abolition of the House of Lords and in other ways.

The last 70 words do not give a complete picture of our whole policy; but for general purposes they will serve. They will serve to show that if anyone wholly despises the political democracy of Britain; and if he is quite certain that the U.S.S.R. is a "Corporate State"; then he will naturally dislike Commonwealth. But those who think that some of the things done in the U.S.S.R. are reasonably good will not be turned against us merely because of the sentences which Bill Brown quotes from our publications.

Bill Brown is right, for example, in saying that we suggest that workers should receive wages; but so they do in the U.S.S.R. There are "different forms" of Common Ownership in the U.S.S.R.—as for example the common farms which are commonly owned in a way somewhat different from the Moscow Metro. There is an organisation called "Gosplan" in the U.S.S.R. whose functions are in general the same as those which we propose for an "Economic General Staff" in this country. The management of each Soviet factory is in the hands of men selected and organised in much the same way as we propose, and co-operating with the men and women who work in each factory on the general lines which we suggest, in our leaflet *Trade Unions under Common Ownership*. If (as Brown suggests) all this is the "Corporate State" it is news to me. I thought the Corporate State was brought into being when Big Business merged the powers of privately owned Monopoly-Capitalism with the powers of the state so as to break up the workers' organisations. Our proposal is that the workers should use their democratic rights to break up the powers of Monopoly-Capitalism by abolishing private ownership. And if Bill Brown is shocked because we count salaried technicians as workers, then there are lots of workers who are not.

Brown is mistaken when he assumes that we intend to maintain the present financial system unaltered merely because we say that all credit institutions, banks, insurance companies and building societies shall be transferred to Common Ownership. We intend that these things be taken into Common Ownership so as to make quite sure that they are so completely transformed as to serve the needs of the people, not of the profit makers. I have dealt with this at some length in a Financial Appendix to a book *How It Can Be Done*, (MacDonald).

It is quite true that we propose that 100 per cent. compensation shall be paid to such citizens as have saved up a little money and invested it in the title deeds of the house next door, or in Savings Certificates, or even in two or three shares of some industrial company,—"robbers" I suppose Bill Brown would call them. We also propose compen-

sation on an infinitely smaller percentage rate even for the larger owners. I know that this proposal,—as well as our proposal to allow the village shop and the local garage to continue in private hands,—must offend the purists. But we have discovered that these proposals correspond to the democratic views of millions of British workers, and we like Democracy.

Thousands of Anti-Capitalists and Anti-Fascists may sincerely disagree with Common Wealth on all sorts of issues. But if any will honestly compare our publications with the way Bill Brown makes extracts from them I do not think they would find any grounds for joining with Brown in describing us as "Welshers".

In a competitive economy the accumulation of capital for industrial expansion is mainly the work of individuals. In a planned economy, it is not. In a planned economy, prices, wages, output and other major decisions are so regulated, either by governments or by the co-operating leaders of industry, as to allow of the accumulation of the reserves necessary for expansion. Or else capital expansion is financed in one way or another by taxation. In other words not the individuals concerned, but the entire population is providing for industrial expansion either by taxation, or by receiving lower wages or by paying higher prices than would be necessary if expansion had not to be financed.

In a competitive economy individuals who owned property might indeed lose the whole of their property by "risking" it in some venture. This remains true of the owners of small properties in a planned economy. But it does not remain true of the shareholders (whether large or small) in the major industries of a planned economy. While a planned economy is managed by the nominees of the owners of big industries, it may be taken for granted that they will never do anything which could destroy either the capital value, or the income earning capacities, of the properties which they manage. And if the economy is in some way directed by democratic governmental decision, then it seems to be accepted that the government will so arrange matters as to maintain the income and capital values concerned.

It is not here suggested that a precise level of income or of capital value will be absolutely guaranteed either by the nominees of the shareholders or by the government. In some cases this will be so,—a 3%, or 4%, or some other rate of return being fixed so that surpluses, even if available, will be paid to the government, or ploughed back into the industry, and deficiencies, when they occur, will be made good in one way or another by the public as a whole. More usually arrangements will be made so that the rate of return will never be allowed to rise above or to fall below two ascertained or approximately ascertained limits.

With two exceptions, all the publications quoted by Brown can be had free by anyone sending (penny) stamped, addressed envelope to me at the House of Commons and mentioning *War Commentary*. The exceptions are *Manifesto* and *Trade Unions under Common Ownership* which cost 6d. each.

Yours very sincerely,

RICHARD ACLAND,

SIR RICHARD ACLAND'S letter makes a number of points which lend support to Bill Brown's article in our Mid-March issue. His exposition does not however do much to clear up the haziness of much Common Wealth propaganda. Thus Bill Brown point-

ed out that various spokesmen for the new party claim equally various aims; for Wintringham the party has most in common with the Socialist Party (? Labour Party); for Loverseed it represents liberalism brought up to date; while Sir Richard himself reiterates his view that there is little difference between C.W. and Communism (U.S.S.R. brand). Sir Richard certainly chose an unfortunate moment to extol the "political democracy" which is said to exist in this country. Churchill's overturning of a parliamentary majority against the government by the trick of a confidence vote, and now the intended legislation whereby the guardians of our democracy wish to see anyone who advises his fellows to follow a course of action which the government don't like languishing in Dartmoor for ten years—these are not the best advertisements for Acland's "political democracy"! But quite apart from these recent exhibitions we do wholeheartedly despise a "democracy" which economic inequality renders wholly inoperative, and have always attacked it as a paper sham.

As for the U.S.S.R., it is clear that from the point of view of a party which expects to supply managers and directors, its structure may differ from that of Mussolini's Corporate State. But we Anarchists do not look at things from the point of view of the would-be upper-dog; we regard the world we live in from the standpoint of the worker, the man who has to make his wage packet do till next Friday, the man whom the rulers, managers, technocrats or what-you-will push around with their decrees and their police and other instruments of coercion. In the U.S.S.R. the workers are pushed around in exactly the same manner as their fellow-workers in the other totalitarian states. Sir Richard is quite right in saying that there are wages paid in the U.S.S.R. The relevant point, however, is that if the term "Common Wealth" means anything at all, it means that the total wealth produced is held in common by a society of free and equal men; it is difficult to square such a conception with the fact of differing wage levels such as obtain in the U.S.S.R. As Sir Richard says "there are 'different forms' of common ownership in the U.S.S.R."; but all these differing forms are similar in that the Russian worker has no say whatever in the control or aim of the apparatuses thus "commonly owned"—that is all done by the monolithic Party, by its managers, technicians, etc.

In the U.S.S.R., miners and peasants are paid at a miserable starvation wage, while ballet stars and servile writers like Alexis Tolstoy and Ilya Ehrenburg receive immense salaries and employ several servants. Acland certainly does not make us feel inclined to retract our opinion of his party when he tells us that C.W. admires "the economic democracy which has been achieved in the U.S.S.R." It is an even more bitter fraud than the political democracy from which the workers are supposed by Sir Richard and his supporters to gain so much benefit here.

So far from rebutting our article, his letter supports its main points; we described a party whose various propagandists give differing views as to aims; which nowhere states what it means by its own self-selected title—although to "those who are politically educated" the term Common Wealth is a perfectly definite one; and finally, a party which explicitly declares its "belief" in such shameless shams as political democracy in this country and economic democracy in the U.S.S.R. We then gave our opinion as to the true nature and aim of such a party. We adhere to that opinion.

EDITORS,



# The Tyneside Strike

## Apprentices' Determined Stand

THE BEVIN BALLOT scheme, which was contrived in the hope of providing easily manipulated recruits for the mines, has resulted in difficulties which were unexpected by its initiators, who evidently did not count on any considerable resistance to coercion.

On Tyneside, where the workers live near enough to the mines to know what it is like to work in them, the young workers had no desire to be forced into the pits in order to alleviate a situation created by the incompetence of the authorities, and immediately began to organise to meet the threat.

The Tyneside Apprentices' Guild was started at the end of last year by Johnson and Stubbings of the North Eastern Marine Engineering Co., who contacted the lads and organised a successful inaugural meeting late in December. At this meeting an executive committee of 11 members and a provisional committee of 4 members were elected, the latter to contact 2 delegates from each yard on Tyneside. J. William Davy, a member of the A.E.U. and Y.C.L., was elected secretary of the provisional committee.

The delegates assembled at the Monument, where they were met by a number of Y.C.L. members from Vickers who told Davy in confidence that they had been sent to smash the meeting. The delegates proceeded to a hall, where Davy, who was elected chairman, declared his sympathies with the objects of the guild and proceeded to denounce the Y.C.L. members by name. Three leaflets were issued, one to apprentices, one to miners, one to the trade union branches. The response was good, especially from members of the A.E.U.

Ultimately it was decided to send a delegation to interview Bevin. Bevin refused to see them, and they had to be content with vague promises from various M.P.'s. They returned and about a week later one apprentice received a calling up notice for the mines. The apprentices immediately issued a strike ultimatum and the call-up was cancelled.

In March call-up papers were sent to another

apprentice, J. Robert Lowery. A letter was sent to Bevin to the effect that if the papers were not cancelled before the 28th March strike action would be taken. No reply was received and the strike began.

On the first day a mass meeting was held on the Swan recreation ground at Wallsend, which was attended by over 4,000 apprentices, who maintained an unanimous anti-union feeling. 25 shipyards were affected. A few fitters were not out at Redheads, South Shields, but the main yards that failed to come out were Vickers Armstrong at Elswick and Scotswood, where in each case the Y.C.L. influence is strong. Parsons and Clark Chapman of Gateshead came out on the Wednesday, after delegates had reported back from the meeting.

On the first day the guild sent telegrams to areas already contacted, telling them that Tyneside was on strike. The guild set up a number of committees with special functions, e.g. Finance Committee, Picket Committee, and a Social Committee which organised football matches and dances to keep the strikers occupied and interested.

For militant activity before the strike one lad had been transferred to Middlesbrough. Here he continued his activities with the result that here 500 apprentices came out on the appointed day.

A meeting at the Swan Recreation ground, to which reporters were refused admission by the pickets, was addressed by 22 Union officials, who made the incredible statement that no youths had been conscripted to the mines from essential work. Charles Hepplewhite, chairman of the T.A.G., replied by producing a lad from such a category who had been 2½ months down the mines. At this meeting the pickets had to chase off a gang of lads, who, it was reported, had been paid by the management of Clarke Chapmans to attempt to break the strike. W. Kennedy, a member of the C.P. and the Junior Workers' committee of the A.E.U., did his utmost all over Tyneside to persuade the lads to go back.

The union officials refused to meet representatives of the guild but agreed to meet representatives of the strikers. As was to be expected, the meeting failed to achieve anything.

On the 29th March Bevin attacked by issuing call-up papers to the Forces. It was decided to send representatives to attempt once again to interview Bevin. Three representatives from Tyneside, together with two from the Clyde and one from Huddersfield, went to London, but the interview was again refused.

On the 5th April there was a further mass meeting at the Swan Recreation Ground to hear the report of the deputation. Here an almost unanimous decision was reached to continue the strike to the bitter end—the few dissentients soon realising that they were voting themselves down the mines.

The reasons for the opposition of the apprentices to the Ballot scheme are made clear in a leaflet they issued at the beginning of the strike, from which we give the following extract:

"FELLOW APPRENTICES! The decision of the Government to conscript, by ballot, young workers for work in the mines, has aroused the wrath of every apprentice on the Tyneside. Could it be otherwise? The Bevin Ballot Scheme has been imposed on youth, who have no rights, no vote, no organisation to express their opposition to the Scheme.

(Continued on p. 12)

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