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The Weapon of the Strike

The Weapon of the Strike

By **ARTHUR PATERSON**

Author of

"John Glynn," a story of Social Work.

"Oliver Cromwell," a biography, etc.

With Foreword by

SIR W. PETER RYLANDS

(Ex-President of the Federation of British Industries)

and the

RIGHT HON. ARTHUR HENDERSON, P.C., M.P.

(Secretary of the Labour Party)

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This book is dedicated to the memory of THE RIGHT
HON. FREDERICK HUTH JACKSON, P.C., founder of the
National Alliance of Employers and Employed.

Foreword

By SIR W. PETER RYLANDS, *Ex-President, Federation of British Industries.*

I THINK it can be safely asserted that if we leave out of consideration that element among the workers of the country whose only object is Revolution—and their number is probably insignificant—Employers and Employed are whole-heartedly in agreement in their detestation of strikes and lock-outs.

On almost every other subject they will probably have a different point of view, but upon this issue their interests are identical, and the result to both equally disastrous in its immediate consequences.

It seems strange, therefore, that no satisfactory alternative as a means of settling differences has yet been found. The difficulty is largely psychological. In less serious fields of life men fail to agree, either on principle or on facts. How often when we hear an *ex-parte* account of a transaction would it appear that the absent party must have behaved like a knave or a fool, and experience tells us that if a correct judgment is a matter of importance, we are wise to hear the other side's account as well.

This phenomenon is at the root of every trade dispute, as to a large extent it may be at the root of a war between Nations. Nothing can persuade either party that their interpretation of the motives and actions of the other

is correct, and their point of view is but little affected by columns of exhortation, counsel or advocacy in the Press.

However, it is a regrettable fact that even while it may be freely admitted that both sides to-day take a far broader view in regard to the relationship between Employers and Employed than in the past, the unconscious bias of self-interest must stimulate an increased rigidity in negotiations when the circumstances of the time are favourable to their respective contentions. This, in turn, aggravates that suspicion of the motives and intentions of the other side, which, if only sub-consciously, is deep-rooted in the minds of both Employers and Employed alike.

It is not easy to see how negotiations could be effectively conducted unless there existed some sanction to add weight to argument, a sanction which on the side of the worker is the threatened strike, and of the employer the threatened lock-out, and when finally both have by negotiation been driven to make their last concession, what other course is open if an acceptable agreement is not reached? So follows the lamentable stoppage of work, disastrous to both disputants, and involving incalculable Economic loss to the Nation.

Up to the present no satisfactory alternative has yet been found, and unfortunately with the development of the powers of the disputants, the consequences of trade disputes grow ever more serious, just as modern warfare far outstrips former experiences in horror.

In seeking a solution, we must bear in mind, first, that we are dealing with the psychology of the herd, as distinguished from the psychology of the individual; and secondly, that in the nature of the case each side is profoundly convinced not only that they are in the right, but that already they have conceded in negotiation more than in their opinion would be justified by

considerations of reason and fair-play, an attitude of mind which cannot accept without resentment any decision imposed from without by pressure or force, and may be expected to bow only to the decision of some tribunal in which its confidence is even greater than its belief in the righteousness of its own case.

I do not propose to put forward any suggested solution, but I am content to join with my fellow countrymen in expressing the hope that we may find in this book a better way, and that Mr. Paterson may succeed in commending an alternative method of settling trade differences which will command the confidence and acceptance of both Employers and Employed.

W. PETER RYLANDS.

Foreword

By THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ARTHUR HENDERSON, P.C.,
M.P., *Secretary to the Labour Party.*

THE war thrust into the foreground many complex and difficult problems. None of these has become so challenging as the grave problem of industry, the importance and urgency of which have been seriously increased as the result of recent experience.

New ideas of social possibilities, of economic reconstruction, of community responsibility, of human right, and the sacredness of personality, have taken possession of men's minds ; and they are looking for a more humane form of economic organization, influenced by a new conception, new motives, and a new spirit. It must be obvious that if we are to secure the goodwill and practical co-operation of the workers, it is necessary to convince them that their effort and energy are being used as a contribution to the enrichment of the entire community. They must be given to feel that there has been a definite elevation in their status as workers, and that they are no longer regarded as mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, but as partners in the enterprises by which the nation lives.

The right of the worker is a human right, which recognizes that the energy he puts forth is a vital energy, and not the mere motion of a machine ; that he puts into his work—however mechanical it may be—intelli-

gence and skill, and, where permitted, even pride of craftsmanship. Then we need to bring into prominence once more the fact that the worker is a human being with a claim to a full life with freedom for the development of all the faculties he possesses, with a right to the enjoyment of those finer things of the mind and spirit which have so often been denied.

Denial of this right, which has existed longer than Trade Unionism, has resulted not only in the creation of the huge army of organized workers throughout the world, but has led far too frequently to the use of "The Weapon of the Strike," not as the last line, but occasionally as the only line of defence against injustice, notwithstanding the hardships and even suffering its use might entail. It is often forgotten that the workers were compelled to organize before "Bolshevism" was thought about because of the intolerable working conditions, and right through the period of machine power there has been a revolt against oppressive industrial conditions.

The "strike•weapon" may be regarded as foolish and even brutal, but it is, after all, only one of the products of a system which provide a striking commentary on the principles and motives upon which the economic system was organized.

• Industry has often subordinated higher interests to material ends, imposed conditions injurious to physical and social well-being, caused the workers to feel that they were over-worked and under-paid, the victims of exploitation possessed of a profound sense of injustice.

As a result of nearly forty years of Trade Union service, I have no hesitation in saying that the great majority of Trade Unionists do not desire to abuse the power of combination, and only wish to retain the strike weapon for defensive purposes, provided there is a clear appreciation of the purpose and function of industry

and that the relationships are such as to enable the economic system to provide the material means for a good and useful social life for all. Frankly, it must be admitted that this human claim to a full life has not been properly recognized, for, in spite of an admitted improvement in the general standard of life, the gap between the poorer and the richer members of the community is much too wide. We need a definite elevation of the status of the workers, and the conditions of their employment require to be humanized to the highest possible extent.

If the use of the "Strike Weapon" is to be minimized—and this is desirable in the interests of the whole community—a decided change in the relations between Capital and Labour must speedily be made. This can be most effectively accomplished by an organization of industry founded on the recognition of a real partnership, to be tested not merely by the amount of material wealth produced, but by its being fairly and equitably distributed so as to ensure a healthy, wholesome life for all concerned.

Then I am convinced that we require some form of permanent machinery which would formulate the general principles which are necessary to the proper conduct of industry and which could give expression to such principles as far as this was practicable, leaving their more detailed application to the individual industries or to kindred groups of industries.

What is needed is a Parliament of Industry, representative of the organizations of employers and of organized workers in the whole field of Industry, and with such authority as would render it capable of expressing, after full and frank consultation and co-operative effort, the mind of Industry. Something more than a conciliation body is suggested, though it could perform such functions, but I should hope that the main work

of the Parliament of Industry would be directed to the solution of those problems which give rise to conflict and render the use of the strike weapon necessary.

In the past, conflict has sometimes resulted from the absence of any clearly conceived policy in industry and because selfish and sectional interests have been the dominant factor. Parliament from time to time has been compelled to intervene with a view to the regulation of labour conditions, or for the settlement of some dispute, but even then, the difficulties have been increased because of a feeling that there was no real goal which industry was striving consciously to reach, or because of the absence of any powerful social motive in our economic life.

From a real Parliament of Industry would grow—given goodwill and public spirit—a realization of industry as a form of public service, better human relationships, and thus assist in developing industry that it might effectively provide the material means for a good social life for all. Under such conditions the need for the use of “the weapon of the strike” would certainly be minimized.

ARTHUR HENDERSON.

Prefatory Note by the Author

I ONCE wrote a play which failed. An admirer of the poor still-born babe asked a great critic his opinion of the work. He shrugged his shoulders significantly, and then politely said, "It is a great endeavour."

If the critics of this book will say as much they will do me honour.

I have endeavoured to express my conviction that the suicidal strife between forces, which has lasted for two centuries, can be ended if men of good-will on both sides of Industry will take their courage in both hands and make common cause for Industrial peace. I have the honour of knowing many of these men, and this knowledge encourages me to believe that I am right.

I have to thank many friends for helping me in this work, particularly my colleague Mr. H. I. Clipstone, Research Officer of the National Alliance of Employers and Employed. He has procured me information which has enlarged the scope of my original plan, and from his wide knowledge of Industrial history has made many valuable suggestions. I owe much to Mr. W. Morris Colles, Director of the Authors' Syndicate, on whose advice the book was written. I must also thank many members of the Alliance for facts relating to the present Industrial situation. Most of all, I am deeply indebted to Sir W. Peter Rylands and to the Right Hon. Arthur Henderson, P.C., M.P., for their Forewords, and to Mr. Samuel Gompers for his interesting, outspoken statement on the point of view of American labour.

ARTHUR PATERSON,

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED

The Alliance was founded in December, 1916, as a result of conferences between employers, Trade Union leaders and public men on the measures to be taken for the re-instatement in civil employment of men serving in the Forces and in munition works during the War. These conferences began in April, 1915.

The objects of the Alliance are :—

- (1) To promote active co-operation of employers and employed in the treatment of questions generally affecting Labour and employment in all trades and industrial occupations.
- (2) To promote the welfare of the industrial workers of the country and efficiency of its industries.

Note.—The Alliance will not, unless especially requested to do so, interfere with arrangements existing between Employers' Associations and Trade Unions for the settlement of questions affecting wages, hours and conditions of Labour.

In the first instance, the Alliance consisted mainly of employers and trade unionists, in equal numbers, of national reputation of the staple industries of the country. In 1918 the principles of the Alliance having been approved by Employers' Federations and Trade Unions in a large number of industrial centres, it proceeded to establish joint committees in these areas, and to reconstitute its Central Council and Executive Committee in London upon a representative basis so that the work it carries out, as defined in its objects, and its policy should be directed officially by the great Federations

and Associations of Employers, Trade Unions, Federations of Trade Unions and Trades Councils.

The Alliance has now established (December, 1921) thirty-six joint Committees of employers and delegates from Trade Unions in equal numbers, representing the principal trades of each district. These Committees are represented by two members (an employer and a Trade Unionist) on the Central Council and Executive Committee.

The following table is a summary of the industries represented by local or branch Trade Unions on the Area Committees of the Alliance :—

Class or Craft or Industry.	No. of Branches.		
	1919	1920.	1921 (to September).
Agriculture.	23	50	50
Bakers and Confectioners	14	20	49
Boots, Shoes, Leather.	21	30	61
Building Trades	86	110	160
Clerical	39	61	92
Coal Mining	16	22	42
Distributive Trades	31	37	57
Engineering	114	161	201
General Workers	89	145	346
Glass Workers	7	8	28
Metal Industries	82	106	156
Printing Trades	28	43	83
Teaching Profession	9	19	49
Textile	43	59	109
Transport (including Railways)	91	125	175
Miscellaneous	30	122	200
Also thirteen Trades and Labour Councils	—	—	260 (approx)
Totals	723	1,118	2,118

Among the national Associations of Employers represented on the Alliance are:—

The Fine Cotton Spinners Association.
The Association of British Chambers of Commerce.
The Federation of British Industries.
The Central Council for Economic Information.
The National Federation of Iron & Steel Manufacturers.
The Central Landowners' Association.
The Brassfounders' Employers' Association.
The Incorporated Federated Association of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers of Great Britain and Ireland.

The matters which have come under consideration of the Alliance Committees include increased output; unemployment; industrial education; improvements in local transport; trade boards; food prices; industrial training of ex-service men; local housing; land cultivation; arbitration in local disputes; factory inspection.

The Central Council and Executive Committee, in addition to the work of forming, organizing and enlarging the scope of the Area Committee work, has departments dealing with agricultural organization; publicity and propaganda; prevention of unemployment; the industrial status and organization of women in industry and in domestic service.

The Alliance is engaged, through its Area Committees supervised from headquarters, in a scheme of economic education, which consists of classes at the Universities in important industrial centres of Trade Unionists who undergo a six or nine months' intensive course on elementary economic theory and elocution. These courses are conducted by University lecturers, and are under the control of sub-committees of employers and Trade Unionists of the Alliance Area Committees. The education given is strictly impartial and its object is to fit the students, who are all men working in their several trades, to take up as lecturers in their spare time, the education in economics of the members of their Unions, and others who desire information and training on the subject of industrial economics. This department is conducted by a Director of Economic Education, who also

lectures and arranges addresses to Chambers of Commerce and groups of employers for the same purpose.

The whole purpose of the Alliance is contained in a paragraph in the Report published in 1921, which is as follows :—

“ It provides the means of co-operation, mutual confidence and good-will for men who otherwise meet in most cases to dispute matters where their interests are seriously divided. But it does much more. It enables all who desire to lay facts on the economics of industry before their comrades on the other side, to do so in a manner best calculated to convince the rank and file, whether of employers or of Labour, of the weight and truth of these facts.”

The National Alliance of Employers and Employed stands for the principle of equality, of comradeship, of good-will and partnership throughout Industry.

Appendix C

STATEMENT FOR MR. A. H. PATERSON, GENERAL
SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF
EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED, LONDON

By SAMUEL GOMPERS, *President American Federation
of Labour.*

In modern industry the all-pervading control which the employers exercise over the material means of production extends to the opportunities for employment. If unchallenged this control gives the employers a similar power over the people who work for wages.

Without the human element in production, without the wealth-producing power of the workers, the material property of the employers become valueless.

For the determination of their rights the workers realize that the only way in which they can adequately meet the employers is to match the organization of the employers' property force with the organization of the workers' wealth-producing force. The trade union is this organized wealth-producing force.

The trade unions are not organized primarily for the purpose of conducting strikes, but rather for the purpose of avoiding them.

The trade unions declare that those who use the tools of production have the right to determine how many hours per day, for what wages, and under what conditions they will use those tools. The anti-trade-union employers declare that they alone shall determine how many hours per day the workers shall use the tools of production, for what wages and under what conditions.

The trade unions undertake to reach an understanding with the employers over these disputed points by direct negotiation between representatives of the unions and representatives of the employers. Collective bargaining is the basic trade-union institution for the adjustment of industrial relations. It is safe to state that the greater part of our improved conditions of labour is secured through collective bargaining—secured without strikes.

All employers recognize the potency of the workers' economic organization. They know the efficiency of the trade unions in securing higher wages, shorter hours, and improved labour conditions generally. Some employers admit the right of the workers to organize for the control of their wealth-creative force. The anti-trade-union employers do not. They ignore the human element in production. They do not willingly forgo the privilege of mastership over the workers. They resent any interference in the operation of their complete organization of the material force of production by a similar organization of the wealth-producing force of the workers.

It sometimes happens that, despite ordinary argument and persuasion, these recalcitrant employers persist in their refusal to admit the right of the workers to organize effectively and deal collectively for the use of their wealth-creative force, refuse to negotiate industrial relations with the representatives of organized labour, refuse to consider the equitable demands of the unions respecting wages, hours, and other fundamental labour conditions.

It is then that the workers strike. By withholding their labour power the wage-earners can bring autocratic employers to an appreciation of the value of the human, wealth-creative element in production. When reason fails, strikes can, and do, put better understanding into the minds of employers and induce them to a proper regard for employés.

In the last analysis it is the exercise of this right to strike—the workers' right to withhold their wealth-producing power for the purpose of securing more desirable labour conditions—that the anti-trade-union employers attack.

They refuse to admit the institution of collective bargaining,

and thus refuse to recognize the right of the wealth-producers to organize their wealth-producing force and use it to meet the organized economic force of the employers in the negotiated settlement of industrial disputes. And in attacking the right to strike they seek to deprive the workers of that form of use of their wealth-creating power.

Not only do the anti-trade-union employers attack the trade unions on the economic field. They carry the fight into the political field and undertake to enact legislation making strikes illegal. They carry the fight into the judicial field and endeavour through the courts to make unlawful both trade unions and strikes as alleged illegal conspiracies. By compulsory arbitration laws and industrial courts they attempt to take away from the workers the right to withhold their labour power—a right which is the final defensive of the workers and that which distinguishes them from slaves.

Since the close of the world-war the anti-trade-union employers in the United States have been engaged in this sort of a nation-wide offensive to destroy our trade unions and deprive the workers of the right to strike. They have used all their heavy artillery. They have brought into action their economic force, their political force, their judicial force. They have mobilized the employer Press to inflame public opinion through misrepresentation.

They have done all this, but they have completely failed in their war against the trade unions.

The trade unions have rallied to a man to resist any and all encroachments on their fundamental rights. After three years of this anti-trade-union employers' war against organized labour and its liberty-seeking principles, purposes and methods, the unions are animated with an unparalleled spirit of fighting solidarity and aggressiveness.

Our object is industrial freedom.

The right to strike is the workers' last resort against industrial oppression. It is a right that we shall continue to defend to the uttermost.

Appendix D

NATIONAL CIVIC FEDERATION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

This Federation was founded in 1900. It is composed of leading employers, trade unionists and members of the general public in the United States. Its principles of representation are carried out by the composition of its Executive Committee, which consists of nineteen employers, fourteen Labour representatives and fifteen distinguished persons outside the ranks of industry. The President of the Federation is Judge Alton B. Parker; the Vice-President, Mr. Samuel Gompers. The Federation is directed by its founder and Chairman of its Executive Council, Mr. Ralph M. Easley.

The chief work of the Federation has been the holding of national conferences, and the appointment of Commissions to inquire into and report upon Trusts and Combinations, Immigration, Naturalization, Taxation, Education, etc. The Federation has sent Commissions to Europe to study such questions as Compulsory Insurance and industrial legislation generally, on which it has issued and published Reports. It has investigated social problems such as the relation between prostitution and low wages paid to women. The comparative merits of municipal and private ownership of public utility service in America and Europe have been studied by the Federation. During the War the Federation organized a "League for National Unity" composed of representatives of thirty national organizations which took action to counteract "pacifist and German propaganda."

The Federation is now engaged, through departmental

Committees, in dealing with industrial welfare, the study and condemnation of revolutionary movements, workmen's compensation, public health, education, and industrial training.

The Federation is, of course, a strictly non-political body. Its main object would appear to be to arouse in members of the public of the United States, especially those in the industrial community, a fuller sense of their responsibility and influence as citizens of their great Republic.