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workers' liberty
reason in revolt

When the workers rise

Events in British labour history — part one

Introduction

"For the first time in the history of the labour movement the struggle is being so conducted that its three sides, the theoretical, the political, and the practical-economic (opposition to the capitalists), form one harmonious and well-planned entity". Frederick Engels, 1874

THE subordinate class — subordinate to the ruling class economically, politically, and in its ideas — that does not know its own history can never reap the full benefit of that history. It cannot learn the lessons and put them to use in the future.

The working class faces great difficulties in preserving the memory of its own past. The memory of the ruling class exists in its institutions of rule, in its schools and colleges, in textbooks and in fine-wrought ideologies. The social and historical memory of the working class exists in its organisations.

Its trade unions and reformist socialist organisations are organisation of short and patchy memory; its revolutionary organisations are the custodians of its fullest memory.

In times of downturn or defeat in the class struggle, things known and understood by previous working-class generations are pushed into the background, subjected to steady effacement and the acid rain of oblivion by the representatives of the ruling class in newspapers, TV, radio, and in one-sided history books. Myths or outright lies take their place.

This is especially so in a period like our own of technological revolution in the economy, the destruction of old industries and the coming into being of new ones, following serious defeats in the class war of the working class and the bourgeoisie.

In the mid-1970s a couple of leaders of the biggest trade unions in Britain were widely believed to have more power than Labour prime minister Harold Wilson. Today a boss-class stooge like Gordon Brown can treat the unions with contempt.

It will not always be like that! The working class goes down in defeat - but then it rises again.

Much that was once commonplace is now forgotten in the working class. Even the techniques of organising strikes will have to be re-learned in Britain in the period ahead, when the capitalist economic crisis now unfolding may well upset the equilibrium of working-class defeat with the Thatcher Tories established and Thatcher's Brown-Blair political offspring have maintained.

Much of working-class history is the history of periods of defeat like the one we are passing through. But our history is also the history of great political and industrial battles, many of which we won.

In times of quietness, the proof that there will be other times in which the working class will fight and maybe this time win is to be found in the battles of the past. No matter what changes are brought about in the working class by technological revolutions, its fundamental relationship with the bourgeoisie remains constant - exploitation by those who control the economy.

In this, the first of a number of pamphlet issues on labour's great battles in the past, *Workers' Liberty* covers the two great 1919 strikes, in Belfast and Glasgow, and the 1913 lockout/ strike in Dublin, the "Labour War" that dragged on for over six months.

We also include Karl Kautsky's article on the relation between the organisation of the working class in trade unions and working-class political action.

Sean Matgamna

From the Daily Herald*, October 1913. Original caption: If the soldier betrays his comrades he is hanged. If the civilian betrays his comrades [i.e. scabs in a strike] he is hugged.*

Revolt on the Clyde

By Stan Crooke

IN 1919 Glasgow was in the grip of a general strike. Although the strike began with the limited demand of a cut in the working Week, it raised — as general strikes do by their very nature — the question of power in society. The strike leaders saw the strike purely in terms of a fight for the 40 hour week, but the press treated it as a threat to the capitalist order of society itself. And for once the press was right.

The strike was a continuation of struggles which had rocked Glasgow throughout the war. Elsewhere, the combativity of the, working class had been diminished by the ruling classes' propaganda about the need not to let down "the boys at the front" during the war.

But in Glasgow this line didn't work. "By November 1914", wrote Willie Gallacher, one of the leaders of the 1919 strike, "the campaign against the war, against high prices and rents, and for increased wages was in full blast". Housewives as well as factory workers were being brought into political activity.

In February 1915, 9,000 engineers struck for tuppence an hour increase [about £0.50 on today's prices]; a few months later the shipyards were shut down by a strike against measures contained in the new "Munitions of War Act"; then the engineers were out on strike again, in opposition to the victimisation of the convenor at Parkhead Forge.

Interlinked with these struggles on the industrial front, a bitter campaign was being waged against massive rent increases which landlords were demanding. Rent strikes were organised, bailiffs coming to evict tenants were physically driven off, and when over 10,000 workers struck against the eviction of 18 munitions workers for non-payment of rent, the government was forced to back down and rush the Rent Restriction Act through Parliament.

Events in Ireland and Russia also contributed to the build-up of militancy.

"War waged by the oppressed nationalities against the oppressors and the class war of the proletariat against capital ... is the swiftest, safest and most peaceful form of constructive work the socialist can engage in," James Connolly told the May Day rally in Glasgow in 1915.

The murder of Connolly a year later by the British state for his part in the Easter Uprising in Dublin unleashed a wave of anger in Glasgow, especially in sections of the Irish community, and contributed to the general bitterness against a government which was not only attacking living standards and sending millions of youth to their deaths at the front, but now also brutally crushing Ireland.

And the revolutions in Russia in February and October 1917 led to euphoria on the Clydeside, with massive meetings and demonstrations being held in support of the overthrow of Tsarism and then of capitalism.

"Here we were in the earliest months of 1917 with the greatest masses of Glasgow aroused to the highest pitch of enthusiasm ... How is it possible to describe those hectic days and the never-ending stream of activity that was carried on?" writes Gallacher, describing the reaction to the February revolution.

Harry McShane describes the political impact on Glasgow of the Bolshevik seizure of power: "We had only known working class revolt; now we could talk about working class power".

Material conditions for working class families were grim by the end of 1918.

Wages had failed to keep up with wartime inflation; Glasgow had always suffered from slums; during the war however, house-building and repairs had practically ceased, leading to a shortage of accommodation and worse slums than ever.

Before 1914 the working week had been 54 hours, which meant starting at 6am and finishing at 5.30pm, and working to noon on Saturdays. During the war this was extended to a 12 hour day, plus Saturday and Sunday working.

How many were unemployed in Glasgow at this time is impossible to estimate since even fewer of the unemployed were registered as such than now: benefit was only paid out for six weeks and after that there was little point in continuing to register.

But the official figures for the period do reflect the trend: 17,000 were registered as unemployed in Glasgow in the last week of 1918. Just a week later the number had increased nearly 50% to 25,000. And by January 24 1919, the Friday before the start of the strike, the number was nearly 31,000. In four weeks unemployment had virtually doubled.

An edition of the *Strike Bulletin*, the daily broadsheet produced during the strike, describes what unemployment meant: "The workers dread unemployment as worse than epidemic of fever. We know what it means — low wages, hunger, soup kitchens, doles, evictions, fireless grates, ragged clothes, weeping children,' frantic women, desperate men ... Unemployment is the Workers' Hell, and, it is into that Hell those who oppose the 40 hours' week want to drive us".

In January 1919 the Glasgow labour movement rose up in revolt against such intolerable burdens. The wartime tradition of militancy, which neither government legislation nor the hysterical jingoism of the yellow press had succeeded in breaking, boosted by the war against the British state in Ireland and the revolutions in Russia, fused with the spontaneous revolt of the workers condemned by capitalism to slum housing and mass unemployment or long hours of work at rock-bottom wages.

On Saturday January 18500 delegates attended a meeting jointly organised by the Clyde Workers' Committee, which had played a leading role in organising the wartime struggles, the Glasgow Trades Council (which at that time had delegates from both union and Labour Party branches), the Scottish TUC, and the district committee of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. The following motion was overwhelmingly passed.

"The Joint Committee... hereby resolves to demand a 40 hour working week for all workers as an experiment with the object of absorbing the unemployed. If a 40 hour week fails to give the desired result a more drastic reduction of hours will be demanded. A general strike has been declared to take place on Monday January 27 and all workers are expected to respond".

In the following week, workplace meetings were held throughout Glasgow to organise support for the strike, and in some places the workforce had to be persuaded to wait until January 27 before coming out. On the Monday the response was overwhelming: all the main factories were shut down and a mass meeting of the strikers in St Andrew's Hall passed a motion pledging no return to work until a 40 hour week with no loss of pay had been won.

After the meeting a demonstration (30,000 strong according to Gallacher, 10,000 strong according to the *Glasgow Evening Times*) marched through the city centre to a rally in George Square. The Evening Times report describes what happened: "A few enthusiasts, who had a red flag in their possession, hoisted it to the top of the flag pole in front of the Municipal Buildings. The raising of the flag was greeted with loud outbursts of cheering".

The hoisting of the workers' flag over the buildings of the local authorities was an unconsciously symbolic act. The "few enthusiasts" little realised that they were giving expression to the internal logic of the general strike beginning that day: the strike was a challenge to the capitalist authorities which could result either in utter defeat or the overthrow of bourgeois rule. The tragedy is that the leaders of the strike did not realise this either.

Right from the outset the strike challenged and denied the agents of bourgeois rule their "right" to administer and control society. In everyday capitalist society, for example, production and distribution of goods, the maintenance of "law and order", the circulation of traffic, etc., are in the hands of agents of the ruling classes. But in Glasgow in 1919 the strike movement established its own rule and administration, challenging and replacing that of the bourgeoisie.

This was most obvious in the sphere of production. By definition a strike and in particular a general strike, brings production to a halt and thereby disrupts the normal functioning of society. But at the same time vital services, such as medical facilities or food supplies, have to be maintained; and the working class establishes its own organisation and authority to do this.

Glasgow 1919 and the simultaneous solidarity strike in Belfast were clear examples of this.

Most of industry, in particular engineering and shipbuilding, was shut down by the strike, and by the third day of the strike over 40,000 workers were on strike in Glasgow. But at the same time the strike movement established certain categories of exemption: all workers in "infirmaries, hospitals and similar institutions" were instructed to remain at work, and "maimed and disabled ex-soldiers" were given the option of doing so as, if they wanted to.

Other categories of exemption established by the strike movement included all workers "employed in the manufacture of artificial limbs" and drivers conveying fuel for schools. A report from a trade-unionist in Belfast describing the strike there, published in the *Strike Bulletin*, brings out the power of a general strike, even when confined to one area:

"The Strike Committee decides which cranemen are to work at the unloading of coal-boats; gives permission, under stipulations, for the taking of ships out of dry-dock; receives applications for electric current and refuses some, but allows hospitals to take current for X-ray purposes and for light at night... In short, the Strike Committee is master of the situation in Belfast and is exercising its power with firmness and moderation".

And nor was it "just" the sphere of production that was re-organised under the rule of the general strike. The whole concept of the private ownership of land and property was challenged by the rent strike which was organised in parallel with, and inseparably from, the industrial strike.

At the St Andrew's Hall meeting the following motion had been passed without opposition: "that no rent or income tax shall be paid until a satisfactory settlement of the demand for a 40 hour week has been come to", and the motion was widely publicised through the Strike Bulletin to help ensure its implementation.

The same methods were used during the strike as during the war to prevent evictions. Appeals against the eviction were made to the courts to slow the procedure and gain time to organise, so that when the bailiffs turned up to carry out the evictions, they could be physically prevented: "Mass pickets don't like evictions, and sheriff officers don't like mass pickets. Sit tight".

The control of the streets was also no longer the preserve of the police and other agents of bourgeois rule. Ever since the unemployment agitation of 1908, for example, meetings had been banned in George Square, the site of the municipal buildings, where the red flag had been hoisted at the rally on the opening day of the strike.

But in spite of the official bans there were mass meetings in the square every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday during the strike. Each area had its own local meeting place where the strikers and unemployed would assemble and then march en masse to the square and take possession of it. Confronted with thousands of marches converging on the square from all over the city, the police were powerless to intervene. Whether or not rallies were held in George Square was decided by the strike movement, not the police.

Traffic control also came under the jurisdiction of the strike movement. For example, there was the issue of special permits to drives conveying school fuel, referred to above. But the greatest challenge came in the attempts of the strikers to stop the trams from running.

On the Friday before the strike, the Joint committee, the leading body of the strike movement, had instructed the magistrates that the trams must be off the roads for the duration of the strike. but when the magistrates failed to comply, the strikers took the matter into their own hands: all over the city strikers cut the ropes connecting the trollies to the overhead lines, with the result that hundreds of trams blocked the routes and dislocated the whole tram service.

Police were physically driven off if ,they attempted to prevent the trams from being immobilised. McShane describes one incident in the Saltmarket when two constables tried to stop a tram from being immobilised: "The strikers pulled the clothes off the two men and they had to run for their lives naked".

The most serious incident came when police tried to prevent a tram from being disconnected during a meeting at George Square. A riot erupted, with running battles in the streets.

Such physical confrontations with the police were another aspect of the way in which the power of the strike movement challenged the power of bourgeois society. The "normal situation" under capitalism, in which a monopoly of force is exercised by defenders of the capitalist regime (police, army, etc.), had disappeared, and the strike movement organised the basis of a workers' militia, as it had to in order to implement its decisions.

This was much more apparent in the Belfast strike than in Glasgow. A Belfast strike patrol, 2,000 strong and identified by white hat bands, was established to maintain law and order.

This was not the law and order of capitalism which protects private property from strikers and pickets. It was working class law and order, preventing attacks on strikers by police and scabs, and preventing "the hooligan element which seems to be helping the authorities to break the strike ... from abusing the strike for disruptive forces".

In Glasgow there was nothing as well organised as this, although the activities of "the rowdy element who are hoping to break the strike by fomenting trouble" were sufficient for the Joint Committee to consider the organisation of a Belfast-type patrol for the maintenance of order, and to send out instructions to local committees to take the appropriate measures to maintain order in their areas.

In Glasgow it was, above all, the mass picket which challenged

Shipyards on the Clyde

the state's monopoly of force. During a strike the workers would always go to the factory gates to get information, but this time, instead of dispersing to go home , they marched en masse to other factories in the area to bring them out.

The decision to hold mass pickets was taken at the initial mass meeting held in St Andrew's Hall. The *Strike Bulletin* describes how the mass pickets were used: "about 2,000 marched to Anniesland in an orderly procession. Arriving there, two cordons were drawn across the street to await the men coming out. On the assurance that they would hold a meeting after dinner, the picket allowed them to pass... The men held sectional meetings and decided to fall in line with the movement".

Similar events occurred throughout the rest of Glasgow. The day after the mass picket at Barr and Strouds described in the *Strike Bulletin*, a mass picket of over 10,000 persuaded workers at the Singer's factory to come out, and a a "mass formation" at Weir's in Cathcart, formed by strikers from Govan and Parkhead, brought the place to a standstill.

The same results were achieved .again the next day by a mass picket of the motor works in Alexandria, and McShane describes how he only needed to mention the possibility of a mass picket at his workplace to get them all out.

Although the *Strike Bulletin* described the mass picket as an "effective offensive of a passive nature", it was in reality very far from passive. Thousands of workers marching through the streets, blockading the entrances to factories and ensuring support for the strike, destroyed the authority which the police always attempt to exercise over strikers and pickets. For the duration of the strike the traditional "right" of the police to control picketing, and thereby make it ineffective, was effectively abolished by the use of the mass picket.

The bodies responsible for ensuring the implementation of the decisions of the Joint Committee were the district committees, consisting of ten members each plus a delegate to the strike's central Information Bureau. Each district committee also had a local speakers' sub-committee of three, and a messengers' service of six.

The *Strike Bulletin* defined the functions of the district committees as: "To arrange meetings in local halls and obtain speakers for the same. To act as responsible persons for all local business and communication with headquarters... to send delegates to the Information Bureau every morning at 11am and report all progress... to hold mass meetings every day so as to furnish all strikers with particulars of the growth of the 40 hours movement".

These district committee held regular local meetings to discuss the strike, to build up support for it, and to organise distribution and sale of the *Strike Bulletin*, which eventually achieved a circulation of 20,000 copies a day.

But these district committees also did much more. For the duration of the strike these committees were the source of power and authority in Glasgow. They decided on exemptions from the strike and special permits for transport, organised the marches, stopped the trams, etc. In essence they were soviets — the form of working-class democracy which had overthrown and replaced bourgeois rule in Russia.

The general strike created a "dual power" situation in Glasgow. Dual power is when the labour movement partially takes over the running of society but not to the extent of the total expropriation of the political, economic, and military power of the bourgeoisie.

In Glasgow 1919 two power structures existed in parallel and in conflict with each other: the power of the working class, organised through the Joint Committee and the district committees, and the power of the ruling classes, which had been drastically weakened by the former but was still a very real force. The question was: who would be victorious?

Unlike the strike leaders, the ruling classes realised the revolutionary nature of the general strike and used all the weapons at their disposal to restore capitalist "normality". They recognised that the various measures being implemented by the strike movement were an encroachment on their power, which could end in the total overthrow of bourgeois rule.

The methods adopted by the ruling class to defeat the strike demonstrate the impossibility of a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. The British ruling classes did not hesitate then (and they would not hesitate now) to resort to violence when they saw their power threatened.

At first the police were used to intimidate the strikers and drive them off the streets. On "Bloody Friday" (January 31) fighting broke out at a rally in George Square. What sparked off the fighting is unclear, although it is generally attributed to the police trying to stop a tram from being immobilised. In any case the police had orders to use their batons that day, and if the tramway incident had not provided an their attack, then another pretext would have been found.

Gallacher describes the attack. "Suddenly, without warning of any kind, a signal was given and the police made a savage and totally unexpected assault on the rear of the meeting, smashing right and left with their batons, utterly regardless of whom or what they hit... with brutal ferocity they made their onslaught on defenceless workers".

But the police got more than they bargained for. Pitched battles took place in the square and the surrounding streets. Charge after charge by the police was driven off under a hail of bricks and bottles, until the police were forced to retreat.

The government sent in the army. Initially they had hesitated to take this step because of fears about a possible mutiny by any troops used against the strikers. At a meeting of the war cabinet held on January 30, General Childs had pointed out that in the pre-war years "...we had a well-disciplined and ignorant army, whereas we now have an army educated and ill-disciplined".

But the defeat of the police put an end to the government's hesitation. Thousands of troops, fully equipped, poured into Glasgow late on the night of Bloody Friday and early Saturday morning. "Accompanied by heavy munitions wagons, the general appearance of long columns of khaki-clad men... suggests that at last the government is in earnest in the measures to crush the new revolutionary spirit," wrote the *Glasgow Evening News*.

Howitzers were positioned in the City Chambers, the cattle market was transformed into a tank depot, machine guns were posted on the top of hotels and, remembering Easter 1916, the main post office, and armed troops stood sentry outside power stations and patrolled the streets.

New regulations were also introduced by the government to legalise whatever violence the troops might need to use to break the strike. If the troops were used to suppress any fighting involving the strikers the Riot Act must first be read — but only "if circumstances permit". Similarly, the commanding officer had to consult with the magistrates before opening fire — but again only "if time permits".

Most revealing of all was Regulation 965: "It is undesirable that firing should take place over the heads of rioters or that blank cartridges should be used." The readiness of the ruling class to have unarmed workers gunned down shows up the absurdity of the idea that some bold "Enabling Act" nationalising the top 200 monopolies would suffice to usher in the socialist society. A scrap of paper voted for by a few hundred MPs is no answer to the guns of the army.

In addition to using the army, the police, and scab organisations, th government was also prepared to introduce a whole new battery of legal restrictions on basic trade union activities and rights. Although never actually carried out, bemuse the strike ended before this was possible, they. illustrate the lengths to which the government was prepared to go:

- Striking railway workers were to be conscripted into the army and then ordered to keep the trains running.
- General mobilisation and demobilisation of the labour battalions was to cease during the strike.
- Legal sanction would be given to industrial agreements, and criminal proceedings begun if the unions did not keep to them.
- All strikes "endangering the public interest" (i.e. effective ones) would be "dealt with" under the Defence of the Realm Act (i.e. banned).
- Union funds would be seized if used to finance such strikes, and union officials involved in them arrested.

Apart from preparing new laws the government also used the existing one to carry out a decision made at the war cabinet meeting of January 31: arrest strike leaders to weaken the movement.

The next day Gallacher and Kirkwood were arrested while trying to stop the(fighting in George Square, and in the following days the rioting was used a an excuse to pick up other leaders including Shinwell, Ebury (national secretary of the Marxist British Socialist Party) and Hopkins (Glasgow secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers).

Thus while certain laws were used to pick up the strike leaders, the same laws were ignored when broken by the scabs and the police themselves; and when existing laws looked like being inadequate to deal with the strike, the government rushed to put new ones on the statute book. As the strike showed, there is nothing neutral about the legal system; it is a weapon in the hands of the ruling class.

The press, too, joined in the ruling classes' counter-offensive against the general strike, and presented a totally false picture. Workplaces and union branches voting to join in the strike were ignored, while news about the Patriotic Workers' League and individual workplaces that had voted not to come out got the front pages. Especially towards the end of the strike, reports appeared about various factories having gone back when in fact they were still on strike.

Often the reporting was just plain hysterical. The *Glasgow Herald* put the strike down to "the clap-trap nonsense of Trotsky" and "the studious inculcation of the temper of revolt" and described its leaders as "a gang of political revolutionaries who have contrived to exploit the industrial weariness of Scottish workers... notorious rebels against the social order".

"Terrorism on the Clyde ".proclaimed one headline in the *Scotsman*, and "Glasgow Bolshevism: disgraceful scenes" proclaimed another in the *Evening News*, over an article which claimed that the troops had been sent in to protect "life and property" from "the rabble".

Even detective stories were used as agitation against the strike movement. The *Weekly Record* published a detective serial about the "famous detective and crime investigator" Derek Clyde, who bumps off a Jew called Finkelstein (who of course isn't a Jew called Finkelstein at all but a Bolshevist agent called Vladimir Tolstoi) and impersonates his contact man Lucas in order to track down the other five Bolshevist agents who, under the leadership of the fanatically mad medical doctor from Petrograd who is hiding in Newcastle, are behind all unrest.

The police, troops, new legislation, a press witch-hunt — these and other similar tactics were used by the government and the employers to smash the strike movement. The action taken by the ruling class during the strike, and the measures in the pipeline when the strike was finishing, amounted to total military suppression combined with the outlawing of free trade unionism. Far from meekly giving in when confronted with the strength of the strike movement, the ruling class fought back with everything they had.

The strike ended officially on February 11, sixteen days after it had begun. The *Strike Bulletin* did the best it could to put a brave face on it. "The strike is suspended until we reinforce our ranks. We have retreated in good order without any intention of submitting to the abject terms our exploiters wish to impose on us... the knowledge we have gained will not be wasted. Be ready!"

But it was making a virtue out of necessity. In the days leading up the 11th, there had been a gradual return to work, although hardly the avalanch portrayed by the press, and the only alternative to instructing a return to work would have been to leave the most militant workers isolated and therefore an easy prey to victimisation.

The press had a straightforward explanation for the failure of the strike. It had never had any support to begin with in Glasgow; there had been a lack of support outside Glasgow as well; the government's firm stand had convinced the strikers they were not going to win; and the whole thing was totally un-British, "a symptom of incipient revolutionary tendencies wholly foreign to the good sense and the political and social beliefs of the people".

The talk about the "un-British" nature of the strike was superstitious nonsense; the claims about the lack of support in Glasgow were only a continuation of the propagada pushed by the press throughout the strike; and a resolute strike leadership would have answered the government's counter-offensive by escalating the struggle into a direct confrontation for power.

But did the strike movement possess such a leadership? And, more geneally, were the leaders of the British labour movement outside of Glasgow prepared to lead a fight for such high stakes? No: and that was the real reason for the strike's failure to achieve the 40 hour week, never mind the overthrow of capitalism.

Many of the local leaders went in fear of the massive social upheavals unleashed by the general strike, and did everything in their power to prevent the strike being pushed forward to its logical conclusion. They were left-talking demagogues; their practice put them in the camp of the right wing of the labour movement.

David Kirkwood was a typical example. Before and during the war he had built up a reputation for himself as a left-winger, and in his speeches to the mass meetings in the strike he would declare himself a revolutionary socialist. But in the same breath he would say that the strike was not a revolutionary situation, so everyone should be sensible and concentrate on no more than trying to get a shorter working week!

The plea made by his lawyer at the trial for his alleged crimes on Bloody Friday sums Kirkwood up. With a tremor in his voice and a sweep on the hand, the lawyer cried out: "Look at him. He's a Christian. His dear old mother who sits at home waiting for him is a Christian. You cannot send a man like this to prison".

The role of Emmanuel Shinwell, chairperson of Glasgow Trades Council (and later a Lord), was a lot worse. He had the same myopic view of the strike as Kirkwood "There was no I war, no plans for revolution- simply a wish to make life in Britain a semblance of the Land Fit For Heroes so glibly promised by Lloyd George".

Shinwell excelled in doing deals behind the strikers' backs. It was Shinwell who was responsible for getting full-time officials onto the Joint Committee set up at the January 18 meeting, and for doing a private deal with the Lord Provost whereby the latter would appeal for government intervention, whilst Shinwell would dampen down the strike movement until the Lord Provost got a reply.

Union officials, both locally and nationally, fell over themselves to prevent workers from striking and to get those on strike back to work. This applied in particular to the miners' officials: in Cambuslang they made an appeal for police protection — for scabs. In Lanarkshire they opposed the strike until an occupation of their offices by their members forced them to back down.

In East Fife they tried the routine of holding a ballot before deciding whether to support the strike. And the members of the Scottish Miners' Executive publicly denounced the strike.

But the national leadership of the unions played a crucial role in the strike's failure. Instead of campaigning for support for the strike and spreading it, they ordered their members to stay at work and refused strike pay, save in the rare cases when they gave in to the membership and paid out strike benefit.

The most scandalous role of all was played by the executive of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers [ASE, a forerunner of Amicus], which even went so far as to suspend Harry Hopkins, the Glasgow district secretary, and the whole of the district committee, for supporting the strike. It was a green light to the police: two days after the suspension of the strike they arrested Hopkins and threw him into prison.

The final edition of the *Strike Bulletin* summed up the anger felt by the strikers at the betrayals of their union executives: "Don't forget the executives who failed us in the fight! Those elected servants of ours who have become our bosses are not too

favourable to the 40 hours' movement... If we don't put our executives in order we will get nowhere, as every time we make an effort to gain .an improvement in our conditions they generally assist big business to keep us from winning".

And the Labour MPs? Did they use Parliament as a tribune to denounce and disrupt the goverment's efforts to break the strike, or to campaign for support for the strike movement?

This was how the Glasgow Herald reported from Westminster on the day following the end of the strike:

"The debate was conducted in admirable temper and left the impression that it must be productive of much good in favourably influencing the atmosphere on both sides in the industrial world". The Labour MPs condemned the use of "unconstitutional methods" by workers to achieve their demands, and stressed that the use of strike action must always be subordinate to the "welfare of the state". Bonar Law, an arch-Tory, commended their attitude.

Kirkwood and Shinwell, the union executives, and the Parliamentary Labour Party all lived in fear of the power of our class which was thrown up by the general strike. They used their positions in the local leadership of the strike and in the national leadership of the labour movement to weaken and betray the general strike, instead of organising to defeat the ruling classes counter-offensive.

It would, however, be a crude oversimplification to say that the strike failed simply because it was stabbed in the back by the misleaders of the British labour movement. Their treachery was certainly a crucial factor in the strike's eventual outcome, but it was only half the picture.

Many of the strike leaders were sincerely hostile to capitalism and committed to the struggle for a socialist society, but their politics were so influenced by the ideas of anarcho-syndicalism they were unable to build on the dual power situation created by the general strike and unable to raise the conflict to the level of a conscious revolutionary confrontation with the bourgeois state.

Anarcho-syndicalism is based on the idea that the working class, if well enough instructed and educated through propaganda, will spontaneously overthrow capitalism. All that is necessary in the meantime is for socialists to explain to workers the nature of capitalism and to build industrial unions which embrace all workers in a particular industry. Once the class is organised in "one big union", the cataclymsic upheaval which overthrows capitalism takes place of its own accord.

Due in particular to the strength of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) in Glasgow, anarcho-syndicalism had a strong influence on the Glasgow labour movement throughout the early part of the century.

The SLP had been formed in 1903 as a break-away in the direction of anarcho-syndicalism from the Social Democratic Federation, the only Marxist national organisation in existence at that time.

Anarcho-syndicalism was partly a reaction to the class collaboration practised by the labour movement leaders. As such and in its emphasis on the need to organise at rank and file level, there was a positive side, to the work of the SLP and others on the Clyde influenced by anarcho-syndicalism. It was central in generating the wartime unrest and struggles.

But the anarcho-syndicalists also suffered from political weaknesses so serious as to prove fatal in Glasgow 1919. The SLP did not exist to give leadership on day-to-day issues in the overall framework of working for the overthrow of capitalism; it existed only to carry out a propaganda role of lecturing workers about the evils of capitalism and the need to overthrow it.

In Glasgow 1919 the leaders of the movement influenced by anarcho-syndicalism floundered helplessly. Gallacher — worldly-wise, as ever, after the event — writes, "we were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making a revolution ... such was the condition of our leadership [that there was] no plan, no unity of purpose, we were watching one another and waiting for and wondering what was going to happen... A rising should have taken place. The workers were ready and able to effect it, the leadership had never thought of it."

Only a hopeless romantic could believe that the situation in Glasgow was as clear-cut as the quote from Gallacher implies, with the workers just waiting to be told to carry out a revolution but the leaders unfortunately having forgotten such a possibility. But the situation did demand a clear, revolutionary leadership which the anarcho-syndicalists were unable to provide. The ruling class displayed a ruthlessness and determination which demanded a similar reply from the strike leaders if defeat was to be avoided. Passive propaganda about the need to overthrow capitalism was meaningless when a counter-offensive by the ruling class was under way to beat back the threat posed by the general strike.

But there was no attempt to shut down the press and thereby deprive the enemy of its main instrument of propaganda. Therewas no attempt to win over the troops in the Maryhill Barracks who were so close to mutiny that the government dared not use them against the strikers. There was no attempt to establish armed workers' militias despite the availability of weapons and ex-soldiers trained in their use. And despite the anarcho-syndicalists' emphasis on organisation at rank-and-file level, there was a particular failure to tap the discontent of the unions involved in the Triple Alliance.

In a situation of dual power where the balance could be tipped in either direction — a revolutionary restructuring of society or a return to capitalist stability, at least temporarily — the inability of the anarcho-syndicalists to sharpen the conflict and draw in wider forces proved a crucial weakness — " 24 hours can decide the fate of a revolution" wrote Lenin, and Glasgow 1919 proved it, negatively.

In both its strengths and weaknesses the strike contains a wealth of lessons for the labour movement of today. "The knowledge we have gained will not be wasted. Be ready!", the *Strike Bulletin* had told its readers. But it is up to the revolutionary socialists of today to draw the correct lessons from Glasgow 1919

Lessons of Belfast 1919

By Michael Farrell

1919 WAS a year of turmoil all over Europe. In the confusion following the break up of three great empires in World War I — the Russian, Turkish and Austrian empires — the working class began to assert itself. In Russia the young Bolshevik republic was fighting for its life. In Bavaria and Hungary short-lived Soviet Republics were established, and in Vienna and Berlin there were socialist uprisings.

Even Belfast did not escape unscathed and at the beginning of 1919 the city experienced the largest and longest industrial dispute in its history. For nearly four weeks shipyard and engineering workers and corporation employees were out on strike and Belfast was without light, heat, trams or heavy industry.

The Belfast strike was part of a general movement for shorter hours which affected all the major industrial centres of Britain as well. During the First World War workers in all industries had been forced to accept gruellingly long hours and low pay. Resentment had built up especially among the well organised engineering workers, and already there had been several disputes in Belfast and Glasgow. With the pressure of the war over, the workers were determined to get their demands. They were spurred on by the approaching demobilisation of hundreds of thousands of soliders, and the threat of mass unemployment. Shorter hours were seen as a form of work-sharing to create more jobs.

The hours worked were intolerable. Engineering workers had a 54 hour week and unskilled workers such as millhands and carters worked even longer. Many men never saw daylight except at weekends for most of the year. They all started without breakfast and had a break for it after a couple of hours.

Anticipating an outburst the TUC had negotiated an agreement with the employers at the end of 1918. Engineering workers were to have a 47 hour week from January 1 1919. The workers weren't satisfied and in the national ballot on the agreement they were offered a choice between 54 hours and 47 hours, as a result only 25% bothered to vote.

So the strikes were unofficial and opposed by the TUC and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE). But workers went ahead: the main centres of militancy were Belfast and Glasgow, though the strikers in both centres had different demands. In Belfast where the decision to strike was taken before Glasgow, the demand was for a 44 hour week including four hours on Saturday. In Glasgow and some of the British centres it was for 40 hours.

On August 21 1918, with the war still on, a packed meeting was held in the Ulster hall and an overflow meeting took place outside. It was called by a committee of militants to pressurise the district committee of the Federation of Shipbuilding and Engineers and Allied Trades into action. James Baird, Boilermakers Society and James Freeland, Irish Organiser of the ASE proposed that they call on the Federation to demand a 44 hour week. It was passed unanimously.

On December 5 1918 another meeting was held with most of the candidates for Belfast seats in the General Election present. Freeland proposed that the meeting call for the 44 hour week to be introduced on January 1 and this was passed unanimously. Several of the Unionists spoke in favour, and none against, though Carson the leader of the Tory Unionists in Ireland referred to the 47 hour agreement in Britain and warned against any separate arrangement in Ulster.

Further meetings were held on December 27 and January 4 when delegates from the Federation reported on their talks with the employers who refused to give way. The January 4 meeting voted to give 14 days strike notice but the Federation officers, who weren't keen on a strike, played for time, sending a deputation to Clydeside to find out the situation there.

Finally on January 14 1919 the Federation held a ballot of its Belfast members It was the occasion for a striking demonstration. Over 20,000 shipyard and engineering workers downed tools at midday and marched to the City Hall for a mass meeting. Then they marched to their union halls to vote. The result was overwhelming.

1,184 voted in favour of a 47 hour week, 20,225 voted for a 44 hour week and an unofficial strike to get it, and 558 voted for the 44 hour week but against the strike to get it. Notice was served on the two shipyards Harland and Wolff and Workman, Clark - the engineering employers and Belfast Corporation, that a strike would begin at noon on January 25 if the 44 hour week was not conceded.

Elsewhere strike action began before the 25th but was on a small scale and was shortlived. In Glasgow, the other main centre, no firm decision had been taken by the 14th and the strike didn't begin until the 27th.

January 25 1919 was a Saturday and the shipyard and engineering workers finished at noon anyway so the effect was not immediately obvious, but by 5 p.m. the electricity power station and the gas works were affected. The power supply to the trams was cut off and they returned to their depots while the gas lights were not lit. The Saturday afternoon shoppers had to walk home in the dark.

On Sunday 8,000 workers gathered at the customhouse steps to show their support for the strike and hear speakers from the newly appointed strike committee. They announced that a deputation would meet the Corporation on Monday to discuss essential services and a strike meeting was arranged for outside the City Hall at the same time.

On Monday the Corporation, mindful of the thousands of strikers outside, agreed to shut off the electric supply to a consumers except the hospitals, for which the strikers agreed to send in a skeleton staff. Since gas could not be cut off to ordinary users the whole gas supply was cut but workers went in to staff the plant.

Meanwhile, most of the engineering shops were shut down and the shipyards were almost empty. After the meeting at the City Hall, 2,000 workers marched to the shipyards to have a "peaceful picket" and persuade the apprentices and clerical staff to stop work also. They broke through the gates, pulled the apprentices out and stoned the offices.

From then on the yards were closed and pickets prevented anyone from going down Queen's Road without a pass from the strike committee. They even stopped company directors.

The same sort of mass picketing was used at firms like the Sirocco works where the men were reluctant to come out, while the cutting off of gas and electricity and the withdrawal of key engineering workers gradually closed down the Rope works and most of the linen mills in the city.

The press was affected as well and the *Irish News*, after producing a single sheet on Monday, closed down until February 14. The *Telegraph* was closed for a week and the *Newsletter* missed a single issue, but the *Northern Whig* kept going, though reduced in size and circulation. Meanwhile, the strike committee established their own paper, the *Workers' Bulletin*, which published 18 issues up to the end of the strike.By the end of the week, nearly 40,000 workers were out and another 20,000 laid off because of the strike. There was no gas, electricity or transport and all major factories in the city were closed. Snow at the beginning of the week and then slush sharpened the strike's effect.

The strikers were making their presence felt as well. For several nights groups roamed the streets smashing windows in shops or offices where electricity was being used, and stoning the offices of the *Belfast Telegraph* which was noted for its anti-working class views. The strike committee condemned this "hooliganism" however and appointed strike pickets to patrol the streets with the police to maintain order.

On Tuesday a massive demonstration was held with thousands of workers marching from Carlisle Circus to the centre of the city for a mass meeting and on Sunday another meeting was held at the Custom House steps where the extraordinarily confused attitude of Belfast workers to their employers was shown by the observance of several minutes of silence in memory of the Managing Director of Harland and Wolff who had just died.

In Glasgow there were dramatic scenes however. There the strike was not as complete as in Belfast and trams were running though most of the shipyards and engineering works closed down. But there were still 100,000 out on strike, and the strike committee had demanded that Lord Provost call on the London government to intervene.

On Friday January 31, a huge crowd gathered outside the City Chambers in George Square to hear the government's reply. A deputation went in to see the Provost and while the crowd was waiting the police made a baton charge. Then the Riot Act was read, mounted police made repeated charges to clear the square, and two members of the deputation, Willie Gallacher and David Kirkwood were batoned and arrested.

Later in the day Manny Shinwell, chair of the strike committee (later an MP, and now a centenarian Lord) was arrested, and that night Highland troops were drafted into Glasgow. The city awoke to find tanks in the Saltmarket, machine gun posts in George Square and troops with fixed bayonets in the streets. The strike was broken. Confused, frightened, and leaderless, some men drifted back to work on Monday and by the end of the week it was over. On February 12 the strike committee admitted defeat and recommended a return to work. But the long term effect was different.

The Glasgow workers had seen the brutal reality of a bosses' government in action and it hardened the mood of industrial and political militancy that was developing on Clydeside. The only comment in Belfast at the weekend came from a strike committee speaker called Clarke at the Custom House who said "they seemed to have made a mess of things over there and (he) contrasted the occurrences there with the peaceful and well organised manner in which the strike was being conducted in Belfast." (*Northern Whig*).

As the strike entered its second week things took a graver turn. The strike committee had relied on the principle of the short sharp attack. They had expected that a week without public services would bring the city to its knees and have the prosperous citizens begging the shipyard and engineering employers to settle with the

men. They had not bargained for a long drawn-out struggle where the workers stood to lose more than the bosses, trying to exist on meager strike pay – on in the case of the 5,000 ASE members no strike pay at all, as their union refused to pay it.

IT became clear to the strike leaders that if they were to win this contest they would have to tighten the screws a little. So far, apart from heavy engineering and the mills, whose owners could afford a few weeks stoppage, business had not been unduly disrupted. Shops could get supplies and if prices rose somewhat it hit the working class hardest. But the strike committee had a promise of support from the transport workers, the dockers, carters and railwaymen. If they called these men out, comrrrerce would come to a total standstill. It would be tantamount to a general strike.

The strike committee hesitated. They were not sure that they could handle the chaos that would ensue and organise the rationing and distribution of essential supplies. On Monday February 3, a delegation met the Corporation again. J. Milan of the ETU asked the Corporation to set up a committee jointly with the strikers to administer supplies. "The transport workers would come out at any time" he said, "but they hadn't called them out as the strike committee wasn't sure that it could run the city". (*Belfast Newsletter*). The Corporation ignored the request and the transport workers were never called out.

Meanwhile the strikers' enemies moved onto the offensive. Already the Lord Mayor had tried to split the movement by appealing to the corporation employees to return separately. He pointed out that the Corporation automatically paid the standard rate in the city so they would get the benefit of shorter hours won in the dispute without having to strike at all. He also pointed out that the (London) secretary of the Municipal Employees Association had instructed them to return to work. He was unsuccessful.

Now the *Newsletter* took a hand in the fray. From the beginning of the dispute the *Newsletter*, *Whig* and *Telegraph* had been hostile to the strikers the Irish News had been sympathetic until it ceased publication but now the Newsletter launched an allout attack. "One of the (strikers) deputation boasted that they had set up a 'workers' parliament'. That is the language of the Bolshevists and Sinn Feiners and it should open the eyes of the authorities, and also of the vast majority of the men, who are loyal and law abiding, to the real objectives of 'the strike committee. These objectives are not industrial, but revolutionary, and if they were attained they would bring disaster to the city." (February 4, 1919).

For the rest of the strike the *Newsletter* continued in this vein, calling for a ban on all strikes by workers in the public service and the prosecution of the Belfast strike leaders whom they described as "Bolshevists, Anarchists and the hirelings of Germany" (February 8, 1919). The *Whig* and *Telegraph* were not far behind.

On Monday February 4, the Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast issued a manifesto to the strikers. They claimed to be neutral on the question of hours but appealed for an immediate resumption of work to await settlement on a national (i.e. UK) basis. This was exactly what the employers wanted. The workers' only chance was to force a concession in areas of strength like Glasgow or Belfast and then campaign for parity elsewhere. But the Grand Lodge had also some comments on the origin of the strike.

"It is perfectly clear that the condition of affairs today has been to a great extent engineered by parties who are neither employers nor employed but who have taken advantage of a trade dispute to attempt to bring discredit on the fair name of Belfast. These parties smarting from the defeat which they have suffered recently at the General Election are endeavouring to get the working men of Belfast into a position from which, in a short time, they may find it very difficult to withdraw. "

This was a reference to the prominent position on the strike committee of James Freeland of the ASE and Robert Waugh, Ulster Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (ASCJ). Both had been Labour candidates in Belfast in the 1918 election.

The attack of the *Newsletter* and the Orange Order, and even the appearance of a lorryload of armed Royal Irish Constabulary men didn't prevent a huge march of strikers on Tuesday from Carlisle Circus to the City Hall, where four platforms were required so all the strikers could hear something.

The Orange Lodge's manifesto was attacked, but there was no sign from Waugh or the other Orangemen on the strike committee that they were resigning in protest. The meeting ended with an extraordinary scene. The funeral of Cuming, the Managing Director of Harland and Wolff, passed the City Hall, and members of the strike committee led many of the workers in joining the cortege.

With the strike committee hesitating to extend the strike and after the strikers' remarkable display of loyalty to their bosses the time was ripe for negotiations, Lord Pirrie, Chairman of Harland and Wolff, and Government Controller of Merchant Shipping, was in Belfast for Cuming's funeral. On Wednesday February 5, he met a delegation from the strike committee.

Pirrie's proposals were ludicrous: he would arrange a meeting with the shipyard directors if the public services were restored immediately and the shipyard went back to work with a 54 hour week with overtime paid after 47 hours. The strike committee rejected this out of hand but a meeting with the directors was arranged anyway, without conditions.

The negotiations dragged on over the weekend, but on Mondav February 10, the employers proposed settlement terms. The men would return to work on the basis of a 54 hour week and the employers would call a "national" conference of engineering employers within 30 days and recommend to it a working week shorter than 47 hours. If the conference didn't accept this then the two Belfast shipyards would settle with their workers independently within three weeks.

Meanwhile the strikers had several setbacks. The National Executive of the ASE meeting in London had announced the suspension of its Belfast and Glasgow District Secretaries for involvement in an unofficial strike, the Committees were also suspended. The Negotiating Committee of the UK Federation of Shipbuilding, Engineering and Allied Trades had called on all shipyard workers to return to work. The government too took a hand.

FACED with a threatened strike by London electricians in solidarity with the Belfast and Glasgow strikers, the government made a new regulation under the wartime Defence of the Realm Act. The DORA regulation made it an offence to deprive the community of light or to encourage anyone to do so. Guards were mounted on all power stations and troops stood by to take control. The electricians' strike was called off and this broke the back of the Glasgow movement. It weakened Belfast too.

By now the strike committee was in favour of the settlement proposals. Charles McKay, the Chairman, told a crowd of strikers "The 44 hour week was as good as won. It might indeed be shorter than 44". The committee began to make arrangements for a ballot of the workers.

There was still fight in the strikers. On Tuesday February 11, the Corporation suddenly restored the public services, gas, electricity and trams. This was contrary to the settlement terms; the men were to stay out till the vote was taken. The Corporation thought they had the workers on the run and attempted to press home the advantage. They were wrong. Strike pickets stopped the trams at Castle Junction, ordered the passengers off and told the drivers to go back to their depots.

The Gas and Electricity Departments were warned that if they didn't go back to the agreed level they would be closed down completely, hospitals or no hospitals. By Tuesday evening the public services had stopped again and the Newsletter was screaming with impotent rage at the "supreme dictators" of the strike committee.

The ballot on the terms offered by the employers was taken on Friday February 14, two days after the Glasgow strike committee had admitted defeat. But a serious problem had arisen. The negotiations had only been with the shipyard employers. However, the engineering, building and electrical employers refused. They insisted on 47 hours.

So the workers voted on Friday knowing that the settlement might mean shorter hours for the shipyard men but leave the others as before. On the other hand the strike was about to enter its fourth week with many men not getting strike pay and with the Red Clydeside in retreat. If Belfast continued the fight they would be on their own.

Lloyd George attacked the strikers; "Anarchy is their aim, anarchy is their focus, to destroy not merely trade unionism, but the state. We are determined to fight Prussianism in the industrial world exactly as we fought it on the Continent of Europe, with the whole might of the nation."

The result of the ballot was 8,774 for the settlement terms and 11,963 against – a majority of 3,189 for rejection. The skilled workers had voted 2 to 1 against, with the ACSJ five to one against, while the more numerous unskilled workers had a small majority for acceptance. The strike committee reluctantly accepted the verdict and agreed to continue but at the Custom House meeting on Sunday, Clarke declared that if the settlement had been accepted it might have meant the "44". This was countered by a tough speech from Sam Kyle of the Workers' Union but already events were moving fast.

On the Tuesday before the ballot Parliament had re-opened at Westminster and Lloyd George had strongly attacked the strikers, saying "Anarchy is their aim, anarchy is their focus, to destroy not merely trade unionism, but the state. We are determined to fight Prussianism in the industrial world exactly as we fought it on the Continent of Europe, with the whole might of the nation." The strikers got little support from William Adamson MP, Leader of the Labour Party, who said the strikes been fomented by "revolutionaries" – "as the speaker for a constitutional party he would encourage neither revolution nor unofficial action".

AT THE same time in Belfast, employers, papers, and City Councillors were growing louder in their demands for stern measures against the strikers. On Thursday the Lord Mayor met Lt. General Sir Frederick Shaw, Commanderin-Chief for Ireland and was promised military protection for blacklegs and for key installations.

On Saturday the Mayor issued a proclamation inviting "all members of the community who are prepared to assist in putting an end to the prevailing lawless and wholly unjustifiable attack on the common rights of the citizens (to help) by offering their services as workers" and to contact him at the City Hall. On Saturday night, troops moved into the gasworks and power station fully armed and in battle gear. The men were told to return to work and most of them did.

Two shop stewards who refused to work were arrested and charged under the DORA regulation. The trams were put back on the streets, though only a tenth of the workers turned up and only a skeleton service ran. Strikers returning from a Custom House meeting attacked the trams and fought a running battle with police in Royal Avenue, but they couldn't stop the service and by Monday more tram workers turned up for duty.

Power, gas and trams were restored by Monday and the strike seemed to be collapsing. Seizing their advantage the engineering employers announced that they would reopen their firms on Tuesday and the shipyards on Thursday, all with a 47 hour week. The demoralised strike committee made no attempt to picket the power station or gas works and on Monday night, February 17, they decided to recommend a return to work on Thursday. The decision was unpopular and they refused to reveal it to the crowd outside their offices. Charles McKay announced that there would be another ballot and there were shouts of "Sellout" and "Who kept the transport workers in when they should have been out with us?"

In the January 1920 Belfast Corporation elections, Labour won its strongest representation ever. They were sure they could break the Unionist grip on the city inside a few years. They would be sadly disillusioned.

The strikers voted union by union on Tuesday and Wednesday but their morale was broken. 20 out of 22 unions voted to resume and the others accepted the majority decision. By Thursday the strike was over. A fifth of the workers stayed out but it was not an organised protest. By the following Monday all were back at work and the troops were withdrawn. The cases against the power station shopstewards were dismissed to avoid further trouble and the greatest industrial dispute in Belfast's history was over.

The shorter hours movement had failed, in Glasgow and Belfast as well as the smaller centres. The workers went back to the 47 hours they could have had for the asking without a strike. But the movement had a sequel.

In Glasgow, where the strike was less widespread and sooner defeated than in Belfast it left a legacy of working class consciousness which made Clydeside the stronghold of the ILP and their apparently militant politics for 20 or 30 years. In the 1918 election the ILP had put up 19 candidates in Scotland and won two seats, only one of them in Glasgow. In the local elections of 1920 they won 45 seats on Glasgow Corporation and in the 1922 General Election they won 10 of the 15 Glasgow seats and 20 in Scotland as a whole. From then until their deaths the "Clydeside" MPs dominated politics in the West of Scotland.

Belfast had the same industrial background as Glasgow, the same miserable slums and grinding poverty. The strike had lasted longer there and had been more widespread. At first the great industrial conflict seemed to have the same effect. In Belfast Labour had been politically weak.

Labour candidates and four Labour candidates in the 1918 election had come well down the voting list. But on the first Saturday in May 1919, despite the inflammatory attacks of the Newsletter, over 100,000 workers took part in a May Day march from the City Hall to Ormeau Park. At the subsequent meeting the platforms were dominated by leaders of the strike earlier in the year, and they called for Labour representation in the city.

The opportunity came in January 1920 with the first – and only - Corporation elections held under proportional representation. Labour nominated 20 candidates for the 60 seats and 13 were elected; two of them, Sam Kyle in Shankill and George Donaldson in St Annes, topped the poll. Five of the 13 including Kyle and Donaldson, were leaders of the 1919 strike. This was the strongest ever Labour representation on the Corporation and they were jubilant. They were sure they could smash the Unionist grip on the city inside a few years.

They were sadly disillusioned. As the war of independence in the South gained momentum so tempers rose - or were inflamed – in the North. There was bitter sectarian rioting in Derry in May and June and the sppeches at the 12th in Belfast were highly inflammatory. Then Col. Philips, a Banbridge man, and Divisional Commander of the RIC in Munster where his brutality provoked a mutiny, was shot dead in Cork and brought home for burial.

This was made the occasion for a meeting outside Workman and Clark's shipyard, held with the collusion of the management. One speaker called for a show of revolvers and the expulsion of Sinn Feiners from the yard. It was the signal for an orgy of terror-

ism in which all "disloyalists" were driven from both shipyards, and most of the engineering works as well. Some had to swim for their lives across the Lagan. That night rioting erupted in the city and continued for five days, leaving 17 dead and hundreds injured.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy was that the expulsions started and were fiercest in the very shipyards and engineering works which had been the backbone of the great strike scarcely 18 months before and where working class solidarity should have been strongest. Charles McKay the Chairman of the strike committee was expelled: he was a Catholic. But James Baird, a Protestant who had presided at early strike meetings, went as well as did John Hanna, a former Worshipful Master of an Orange Lodge.

Altogether 12,000 men were expelled and about 3,000 were Protestants, most of them socialists, Labour men or militant trade unionists. Thus ended working class solidarity in Belfast. It was no accident that the meeting on, July 21 passed a resolution to stand by the employers as well as expel their fellow-workers.

A sad little footnote was added to the story when the Belfast District Committee of the Federation of Shipbuilding, Engineering and Allied Trades met on October 18, 1920. A letter was read from the management of Harland and Wolff refusing a further request for a 44 hour week and "the Federation decided to defer this matter owing to the unsettled and uncertain position at present prevailing in Belfast". (*Northern Whig*).

In the face of the pogroms the trade union movement was impotent. The employers must have been well satisfied. The Orange Card had worked again.

The 1919 strike failed in two ways. It failed to achieve its immediate objective of a 44 hour week and it failed to establish a tradition of working class consciousness and solidarity which would have transcended sectarian incitement in 1920 and prevented the outbreak of the pogrom.

On the day the strike ended the Chairman of the strike committee, Charles McKay, gave his explanation for the first failure to the *Newsletter*: "If the Clyde and other centres had displayed the same solidarity, made the same stand, as we in Belfast made, we should now have been working 44 hours." But this is not enough. Belfast was the strongest centre in the strike. There the strike was most widespread, it had the sanction of a democratic ballot of the workers, and the authorities were slow to act against the strikers. Belfast should have been able to stand alone. And if the "44" had been won in Belfast it would have spread to other centres.

Two decisions of the Strike Committee ensured their defeat: the failure to call out the transport workers and the failure to challenge the military occupation of the power station and the gas works. From the first weekend the rank and file were calling for the involvement of the transport workers and at the end many were convinced that this was the reason for their defeat. The strike committee all the time maintained that they had the support of the transport workers and having declared limited industrial war in Belfast they would have been better to broaden the struggle.

WHEN the military occupied the gas and electricity works no attempt was made to picket them. The committee feared a clash like that in Glasgow. The authorities were expecting it and had brought in three extra magistrates to try the resulting court cases. The workers were not afraid as they showed when, they attacked the trams on the last Sunday. But the committee shirked the risk and failed to call the authorities' bluff, thereby they conceded defeat.

For the strike committee to be willing to call a virtual general strike or to take the risk of serious rioting between strikers and troops they would have had to believe in the doctrine of the class war and that the government was the tool of the employers not the servant of the people. Members of the committee believed no such thing. At the Custom House meeting on Sunday February 10, Clarke of the Strike Committee boasted that "they had never once said a hard or harsh or unkind word about the employers." Even James Baird who was something of a militant, wrote to the Northern Whig "I most emphatically deny having at any time said or written anything calculated to create class prejudice."

The dilemma of the strike committee was that they were trying to fight their battle according to the rules. The employers had no such scruples and anyway they made the rules so they could change them if they wished.

The second failure of the strike was related to the first. To build up a solidarity which would transcend and overcome sectarian prejudice required political as well as industrial awareness. The strikers received an industrial education from the strike itself though the final lessons went unlearnt when the committee failed to extend the strike. The political lessons of the strike were not drawn by the committee and they prevented anyone else from drawing them.

The strike committee was made up of delegates and officials of all the unions affiliated to the federation. It was a heterogeneous body. Two prominent members, James Freeland and Robert Waugh had been Labour candidates in the recent election. So had Sam Kyle, a textile workers' official, who played an active part in the strike. But also on the strike committee were Robert Weir and William Grant, prominent members of the Ulster Unionist Labour Association, which had been set up to counteract the spread of Labourism in the working class and keep them loyal to the Unionist Party. Grant later became a Unionist MP and Stormont Cabinet Minister.

The motley composition of the strike committee produced the resolve to keep the strike 'non-political' John McKaig of the Workers' Union, speaking at the City Hall on January 29 said "he was not there to discuss politics or religion. They were there to get a 44 hour week for the people of this country, North, South, East or West" (Belfast Newsletter). James Baird, who was a member of the Belfast ILP wrote to the Whig "like Mr Allen (a director of Workman and Clark) I refrain from introducing any political references, except to assure him that politics have nothing to do with the hours of labour".

The desire to keep politics out prevented more than the briefest reference to the conduct of the Unionist MPs for Belfast who had pledged themselves to support the 44 hour demand before the election and who now completely ignored the issue. Indeed one, RJ Lynn MP, who had spoken strongly in favour of the "44" at the Ulster Hall meeting on December 5, was editor of the Whig which daily attacked the strikers. The three "Labour Unionists" elected – all trade unionists – were particularly silent, yet one, Sam McGuffin, MP for Shankill, was cheered at a union meeting after the strike began. No attempt was made to expose the hypocrisy of these charlatans' claim to represent the interests of the working class.

But the strike committee did more than just discourage politics. During the first few days of the strike a member of the Workers' Union, Jack O'Hagan, spoke at several meetings and made the only serious attempt to talk of socialism, capitalism and the class war. O'Hagan, who was not a Northerner and had been involved in many strikes, then organized daily meetings at the City Hall at which he and a few colleagues put the socialist case.

On Thursday January 30th they were interrupted by Clarke, a member of the strike committee who announced that the committee wanted no unauthorised meetings. "Mr O'Hagan might think he was doing a great deal of good in connection with the strike, but he could tell him that he was doing an enormous amount of harm." This led to shouts that "There was neither Bolshevism or Sinn Feinism in the strike movement" (*Belfast Newsletter*), and O'Hagan was rushed by a section of the crowd. When O'Hagan went to the strike committee's offices to clarify the matter Robert Waugh told the large crowd outside that O'Hagan had no authority from the committee to hold meetings and the committee alone should run the strike. Bob Weir of the Unionist Labour Association added that "If these men attempt to speak again you can deal with them" (*Belfast Newsletter*).

The 1919 strike failed in two ways. It failed to achieve its immediate objective of a 44 hour week and it failed to establish a tradition of working class consciousness and solidarity which would have transcended sectarian incitement in 1920 and prevented the outbreak of the pogrom.

Clarke figured again at the meeting on Sunday February 2, when he referred to labour unrest in Dublin. "On behalf of the strike committee he disclaimed any responsibility for anything that might occur in Dublin (a voice 'Unity is strength'). The speaker concurred but said the Dublin workers had not been in with the Belfast workers from the start. In fact the Dublin movement was entirely unconnected with the Belfast movement which was purely a local one" (*Belfast Newsletter*). For this performance Clarke won the nickname of "the repudiator".

At the end of the strike Charles McKay repeated the point in his interview with the Newsletter. There was none of the frothy talk of the usual agitator type, who take advantage of strikers to push their own ideas. The men held to the idea of the 44 hour week as a simple plain demand, without working out any theories such as were associated with the shorter hours movement on the Clyde and elsewhere" and he outlined his own philosophy, "I have every hope that if we can stick to the purely industrial aspect we shall remedy many injustices which the worker still suffers from in Belfast. "

In fact they did not always stick rigidly to "the purely industrial aspect". Some forms of politics were less rigidly excluded than others. At the big meeting on December 5 to persuade the election candidates to support the 44 hours, the proceedings began with "God Save the King". And when the shipyard workers downed tools on January 14 to march to the ballot on the strike issue, the Union Jack was prominently displayed, together with trade union banners.

It was impossible to keep "politics" out of the strike when every development forced it upon the strikers. The practical effect of the strike committee's efforts was to reduce the politics of the strike to the lowest common denominator. The vast majority of the strikers were Unionist by upbringing and tradition. The strike brought them into conflict with the Unionist establishment. That conflict could only be resolved and their sectarian prejudices left unchallenged if the ideology of Labour Unionism remained dominant, an ideology which claimed that class conflicts were not irreconcilable, that the interests of workers and employers were basically the same and merely needed periodic readjustment.

By bending over backwards to deny any connection with Sinn Fein, Bolshevism or the workers of Dublin, by tolerating Unionist flag-waving, by eschewing any effort and political propaganda themselves and by prohibiting it from socialists the strike committee reduced its politics to those of Robert Weir and William Grant, to the level of the Unionist Labour Association.

The "Labour" members of the committee occasionally referred to the need for greater "Labour" representation, and their word may well have borne fruit in the Corporation election of 1920, but this still didn't challenge any prejudices or indeed raise the question of socialism since Freeland had declared in the 1918 election that he would oppose Home Rule and Waugh had boasted that he was an Orangeman and had "no connection with any political body." (*Northern Whig*).

THE reason the 1919 strike failed to establish lasting solidarity among the workers of Belfast, a solidarity that would have overcome any further incitement to sectarian hate, was because no-one tried, or was given the chance to try, to use the lessons of the strike to uproot the sectarian ideology of the workers and replace it with socialism All that was left behind was a veneer of economic militancy which cracked as soon as sectarian tension grew. In trying to exclude "politics" from the strike the strike committee sowed the wind. In July 1920 they reaped the whirlwind, many of them personally.

There can be few clearer examples in history of the ephemeral effect of purely economic militancy. The greatest labour upheaval in Belfast's history left scarcely a ripple on the political consciousness of the city's workers. There could be no better proof of the need for a socialist party which can not only take the lead in such struggle, but constantly draw the lessons of them and take advantage of the heightened political interest and involvement of the workers at such a time to hammer these lessons home.

The Harland and Wolff shipyard, shut down by the strike

Larkin: the apostle of labour solidarity

By John O'Mahony

IN Dublin, 61 years ago, March 1947, an immense crowd of people, 200,000 of them, many of the men bare-headed in freakishly Arctic weather, marched behind the coffin of Jim Larkin. Larkin was the founder of the modern Irish labour movement. He is the greatest figure in Irish labour history. James Connolly, Larkin's partner between 1910 and 1914, was far more clever and far better educated, but it was Larkin who touched the workers of the slums with the holy fire of righteous indignation, and ignited them in revolt.

Larkin was a union organiser in Liverpool, Belfast, Dublin and in the USA — where he was jailed in the aftermath of World War One. He was a founder of the US Communist Party and a — none too competent — leader of an Irish communist party in the '20s. A man of contradictions, he was both a practising Catholic and a member of the Executive of the Communist International! He never abandoned revolutionary socialism. Dublin's workers elected him to the Dail in 1944.

The magnificent quality of Larkin and of Larkin's work is best seen in the heroism which the workers he inspired and organised displayed in such abundance during Dublin's Labour War of 1913-14. Let us look at Larkin — and Connolly, and the workers they led — in action. We will see in them what working-class solidarity is and what it can achieve. Larkin's great message of labour solidarity has as much meaning — and urgency — for British workers today as it had in Dublin before the First World War.

In the beginning of 1916, when the British army began to grow desperate for recruits for the imperialist slaughter-house in France, it plastered Dublin with posters conveying the following encouragement: "The trenches in France are healthier than the slums of Dublin"!

The posters were right. Dublin had the highest general death rate of any city in Europe, including Russia. Moscow: 26.3 per 1,000, Calcutta: 27 per 1,000, Dublin: 27.6 per 1,000. The death rate for working class children was 27.7 per 1,000.

The mass of the Dublin working class, the general labourers, dockers, transport workers, etc. lived from the miserable pittances which the city's small-scale, under-developed and backward capitalist industry allowed them. Living in this festering degraded condition, they died like flies. The trade union movement in Southern Ireland, paralleling industry, was craft-centred, puny, confined to the dozen or so large towns, and to the upper stratum of relatively well-off artisans. This movement was strong enough to organise an Irish TUC only in 1894, nearly 30 years after the British TUC was founded.

When the Irish TUC was being organised the British movement was already past the craft union stage, and, from 1889 onwards fighting heroic battles, like the great fight for the "docker's tanner". This "New Unionism" of the masses of the "unskilled" workers was less an organisation of a secure, relatively respectable section of society such as craft unionism was, and more a fighting organisation of the general working class.

The especially crushed masses of the class in Ireland remained unorganised until Larkin came, in 1907. In that year the National Union of Dock Labourers sent Jim Larkin, a Liverpool-Irish militant, to organise the Belfast docks. Larkin had been a foreman on the Liverpool docks, and was sacked for siding with his gang when they went on strike. He was a member of the Independent Labour Party. Larkin roused the Belfast workers, appealing to them successfully along class lines, and for a time swept aside the capitalist-fostered "religious" and national hatreds that divided the workers by showing them the real common enemy.

When the "infection" spread to the Belfast police, troops were brought in and set upon the Catholic areas of the city in order to smash the unity Larkin had welded between the hitherto inter-warring sections of the working class. Without success. What finally smashed the great dock strike and the promising unity of the Belfast working class was the action of the union bureaucrats in Liverpool. Union leader James Sexton repudiated Larkin, stopped strike pay, and treacherously accepted conditions that made a mockery of the great fight of the Belfast workers. Thus betrayed and confused, their class organisation in disarray, the Belfast workers were again easy prey to the splitting tactics of the bosses.

But the torch lit in the North was seen all over Ireland by workers living in conditions like those of Belfast, and worse. From all over Ireland, workers appealed to Larkin as to some sort of a champion to come and help them break their chains. From this beginning grew a union of the unskilled workers in Ireland, the ITGWU (now merged in SIPTU). By 1920 it would embrace 50% of the organised workers of Ireland — 100,000 people.

These were the years of the great "labour unrest" in Britain. Wave after wave of strikes — dockers, railway-men, miners — erupted in the centre of the British Empire. These strikes were mainly unofficial because the new unions of the 1890s had immediately come under the pressures of the capitalist system and quickly been bureaucratised.

In 1910 James Connolly returned from America where he had been an organiser for the IWW and took on the job of overcoming the demoralisation in Belfast and building up the union. Connolly's understanding of the class struggle together with his experience in America, Larkin's flaming personification of the workers' drive to win that struggle, and the determination of thousands of workers to rise up — these elements now came together and made the ITGWU a terrific and hitherto unheard of power in Dublin.

The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) grew, put down roots gathered into itself the unskilled and unorganised including the thrice enslaved women workers of Dublin. It put into practice the new methods of class as opposed to sectional and craft struggle developed by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in America and used by the great rank and file movement in Britain. In particular they used the sympathetic strike.

The sympathetic strike in practice meant that when a small group of workers had a dispute with their employers they spoke not with the voice of their own puny dozen or few dozen against the entrenched wealth and consequent staying power of the capitalist organisation, but with the voice of their class. After a few test cases the bosses came to know it.

Connolly: "The ITGWU found the labourers of Ireland on their knees, and has striven to raise them to the erect position of manhood. It found them with no other weapons of defence than the arts of the liar, the lickspittle and the toady, and it combined them and taught them to abhor those arts and rely proudly on the defensive power of combination…"

For example, in 1911 the Dublin dockers held up all the ships entering the harbour until the sailors joined the seamen's union and were given union rates of pay and conditions!

When the Dublin coachmakers went on strike, the transport workers' union paid the labourers in that industry strike-pay and continued to do so until the coachmakers won.

The ITGWU struck in demand of the recognition by the bosses of the Mill-Sawers Union, winning recognition and a pay increase. Connolly: "The ITGWU up and down the docks preached most energetically the doctrine of the sympathetic strike, and the doctrine was readily assimilated by the dockers and carters. It brought the union into a long and bitter struggle along the quays, a struggle which cost it thousands of pounds, imperilled its very existence, and earned for it the bitterest hatred of every employer and sweater in the city, every one of whom swore they would wait their chance to 'get even with Larkin and his crew'."

The standard of living of Dublin workers began to be pushed slowly upwards. Their militancy, self-confidence and consciousness of their power as a class rose correspondingly.

Thus the roused workers of Dublin "took the fierce beast of capital by the throat all over Dublin and loosened its hold on the vitals of thousands of our class" (Connolly). But the fierce beast has its police and its army and, so long as it controls industry and the banks, vast reserves of strength. It rallied its forces for a determined effort to hurl the workers back to where they had been before the coming of the union.

Four hundred Dublin capitalists banded together around a man named William Martin Murphy, owner of the tramways of Dublin, a national newspaper still in existence, the *Irish Independent*, and many other concerns, and declared war to the death on the ITGWU.

Each of the gallant four hundred deposited a sum of money, in proportion to the size of his concern, in a common pool, and signed a document forfeiting the sum if he made peace with the union before all the other four hundred did so. One day soon, after the Easter Rising of 1916, the Dublin Chamber of Commerce would denounce the Rising as "Larkinism run amok". Murphy would demand through his paper that the British authorities shoot James Connolly; now he contented himself with lining up these authorities for the coming struggle.

In August 1913 Murphy presented an ultimatum to the tramway workers of Dublin: the union or their jobs. The tramwaymen struck.

All over Dublin, wherever the union had members, dockers, carters, gas workers, factory hands are presented with the demand of the four hundred masters of the wealth of Dublin: sign a declaration repudiating the ITGWU, or get out.

But the workers have felt their strength. They know what is at stake.

All over Dublin they refuse to sign the repudiation document and are locked out. So much has the idea of solidarity taken hold of all sections of the workers of Dublin that even those who might avoid the long, hard struggle, the half a year of starvation and the murderous clashes with the police, choose to join their comrades in the street. Thus it is with the members of the Women Workers Union of Ireland. It is only affiliated to the ITGWU and "the document" demands only repudiation by name of the General Workers Union. But, "the second part pledges them to refuse to help the ITGWU — in every shop, factory and sweating hell-hole in Dublin, as the agreement is presented they march out with pinched faces, threadbare clothes and miserable footgear, but with high hopes, undaunted spirit, and glorious resolve shining out of their eyes" (Connolly).

Other unions too are presented by the arrogant and determined bosses with the demand that their members will neither become members of the ITGWU nor give it help. Nearly all of them refuse to sign the document. All over Dublin "…each trade that is served by general labourers, walks out along with

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Jim Larkin

the ITGWU boys; refuses to even promise to work with anyone who signs the employer's agreement, and, cheering, lines up with their class." Even old established craft unions, caught up in the general class movement of the past period, join their class in the streets. Thirty seven other unions support the ITGWU. The line-up has begun; the rumbling skirmishing class struggles of the past years are on the brink of becoming open class war.

As the bosses organise themselves, thrashing out their policies, making their deposits in the bank, giving their instructions to their police and the rest of their bourgeois-serving class state machine, so too the ITGWU prepares. The revolutionary leaders of the union and the roused workers are well aware that they have won what they have only by struggle and that they will keep it now only by prevailing in a bitter conflict. They set about mobilising the class for battle. Connolly is brought back from Belfast. Meetings are organised all over Dublin to rally the class for the coming battles.

The workers are confident of their strength, with the desperate confidence of people who have learned the hard lesson that existence is class struggle and yet again class struggle. In the *Irish Worker*, Connolly asks: "Shall we crawl back into our slums, abase our hearts, bow our knees, and crawl once more to lick the hand that would smite us? Shall we, who have been carving out for our children a brighter future, a cleaner city, a freer life, consent to betray them instead into the grasp of the blood-suckers from whom we have dreamt of escaping? No, no and yet again, no! Let them declare their lock-out: it will only hasten the day when the working class will lock-out the capitalist class for good and all." (30 August 1913)

A mass meeting is announced for Sunday 31 August as the culminating point of the lesser meetings of support for the tramway strikers used all over Dublin to mobilise support for the coming life or death battle.

But now the state moves into action. Larkin and four other leaders of the union are arrested. Why? Larkin has said that if force is used against the workers they will retaliate. He and his companions are charged with arousing discontent between the workers of Dublin and the police and soldiers of the crown, with disturbing the public peace and with incitement to murder. A proclamation is issued forbidding the mass meeting in O'Connell Street. Connolly points out that freedom of speech and assembly are only scraps of paper and can be torn up when the interests of the masters require it. When that happens only the determination and activity of the workers can maintain these freedoms.

Larkin is sent for trial. Released on bail, he pledges that the mass meeting will take place as arranged despite having been "proclaimed" by the government and that nothing but death will stop him from speaking there.

On Saturday 30 August, the morning before the mass meeting, Connolly is arrested. The evening before he has openly talked of the need for the workers to arm in self-defence. He is charged with incitement to riot and disorderly conduct. Sentenced to 3 months in jail, he goes on hunger strike. In a week he is free. The workers of Dublin have leaders fit for the job!

Terror reigns in Dublin. In the tense atmosphere there are clashes between the police and workers. That same Saturday night the first casualties of the labour war die. Two men, Nolan and Byrne, have their skulls smashed in by drunken policemen. Witnesses will testify that they were deliberately beaten to death — beaten down, followed, beaten down again, and then again until they stopped moving.

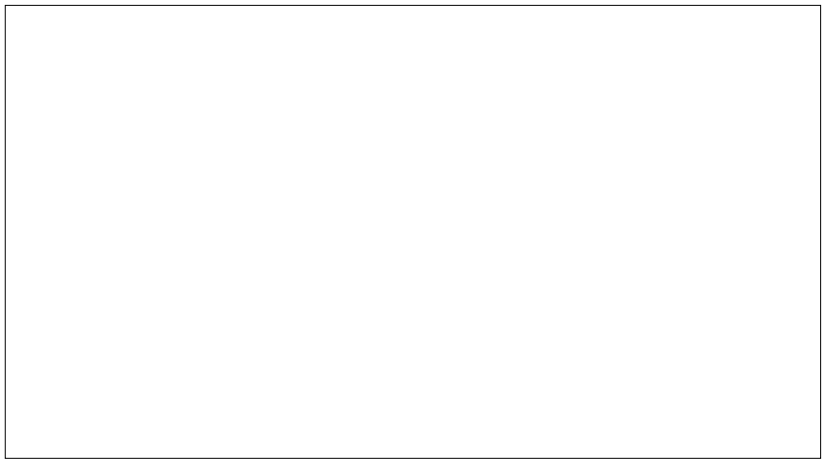
The scene is set for Dublin's Bloody Sunday. From early morning dense masses of police are concentrated in O'Connell Street and the surrounding area to make sure the meeting is not held. Equally determined, tens of thousands of workers gather in O'Connell Street. Larkin, who is pledged to speak, will be arrested on sight.

Larkin arrives, disguised as an old invalid and dressed like a bourgeois. Accompanied by his "niece" — who is Constance Markiewiecz — the old man makes his way to the Imperial hotel — owned by none other than Murphy — and out onto a balcony overlooking the crowded O'Connell Street. Suddenly the invalid straightens his back, whips off his beard, is recognised by the crowd, and a roar of triumph goes up from the thousands of workers as he begins to speak.

Now the class hatred of the Dublin blood suckers, all their fierce resentment at the revolt and the gains of the working class, takes a physical form — that of flying, flailing police truncheons. The hundreds of police hurl themselves on the crowd, lashing out indiscriminately. When the day is over more than 500 people will have been treated in hospital.

With this bloody day the long months of slow starvation have begun for the workers of Dublin. The months of battling with the police and armed scabs imported by the bosses. The long months of acute starvation for the children of the Dublin workers. Already the death rate amongst working-class children in this city is frightfully high.

The good Catholic employers, the nationalist men who "love Ireland" and would "win its freedom" — to them starvation is a fitting weapon to use against Irish workers. Their patriotism allows them to accept help and protection from the British Imperial state machine. But later, when the strike has dragged on for months and desperate plans are made to evacuate the starving working-class children from the embattled city to be housed by English workers — then the patriotic and religious feelings of these nationalist capitalists will revolt. They will create a big outcry against a diabolical plot to steal away these "Catholic children" and expose them to the contaminating contact of English Protestants. Their priests and their press will whip up mob-violence against those trying to save the children from slow starvation.



Police break up a union rally on Dublin's O'Connell street in August 1913

In this battle all the advantage is with the employers: they have wealth which gives them staying power, and the ability to starve out the workers. They have a mass army of thugs in police uniform at their command to intimidate and beat up pickets, break-up union meetings, jail militant strikers and protect scabs — who hardly need protection for they have guns and impunity in using them. When a drunken scab shoots trade unionist Alice Brady dead, he is arrested and then immediately released. One more worker is beaten to death by the police.

Now the leaders of the union show their quality. Released from jail by his hunger strike, Connolly joins Larkin in organising workers' defence squads. Bands of workers up and down the city are drilled and armed with hockey-stick-like hurleys. In future they will march with union demonstrations to protect meetings and pickets from the police. After a few clashes the police will learn to be a little easier on the strikers, learn to let union demonstrations alone, to refrain from attacking pickets. In their own way, they accept Connolly's truth: freedom for the workers securely exists when the workers are able and willing to defend it.

These defence squads will grow into a union army, the Irish Citizen Army, acquire uniforms and later guns. In 1916 they will be led by Connolly — Larkin is in the USA — to form part of the Republican forces that rise to strike a blow at the British empire, one of the bloody warring empires then bleeding Europe to death.

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In Britain the Dublin strike/lock-out and the police atrocities call forth immediate solidarity action.

British rail workers strike, refusing to handle "black" goods. The best sections of the working class, the conscious militants in this Britain of the great pre-war "labour unrest" and unofficial strikes, link up the battle of the Dublin workers with their own struggles.

In South Wales two drivers, James and Reynolds, refuse to handle black goods, link up the feeling of solidarity with the Dubliners with the fight for the eight-hour day, and bring all the locomotivemen in South Wales out.

This strike is sabotaged and demobilised by the trade union leader J H Thomas.

The Co-op sends food ships up the Liffey.

This is the first time that the idea of a general strike in Britain is seriously proposed since the days of the Chartists.

The advanced layers of the class all over the British Isles is striving to link up, to use its strength against its enemies. All the sectional interests and struggles are seen as part of a whole. The idea of class solidarity is the predominant one. Desperately the conservative union bureaucrats hold on, they manoeuvre, they make promises. They make pretences of militancy while sabotaging the movement for class action.

Because there is no adequate revolutionary party that understands what needs to be done and has the militants in place to get it done throughout industry, linking up and co-ordinating this movement, the trade union leaders manage to contain it.

They denounce the "erratic activities" of Larkin in the same breath as they condemn the Dublin sweaters and the murdering Dublin police. They sabotage the activities of their own rank-and-file in support of Dublin. They won't hear of strike action to support the locked-out Dubliners, but they offer money. Where the workers can be absolute, in industry, where they can cripple the boss by stopping him from going about his business, there they are opposed to all activity. Where the capitalists are absolute, in cash, here they are willing to "help" Dublin. They make donations! They send a delegation to Dublin to try and restore peace.

Larkin goes on a speaking tour around Britain to rouse support for Dublin. Demands for a general strike become clamorous. To head off the movement the union leaders call a special TUC conference in December 1913 to consider the question. Here the anger of the bureaucrats at the "trouble making" movement of the class is turned on the representatives of Dublin's workers, Larkin and Connolly. Their special hatred is reserved for Larkin, who taunts them with bitter irony calling them "human beings", to imply they were a great deal less. He is denounced as disrupter, the call for a general strike is defeated.

But the idea of the general strike, once disinterred from the Chartist period is not forgotten.

The strike/lock-out continued for eight months, becoming a war of attrition in which the workers were at a massive disadvantage. Once the British union bureaucrats succeed in containing and stopping the movement in Britain for action in solidarity with Dublin, confining solidarity to the sending of food, money and similar aid, then the chance of outright victory for Dublin's workers was over.

This general strike limited to one city became a prolonged test of the heroism of the workers and of the resoluteness and seriousness of their leaders. Because the workers were determined and heroic they stopped the bosses' drive to exterminate the union. Because the workers' leaders were serious, because they were not afraid to take on the state machine, because they answered force with force, organising a workers' army to defend the workers against the police, the ITGWU was preserved.

By the spring of 1914 most Dublin workers had drifted back to work. They signed no document repudiating the union. There was victimisation, but the union still existed and could fight it. The gains in wages and conditions could still be protected. The workers were not demoralised, although the doctrine of the sympathetic strike had received some severe blows.

Working-class solidarity was the source of the great strength shown by Dublin's workers; the lack of adequate UK-wide solidarity was the reason why they did not crush the boss class of Dublin. Let James Connolly have the last word:

It was the isolation of Dublin that saved the Dublin blood-suckers. "The Dublin fighters received their defeat, met their Waterloo, at the London Conference… At the conference the representatives of organised labour declared that they would not counsel the use of any kind of economic force or industrial action in support of the Dublin workers, and immediately this was known the fight was lost. At the next peace conference in Dublin the employer would not even look at the joint proposals unanimously agreed to by the representatives of the British and Irish trade unions. They knew that they had nothing to fear, as their opponents in the labour camp had solemnly sworn not to hurt them" (*Forward*, Glasgow, 14 March 1914).

Jim Larkin has been dead 61 years. In Ireland he is a respected, mythic figure even to the descendants of those who were his life-long enemies. "Larkinite" is no longer the term of abuse for militant working-class fighters it once was. There is today a statue of Larkin in O'Connell Street, where the police batoned workers on 31 August 1913. Larkin is dead, but as the song about Larkin's early contemporary, Joe Hill says: He never died. Where working men — and women — defend their rights, there you'll find Jim Larkin. Every serious working-class militant, even those who have never heard of Jim Larkin, is a Larkinite. It is an affinity we should be proud of!

Marxists and mass workers' parties

By Karl Kautsky

EVOLVING out of the trade unions, adopting a formal commitment to socialism only in 1918, two decades after its formation, the Labour Party puzzled and perplexed European Marxists. It was accepted into membership of the Socialist International in 1908 on the grounds that it fought the class struggle even though it did not "recognise" it and was independent. Karl Kautsky, the leading Marxist of the time, wrote a resolution to that effect. Lenin, while agreeing with Kautsky on the main point, criticised his resolution: Labour was not fully independent of bourgeois parties — electoral pacts with the Liberals did not end until 1918, it was only a "first step".

The second part of this article examines the relationship of the British Marxists of the Social Democratic Federation to the Labour Party in its first decade. Founded in the early 1880s, the SDF, later called the British Socialist Party, was to be the main component of the Communist Party of Great Britain, founded in 1920. Kautsky's article is of particular interest in that it discusses the relationship of small Marxist organisations to mass trade union-based Labour type organisations. In Holland the Marxists — Anton Pannokoek and Co — were then already an expelled faction of the Labour Party.

I. Marx and the political problems of the trade unions

I HAVE no intention of solving the problem as to which is the more important, the organisation of the proletariat into one independent class party without any definite programme or the formation of a special, though indeed smaller, working-class party, but having a definite socialist programme. I do not think there is any such problem at all. There is just as little sense in such a problem as there is in asking which is the more important — the final aim or the movement. The organisation of the proletariat into an independent class party is as inseparable from the necessity of converting them to socialism as is the movement from its aim. In the long run, the one is quite inefficient without the other. Both must go hand in hand.

The problem is not which is the more important, organisation or enlightenment, but how best they can both be united. This question, however, can by no means be answered identically for all countries, the various answers depending upon the given political and social conditions, and corresponding, to some extent, with the answers to the question regarding the relations existing between the parties and the trade unions. In general, however, one can distinguish two principal types of movements for the attainment of an all-embracing Socialist class party. The European continental type, which is best illustrated at present in the German Social Democracy, and the Anglo-Saxon type, which can best be studied in England, but which is also strongly developed in North America and in Australia.

The great difference between the Anglo-Saxon world and the European continent consists, in the first place, in that the political development of the latter took place under the flag of the French revolution which commenced in 1789, whereas the bourgeois revolution in England was completed in 1688, a whole century in advance, that is. The bourgeois revolution in England was thus accomplished under less highly developed conditions, and thus could bring in its train no such tremendous upheaval in the material and spiritual life of society as did the French revolution. The subsequent political advances made by the rising classes in England since 1688 until the present time always took the form of isolated struggles for one particular object. The revolutionary classes themselves held aloof from revolutionary ideas. They were far more violent than the continentals in their action, but their ideas concerned not society as a whole, but only single occurrences.

The revolutionary classes of the European continent, whose ideas were influenced by the great revolution were, on the contrary, far more prone to consider society as a whole and thus to strive to change it as a whole; they were thus revolutionary in their ideas. Consequently they were more ready than the English to look upon the winning of political rights as a means of attaining the social revolution. Besides this difference between the Anglo-Saxon and the European continental conditions there is also this to be added: When the modern working-class movement commenced in the sixties of the nineteenth century the trade union movement on the continent found greater obstruction than the political movement: politics were everywhere forbidden to the trade union as such. At the same time the European continent was still living through a revolutionary epoch which only came to an end in 1871, an epoch in which the interests of the proletariat were entirely absorbed in political struggles and organisations. Thus, in continental Europe the political organisation of the proletariat developed before their trade union organisation; they have, therefore, the sooner formed a mass party under the socialist flag. For the propagation of socialism in general, but definite Marxian socialism, the theory of the proletarian class struggle as deduced from the study of capitalist society.

Things in England did not develop so simply. Thanks to its earlier industrial development an energetic working-class party, the Chartists were to be found there before anywhere else; but this party had no revolutionary programme. Very good socialists did, indeed, belong to it, but as a party it only fought for the universal suffrage and the ten hours' day. Its political centre of gravity lay in the industrial north of England, far from London, whereas that of socialism and of the revolutionary working-class movement in France lay in Paris, at the seat of central government. In London itself the Chartists were weak and irresolute. While the Parisian workers in February and June, 1848, show the whole of Europe by their bravery at the barricades, the Chartists could find no better weapon than a gigantic petition to Parliament, which under the circumstances gave but the impression of timidity rather than of power. During the decline of Chartism, which followed the year 1848, the trade unions, on the contrary, developed rapidly. Already in 1824 and 1825 the trade unions had won for themselves legal recognition, and during the economic development of the new Free Trade era, after 1847, they grew rapidly in strength and influence. The whole interest of the working masses was centred in the trade union movement, and a separate political party seemed quite superfluous since no obstacle hindered their political activity in England.

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Under these conditions it was only possible to for a separate working-class party by amalgamating the trade unions into a common political organisation and to permeate it with the socialist spirit.

This was also the opinion of Karl Marx, who was so influenced by the English conditions that he propagated a similar development in continental Europe.

Already in his *Poverty of Philosophy*, in 1847, Marx indicated the political character of the trade union movement — "To form a coalition, is that not pursuing political ends?… In this fight (the coalition regarding wages) — a veritable civil war — all the different elements unite and prepare for the coming struggle. Once this point is reached the coalition assumes a political character" (pp. 160, 162). Still more decidedly did Marx insist upon the political significance of the trade unions in the resolution he proposed, and which was accepted by the Geneva International Congress in 1866. Among other things this resolution says: "Indispensable as are the trade unions in the guerrilla warfare between capital and labour, of still greater importance are they as an organised means of promoting the abolition of the wage system itself.

"The trade unions have so far laid too much stress upon their local and immediate struggles against capital. They have not yet fully understood their power of attacking the whole system of wage slavery and present forms of production… On that account they hold themselves too much aloof from general, social and political movements. Lately, however, they seem to have awakened to some extent to the consciousness of the great historical problem confronting them… Apart from their original aims, the trade unions must now learn to focus the organisation of the working classes for the great purpose of attaining their complete emancipation. They must therefore support every social and political movement which has this for its aim," and so on. We see, then, that what we demand from the Social Democracy, Marx pointed out as the functions of the trade unions.

Interesting also is an interview between Hamann, the secretary of the German Metal Workers' trade union, and Karl Marx, at Hanover, an account of which was given by Hamann in the Volkstaat, 1869, No. 17. (This account has been printed by Bringmann, *The History of the German Carpenters' Movement*, 1903, vol. i., p. 364.)

Marx said: "The trade unions should never be affiliated with or made dependent upon a political society if they are to fulfil the object for which they are formed. If this happens it means their death blow. The trade unions are the schools for socialism, the workers are there educated up to socialism by means of the incessant struggle against capitalism which is being carried on before their eyes. All political parties, be they what they may, can hold sway over the mass of the workers for only a time; the trade union, on the other hand,

The Matchworkers' strike of 1888 — the development of "new unionism" was an important landmark in a drive towards working-class political representation

capture them permanently; only the trade unions are thus able to represent a real working-class party, and to form a bulwark against the power of capital. The greater mass of the workers conceive the necessity of bettering their material position whatever political party they may belong to. Once the material position of the worker has improved he can then devote himself to the better education of his children; his wife and children need not go to the factory, and he himself can pay some attention to his own mental education, he can better see to his physique. He becomes a socialist without knowing it." This quotation is only an interview, not a signed article by Marx, consequently it is possible that it does not altogether accurately represent Marx's meaning. However, it is probable that Marx saw it in print, for it appeared in the Volkstaat, and, if so, he would have corrected it had he found it to be erroneous. Thus, although we cannot vouch for its absolute accuracy, it is yet worthy of attention, and although such an attitude seems very strange to us now, it is yet readily explained by the position of affairs at that time.

Marx says expressly: "The trade unions are the schools for socialism… only they are about to form a real working-class party." That means, the trade unions should not be neutral toward bourgeois political parties, but should keep away from all political parties because it is they themselves who are to form the socialist working-class party, and as such they must declare war on all bourgeois parties.

Only in England and in France was there then a fairly wide working-class movement of some duration, and it was only from the experience of these movements that Marx could develop his ideas on the subject. In France he found, indeed, much socialism, but only in the form of sectarian societies. There were many socialist "schools," each swearing to the genuineness of its patent pill for the cure of all the ills of society, and each trying to rally the workers round itself. The various schools were at war with one another, and were thus instrumental in splitting the working masses rather than uniting them.

None of them had chosen as their basis the class struggle, which alone could unite the whole class. And the same was true of the political movements which appealed to the working classes. When Lassalle's movement first came into being, it also appeared to Marx as a new sect. The ignoring of the trade unions, the prominence given to the panacea of co-operative production, seemed to him entirely sectarian, and no less sectarian also was the appeal to state help. When, after Lassalle's death, the new working-class party split, he was still further confirmed in his conclusions that such a party was only the means whereby to divide, not unite, the proletariat. It thus seemed to him that to save the trade unions they must hold aloof from political organisations.

There has been an attempt to conclude from this interview that Marx was in favour of the political neutrality of the trade unions, but this is quite unjustified. Marx was by no means of opinion that the trade unions should be as neutral towards the Liberals and clericals as toward socialists. He says expressly: "The trade unions are the schools for socialism… only they are about to form a real working-class party." That means, the trade unions should not be neutral toward bourgeois political parties, but should keep away from all political parties because it is they themselves who are to form the socialist working-class party, and as such they must declare war on all bourgeois parties. Thus, explicable though this attitude may be under those circumstances, further developments have shown that it is now not altogether tenable. In the first place, the German Social Democracy lost more and more of its sectarian character. It was now no longer an organisation for the attainment of state credit for co-operative production, but it was the organisation of the proletarian class struggle, which was for a long time far in advance of the trade unions. It was the "real working-class party", whose functions the trade unions, as they grew stronger, had neither the opportunity, reasons nor even legal rights to take over. On the other hand, the English trade unions have shown that their existence alone is insufficient to convert the worker to socialism "without him knowing it"; that they do not necessarily bring socialist convictions home to the worker because of "the incessant struggle against capitalism which is being carried on before their eyes." Only a scrap of this struggle is really being pursued daily, and this scrap is not even always sufficient to indicate the real meaning of the whole struggle. And under certain circumstances the trade unions might even seek to evade this struggle altogether when their benefit arrangements are endangered thereby.

While in Germany the political party has become a real working-class party, the trade unions in England have more and more lost the ability to become such a party. They have ever more separated themselves from the mass of the proletariat, thus forming an aristocracy of labour and becoming means of splitting rather than of uniting the masses. Moreover, they have always shown a tendency to political dependence on the bourgeois parties, by whom the unions and, to even a greater extent, their leaders, have been bought and duped by concessions.

So it appeared that the development of events in England proved Marx wrong. His theory of the class struggle and its practical results were mainly deduced from English conditions, and it was just in England that they seemed to be brought to an ad absurdum. But, finally, Marx is seen to be right after all.

II. The Social-Democracy and the Labour Party in England

At first, indeed, Marxism made its appearance in England in opposition to Marx, when Hyndman, Bax and the other followers of Marx's teachings founded, in 1881, the Democratic Federation, later on the Social Democratic Federation, at present the Social Democratic Party. According to the intention of its founders it was to become a workingmen's party, similar to the German Social Democratic Party. It was a product of the great crisis which began in the seventies and which introduced the cessation of England's industrial supremacy. The conditions which gave to English capital a position of monopoly and allowed it to cede a share of its fruits to the trade unions were coming to an end. Unemployment was raging and the trade unions were declining. At the same time the antagonism between capital and labour was growing; as a consequence, the English workingmen became again susceptible to the ideas of socialism, and the Social Democratic Federation was enabled to achieve considerable success.

But strange to say, beyond a certain point it could never go in its achievements. The Social Democratic Federation thought it necessary to point out to the workingmen the insufficiency of trade unionism in order to make them realise the necessity for socialism. But this provoked the opposition of the trade unionists — that element, to wit, which constitutes a portion of the working class, and which is best capable of being organised. It was this, no doubt, which made it impossible for Engels to adopt a friendly attitude toward the Social Democratic Federation. As is known from his letters to Sorge, he judged it and its sectarian character rather severely. It is true that Marx and Engels fought against the corruption and narrow-mindedness of the majority of the English trade union officials in a similar manner, and with no less energy than the Social Democratic Federation itself, but nothing could shake their conviction that, in spite of it all, the only way to create in England a strong Social Democratic working-class party was to propagate socialism in the trade unions, to loosen the bonds between them and the bourgeois parties, and to unite them into one separate party. Finally, however, Engels did not expect much from the old trade unionists. The new unionism in England, the Knights of Labour in America, seemed to him a much better soil from which a Labour Party could spring. Experience has shown that Marx has been right after all. The English workingman, insofar as he is at all capable of being organised and of fighting, is very strongly attached to his trade union, which has become an indispensable life element to him. Whoever attacks it, or even belittles it, is his enemy. And, in fact, there is no need at all for either setting the trade unions aside or lessening their importance.

The new economic and political situation dates from the eighties, and having improved for a time during the nineties, renders the class antagonism in the new century all the more pronounced and violent. This situation can no longer be met adequately by the trade unionist methods hitherto in vogue. The methods, then, certainly should be changed, by widening the sphere of action of the trade unions, and by expanding their forms of organisations, which, at the same time, will occasion a widening of the mental horizon of their members, and morally also of their leaders. But this implies that the trade unions, so far from losing, will, on the contrary, gain in importance.

The English workingman is very strongly attached to his trade union. It is for him to such an extent the all engrossing organ of all his social and political struggles, that he requires no other, and considers any other organ superfluous. A Labour Party in England, outside the trade unions, can therefore never become a party embracing the masses. It is doomed always to be confined to a small circle, and to remain in this sense a sect.

In consequence of all this, the SDF, as well as the other socialist organisations, namely, the Fabians (1883) and the Independent Labour Party (1893), formed side by side with it, did not grow, in spite of the fact that the new situation made it an imperative necessity to create an independent workingmen's party.

If smallness and an incapability to get a hold on the masses are the essential characteristics of a sect, then these other organisations were no less sects than the SDF.

When, however, the majority of the trade unions at last made up their minds to form a common political organisation, at once a mass-party arose to which the existing socialist organisations affiliated. Thus the Labour Representation Committee was formed (1900), out of which grew the Labour Party now in existence.

By creating this Labour Party, the path was at last entered upon, which Marx so long ago designated as the right one, and which proved for England at the present time the only path leading to the organisation of the proletariat as a class. And yet we need by no means declare the judgement passed by Engels on the SDF as justified in all points. The SDF committed indeed mistakes enough. Its Marxism was often enough a dogma rather than a method, and mixed up with additions quite foreign to the spirit of true Marxism. But, notwithstanding all this, the SDF has accomplished a good deal, and its mistakes can be partly explained by the difficulties it had to contend against.

The SDF desired to become a party like the German SDF; for this, however, the condition in England was not ripe. Failure was bound to attend these endeavours in spite of the most self-sacrificing work. It only blocked the way to the formation of a real mass party.

But this by no means implies a condemnation of the SDF; it only means that the tasks and functions of this organisation lay elsewhere than in the direction in which the SDF itself sought them.

It is, for instance, a mistake to think that the principal thing is to organise an independent working-class party, and that once such a party is in existence the logic of events will force it to adopt socialism. One is apt to forget that socialism, which is alone capable of keeping the proletariat permanently together, and which alone can lead them to victory — namely, the socialism of the class struggle — is not a thing which lies on the surface. No doubt their very class position enables the proletarians to grasp socialism more readily than the bourgeois elements can do; true, also, that an independent class party furnishes them with the best basis for it. But for all that, a good deal of theoretical knowledge is indispensable in order to attain a deeper comprehension of the capitalist mode of production, and of the nature of the class relations begotten by that mode of production as well as of the historical tasks imposed upon these classes. Without such a comprehension it is impossible to create a really independent permanent class party of the proletariat, independent not only in the essence that the workers are organised separately, but that their mode of thinking is distinct from that of the bourgeoisie.

We are present rather inclined to undervalue the importance of spreading socialist comprehension among the mass movement, because it rests upon propositions which have now become familiar to us for a generation — and are now, by means of a widely-spread press, the common property of wide circles, so that they appear to us true enough. In a country, however, where you just start teaching these propositions, they are by no means so readily grasped. The logic of events will not of itself bring them into the brains of the proletariat, although it will make their brains susceptible to them.

The striving, therefore, for the organisation of an independent mass and class party is not sufficient. No less important is the socialist enlightenment. If the SDF failed in the former task, it achieved all the more in the domain of the latter. By its socialist agitation it prepared the soil upon which the Labour Party could arise, and the socialist criticism and propaganda which it still pursues is indispensable even now, when the Labour Party already exists, in order to imbue that Party with a socialist spirit and to bring its actions for occasional and partial ends into accord with the lasting aims of the struggle of the proletariat for its complete emancipation. Looked at in this light, the SDF acquires an importance very different from what it seems to possess when merely compared to the continental social-democratic parties, which being mass parties are the political representatives of the whole proletariat engaged in its class struggle.

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The task of the SDF is aptly stated in what the *Communist Manifesto* says in 1847 of the Communist League: "They are practically the most resolute and active portion of the working-class party; theoretically they are in advance of the rest of the proletariat, inasmuch as they possess a clear insight into the conditions, the progress, and the general results of the proletarian movement."

It is the endeavour of the Marxists of all countries to be worthy of this position. The peculiarity of England consists in the fact that the conditions there render it necessary for the Marxists to form a separate, solid organisation, which in countries where mass parties, with a social democratic i.e., Marxist — programme exist, would be superfluous — nay, detrimental — inasmuch as it would only split up the party.

It is unavoidable, however, in a country where the trade unions form the Labour Party, at least so long as this Party does not accept a social democratic programme, and has not yet developed a permanent social democratic policy.

We must be very much on our guard not to look at the English conditions through continental spectacles, and not to think that the Labour Party and the SDP are two parties competing with one another, the one excluding the other. Rather are they to be considered as two organs with different functions to which one is the complement of the other, and of which one can function but imperfectly without the other.

One should not imagine that the relation of the Labour Party to the SDP in England is similar to that existing at the present moment between the Marxists and the Social Democratic Labour Party in Holland. The formation of the Labour Party was cordially welcomed in England by the social democrats. For a certain time the SDP formed a constituent part of the Labour Party, and afterward left it, not because it wanted the Labour Party to cease to exist, but because it did not agree with the policy of the latter.

Where two independent organisations exist side by side conflicts between them are always possible, however much the attainment of their common ends makes it desirable for them to work in cordial agreement.

But it is still possible for the SDP to join the Labour Party, and resolutions to that effect, backed by considerable minorities, are again and again proposed at the SDP conferences. The British Labour Party has always desired this union. Unlike the Labour Party in Holland, it does not exclude Marxists, and yet it is contended that it is unworthy of being represented in the International Socialist Bureau side by side with the SDP.

Although the antagonism between the social democracy and the Labour Party is so great at present, the SDP itself has altogether given up the hope of becoming a mass party after the style of the German Social Democracy, recognising as it does that in England the political organisation of the proletariat, as a class, can only be attained by the inclusion the trade unions.

Since, under the given conditions in England, the functions of the SDP, just as those of the other socialist parties, are entirely different from those of the continental socialist organisations, injustice is done to it when one compares it to these organisations, and depreciates it on account of its small membership, and splits. The importance of the SDP does not consist in its electoral activity, the number of its voters, its parliamentary representation — these are the spheres dominated by the Labour Party — but in its propaganda work. The Labour Party has no press, no literature, and its propagandist activist in the form of public meetings is also practically nil.

What is done at all in this sphere in England, is done only by the socialist parties. The Labour Party represents a tremendous ship, but the socialist organisations are the compass and rudder of this ship — without these it would be tossed hither and thither by the waves.

What the relationship between the SDP and Labour Party should be depends upon various conditions. The Labour Party is far from being an ideal party, and I have no such liking for its politics as has Comrade Beer.

The criticisms of the SDP may, in many points, be rather overdrawn; still, the Labour Party in its present stage can easily sink into confusion and impotence when the socialism of the trade union masses consists rather in the form of a merely vague desire than in that of a clear understanding of its principles; when the Parliamentary and trade union leaders of the Labour Party, still largely influenced by the deeply-rooted traditions of co-operation with the Liberals, are by no means independent, all their ideas being saturated with bourgeois conceptions of philanthropy, of ethics, of economics and of democracy.

Only by means of the most energetic Marxist propaganda among the masses and the most determined criticism of the errors and entanglements of the leaders can the Party be made into a powerful and trustworthy organ, in the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.

It is, of course, open to doubt as to which is the best from of carrying on this propaganda and criticism; particularly as to whether it would be more effective were the Social Democratic Party inside or outside the Labour Party. In general, the former is to be preferred, for when one criticises an organisation from the outside the critic too often appears as an enemy who would gladly wreck it. When, however, it is criticised by a member, the very membership shows that the critic has an interest in its existence, and only opposes its immediate actions in order to make it all the more powerful.

The English worker now considers the entrance of the trade unions into the Labour Party as essential, as he formerly considered the trade unions themselves, and as formerly the agitation of the Social Democratic Party among the English workers was the more difficult because they carried it on outside the unions, so it is to be feared that it is now committing the same mistake in attempting to criticise the Labour Party from without.

"New" unionism? Young, casualised workers go on strike in France

Nothing benefited the Social Democratic Party more than that so many of its members could propagate socialism as trade unionists among the trade unions. Now too, many of its members are also members of the Labour Party in virtue of their trade unions, and as such they take part in the congresses of the Labour Party. Why, therefore, awaken the idea that the Social Democratic Party sees a rival in the Labour Party, which it has to destroy, instead of trying to make it better and more effective? It will be said, on the other hand, that the Labour Party refuses to have a programme to which its candidates must adhere. This is certainly a great mistake, but it is no reason for keeping away from the Labour Party. Were the Labour Party so far advanced as to adopt a socialist programme, the question as to the affiliation of the Social Democratic Party as a party would no longer arise: the question would rather be as to whether the Social Democratic Party had not attained its purpose, and should not sink its identity in that of the Labour Party.

Unfortunately, we have not yet reached this stage; the social democracy as a separate body is still indispensable for the education of the Labour Party, but this could best be done as a member of the Labour Party. So long as this work of education is not made impossible to the Social Democratic Party, so long ought it not to stand outside the Labour Party. Whether this is just now impossible it is difficult for the stranger to decide. A very important role is played by the "imponderables," the importance of which can only be more or less accurately estimated by one who lives in the country and works among the people. Within the different socialist parties there is at present a movement aiming at their unification in one form or other. Whatever form the socialist organisation may take it will still remain for a long time the fact that the socialist organisations and the Labour Party have different functions, each being incomplete without the other: that under present conditions both are indispensable in the struggle for the emancipation of the English proletariat, that one can very well defend both. The Socialist International itself has very reason to use every opportunity of drawing the Labour Party into closer contact with international socialism, thus subjecting it more and more to socialist influence. There is no alternative here. It is not a question as to whether we prefer a small, resolute Social Democratic Party to a big class party with no definite programme, indeed, but still independent of all bourgeois parties: the fact is that both form one whole under the given conditions in England. A socialist organisation of the Social Democratic Party type is an insufficient by itself as the Labour Party. We must encourage both. We must further the spread and growth of social democracy as much as the propagation of socialism in the Labour Party.

In North America things are somewhat different from those obtaining in England. Still, there is some similarity and it is possible that there, too, the long-wished-for mass party of the proletariat may be formed into an independent political party in the very near future by the constitution of the American Federation of Labour. Probably this new party will not be a definitely socialist one at first, and the Socialist Party will, therefore, have to exist side-by-side with it until the trade union party has been fully won for social democracy. As in England, so in the United States. The chief sphere of the Labour Party will be parliamentary and electoral, while that of the social democracy will be theoretical and propagandist.

Attempts have been made in this direction, and we must be prepared one fine day to see the rise of such a Labour Party side by side with the Socialist Party in the United States, and demanding admission to the International.

And here I am of the opinion that what holds for the British will also hold for the American Labour Party.

It would, however, be quite a different question if such a party were formed on the European continent.

Here the new Labour Party would no longer be supplementary to the present socialist parties, but it would be antagonistic. It could only exist and thrive by the suppression of the other. It would not be, as in the Anglo-Saxon world, the only form in which the mass of the proletariat could unite into an independent party. The Social Democratic Parties are already such mass parties, and the new Labour Party would consequently enter the field as a wedge in order to disperse the mass organisation and split the proletariat.

FInally, the present form of the English Labour Party is only a transition stage which will sooner or later develop into a class conscious Social Democratic Labour Party, with a definite socialist programme. With us this object has been attained, and, consequently, the formation of a purely Labour Party is merely an attempt to crush out an already existing higher form, by a more reactionary party.

In short, although superficially similar in organisation, such a Labour Party on the continent is just the opposite to what it is in England under the given historical conditions. He who judges both these Labour Parties, isolated from their surroundings, may think we ought to repudiate the Anglo-Saxon, because the European continental parties must be fought with all the means at our disposal. In their historical connection, however, the Labour Parties here assume quite different characters. What we attack here we must recognise there, indeed, we must joyously welcome it, not, of course, as an ideal organisation, but merely as the previous step to it.

The ideal organisation is the unification of all proletarian parties, the political societies, the trade unions, the co-operatives, as equal members, not of a Labour Party without a programme, as is at the present, the case in England, but of a class-conscious, all-embracing social democracy.