

BRITISH TRADE UNIONS

JOHN PRICE



British Life and Thought

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As Mr. Ernest Bevin says in his foreword to this book, "Trade Unions must be concerned firstly with wages, hours and conditions of employment. But also they must be ready at all times to meet new tasks with new vision".

At the present time, these new tasks include the adaption of old ideals to war-time needs, questions of recruitment and training, and the planning of the post-war world, with its fresh economic and social problems.

As a leading member of the Transport & General Workers' Union, and the Secretary of its Political & Research Department, Mr. John Price has first-hand knowledge of his subject. Here, he describes with understanding the development of British Trade Unions; he then discusses their contribution to the disciplined and orderly settlement of industrial relations; and finally he speaks of progress in social conditions.

"Like the old pioneers of trade-unionism, the British trade unionists of today are inspired by the hope of a better world. It is for the new world of tomorrow that they are fighting now, as they fought in the past."

BRITISH TRADE UNIONS

British Life and Thought : No. 12

BRITISH LIFE AND THOUGHT

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Daily Herald

May Day Procession, Thames Embankment, London

BRITISH TRADE UNIONS

BY

JOHN PRICE

SECRETARY POLITICAL & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT
TRANSPORT & GENERAL WORKERS' UNION

With a Foreword by
THE RT. HON. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P.
Minister of Labour & National Service

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FOREWORD

By the RT. HON. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P.

Minister of Labour and National Service

IN Great Britain, as in Germany and Italy before Fascism came into power, Trade Unions have stood for the independent and free organisation of the working people. It is significant that they should have been one of the first institutions to be destroyed by Hitler and by Mussolini. On the other hand, in China where policy is guided by a philosophy of freedom and tolerance, industrial workers are urged to join Trade Unions and Trade Union organisation is otherwise encouraged.

In their origins British Trade Unions were a means of giving expression to the rights of men to an effective voice in deciding the conditions under which they give their labour. As this booklet shows, their progress over a hundred and fifty years has been an upward struggle. But whatever the conditions created by the broad stream of social and economic change, the guiding inspiration and objective throughout has been nothing less than the liberty of the ordinary man and the right relationship between fellow men. Many of the things for which the early Trade Unionists fought have long since been embodied in the vast body of social and industrial legislation in Great Britain. As obstacles are removed or overcome, the horizon becomes wider, and just as Trade Union organisation itself has developed from a local to a national and to an international basis, so the objectives have become more comprehensive or have taken on a deeper significance. Trade Unions must be concerned firstly with matters affecting wages, hours and conditions of employment, provision for industrial risks and generally the regulation of relations between worker and employer. But they could not truly fulfil their real function of representing the organised workers if they were concerned only with narrow sectional interests and ignored the wider interests and inspirations of those they serve. They must be ready at all times to meet new tasks with new vision and to preserve and create as well as making demands.

This readiness to meet new problems has been most fully demonstrated by the actions of British Trade Unions during the war. The present war is essentially a struggle between the philosophy and outlook on which Trade Unionism is based and the negation of all that it stands for.

In Great Britain, as in other democratic countries, whatever regulations may be made by the State, their enforcement must rest in the last resort

British Trade Unions

upon willing acceptance by those whose actions are to be governed by them. The State relies to a large extent on the self-government and self-discipline of workers acting as organised corporate bodies through their unions. Without the good faith, sense of responsibility and discipline of the Trade Unions relations in industry would be chaotic in time of peace and disastrous in time of war. The immediate needs of war production have called for the temporary relinquishment in the national interests of many safeguards and privileges which have been won only by bitter struggle in the past. At the same time new methods have been adopted for avoiding some of the waste of competitive industrialism which could not be tolerated when a country's life is at stake.

Some of these innovations and changes made during the war may prove to be positive gains when the time comes for post-war readjustment. The universal recognition of the need of total effort in total war has caused the problems of the direction of industry to be seen in a new light, and the distinctions between operative and managerial interests are shown to be less fundamental than the community of their interests.

British Trade Unions are already looking ahead to the post-war world. In co-operation with managements they are, for example, studying questions of recruitment and training for industry. They are actively concerned with the steps taken by the International Labour Office to study economic and social problems affecting all countries when peace comes.

Whatever the future may hold, the working people form a vast reservoir of power and ideas, and trade unions provide a channel through which these forces can find expression. The movement produces its own leaders. The great range of Trade Union activities and the great responsibility carried by those men and women who speak on behalf of the workers in the industries they represent show that leadership calls in an exceptional degree not merely for ability to organise and negotiate, but also for high qualities of personal character, courage and vision.

In this booklet John Price has described with admirable understanding the development of British Trade Unions and their contribution towards the disciplined and orderly settlement of industrial relations and to progress in social conditions. He has shown too the capacity of the movement for evolution and adaptation. He writes with knowledge derived from practical experience as well as close study, and I commend his work to all who hope to see the principles of the Atlantic Charter established throughout the world.

ERNEST BEVIN

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BRITISH TRADE UNIONS

I. THE NEED FOR TRADE UNIONS

THE British trade unions form part of a great nation-wide movement which expresses the needs and aspirations of millions of wage-earners and their families. They are not mere agencies for collecting contributions and paying out benefits, nor are they just administrative machines. They are organisations formed by working men and women both to improve conditions of labour and to further the workers' desire for a better life.

It is over a century and a half since the first trade unions were formed. The conditions of the workers have vastly improved since then ; but each step forward has given the trade unions a higher goal at which to aim. Industry has gone through many stages of development, but the trade unions have adapted themselves to the changing conditions and taken on new and wider functions. During their long history the unions have often met with serious opposition, but they have survived all attacks and today are stronger and more active than ever.

One of the big problems in the life of a worker is how to provide food, clothing and a home for himself and his family. This is first and foremost a question of finding a job at a reasonable wage. To maintain and improve his wages is one of his reasons for joining a trade union.

He needs defence against the effects of accidents at work, help in time of sickness or death, protection from suffering and want when he is out of a job, and an income of some kind when he is too old to work any more. To help him to secure these things the trade unions have provided cash benefits themselves and have worked for the development of social services by the State, recognising that these needs of the individual are to a large extent the responsibility of the whole community.

He requires not only the bare necessities of existence but the amenities of a civilised life—a better home, more leisure, higher education for his children. These things, too, have been a concern of the trade unions, which have put them in the forefront of their programme.

Working men or women join trade unions largely because they have interests such as these to promote or defend. It is the same kind of motive that urges other people to form friendly societies, chambers of commerce or ratepayers' associations. But it is not merely a question of material interests. With the spread of education, the development of democratic institutions and the growth of their own organisations, working people have acquired to an increasing extent a desire for higher things. The trade unions

British Trade Unions

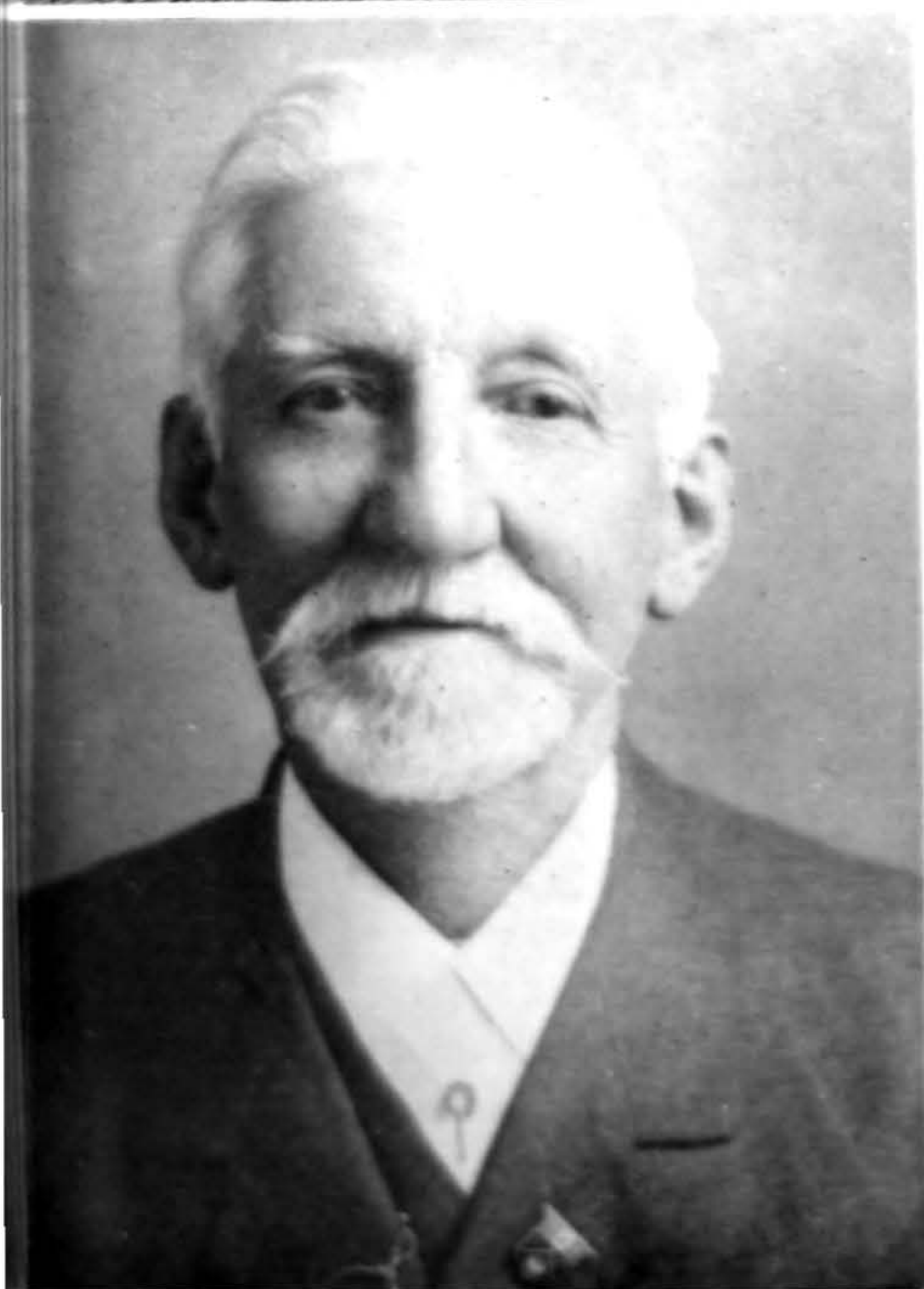
never have confined themselves to protecting standards of labour in the narrow sense ; they must concern themselves with the conditions and standards of life in general. Their efforts to improve the conditions of their members' working lives are only a part of the wider task of helping to create opportunities for working people to satisfy their growing aspirations.

An examination of the work and policy of the trade unions will show that they continually stress this desire for a better life and a wider culture, and not merely the workers' economic interests.

There is another important reason for the existence of trade unions, namely, the need for adequate machinery for settling the relations between employers and employed. When a man or woman is employed to work for somebody else—whether it is a private employer, a large company, a municipality or a Government Department—questions are bound to arise between them. The wages and hours and all the other conditions of employment have to be fixed. The worker may become dissatisfied with his working conditions or his treatment, while the employer may feel that he has cause for complaint against the worker. In short, innumerable questions arise naturally out of the relationship between employer and employed, while there may also be misunderstandings and differences as well.

With the growth of industry, the number of questions to be settled increases. They have to be adjusted somehow, and it is much better for all concerned that they should be regulated by agreement. The alternative to an amicable settlement is industrial strife. In Great Britain the policy of the Government has been to encourage the regulation of wages and conditions of labour by negotiations between employers and employed, and also the establishment of machinery for settling by agreement any disputes or differences that may arise. The trade unions conduct such negotiations on behalf of the workpeople.

In modern industry the old personal relationship between the employer and the worker largely disappears. A large proportion of the workers are now employed by big firms and combines, by municipalities and other public authorities or by Government Departments. Instead of meeting and knowing the employer as an individual, they may come into contact only with foremen, heads of departments or works managers, acting on the employer's behalf. When workpeople are employed on the same jobs it is important that there should be a common standard of wages, hours and conditions. Such standards were first established within particular factories. They were later applied to towns or districts. In recent years the development of industrial organisation has been accompanied by the growth of agreements on a national scale, settling the wages and conditions for a whole industry, or section of an industry, throughout the country.



ABOVE: Joseph Arch (1820-1919), President and founder, National Agricultural Labourers' Union

BELOW: Robert Applegarth (1834-1924), General Secretary, Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, 1862-71; member of General Council of the International Working Men's Association

ABOVE: Henry Broadhurst (d. 1911), Secretary, Parliamentary Committee, T.U.C., 1874-1884 and 1886-89; Under Secretary of State for Home Department, 1885-86

BELOW: Keir Hardie (1856-1915), delegate to T.U.C. 1887-95; first Chairman of the Independent Labour Party; Member of Parliament, 1892-95 and 1900-15



ABOVE: C. W. Bowerman (b. 1851), General Secretary, London Society of Compositors, 1892-1906; President, T.U.C., 1901; Secretary T.U.C. Parliamentary Committee, 1912-23; Member of Parliament, 1906-31; P.C., 1916; J.P.

BELOW: Robert Smillie (1857-1940), President, Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain, 1912-21; member of T.U.C. General Council, 1917, and 1920-26

Walter Scott

ABOVE: Will Thorne (b. 1856), General Secretary National Union of General & Municipal Workers, 1889-1934; President, T.U.C., 1912; Member of Parliament since 1906. C.B.E., 1930

BELOW: Ben Tillett (b. 1860); General Secretary Dock, Wharf, Riverside & General Workers' Union, 1887-1922; official, Transport & General Workers' Union, 1922-31; President, T.U.C. 1929; Member of Parliament, 1917-24 and 1929-31

Walter Scott

The Need for Trade Unions

By participating in the work of settling wages, conditions of employment and other problems of industry, the trade unions fulfil a vital social function. They help to maintain good relations between employers and employed, thus reducing the number of disputes and stoppages, and making for the smooth running of industry. And they also assist in establishing a reasonable standard of living, which conduces towards social peace and the prosperity of the nation.

It is clear that the first business of the trade unions is to serve their members. But it should be equally clear that the improvements they obtain for their members are in fact shared by the whole body of workers. Their work accordingly benefits, directly or indirectly, all the wage-earners in the country. Nor do they confine their activities to questions affecting the worker at his work. As we have seen, they must interest themselves in all the worker's problems, whether they arise at his work or not. They must, for instance, take up matters concerning the worker's family and dependants. This considerably widens their field of activity. The worker is not a producer only; he and his family are consumers. He is not merely a part of the industrial machine, but a citizen. He turns to his union for help in all his problems. It is because of these factors that the trade unions concern themselves with social as well as industrial problems and, in fact, with all questions affecting the general public interest.

The trade union movement was not always as it is today. The unions have grown from small beginnings and have assumed many forms. They present a complex and confusing picture to the outside observer, without any apparent similarity of structure, rules or methods. The vast majority are independent units, yet they are co-ordinated into a nation-wide movement. They are all run on democratic lines, they can discuss and act together, and they achieve an extraordinary solidarity and unity of purpose.

Some unions are spread over many industries; some are limited to a single trade or occupation; some are intended for highly skilled workers, others for general labourers; some are confined to a single locality, others cover wide regions, others the whole country or even beyond. But with the passage of time they have become more closely associated in their activity. They have discovered the importance of federation and amalgamation; they have created many kinds of machinery for more effective expression and action; and they have widened their interests and activities. Till the eighties of last century the unions were mainly craft organisations. After that the general and industrial unions grew up and obtained a remarkable influence in the industrial world and the trade union movement generally.

From their earliest days the unions were engaged in struggles for rights and recognition. Independent political action was developed, and the

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unions sought expression for their common aspirations through the Trades Union Congress and also in the wider international field. Thus, the trade unions—like so many other British institutions—have grown up independently and without a central plan. But they have developed common features and discovered mutual interests. Beneath the seeming confusion there is an underlying simplicity. Behind the outward differences in policy and action there is a high degree of co-ordination and unity of direction. For the British trade unions, varied as they are in many ways, have all sprung from the same common need.

2. THE STORY OF THE TRADE UNIONS

The desirability of settling labour problems between the employers' organisations and those formed by the workers has not always been recognised in Great Britain. A hundred years ago the State and the employers frowned upon the attempts of the workers to form organisations for the purpose of regulating their conditions of labour. Such attempts were thought to be dangerous to society. The recognition of the need for trade unions came slowly, and it is only since the war of 1914-18 that their position has been unchallenged.

Our trade unions are a product of the Industrial Revolution. They were not called into being because of some new theory for reforming society. They grew up one by one in all industries and all parts of the country, because the conditions of the industrial system made them necessary.

Trade unions did not exist in the Middle Ages, nor in the time of the Tudors and Stuarts. In those days, when industries were carried on largely by skilled craftsmen in small workshops, or by families working in their own homes, trade unions were not required. The craftsman had a prospect of becoming his own master; the family was a separate unit, often combining its industrial work with agriculture. The workpeople were not congregated in large numbers but scattered in small towns and villages. Industries were fewer in number and there were no great factories. Most of the work was done by hand or by primitive water-driven machinery.

It was the development of modern industry from the eighteenth century onwards that created the conditions in which trade unions became necessary. The growth of the factory system, the more widespread use of machinery, the establishment of new industries, the increasing pace of industrial work and the concentration of industries in large towns created a new class of wage-earners who were entirely dependent upon their wages for their livelihood. In an age of individualism, when the doctrine of *laissez-faire* held the field, the wage-earners were at a disadvantage. The expanding market

The Story of the Trade Unions

created a demand for labour on an increasing scale, while the new machines diminished labour's value. Workpeople found themselves side by side with others who were doing the same work under the same conditions and facing the same problems. In such circumstances it was natural that they should join together in seeking to improve their conditions. The early trade unions, or combinations as they were called, were the result. They were formed spontaneously by the workpeople themselves because of their need to combine for their own protection in a rapidly developing world of industry.

During the Industrial Revolution the workers were exposed to great hardships and injustices. But when they combined to seek remedies for those conditions their organisations were suppressed. As long ago as the sixteenth century the Tudor State had enacted legislation for the regulation of wages and conditions of labour, and even before this there had been Acts of Parliament providing for the fixing of wages by the Justices of the Peace. Having itself assumed the responsibility of regulating conditions of labour, the State prohibited by legislation combinations of workers to raise wages or to interfere in any other way with labour conditions. Combinations of employers for altering wages and conditions were subject to the same prohibition.

With the passage of time, however, the State system of regulation fell into disuse. The rapid expansion of industry in the eighteenth century created changing conditions for which the old legislation was never designed. State regulation then passed completely into the background and wages and conditions were left to be fixed by the employers. The attempts by the workpeople to combine for the purpose of bargaining with the employers were put down under the laws against combinations—which still remained in force, although the State had ceased to settle the conditions itself.

New legislation passed during the eighteenth century prohibited combinations in one trade after another. The courts, too, gave numerous judgments against the combinations of workpeople, both in virtue of this legislation and because they held that such combinations were in restraint of trade and therefore illegal at common law. On the other hand, the prohibition of combinations of employers was of little practical effect. At the end of the eighteenth century even more drastic action was taken and the Combination Acts of 1799–1800 were passed to bring into force a general prohibition of combinations in all trades.

Despite the prohibition organisations were continually being formed, but their members were liable at any time to be tried and severely sentenced. Thus the organisations were driven underground. Meetings were held in back rooms and cellars and the names of their members were kept a close secret. The unions could not openly approach the employers without

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incurring the gravest risks. In these conditions strikes, lockouts and violence were inevitable. The way to a peaceful settlement was barred. Dissatisfaction with conditions in the factories accordingly led to such incidents as the attempts to smash the factory machinery, which was regarded by the workers as the cause of their suffering and misery. Efforts to improve the conditions by collective action resulted in such incidents as the trial of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, who were sentenced in March 1834 to be transported overseas because of their endeavour to encourage trade unionism amongst the agricultural workers in Dorsetshire.

The combinations were illegal bodies and those who joined them committed a criminal offence. Yet there was nothing criminal or subversive in their objects. From its earliest days, therefore, the trade union movement had to engage in a struggle to establish the right to exist and to secure the conditions in which trade unions could function. Accordingly a large part of the history of the trade union movement is taken up by a long fight to secure a legal status and to win recognition from both Governments and employers.

Step by step the trade unions gained from Parliament the right to exist as legal organisations. The first stage was to secure the repeal of the Combination Laws, and this was achieved in 1824-5. But although the trade unions then ceased to be illegal conspiracies, they could only function within narrow limits. Nearly half a century followed before the Trade Union Acts of 1871-5 gave the unions a positive legal status and recognised the principle of collective bargaining.

In 1867 a Royal Commission was appointed to enquire into the position of the trade union movement, and in 1871 the Trade Union Act legalised the existence of trade unions and provided that the purposes of a union should not be illegal merely because they were in restraint of trade. A second Act, passed in the same year, imposed criminal penalties for certain forms of picketing and persuasion to strike. But these provisions were repealed in 1875 as a result of an Act then passed. No act committed by a combination was henceforth to be punishable unless the same act was a criminal offence if committed by an individual.

The question of the right to strike has occupied Parliament on a number of occasions. The individual workman could leave his work if he was dissatisfied with the conditions, but difficulties arose when a number of people stopped work at the same time, *i.e.* went on strike.

Since 1875 the right to strike has been confirmed by Act of Parliament, though various restrictions have been imposed as to the way in which it may be exercised.

Under the Act of 1871 "a strike was lawful, but anything done in



ABOVE: Ernest Bevin (*b.* 1881), General Secretary, Transport & General Workers' Union, 1922-40; Minister of Labour and National Service since May 1940; P.C., 1940; President, T.U.C., 1937

Harratt

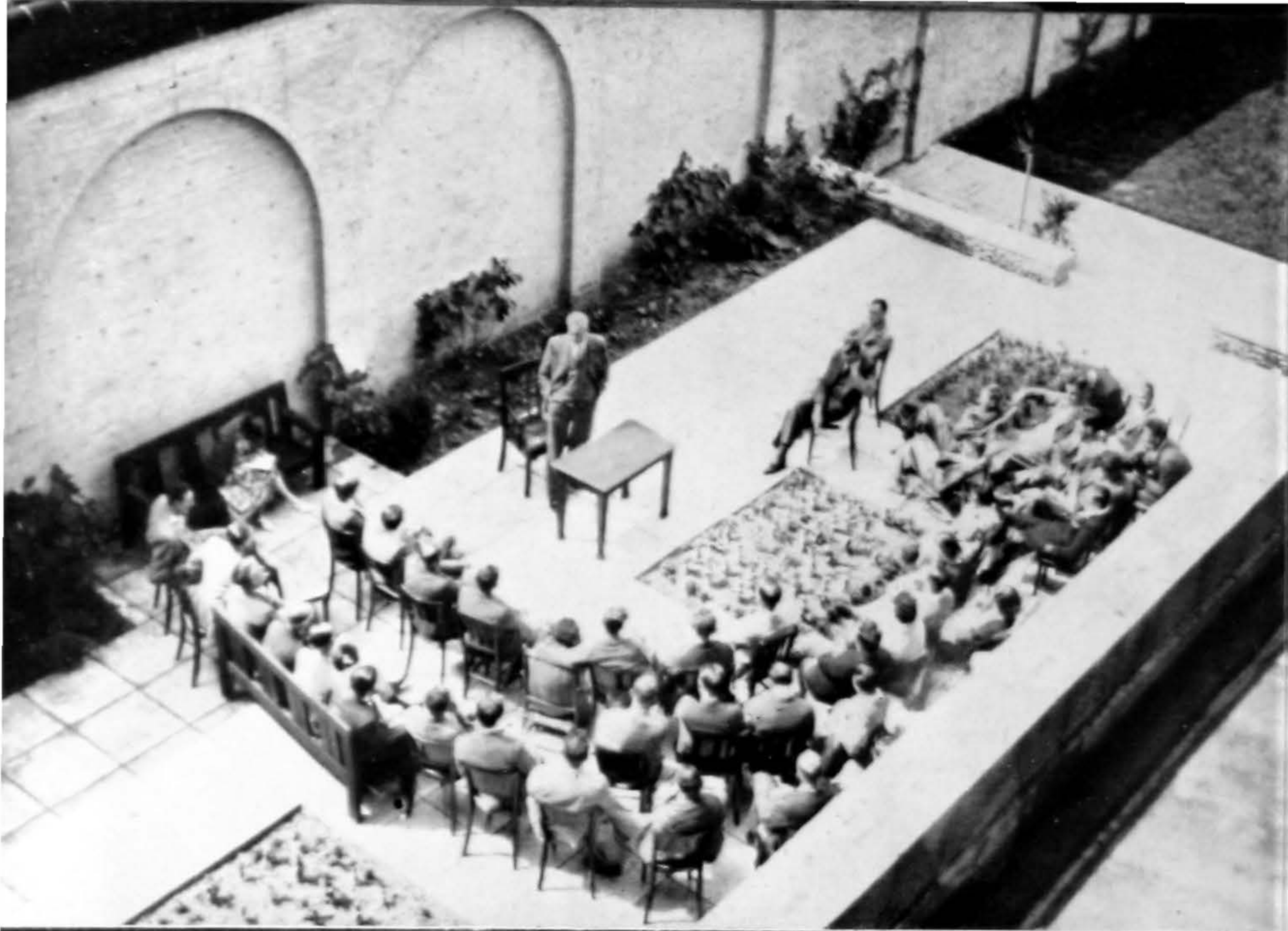
BELOW: George Gibson (*b.* 1885), General Secretary, Mental Hospitals & Institutional Workers' Union since 1919; President, T.U.C., 1941

Reynolds News

ABOVE: Joseph Hallsworth (*b.* 1884), Secretary-General, National Union of Distributive & Allied Workers since 1916; President, T.U.C., 1939; member of Governing Body, International Labour Office

BELOW: Sir Walter Citrine (*b.* 1887), General Secretary, Trades Union Congress since 1926; President, International Federation of Trade Unions since 1928; P.C., 1940; K.B.E., 1935

F. J.



ABOVE : Sir Walter Citrine lecturing to the T.U.C. Summer School, July 1939

BELOW : Special conference of trade union executive committees, May 1939 *Wide World F*

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pursuance of a strike was criminal". By the Act of 1875 "the legalisation of the trade unions was completed by the legal recognition of their methods". The Trade Disputes Act of 1906 expressly permitted picketing and peaceful persuasion. The Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act of 1927, which was passed after the General Strike of 1926, restricted "sympathetic" strikes and placed limitations on picketing and persuasion, but did not take away the right to strike.

Many other questions arose which likewise had to be dealt with by legislation. The right of a union to own property and to protect its funds by action in the courts, the liability of a union for the actions of its members, the personal liability of the officers of a union and similar questions all had to be regulated by Act of Parliament. As late as 1901 the Law Lords decided that a trade union could be sued for damages alleged to have been caused by the action of its officers. This was the famous "Taff Vale" judgment. As every stoppage of work, however lawful, involved financial loss to the employers, even the most carefully conducted strike might lead to costly litigation. This position was dealt with by the Trade Disputes Act of 1906.

Another subject of legislation has been the right of the trade unions to undertake action in the political and Parliamentary field. During the nineteenth century the trade unions made increasing use of what Sidney and Beatrice Webb called the "method of legal enactment", *i.e.* of securing reforms in conditions of labour by Act of Parliament.¹ They came to the view that in order to promote such reforms they would need to have in Parliament representatives of their own. A period of trade union support for Liberal M.P.s was followed by a movement to form an independent party of the working class. This involved financing candidatures, issuing election literature and carrying on political propaganda in trade union journals.

The formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, which became the Labour Party in 1906, was one of the fruits of this work.

In 1909, however, W. V. Osborne, a member of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, secured a judgment from the House of Lords which had the effect of making all such political action impossible for any union. Four years later the matter was dealt with in the Trade Union Act, 1913, which permitted political activities provided that they were paid for out of a separate political fund. Contributions to the fund were not to be collected from members who declared their unwillingness to pay. Under the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927, the procedure was altered, and unions were thenceforward allowed to collect the political levy only

¹ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy*.

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from members who expressed a desire to pay it.

Trade union history, of course, has not been concerned merely with securing rights and privileges on paper. There has also been a long and slow process of establishing trade unionism in actual practice. An essential part of this process has been the assertion of the principle of collective bargaining, i.e. the principle that conditions of labour should be regulated according to a "common rule" and not by separate arrangements between the employer and the individual workpeople.

By 1914 the principle of collective bargaining had been accepted in most of the big industries, though there were still some noticeable gaps. The acceptance of the principle implied that the trade unions were recognised as being competent to conduct negotiations on behalf of their members and to conclude collective agreements for them.

But it was necessary for the trade unions to receive practical recognition from the Government as well as from the employers. The trade unions claimed to be able to speak for the workers in a general way and not merely to act for them in wage negotiations. This implied that the Government should take the unions into consultation when dealing with problems of labour and industry. It was during and after the war of 1914-18 that the claim was admitted by successive Governments and the way thus opened for complete recognition.

3. GETTING TOGETHER

Although collective bargaining was recognised in most of the great industries before the last war, the arrangements for the conduct of the necessary negotiations were not as highly developed as they are today. Negotiations were usually conducted between the unions and individual employers. The two sides met only when definite questions arose between the employers and the workpeople. They did not make a practice of meeting at regular intervals nor did they usually maintain standing joint committees or similar bodies to keep conditions in industry constantly under review.

Experience showed, however, that some form of permanent machinery was necessary. It was not enough to negotiate agreements; provision had to be made for interpreting and revising them, and also for settling differences and disputes. Even the most carefully drafted agreement cannot provide for all eventualities, and difficulties often arise when the document fails to cover an unforeseen set of conditions. If there is a recognised procedure for interpreting and revising agreements the difficulties can be smoothed out without any danger of conflict. But in any case it is always

Getting Together

possible for a more or less serious difference to arise between the employer and the workpeople, and unless there are agreed arrangements for settling differences they may easily lead to open disputes.

In British industry today there are a large number of joint councils or committees representing the employers and the trade unions. These bodies are governed by agreed constitutions containing provisions for regular meetings at which matters raised by either side may be discussed, and laying down the procedure for dealing with any questions that may arise. The existence of this voluntary joint machinery enables the two sides to give regular consideration to conditions in the industry and to settle practically all their differences by agreement.

The great bulk of this machinery was established as a result of developments during and immediately after the last war. At this period the Government, the employers and the unions were thrown into closer association. The unions, by co-operating in the national effort, obtained a marked improvement in status. Their advice and assistance were necessary in order that the maximum output might be achieved; the Government, therefore, took them more frequently into consultation and this gave them increased opportunities for exerting their influence.

Before the war there had been several widespread conflicts in industry. Although the tension died down on the outbreak of hostilities, a number of new and serious problems arose as the war progressed. The lack of systematic arrangements for dealing with differences and disputes increased the difficulty of securing settlements by agreement, with the result that much time was lost and much bitterness caused before the troubles were cleared up. It became evident, therefore, that some means would have to be found for effecting a permanent improvement in the relations between employers and employed.

In 1916 the Government set up a Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. Whitley to examine the matter. The Committee's Report issued in 1917 recommended the establishment, in each industry, of an organisation representing employers and workpeople, to give regular consideration to conditions in the industry. They suggested that national joint industrial councils should be set up in the well-organised trades, with interim industrial reconstruction committees in those in which the organisation of employers and workpeople had not progressed so far. They further recommended that the number of trade boards formed under the Trade Boards Act of 1909 to fix minimum wages in "sweated" industries should be increased and that their objects and functions should be widened.

In outlining the functions of the proposed joint industrial councils the Committee emphasised that these bodies should not be concerned with

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wage questions alone but should deal with all matters of common interest to the employers and workpeople. This conception was accepted by the Government, which commended the Report to the employers and trade unions and made it clear that the joint industrial councils would be recognised as the official standing consultative committees to the Government for the industries in which they were set up. From that time onwards it has been the Government's policy to stimulate the establishment and use of joint voluntary machinery.

It was also during and after the last war that further progress was made towards the recognition of trade-unionism by the employers. In 1919 a National Industrial Conference, representing the employers and trade unions, was held at the suggestion of the Government to consider post-war labour problems. The Provisional Joint Committee of the Conference recommended that the employers' organisations and trade unions should be fully and frankly accepted as organisations competent to speak and act on behalf of their members, as was already the case in most of the important industries. This pronouncement implied the recognition of trade unions and collective bargaining by the leading organisations of employers. It also underlined the willingness of the trade unions to settle industrial matters by peaceful negotiation.

Since those days joint voluntary bodies for the regulation of industrial relations have been set up in a large number of industries. They include both National Joint Industrial Councils and other bodies, such as conciliation committees. They are standing bodies with a regular membership, meeting at stated intervals and not merely when disputes break out. Their membership is drawn not from individuals but from representative bodies, *i.e.* employers' organisations and trade unions.

It is significant that with the evolution of industry there has been a development of organisation amongst both the employers and the trade unions. Employers' organisation has grown as part of the development of British industry. In many industries the units have become larger and interests have become interlocked. Out of the joint-stock companies great concerns and monopolies have been developed. By this process of fusion the control of industry has been concentrated into fewer hands.

Individual employers, companies and great concerns have formed employers' organisations to protect their interests and formulate agreed policies. This has meant an impetus to better trade union organisation. The trade unions had to cope with the new combinations of employers, with their research services, financial and other resources. Often the trade unions found themselves facing a policy determined for a whole industry or over the whole field of industry. Accordingly, a great many of the local or

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competing unions have joined together to form powerful amalgamations with a nation-wide membership.

The need for settling conditions of labour for whole industries on a national basis has also encouraged the growth of these large organisations on both sides. In most of the industries, therefore, the voluntary joint councils are national bodies representing all the employers' organisations and trade unions concerned. Many of them contain representatives of Government Departments, local authorities, public utilities and other public bodies, since these are amongst the largest employers of labour.

With a view to providing improved machinery for the settlement of disputes Parliament passed, in 1919, the Industrial Courts Act, which virtually superseded the former legislation on conciliation and arbitration. The Act gave the Minister of Labour power to set up an Industrial Court consisting of an independent chairman and representatives of employers and work-people, to which industrial disputes might be referred with the consent of the parties concerned. The Minister was also empowered to appoint a Court of Enquiry to ascertain the facts of any industrial dispute, whether existing or apprehended.

The great Dockers' Enquiry of 1920, which was held to investigate a wages dispute in the docks industry, was an early example of this new method of settling differences by agreement. In his speech to the Court on behalf of the dockers Mr. Ernest Bevin pointed out that, by coming to the Court instead of going on strike, the dockers were giving a trial to a new experiment. After a full investigation the Court proposed a substantial increase in wages and expressed the view that relations between the port labour employers and the dockers would have been better if there had been proper machinery in the industry for the settlement of questions in dispute. A National Council of Dock Labour, representing the employers and the unions, was subsequently established, and since that time the industry has been practically free from large-scale disturbances.

There are many other examples of industries in which the existence of voluntary joint machinery has helped to promote better understanding on both sides. The decisions of the joint bodies are not enforceable at law, but can only be carried out if there is loyal co-operation by employers and unions alike. Once the decisions have been accepted, however, the parties can nearly always be relied upon to observe them in good faith.

As already stated, the joint industrial councils and similar bodies are comprised of representatives of employers' organisations and trade unions. The two sides have a right to equal representation and decisions are only valid if a majority of both sides agree to them. As a rule their constitutions lay down the procedure for discussing and regulating questions raised by

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either side, and also for settling differences and disputes either within the council itself or by appeal to independent arbitration.

The voluntary joint bodies are not concerned only with wage questions. Many of them carry out the greater part of the functions recommended by the Whitley Committee. They discuss, for example, such subjects as workshop conditions, safety and welfare, the organisation of work, holiday arrangements, discipline and conduct, technical education, training and apprenticeship, industrial diseases and so on. Moreover, since they are recognised by the Government for consultative purposes, they consider matters relating to the welfare of the industry as such, examine proposals for legislation, submit evidence to committees of enquiry and generally express the agreed opinions of employers and employed in their respective industries.

In some cases it has been found difficult to establish voluntary machinery, e.g. in industries carried on by a great number of small units. In certain of these industries machinery has been set up by Act of Parliament. Thus some 50 trade boards have been established in industries where organisation was weak. In agriculture there are the Agricultural Wages Boards and the county agricultural wages committees, first established in 1917, then dropped, and revived in 1924. The road haulage industry also has its Central Wages Board and area wages boards, set up in 1938. All these "statutory" bodies contain representatives of the employers and the trade unions, with the addition of a small number of independent members. They fix minimum wages which are enforceable at law. Trade Boards and Road Haulage Wages Boards also give advice on matters referred to them by the competent Minister.

The development of all this voluntary and statutory machinery has been of the highest significance. It has given the workpeople widening opportunities of improving their wages and conditions of labour and of influencing decisions on industrial matters generally. And it has greatly contributed towards the smooth running of industry by bringing employers and trade union representatives into closer and more regular consultation, thus reducing the causes of friction and increasing the general confidence and goodwill.

4. TRADE UNION FUNCTIONS

The principal work of the trade unions is concerned with the protection and improvement of wages and conditions of labour. This involves not only negotiations with employers of labour but the submission of evidence to Royal Commissions and Committees of Enquiry, the promotion of industrial and social legislation, and many other forms of activity.

Negotiations may be conducted with employers' associations and indi-

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vidual employers, who are in a position to take decisions, or with works managers and others, who may be simply representatives acting on instructions. They may concern small private firms or great public corporations. They may apply to a particular factory or other undertaking, or to a whole industry. They may affect a given locality or area, or extend to the country as a whole. And, as we have seen, they may be conducted through a national joint industrial council or similar body, or through one of the statutory authorities such as the trade boards, agricultural wages committees and road haulage wages boards. In cases of disagreement, the claim may be argued before the Industrial Court, or before a wages tribunal or arbitration authority.

In preparing and conducting negotiations the trade union officials of today have a much more complicated task than their predecessors. In former days it was usually a case of arguing a claim with an employer or a small group of employers—with, in the background, the threat of a stoppage of work. But nowadays there may also be prolonged and complicated negotiations through councils and committees, followed in cases of disagreement by proceedings before an arbitration tribunal. Negotiations of this kind involve a great deal of careful preparation, and those who take part in them require a fund of expert knowledge and a high degree of skill in presenting and defending a case.

Trade unions that are involved in such negotiations accordingly provide themselves with a staff of specialised officers who can give the requisite attention to this work, and also with a research staff for collecting and preparing the necessary information. Even in local negotiations the officer may need to know the rates and conditions applying to similar work in other districts or to comparable processes in other industries, together with many other facts which the employers may be taking into consideration. But in large-scale negotiations he may need to be equipped also with the figures relating to production and employment in the industry, the costs of production, the state of trade, the cost of living, the financial position of the industry and so on. And instead of making a direct arrangement with an individual employer he may have to convince all the employers' representatives on a joint industrial council, or the independent members of a trade board, or the members of an arbitration tribunal or court of enquiry. In this important matter of negotiating changes in wages and conditions of labour, therefore, the functions of the trade unions have become both wider and more highly specialised.

The basis of the work is organisation. The extent to which a claim for an improvement may be admitted by the employers or conceded by a tribunal, and the degree in which a suggested reduction in wages may be

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resisted by the workpeople, will be influenced not merely by facts and figures but also by the power which the two sides possess. On the workers' side the most important factor is the strength of their organisation—not only in numbers but in financial resources and solidarity of spirit. One of the foremost functions of the trade unions, therefore, is to extend and improve their organisation, by securing the largest possible number of members amongst the workers in their respective industries and by welding them into a coherent force. This implies more than the mere enrolment of members—it means encouraging them to become active constituents of their organisation, taking their part in its work and promoting its aims and objects. For this work, too, the unions maintain full-time officials, who co-operate with the voluntary and part-time helpers among the lay members.—

When dealing with conditions of labour the trade unions interpret the term in its widest sense. It is not just a matter of arranging the length of the working day or remedying unsatisfactory conditions in the factories. As we have seen, the joint industrial councils deal with a much wider range of subjects than this. But even where there is no such machinery the unions claim the right to raise the same kind of questions in direct negotiations with the employers.

Thus the unions not only take up grievances regarding conditions in factories, workshops, mines and so on, but also co-operate in working out constructive proposals for bringing about improvements. This applies both in the case of such obvious matters as lighting, ventilation, sanitation and safety and also in regard to wider questions, such as the organisation of the work, pauses and rest periods, canteen arrangements, facilities for recreation and the welfare of the workers in general. To co-ordinate this work and keep these questions constantly under review the Trades Union Congress has set up a standing Workmen's Compensation and Factories Committee containing representatives of the Trades Union Congress, the Labour Party Executive and the Parliamentary Labour Party.

In many industries it is customary for the unions to deal also with questions of discipline. Thus on the trams and buses, where a man may be suspended or otherwise punished for missing fares or for alleged insolence to passengers, it is the practice for a union representative to take part in the proceedings on the man's behalf. Or, as in the docks industry, cases of infringement against working rules may be heard by a joint committee representing the employers and the unions.

Even the conditions for admission into or dismissal from employment are frequently arranged by agreement between the two sides. The conditions for apprenticeship, vocational training and promotion, the qualifications to be demanded from entrants into the industry and so on may be drawn up

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in this way. In some cases there is an arrangement that workers may only be taken on by agreement between the two sides, or that they must be members of a trade union. There are also arrangements in some industries for preventing the discharging of redundant men until a joint effort has been made to provide them with alternative employment.

In addition to protecting and improving conditions of labour the unions also provide their members with various benefits in cash. These benefits vary from union to union. In some organisations they may be scaled according to the amount of contributions that the member elects to pay. But in each case they provide for cash payments in the event of sickness, accident or death. Funeral benefit may be paid on the death of a member's wife and sometimes maternity benefits are included. Some unions pay an unemployment benefit—usually a survival from the days before the State schemes for unemployment insurance and unemployment assistance were inaugurated.

The provision of cash benefits is one of the oldest of the trade union functions. Many of the early trade unions were, in fact, formed as trade clubs or benefit societies in the days when the workers and their families had to depend on charity if they fell into difficulties as a result of sickness, accident, loss of work, or death. To protect themselves in time of trouble the workers built up benefit funds through their trade unions. This was the method of "mutual insurance", which was developed alongside the method of "collective bargaining" and that of "legal enactment". It had the effect both of assisting members at a moment of need and of helping to maintain standards in industry. The out-of-work benefit in particular was a factor in deterring workers from accepting wages below the customary rate in their anxiety to secure work.

To assist members further in case of sickness, most unions have become approved societies for the administration of benefits under the National Health Insurance Acts. A number of unions maintain convalescent homes for their members.

Legal protection is provided for members by the trade unions, particularly when they meet with accidents at work or are involved in legal proceedings on account of alleged offences in connection with their employment. When a workman suffers an accident "arising out of or in the course of his employment" he may be entitled to compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Acts or to damages at Common Law. Trade unions protect their members in such cases by conducting the negotiations on their behalf and, if necessary, by taking action in the courts without any cost to the members involved.

Compensation is payable to workmen not only in case of accident but

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also when they contract "industrial diseases". It is necessary for the worker to prove that the disease was, in fact, contracted as a result of his employment. Here again the union protects him if proceedings are necessary and if expert medical evidence has to be obtained. The unions have also done much to assist the workers by collecting evidence regarding unhealthy industries and processes and pressing for them to be included in the "schedule of industrial diseases" which are recognised for purposes of compensation.

As already stated, legal protection includes the defence of trade union members in the courts if they should be charged with offences arising out of their employment, *e.g.* speeding on the roads, or failure to keep prescribed records. It also covers the help given in making claims to unemployment benefit or assistance allowances. In disputed cases the unions represent their members before the Courts of Referees, who make the decisions, or before the Umpire, who hears appeals. Trade union representatives also sit as members of the Courts of Referees.

A great many unions provide grants and scholarships to enable members to take advantage of the educational facilities arranged by such bodies as the Workers' Educational Association and the National Council of Labour Colleges. These facilities include correspondence courses, day schools, week-end schools and summer schools. Members may also attend the Summer Schools organised by the Trades Union Congress and the Universities. Another popular summer school in recent years was that held at Geneva and organised jointly by the Workers' Educational Association and the International Labour Office. Some unions also provide scholarships and grants to assist members attending full-time courses at residential colleges such as Ruskin College, Oxford and Coleg Harlech, Wales. The subjects studied through these facilities include not only trade-unionism but economics and other social sciences, and also cultural subjects.

A few unions organise special courses. Thus the Union of Post Office Workers has arranged for correspondence courses on chairmanship and branch management to be conducted for its members by Ruskin College, and has also held schools for boy messengers. The Transport and General Workers' Union has organised day schools for its members, and itself runs correspondence courses on "The Union, its Work and Problems" and "The Union and the War".

The trade unions, as already indicated, no longer concern themselves only with the conditions of their members' working lives. Their work is directed towards the raising of working-class standards in general. They have helped to improve the material standards of the workers, their intellectual and cultural standards and their sense of civic responsibility. These efforts have greatly enhanced the status and self-respect of the working men

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and women. Such work cannot be merely sectional in its effect. It reflects itself in the life of the whole community.

5. THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

The trade unions now occupy an established position in Great Britain's industrial system. To begin with, they form part of the machinery of industrial relations. They are the recognised bodies for conducting wage negotiations on behalf of the workers and also for putting forward their views regarding conditions of employment in general.

With the widespread adoption of the principle of collective bargaining the unions have come to be accepted by the Government and the employers as organisations competent to conclude agreements which will be observed by the workpeople to whom they apply. Thus when wages and conditions of labour are settled by agreement through a national joint industrial council or similar voluntary body, it is expected that the agreement will be observed by all the employers associated with the council and by all the workpeople whom they employ. The fact that the unions are entitled to equal representation on these bodies with the employers is a recognition of their ability to secure respect for the agreements made. When, on the other hand, the wages and conditions are regulated by a statutory body (trade board, agricultural wages committee, etc.), the Order giving effect to their decisions has the force of law and is binding on the employers and workpeople concerned. Here, again, the representation of the unions on these bodies, by members appointed from amongst their own nominees by the competent Ministers, is a recognition of their authority and competence to take part in the work.

In all these cases it is the trade unions which put forward the claims and views of the workpeople and enter into undertakings on their behalf. Practically the whole of the wage-fixing in Great Britain is now carried out by these voluntary and statutory bodies on which the trade unions are represented.

As we have seen, it is not merely a question of discussing wages and conditions in the narrow sense. Any question which arises between employers and workpeople can be dealt with through the machinery of industrial relations with which the trade unions are associated. When disputes break out, or differences arise which the parties cannot settle unaided, provision is made for representation of workers and employers on the bodies to which the matters may be referred for settlement by conciliation or arbitration. This applies in the case of the industrial court, the Courts of Enquiry, the war-time National Arbitration Tribunal, and other conciliation

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and arbitration bodies which may be set up by the State.

By assisting in the settlement of labour questions, by helping to adjust differences and disputes, by securing the observance of agreements and so on, the unions help to lessen industrial strife, to avoid stoppages of work, to promote better relations in industry and thus to perform an important public service. During recent years the number of disputes, and the number of working days lost as a result of them, has considerably declined. The decline has continued during the difficult conditions created by the war. In 1940 the number of industrial disputes was 914 and 300,500 workers were affected either directly or indirectly. The number of days lost as a result of these disputes was 941,000, the lowest for nearly fifty years. The corresponding total for 1939 was 1,356,000. In a speech to the House of Commons in April 1941 Mr. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, spoke of the difficulties encountered in regard to the supply and use of labour in war-time and emphasised that the least trouble was being experienced in the industries in which joint voluntary machinery had been established.

When industrial and social questions are under consideration by the Government the trade unions are asked for their advice and assistance. This may be given by the unions independently, or jointly with the employers through one of the negotiating bodies. If the question at issue affects a single trade or industry, for example, the advice may be given by the union or a group of unions directly concerned, whereas if it is of importance to the workers generally it will be given by the Trades Union Congress on behalf of the Trade Union Movement as a whole.

Many of Great Britain's industrial and social questions have been the subject of investigation by Royal Commissions or Committees of Enquiry. The trade unions are invariably invited to give evidence when such enquiries are set on foot. Here, again, they act either independently or in association with the employers. It is usual for the employers and unions to give their evidence separately, but they are sometimes able to submit a statement representing the agreed opinions of both sides.

Royal Commissions and Committees of Enquiry usually include representatives of the workers, appointed after consultation with the T.U.C. or the unions directly involved. The unions are thus enabled not merely to submit evidence but also to take part in the actual investigation and to help in framing the report and recommendations. As in the development of voluntary and statutory negotiating machinery, the events of the last war hastened the growth of this practice of consulting the unions and giving them the opportunity to take part in such investigations. In 1920 Sidney and Beatrice Webb were able to write that it was by then "taken for granted that trade-unionism must be distinctly and effectually represented, usually by

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men or women of its own informal nomination, on all Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees, whether or not these enquiries are concerned specifically with 'labour Questions'—excepting only such as are so exclusively financial or professional that the representatives of Labour do not seek or desire representation on them".¹

It is also the practice of Ministers and Government Departments to seek the advice and assistance of the employers and the trade unions when legislation relating to industry, or to social questions, is under consideration. Here, again, they may be consulted separately or together. Sometimes the legislation is introduced on the Government's own initiative; sometimes it is suggested by the employers or the trade unions, or by the two sides in agreement. Or, again, it may be brought in to carry out the recommendations of a Royal Commission or Committee of Enquiry.

Before the Bill is actually drafted the Minister concerned may ascertain the views of the two sides and, if possible, secure their agreement to the general lines of the proposed measure. Such negotiations may be lengthy. Neither the employers nor the unions will obtain all that they desire but each will give way on certain points in order to obtain an agreed Bill. The consultations will continue after the Bill has been presented to Parliament. Amendments to the Bill, which seem necessary in the light of the Parliamentary Debates, will be agreed upon and presented by the Minister or by an M.P. in touch with one of the two sides. Amendments introduced by other members will be studied and an effort made to persuade the House to accept or reject them, as the case may be.

As a result of all these consultations and discussions, the Act which finally emerges is an example of legislation by agreement. It is a measure which is likely to work all the better in practice because the two sides are in general agreement on its provisions.

It is of the greatest importance to the trade unions that these discussions should take place. The practice of consulting the unions, as well as the employers, has extended in recent years until it has now become the rule. It constitutes a recognition of the fact that the unions have valuable knowledge and experience to contribute and that their co-operation is necessary in the administration of legislation by which the workers are affected. Writing on this subject in his recent book entitled *Parliament*, Dr. Ivor Jennings has referred to the consultations which take place when legislation is being handled. He points out that such consultations are particularly obvious in respect of local government legislation. According to the nature of the proposed legislation the Government consults the various associations of local authorities and education committees, or the appropriate technical

¹ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism*.

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associations or professional organisations. Nor is this practice limited to local government legislation. The public utilities are similarly organised and "no important legislation relating to a public utility would be introduced without consulting the interests concerned". The same practice is followed in connection with trade and industry. "The Federation of British Industries is consulted on all matters affecting industry generally. . . . Similarly the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and the London Chamber of Commerce are consulted on matters affecting trade. . . . Where legislation affects conditions of labour, the advice of the Trades Union Congress is sought."¹

Trade unions are interested, either directly or indirectly, in most of the measures which come before Parliament. Although trade unions are primarily organisations of producers, their members are affected by any Act of Parliament which touches the interests of consumers or of citizens generally. Social legislation—dealing with unemployment insurance, health insurance, workmen's compensation, pensions, housing, public health, education and so on—directly concerns the worker himself or his family. But the chief concern of the unions, of course, is industrial legislation.

In recent years there has been a considerable increase in the number of Acts relating to the organisation, ownership and control of industry. A number of boards and committees have been set up to advise and assist the Ministers in the administration of these measures. In most cases these bodies contain representatives of the interests of the workers, usually appointed by the Minister after consultation with the Trades Union Congress or the trade unions concerned.

Trade unions have also been entrusted with administrative functions in connection with State schemes for unemployment insurance, unemployment assistance and national health insurance. The work of the unions as approved societies under the National Health Insurance Acts, and their activities in connection with the Courts of Referees under the Unemployment Insurance Acts, were noted under the heading of trade union functions. Some of the unions have also been entrusted with the payment of unemployment benefit on behalf of the State.

It follows from all this that the trade unions are now regarded as a valuable element in Great Britain's industrial and social mechanism. The State, and most employers, now consider that wages and conditions of labour should be regulated in agreement with the trade unions. To an increasing extent the advice and assistance of the unions is being sought when decisions have to be taken on questions affecting industry and the workers. Gradually the unions are also being called upon to participate in functions connected

¹ Dr. Ivor Jennings, *Parliament*, pp. 196-9.

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with the administration of legislation. A further development in this direction is taking place during the war.

6. THE TRADE UNIONS AT WORK

The British trade unions are voluntary organisations formed by their own members and not set up by the State. Their leaders and representatives are chosen by the members themselves and not appointed by the Government, the employers or any of the political parties. They function on democratic lines and thus give their members first-hand experience of democratic methods of discussion and administration.

The basis of a trade union is the local branch or lodge. It is here that the individual members have their opportunities to put forward suggestions regarding their conditions of employment and to raise questions concerning the work and policy of their union. The branches discuss and settle all matters that can be dealt with locally and send forward wider questions for the attention of the union's district or national bodies. Every member has a right to attend and take part in branch meetings. The branch officers and committees are elected by and from the members themselves. It is the members also who elect the delegates to represent them on the various district and national committees and at the union's annual or other national conferences. This system both gives the members as a whole a voice and vote in the affairs of the union, and provides the elected representatives with a training in the exercise of responsibility.

Some of the larger branches are served by full-time secretaries, but most of the branch secretaries—like the other branch officers—are workmates of the other members, attending to their union business in their spare time and receiving a small honorarium for their services. This arrangement means that a considerable part of the union's activity depends upon voluntary or part-time service. It has the effect of giving a large number of the members opportunities of sharing in organising and administrative work and of learning how to conduct business on democratic lines.

For the consideration of business with more than local significance, *e.g.* a wage movement affecting a whole industry, there are district or area committees, national committees and national conferences or delegate meetings. These, too, are composed of representatives elected by the members either by ballot or by show of hands at branch meetings. There are variations in the composition and distribution of these bodies, but the general principle is election by and from the membership.

The district or area committees hear reports from the union officials in their respective parts of the country, and consider business sent up from the

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branches. They settle the matters that concern their own districts only and remit the others to the national body. Again there are variations of the procedure, but the main rule is that the members in each district should shoulder their own responsibility, through their committees and officers, and that the national authorities should handle matters affecting the membership as a whole. These authorities, of course, include representatives of all the districts and of all the categories of members.

The national conference, which again is composed of representatives of the members in all districts, is usually the supreme authority in the union. It deals with large questions of union policy and with alterations to the union's rules. In most unions it meets either annually or once every two years, though special conferences can usually be called if the need arises. A typical national conference decides on proposals to alter the union rules, *e.g.* with regard to contributions, benefits, qualifications for membership, and representation on the various union committees. It also lays down the policy of the union on labour questions, industrial and social matters and any political or industrial questions in which the union is interested.

All the unions appoint full-time officials. Their number and distribution varies with the size and importance of the union and the nature of the duties to be undertaken. Some of them are national officers and others confine their work to specified districts. In unions with interests in a number of different industries there may also be officials who devote their whole time to members in a particular industry or trade. The officers are responsible to the appropriate committees elected by the members. To be successful in their work they must enjoy the confidence of the members and must know how to co-operate with those who give the union voluntary and part-time service in the branches.

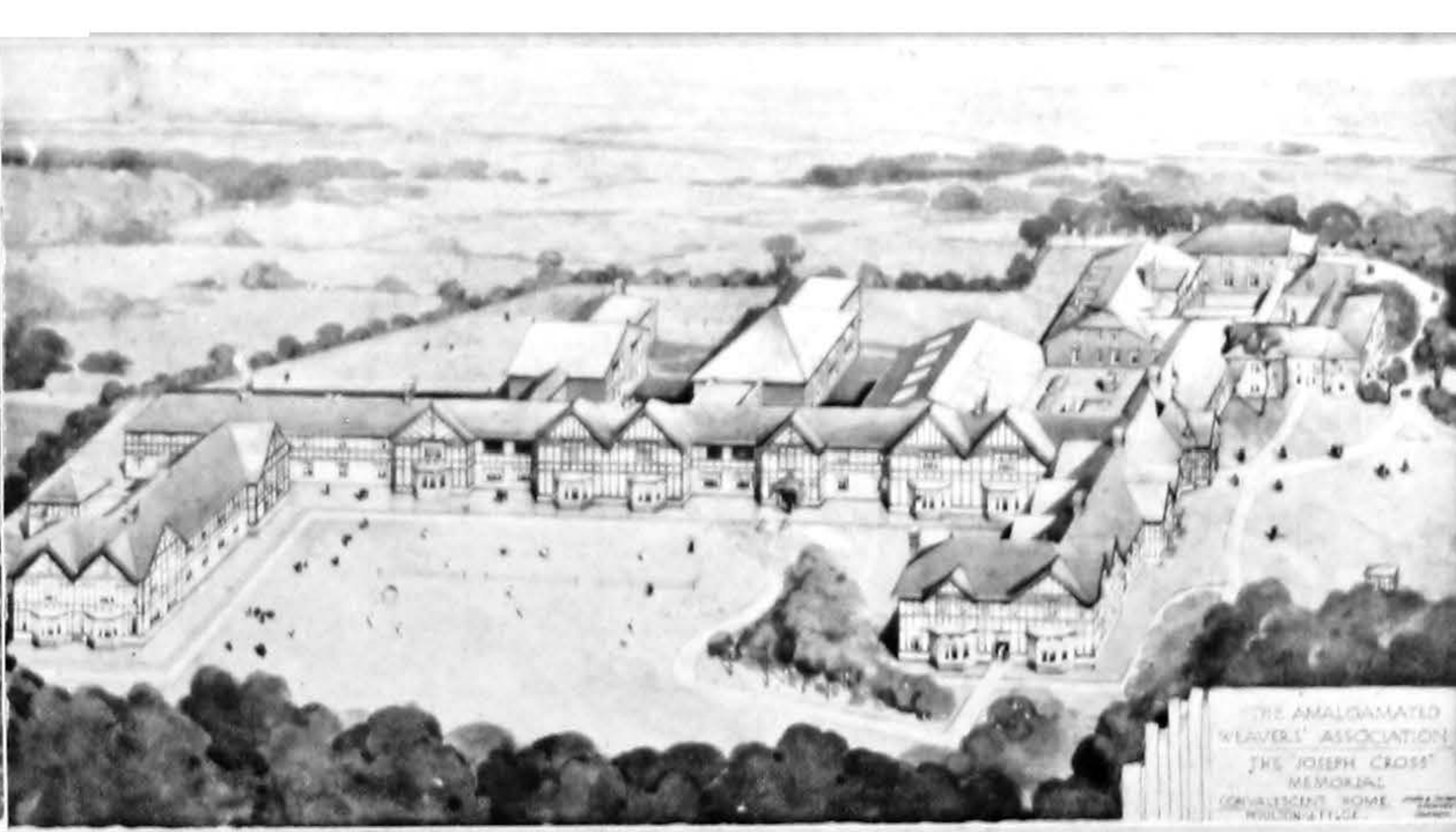
Each union is an autonomous body, with its own organisation, funds, offices and staff. In general every union decides for itself what line to take regarding wages and conditions in the industries with which it is concerned. Where, however, several unions are interested in the same industry or group of industries, they may consult and act together. It is quite common indeed for unions to federate with others in order to facilitate joint action. In the localities the branches of the various trade unions may appoint representatives to a local trades council, which meets to consider industrial questions of common interest to the unions in the town concerned. Some of the trades councils also deal with political questions, *i.e.* in places where there is no local Labour Party or where the Labour Party and Trades Council are combined.

Before the war there were 1033 trade unions in Great Britain with a total membership of 5,850,748. Over a million of these members were



ABOVE : Seventy-third Trades Union Congress, Edinburgh, 1941 *Hulton Press*

BELOW : Transport & General Workers' delegation, T.U.C., 1941 *Hulton Press*



TRADE UNION CONVALESCENT HOMES

ABOVE : Natsopa (National Society of Operative Printers & Assistants)
Memorial Homes, Wellesborough

ABOVE : The " Joseph Cross " (Amalgamated Weavers' Association)
Memorial Home, Poulton-le-Fylde

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accounted for by the Transport and General Workers' Union (611,000) and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers (405,359). Other large organisations included the Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain (538,468), National Union of Railwaymen (364,356), Amalgamated Engineering Union (299,284), Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (129,000) and National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers (171,789).

Some of the unions cater for workers of a particular craft, irrespective of the industry in which they actually work. Others draw their membership from workers of all grades within a given industry. Others, again, are general workers' unions, whose members represent a variety of occupations in a large number of different industries.

Organisation is particularly strong amongst many of the skilled craftsmen, such as the engineers, woodworkers and printers. Some of the craft unions are amongst the oldest in the country. A hundred years ago the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (now the A.E.U.) was regarded as the model for the new trade unions that were being formed after the repeal of the Combination Laws.

Powerful organisations also exist among the unions in specific industries, e.g. the unions representing the miners, textile workers and railwaymen. Strongly organised bodies of workers are also to be found in the general unions, among them being the dockers, road passenger transport workers and flour millers. Influential unions exist for the postal workers and other public employees and there has been a spread of organisation amongst clerical and administrative workers generally. In recent years new organisations have been formed amongst professional workers such as doctors, nurses, bank officers, public health officers, supervisory electricians, officers in the merchant navy and cine technicians. In 1913 the total membership of the trade unions was 4,135,000 (3,702,000 men and 433,000 women). The figure rose to 8,348,000 in 1920, and then fell to 4,383,000 in 1933. In 1938 it was 5,850,748. The membership in the principal industries was—road and dock transport and general labour, 1,070,725; metal and engineering, 791,751; coalmining, 702,619; railway service, 476,215; national and local government, 462,533; building and public works, etc., 220,995; textiles, 193,047; commerce and distribution, 189,469; paper, printing, etc., 165,127.

The work of the trade unions is co-ordinated through the Trades Union Congress—the central organ of the trade union movement. A total of 216 unions with an aggregate membership of 4,460,617 are affiliated to the T.U.C., the remaining 817 unions having a membership of 1,390,131 between them. Each of the affiliated unions retains its autonomy but is expected to abide by the T.U.C. decisions. The unions are not subsections of the T.U.C.,

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established by that body and subject to its orders ; they are its constituent parts and the T.U.C. may only exercise such powers and authority as they themselves confer upon it.

The Trades Union Congress meets annually and comprises some 600 or 700 delegates appointed by the affiliated unions in proportion to their membership. It is the Congress that decides broad questions of policy for the trade union movement as a whole. The main purposes of the T.U.C. are to promote the interests of its affiliated organisations and generally to improve the economic and social welfare of the workers.

Between Congresses the work is carried on by a General Council composed of members elected at the annual meeting of Congress. The affiliated unions are allocated among seventeen trade groups representing mining and quarrying ; railways ; transport (other than railways) ; shipbuilding ; engineering ; founding and vehicle-building ; iron and steel and minor metal trades ; building, woodworking and furnishing ; printing and paper ; cotton ; textiles (other than cotton) ; clothing ; leather and boot and shoe ; glass, pottery, chemicals, food, drink, tobacco, brushmaking and distribution ; agriculture ; public employees ; non-manual workers and general workers. Each of the trade groups has at least one representative on the General Council, while the groups with the largest membership have three each. Two seats are reserved for representatives of women workers.

The duties of the General Council are, among other things, to keep a watch on all industrial movements and where possible to co-ordinate industrial action ; to watch legislation affecting labour and to initiate such legislation as Congress may direct ; to adjust differences and disputes between unions ; to promote common action on general questions such as wages and hours of labour ; to assist any union which is attacked on any vital matter of trade union principle ; to assist in the work of organisation and to carry on propaganda to strengthen the trade union movement ; to enter into relations with the trade unions and labour movement in other countries ; and if necessary to take trade union cases for decision¹ to the House of Lords, as the Court of Final Appeal.

The work of the General Council has grown as the activities of the trade union movement have spread. At the headquarters of the T.U.C. there are now departments dealing with finance, organisation, international questions, trade boards, education, research and economic questions, social insurance and publicity. Committees overlook the work of each of these departments. There are also six group committees through which contact between the unions in allied industries (though in different trade groups) is maintained.

To advise the General Council on special problems a number of advisory

¹ Sir Walter Citrine, *The Trade Union Movement of Great Britain*.

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committees and councils have been set up in association with other bodies. There are joint committees of this kind to deal with the organisation of women, questions affecting non-manual workers, the problems of the trades councils, trade boards, social insurance, the local government services and the nursing profession, as well as a Colonial Advisory Committee, a Scientific Advisory Committee and a Joint Committee of the British Medical Association and the T.U.C. on medical questions.

As we have seen, a substantial part of trade union work is concerned with Parliamentary and political questions (the method of "legal enactment") Many trade unions finance the candidatures of members seeking election to Parliament or local authorities, make contributions towards the upkeep of Party organisation in constituencies represented by their members, and further their political objects by printing literature and articles in their journals. A large number of the unions have one or more of their members in the House of Commons. Some of them, such as the transport and general workers, railwaymen, railway clerks, and distributive and allied workers have groups of such members. The largest of these groups consists of the M.P.s financed by the Mineworkers' Federation. To give systematic attention to their Parliamentary and political work some unions appoint political secretaries or maintain political departments.

Trade union members elected to Parliament usually become members of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Most members of the Party, in fact, belong to a trade union, though not all of them receive financial support from their unions. Like other M.P.s, the trade union members represent their constituencies as a whole and not merely the interests of their organisations. They accept the constitution and objects of the Labour Party, and are bound by its policy. When industrial and social matters come before Parliament they contribute the knowledge and experience gained in their trade union work, express the views of the members and support the general policy laid down by the T.U.C. and the Labour Party.

The trade unions maintain a strong interest in the Labour Party, which they helped to form because experience had taught them the need to establish an independent Party for the workers. The Labour Party constitution provides both for individual members and for the collective affiliation of organisations. In 1939 there were 72 trade unions with a membership of 2,214,070 affiliated to the Party, and six Socialist and Co-operative Societies with a membership of 40,153. The individual members of the Party numbered 408,844. The Party constitution also provides that 12 of the 25 members of the National Executive Committee shall be nominated by affiliated trade unions and elected by their delegates at the annual Party conference. To co-ordinate the activities of the Trades Union Congress,

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the Labour Party, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Co-operative Union, a National Council of Labour is elected. The Council, which represents the four bodies, discusses questions of common interest and issues joint statements of policy when necessary. This machinery enables the trade unions and the other organisations to maintain regular contact with each other and to pursue an agreed policy.

Thus the trade unions march in step with the other organisations of the labour movement, employing the methods of representative government and the principle of majority rule.

7. TRADE UNION AIMS

The British trade unions, born in the stress of the Industrial Revolution out of the workers' need for protection, have grown in stature and experience and have passed from the defensive to the positive and constructive stage. The trade unions of today are more highly developed than their forerunners, they undertake a wider range of functions and they have a clearer perception of their ultimate aims.

Most of the early unions were trade clubs for the mutual support of members in time of trouble, or organisations appealing to Parliament for protection for the workers' standards of life, or combinations attempting either to maintain the customary rates of wages or to secure increases in those rates. The trade union movement of today is not content with protecting and improving wages and conditions of labour; it concerns itself with all matters by which the workers are likely to be affected, whether as producers or as consumers, whether as units of industrial man-power or as citizens.

The trade unions realised many years ago that they could not achieve their objects by action in one country alone. They saw that conditions of labour would have to be improved, and the general standard of living raised, in all the industrial countries, if progress was to be real and lasting. Accordingly the British trade unions joined with those in other countries to form international organisations. With the help of these organisations the unions have exchanged information about the position in their various countries, formulated agreed statements of policy, carried out parallel action in accordance with that policy, and supported each other in time of difficulty.

Chief among the organisations with which the British unions are connected is the International Federation of Trade Unions. This is composed of the central trade union organisations in a large number of countries, both in Europe and overseas. Its affiliated body in Great Britain is the Trades Union Congress. There are also a number of organisations for unions in

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specific industries, such as the Miners' International Federation, to which the Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain is affiliated.

These bodies (called International Trade Secretariats) maintain close contact with the I.F.T.U. and have frequent meetings with that body to discuss matters of common interest.

The largest of these is the International Transport-workers' Federation, whose affiliated unions in Great Britain are the National Union of Railwaymen, the Railway Clerks' Association, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, the Transport and General Workers' Union, the Cardiff, Penarth and Barry Coal Trimmers' Union, the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers and the National Union of Seamen. Other International Trade Secretariats to which British unions are affiliated include those for building and woodworkers, clothing workers, employees in public and civil service, miners, bookbinders, typographers, general factory workers, pottery workers, landworkers, workers in the food and drink trades, boot and shoe operatives, lithographers, etc., enginemmen and firemen, metal workers, commercial, clerical and technical employees, textile workers and tobacco workers.

In addition to these organic links, the British unions have maintained a specially close contact with the trade unions in the U.S.A. and Canada. Delegates from the T.U.C. attend the Conventions of the American Federation of Labor and the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress every year, and delegates from the U.S.A. and Canada visit the T.U.C. in their turn. Apart from a brief interruption during the Great War, this practice has been kept up since 1894 in the case of the U.S.A. and since 1913 in that of Canada.

In furtherance of their common aims the trade unions have also been active in their support of the International Labour Organisation at Geneva. Workers' delegates and advisers, appointed in consultation with the Trades Union Congress, have attended the Conferences year by year. One of them sits on the Governing Body of the I.L.O. as a representative of Great Britain. The British unions have also helped to keep the work of the I.L.O. before Parliament and to secure public approval for its activities.

In their *History of Trade Unionism* the Webbs defined a trade union as "a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining and improving the conditions of their *working lives*". But, as we have seen, the trade unions are no longer concerned with their members' working lives only, but with their conditions of life in general. The delegates to the annual meeting of the T.U.C. directly represent over five million workers in industry and agriculture who belong to the affiliated unions. But they are also in a position to understand and express the needs and desires of their families. Thus they speak indirectly for many millions of people over and

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above the actual affiliated trade union membership. The T.U.C., therefore, is not just a meeting of delegates to discuss workshop grievances but an assembly with national significance.

The objects of the British trade unions now extend beyond the regulation of wages and conditions, the provision of benefits to members and the promotion of the members' welfare in general, to the securing of a substantial measure of participation by the workers in the management of the industries in which they are employed. The unions believe that, while striving to give their members protection and to obtain for them the best bargain possible under present conditions, they should also endeavour to influence the development of industrial organisation and to produce far-reaching changes in the industrial and social system.

This is the policy of the trade union movement as a whole. Thus the Trades Union Congress, the central organ of the Movement, includes amongst its objects the promotion of the public ownership and control of natural resources and services by nationalising the land, mines, minerals and railways, extending State and municipal enterprise for the provision of social necessities and services, and making provision for the adequate participation of the workers in the control and management of public services and industries.

But the trade union movement has not been content with statements of policy in broad outline. Both the T.U.C. and its affiliated unions are committed to concrete proposals in detail. After the resignation of the second Labour Government in 1931 comprehensive plans for economic reorganisation were worked out by the T.U.C. and the Labour Party in common. The proposals were adopted stage by stage over a period of years by both the Trades Union Congress and the Annual Conferences of the Labour Party, and thus became the declared policy of the British Labour Movement.

These proposals apply to a number of the key industries and to agriculture, banking and credit. They envisage the public ownership and control of primary industries and services as a foundation step towards economic reorganisation. The publicly-owned industries and services would be run for the purpose of meeting public needs; the wages and conditions of employment would receive particular attention; and the employees would be given an effective share in the control and direction of industry.

It is interesting to compare these proposals with the changes that have actually been made in industry as a result of legislative action. In addition to enacting legislation for the protection of the workers (Factory Acts, etc.) and measures for the regulation of wages and industrial relations, Parliament has passed a number of Acts concerning the conditions under which industries are owned and controlled. In the last sphere the State has been feeling its

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way towards a more extensive control of industry in the general public interest.

Thus Acts of Parliament passed in recent years have imposed regulations on certain industries—over and above those which are concerned with the safety and welfare of the workers—but without introducing changes in the organisation of the industry or altering the basis of its ownership. Other measures have been designed to introduce new features in the actual organisation and running of various industries, but again leaving the system of ownership unchanged. Others, again, have affected not only the way in which industries are managed but their ownership as well.

Examples of these various types include the Railways Act, 1921, the Electricity (Supply) Acts, 1919-28, the Road Traffic Acts, 1930-36, the Agricultural Marketing Acts, 1931 and 1933, the London Passenger Transport Act, 1933, the Herring Industry Acts, 1935-38, the Sea Fish Industry Act, 1938, the Bacon Industry Act, 1938, and the Cotton Industry (Reorganisation) Act, 1939. A British Shipping Assistance Bill was introduced in Parliament in the summer of 1939 but was dropped on the outbreak of war.

The trade unions have been entrusted with various functions in connection with the administration and enforcement of most of these Acts, particularly in relation to wages and conditions of employment. They have also been given certain advisory functions by the inclusion of trade union representatives among the members of the committees and councils set up to advise and assist the competent Ministers in carrying out the provisions of the Acts.

It remains to be seen how this legislation will develop. Experiments have been made, as already shown, both in regulating industries and improving their organisation, and also in changing the whole basis of their ownership. The trade unions have played a part in shaping much of this legislation, and in many respects therefore it corresponds with their own ideas. In general, however, their plan is to extend public control over all the essential industries, with a view to reorganising the whole of the country's industrial system as a co-ordinated public service.

This plan must be considered not as an end in itself but as a means for attaining a goal. The British trade unions have never been concerned with economic solutions alone. They have never confined their interest to the material side of life. It is an open question whether they have been more greatly influenced by the arguments of economists or by the theories of philosophers. At all events, they lay great stress in their work on the importance of spiritual values. Many of the trade union pioneers of the past were inspired by religious teachings and were themselves lay preachers. The same is true of large numbers of trade union members and leaders of today. The

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unions are concerned for the welfare of the individual (more as well as material) and for the progress of the human race. Their economic and political programmes are inspired by the desire to achieve these ends.

In one of his recent speeches, Mr. Bevin has referred to this aspect of trade unionism. "The mainspring of the British Labour Movement", he said, "is a spiritual one. After all, whence did we get our ideals? Over a hundred years ago our Movement was born—or shall I say resurrected—in the villages, in the local churches and chapels and the adult schools—before ever Britain had extended universal education for her children. Out of this primitive opportunity there sprang men and women with the desire to shake off all the shackles that bound them, and to establish a great unity and freedom which would enable Labour to get back into its own standard of life the fruits of this glorious earth which it had toiled to produce."¹

The impact of the Industrial Revolution—the new age of steam, machinery, expanding trade and improved communications—did not shake the economic system alone, but moved the foundations of the country's political and social life. While new methods and forms of organisation were being forced upon industry and agriculture, new ideas and principles were emerging to govern political and social relationships. Parliament, local government, education, the old political parties, the churches: all came under fire. Amongst the workers, something more took place than a revolt against material conditions. Their struggle for economic emancipation could not be separated from their desire for new and better ways of life. Their minds were influenced not only by trade unionism but by the political aspirations of Chartism, the promise of the new co-operative movement, the teachings of Socialism, and the Nonconformist movement in the churches. It was in the chapels and Sunday Schools that many of the pioneers of trade unionism developed their gifts of oratory, organisation and leadership, deepened their convictions, and even received much of their education. Thus the British trade union movement has always looked beyond the solution of bread-and-butter problems to the need for a higher and nobler life for the people.

The ultimate object of trade union policy is a state of society in which every man, woman and child is assured of the necessities and amenities of a civilised existence, and in which everyone would have an opportunity of acquiring a reasonable standard of knowledge and skill and of developing his tastes and talents. It is hoped that in such a society every citizen would be able to lead a cultured life himself and contribute in greater measure to the welfare of his fellows and the progress of humanity.

The trade unions hold that in order to achieve this state of affairs we must

¹ Ernest Bevin, *The Job to be Done*, p. 72 (Wm. Heinemann, Ltd.).

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both reorganise our industrial and economic system and alter the principles of our social life in general. Their stubborn insistence upon the need for improved wages and conditions of labour is not dictated by narrow self-interest. They believe that if the standards of labour are raised, then the standard of life for the whole nation will rise. They hold that it is in the interests of society generally to encourage the workers' aspirations to a greater measure of well-being and a higher level of knowledge and culture.

In short, the trade unions maintain not simply that the labourer is worthy of his hire but that the workers and their families are worthy members of a great community. They base their belief on the value of the human personality, and their aim is to secure for the individual the opportunity to enjoy his rights and liberties, and to fulfil his obligations to his fellows, in a democratic community. The great pioneers of trade-unionism were not mere grumblers and trouble-makers; they were prophets and leaders inspired by the hope and vision of a better world. Towards this new world the British trade union movement still aspires.

8. THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE WAR

The British trade unions are giving their full support to the war effort. On the day after Great Britain entered the war the T.U.C. was due to hold its annual meeting, and it was therefore able to take an immediate decision. The decision, taken with only two dissentients in a conference of nearly 500 delegates, was that the Nazi Government must be opposed by all the forces that the civilised nations could concentrate for its defeat and overthrow. The defeat of ruthless aggression was essential, they said, if liberty and order were to be re-established in the world.

After the last war the British Labour Movement had strongly supported a policy of disarmament, but a new situation developed when the totalitarian powers began to threaten the peace of the world and to undermine the foundations of democracy. Opinion in the Labour Movement was profoundly influenced by the acts of aggression committed in Manchuria, China and Abyssinia, by the support of the totalitarian powers for the enemies of the Republican Government in Spain, and by the treaty violations and aggressive actions of Nazi Germany. In these circumstances the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress committed themselves to a policy of collective security, involving a measure of rearmament and armed resistance, if necessary, to the advances of the aggressor powers. This policy they advocated for some years before the war, in the hope that a combined effort by the peaceful and democratic powers would deter the aggressors and avert another world conflict.

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It was seen, however, during the year after the Munich Conference, that war could only be avoided with great difficulty. Accordingly a number of precautions were taken in Great Britain, some of which directly concerned the trade unions. During this period the unions decided, as also did the Labour Party, to take part in the development of a civil defence organisation. In December 1938 the General Council of the T.U.C. were invited by the Minister of Labour to discuss with him the problem of the use of labour in the event of war, and here, again, the unions agreed to play their part. Having advocated a policy of collective resistance to aggression they were also prepared to accept its implications.

In May 1939 a Special Conference of Trade Union Executive Committees was held to consider what had been done and to decide policy for the future. The Conference endorsed the action taken up to that date and adopted a scheme for the organisation of labour in war-time, based on the principle that the fullest possible use should be made of the voluntary joint machinery in industry. It was thought that if the Government notified each industry of the production required from it the employers and trade unions would work out the best system for utilising labour in each case. The Conference also called for legislation to control prices, limit profits and conscript wealth, and sanctioned the continuation of negotiations with the Ministry of Labour on the war-time problems of industry.

Because of these events and decisions the trade unions were able to take part in the national effort from the beginning. They said at the outset that trade union activities should continue in war-time in the national interest. In war-time, no less than in peace-time, the trade unions have positive and constructive functions of national importance to fulfil. With their knowledge of industry and understanding of the problems of labour they can co-operate in adapting industry and agriculture to war purposes, in building up the war-time machinery for organising and controlling production, in securing the necessary labour power and in ensuring that it is used to the best advantage.

No less important is their function of helping to solve the human problems that arise for the individual workers. The normal peace-time problems of wages, hours of work and general conditions of labour have to be approached afresh in the changed circumstances created by war. New and specific war-time problems also present themselves in connection with work during the black-out, transport to and from work under war conditions, work during air raids, compensation for war injuries, the conditions under which workers are trained for new jobs or transferred to work in other parts of the country, and so on.

These and many other problems were taken up by the trade unions in direct discussions with the Government and the employers. But the unions

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also asked for opportunities to make their contribution towards dealing with the war-time problems of industry and labour through the various boards and committees that were established by Government action. Their request was met by the appointment of trade union representatives to numerous bodies set up by various Ministers for the purpose of assisting the Government in the handling of war-time problems. In most cases the representatives of the unions served on the committees in company with representatives of the employers' organisations, sometimes in equal numbers. By taking part in the work of these bodies the unions accepted their share of responsibility in advising the Government on the formulation of policy.

In connection with the organisation of industry and production, trade union representatives have been serving on such bodies as the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the Ministry of Supply, the Ministry's Area Boards and Area Advisory Committees, the Advisory Committees to the Controllers of Raw Materials, the Labour Supply Board, the Industrial and Export Council, the Port Emergency Committees, the Coal Production Council, the Cotton Board, the Inland Transport War Council, the National Advisory Council to the Ministry of Shipping and the Canals (Defence) Committee.

To help in solving the human problems of labour they have taken part in the work of the Factory and Welfare Advisory Board and the Seamen's Welfare Board at the Ministry of Labour. They also serve on the National Joint Advisory Council and the Joint Consultative Committee, which advise the Minister on all problems of industry and labour, *i.e.* both problems of organisation and those that concern the workers as human beings.

Trade unions have also been concerned with another category of committees, namely, those which deal with problems affecting the civil population. As representatives of the workers and their families, the trade unions have assisted in the activities of the advisory committees at the Ministry of Food, the food control committees in the localities, the central and local price regulation committees of the Board of Trade and the fuel control committees.

As in peace-time, the unions have also been taken into consultation regarding the preparation and administration of legislation on industrial and social questions. In addition to the Emergency Powers (Defence) Acts, which conferred wide powers on Ministers to deal with these problems, amongst others, there have been Acts of Parliament on the control of employment, wages and superannuation, the functioning of trade unions and friendly societies under war conditions, compensation for war injuries, health and unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation, pensions and so on. All these Acts, and the numerous Orders and Regulations by which they have been followed, have called for decision and action by the trade unions.

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In May 1940, when the war took a critical turn, the Labour Party, with the support of the trade unions, entered the Government. A number of the Labour Ministers appointed then and since are actively associated with trade unions. A leading member of the General Council of the T.U.C., Mr. Ernest Bevin, took office as Minister of Labour and National Service, and thus became responsible for mobilising the nation's man-power, securing its most effective use and handling the human problems of labour, with the co-operation of the employers and trade unions. In October 1940 Mr. Bevin was also appointed a member of the War Cabinet.

After the Labour Party's decision to enter the Government, another Special Conference of Trade Union Executive Committees was held (on May 25th, 1940) to consider the position of the trade unions in relation to the new Government's plans for increasing the war effort. The Conference heard statements from Sir Walter Citrine and Mr. Bevin, after which it endorsed the action of the General Council in giving its full support to the measures necessary for organising the entire resources of the country and striving to the utmost to defeat the forces of aggression.

A few months later (in October) the trade union movement had another opportunity of taking stock of the position at its annual meeting. In the light of its experience of a full year of war, Congress again affirmed its inflexible resolve to go on with the struggle against the aggressor powers, which had entered into an alliance to destroy the foundations of liberty and the democratic way of life throughout the world. Congress also took the opportunity of declaring that it regarded the developments in trade union relationships with Ministers, Government Departments and employers' organisations as "a further stage in a national acceptance of trade-unionism, and as an acknowledgment of its place in the social life and the economic organisation of a community of free citizens built upon democratic foundations".

The results of trade union action during the war, in association with the Government and the employers, have been appreciable. Wages and conditions of employment have been protected and a resolute effort made to lighten the workers' burdens and lessen their hardships. A tremendous drive has been made to increase the number of workers in war industries, to train those that need training, and to ensure that people do the work for which they are best fitted. Under Mr. Bevin's inspiration the policy has been twofold: on the one hand, to increase the supply and secure the best use of labour; and, on the other hand, to make adequate provision for the welfare of the workers as individuals.

From the very beginning of the war—and indeed before it broke out—the trade union movement stressed the importance of voluntary effort.

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They have always maintained that better output and more willing service can be obtained by agreement than by compulsion. They felt it to be in the national interest that the Government should take the employers and trade unions into its confidence. Following this line, the unions have made great efforts to enlighten their own members and the public generally on the issues of the war. They have clearly seen that we are fighting against a dangerous philosophy of life and not merely defending our territory. They have emphasised the need for effort and sacrifice and have themselves shown an example to others.

In this spirit the trade unions have given up, for the period of the war, rights and customs which they had only established after generations of struggle. Many thousands of cases in which working rules and practices were relaxed have been placed on record, under promise of restoration after the war. The unions have also agreed, as a war-time measure, to a prohibition of strikes and lockouts, coupled with provisions for compulsory arbitration. They have done so in the belief that the workers will have no need to strike if they can secure justice by other means. During the first full year of the war—1940—the number of days lost as a result of industrial disputes was the lowest on record.

There are many other ways in which the trade unions have thrown themselves into the war effort, *e.g.* by strongly supporting the war savings movement and the Red Cross penny-a-week fund, by lending sums of money to the State free of interest, by subscribing to the cost of mobile canteens and ambulances and so on.

Trade-unionists are at one with the rest of the British people in their desire to defeat the aggressors. But it is not a fight for the return of the old conditions; they believe that if peace and justice are to reign in the world there must be profound changes in the organisation of industry and society. At bottom, therefore, the war aims of the British trade unions are the aims for which they stood in time of peace.

The British trade unions further believe that we can make great progress towards the new conditions without waiting until the war is over, and that many of the changes made during the war will turn out to be permanent. They believe that this is a war for liberty, democracy and progress against oppression, dictatorship and reaction. Hence they attach great importance to democratic and voluntary methods, to the functioning of Parliament and other free institutions, and to the maintenance and improvement of industrial and social standards while the war is still being fought. Like the old pioneers of trade-unionism, the British trade-unionists of today are inspired by the hope of a better world. It is for the new world of tomorrow that they are fighting now, as they fought in the past.

Readers who wish to follow up this subject are recommended to consult Trade Unionism, a select list of recent books, which can be obtained for twopence post free from The National Book Council, 3 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.2.

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