

TRADE UNIONISM

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Considerable sections of this book have been rewritten in view of the Trade Boards Act, 1918, the Education Act, 1918, the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923 and the Consolidating Act of 1925, the Insurance and Pensions legislation of 1924-25, and many less important Acts. New chapters deal with the Trade Unions Act, 1927, and the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1927, so that the work is now up-to-date, authoritative, and complete. *[In the Press.]*

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BY

C. M. LLOYD

THIRD EDITION

REVISED AND ENLARGED



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PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

A GOOD deal has happened in the Trade Union world since I last revised this book, and the present edition contains some entirely new matter as well as corrections and rearrangement of the old. The General Strike, the coal dispute of 1926, and the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act of 1927 are dealt with as fully as space would allow. The text of the Act is printed in the Appendix.

I have cut out a chapter on the German, French and Belgian movements, which appeared in the previous editions. But certain parts of it, which are still relevant to the discussion of British Trade Unionism, I have kept and put in their appropriate places in the book.

I have to thank several friends for information on various points, and especially Mr. G. D. H. Cole, who has read my proofs and made valuable criticisms and suggestions.

C. M. LLOYD.

LONDON, *October 1927.*

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THIS book does not purport to be a purely elementary treatise. Nor, of course, is it an exhaustive study of Trade Unionism. The compression of so vast a theme into so small a compass is bound to result in many things being left unsaid and in an all too brief treatment of many important subjects. I hope, however, that despite its shortcomings, it may yet succeed in giving the reader a clear idea of what the Trade Union movement is, and in putting him upon inquiry as to what it ought to be.

I am deeply in the debt of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb, not only in common with all the world, for their standard works—*The History of Trade Unionism* and *Industrial Democracy*—but also for advice and suggestions in the writing of these pages. Others whom I have to thank particularly for valuable criticism or for information, are Mr. Frederic Keeling, Mr. G. D. H. Cole, Mr. W. Stephen Sanders, and my wife, besides a host of Trade Unionist friends—not least those of France and Belgium, who have given me the greatest possible assistance on my visits of investigation in their countries.

The bibliography in the Appendix contains, as will be seen, only the most modern books. Those who wish to consult earlier works will do well to refer to the elaborate bibliographies in *Industrial Democracy* and *The History of Trade Unionism*.

C. M. LLOYD.

July 1914.

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TRADE UNIONISM

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS OF TRADE UNIONISM

Origins of Trade Unionism—The Combination Acts—Francis Place—
"Syndicalism" and Chartism, 1829-1842.

ASSOCIATIONS of workmen, of one type or another, can no doubt be traced far back into history. But it would be a waste of ingenuity to try to connect the scattered and ephemeral combinations of a dim past with Trade Unions as we know them to-day. Nor is the modern Trade Union, as it was once fashionable to suppose, a lineal descendant of the mediæval Craft Guild. A Trade Union is a permanent combination of wage-earners for the protection or improvement of the conditions of their working life.¹ The Guilds, which survive to-day in the City Companies of London, were bodies entirely dominated by the master craftsmen; their members were masters, or journeymen on their way to become masters; there was no question of a wage-earning class attempting to protect itself against capitalist employers.

The rise of Trade Unionism in the eighteenth century was due to the change which had already begun in the organisation of industry. The great bulk of workers were more and more ceasing to be independent producers; for as industry enlarged, and it wanted more

¹ Technically, an association of employers may be a Trade Union, since the statutory definition in the Trade Union Acts includes "combinations for regulating the relations between workmen and masters," and even "for regulating the relations between masters and masters." But its ordinary usage is confined to workmen (including such salaried public servants as school teachers and some classes of clerical or other brain workers, etc.), and it will be used in no other sense in this book.

capital to start in business, the journeyman, unable to accumulate enough, sank steadily into the position of a permanent wage-earner. This process was not merely the result of the introduction of machinery and the factory—the Industrial Revolution of the latter half of the eighteenth century. It was, of course, enormously affected by that; but it had begun long before. Thus, in 1720, we have Tailors' Unions in London agitating for higher wages and shorter hours, and earlier still, the woolcombers and weavers in the West "confederating how to incorporate themselves into a club"; while combinations both of the framework knitters and the Sheffield cutlers preceded the Industrial Revolution.

Other notable instances of eighteenth-century combinations are found amongst hatters, cordwainers, curriers, brushmakers, basketmakers, calico-printers, cotton-spinners, coopers, sailmakers, coachmakers, smiths, bricklayers, carpenters, though many of these, in their original form, were more or less isolated 'trade clubs' of a peculiarly exclusive nature, to whom such phrases as 'the solidarity of labour' or the 'Trade Union movement' would have meant nothing at all.¹ These artisans' clubs, indeed, were not engaged in that life-and-death struggle which characterises later periods of Trade Unionism; for their members did not come from the most oppressed classes; they were, in fact, the aristocrats of the working-class world. Among the labourers, as distinct from the skilled craftsmen, there was no attempt at organisation.

The first noticeable effect of the Industrial Revolution is to drive the workers to Parliament for protection against the debasement of their standard of life. Trade after trade is found appealing to the House of Commons to fix the wages on which the God of Profit was levying

¹ Interesting light is thrown on some of these early Unions by the papers of Francis Place. Place himself in 1790 joined the "Breeches Makers' Benefit Society . . . for the support of the members when sick and to bury them when dead." This club, like many others, was organised as a benefit club, but its real object was that of "supporting the members in a strike for wages." The Breeches Makers had collected about £250 by 1793, when they struck and were promptly defeated. Place reorganised them presently as a Tontine Sick Club.

a steadily increasing toll. The principle of the regulation of industry by the legislature was not new—indeed, it had been an accepted policy for many generations. But what was new was the rapid and revolutionary change that was coming over public opinion—the opinion, that is, of the classes who formed the House of Commons. From 1753 onwards, the history of the workmen's appeals for assistance is a long record of rebuffs, with a very occasional exception, as for instance in the Spitalfields Acts of 1765 and 1773, which empowered the justices to fix and enforce rates of wages for the silk-weavers.¹

From the outset, the influence of the manufacturers, as was natural, bore heavily upon Parliament, and when in 1776 this influence was reinforced by Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which seemed to imply that the creed of unrestricted exploitation was really a new gospel for humanity, the day of paternalism was gone beyond recall.

By the end of the century, the last remnants of the old practice of appealing to Parliament in industrial disputes were swept away, and the dread and contempt, in which the ruling classes held the workmen, were crystallised into the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800. These Acts the most stringent of their kind since the Statutes of Labourers four centuries earlier, expressly prohibited all combinations whatsoever. True, they purported to affect masters as well as men, but in this respect they were a dead letter, for no employers' combination ever appears to have been molested.

It is interesting to note that the French Parliament itself had already taken a similarly drastic step eight years previously in the middle of the great Revolution. In 1791 the Constituent Assembly, drunk with its new-found 'political' liberty, passed without debate the famous Le Chapelier Law, which forbade the formation of "any sort of combination of citizens of the same profession or trade," as being fundamentally opposed to the constitution. No body of persons might appoint officers or keep a register of membership, or hold dis-

¹ It is to be observed that these Acts were not passed by Parliament of its own volition, but only after serious riots.

cussions or pass resolutions, under penalties ranging from a fine of 500 francs to being punished for sedition "with the utmost rigour of the law." A few months later followed another law, expressly forbidding all combinations of agricultural workmen for the purpose of raising or fixing wages, while in 1796, under the Directory, the paper-makers were actually forbidden by law to leave their work except after giving satisfactory proof of sickness or infirmity.¹

The Combination Acts mark the lowest pitch of degradation to which the English working class ever fell. It is true that from the fourteenth century onwards there were always statutes in force against coalitions of workmen, amply reinforced, whenever necessary, by the Common Law doctrine of 'restraint of trade,' so that the Acts of 1799 and 1800 were not a new departure. But they were more comprehensive than anything hitherto, and the application of the law was more rigorous, whilst at the same time the workman was deprived of the protection by Parliament, which former statutes had not interfered with. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century the history of Labour is a long record of relentless persecution by the employers, of angry reprisals by the workmen, and of savage sentences in the Courts. Place tells us that "the suffering of persons employed in the cotton manufacture were beyond credibility; they were drawn into combinations, betrayed, prosecuted, convicted, sentenced, and monstrously severe punishments inflicted on them; they were reduced to and kept in the most wretched state of existence. . . . Justice was entirely out of the question; the working men could seldom obtain a hearing before a magistrate—never without impatience and insult; and never could they calculate on even an approximation to a rational conclusion. . . . Could an accurate account be given of proceedings, of hearings before magistrates,

¹ Repressive legislation of this character was continued under Napoleon I., under the Restored Monarchy, under Louis Philippe, and under the Second Empire. Strikes remained illegal right down to 1864, and it was not until twenty years later that the elementary rights of Trade Unionism were recognised.

trials at Sessions and in the Court of King's Bench, the gross injustice, the foul invective and terrible punishments inflicted would not, after a few years have passed away, be credited on any but the best of evidence."

Some of these judicial savageries and their authors have obtained a lasting notoriety. In 1810 Sir John Sylvester, Common Serjeant of London, known significantly as 'Bloody Black Jack,' condemned nineteen printers employed on *The Times* newspaper to terms of imprisonment varying from nine months to two years, for "combining and conspiring together maliciously to injure their masters and employers by quitting their work on account of their demands for an increase of wages not being acceded to." In passing sentence, this ornament of the Bench harangued the prisoners as though they had been parricides, observing that "the frequency of such crimes among men of your class of life, and their mischievous and dangerous tendency to ruin the fortunes of those employers which a principle of gratitude and self-interest should induce you to support, demand of the law that a severe example should be made of those persons who shall be convicted of such daring and flagitious combinations, in defiance of public justice and in violation of public order." A few years later seven scissor-grinders of Sheffield were thrown into gaol for three months merely for belonging to a society called the 'Misfortune Club,' which gave out-of-work benefit and tried to keep up the customary rate of wages.

In 1818 occurred the monstrous case of the Bolton Weavers. A number of delegates had met in a perfectly orderly fashion, actually at the suggestion of certain of their masters, and decided to demand an advance of wages. As a result three of them were arrested and received sentences of one and two years' imprisonment for the crime of conspiracy, despite the fact that they were supported at the trial by the employers!

The Combination Laws, however, were not systematically enforced except in the new factory areas, and Trade Unionism was by no means crushed out. Combinations still persisted, often in the shape of secret clubs, with fearful oaths and rites, sometimes, where the

employers raised no objections, more or less openly. The artisans especially in London and other towns were not so hard hit, and at the time of the repeal in 1824 there were trade societies, often quite powerful, existing in practically all the chief handicrafts.¹

It may seem surprising that, during the whole twenty-five years of the Combination Acts' operation, there was no strong popular movement for their repeal. But the reasons for this are not far to seek. There was the general lack of organisation, without which, as anyone who is concerned with large bodies of men is well aware, it is difficult to maintain, or even to create, lasting enthusiasm. Moreover, the absence of communications prevented widespread and accurate knowledge of what was happening. The persecuted cotton operatives in Lanarkshire had but little inkling of how nearly their sufferings were paralleled by those of the miners of Northumberland, the calico-printers of Lancashire, or even the cabinet-makers and other skilled journeymen of London. The very poverty of the mass of the people, too, was a bar to effective revolt, and when, in the exhaustion and misery following the Peace of 1816, wages fell below subsistence level, the strikes of starving serfs that broke out here and there were only too obviously foredoomed to failure. Finally, in 1819, came the atrocious 'Six Act.,' chastising the people with scorpions where the Combination Acts had chastised them with whips, and the working-class leaders were driven to seek the salvation of the popular liberties in larger political reforms.

It was to Francis Place, the tailor of Charing Cross more than to any other man, that the workmen owed the removal of the ban on Trade Unionism. In 1814 he began his task of collecting evidence, enlisting the sympathies of politicians and economists as well as of Trade Unionists, and laying his plans for the repeal of

¹ The London coopers actually formed a Union in 1821—the 'Philanthropic Society of Coopers,' which has maintained a continuous existence ever since. The master coopers of that day do not seem to have cherished any hostility to combinations, for they had met their journeymen in 1813, and again in 1816, in conference, and agreed upon a list of prices.

the Combination Acts. At last in 1824 a Select Committee was appointed by Parliament, with Joseph Hume as chairman and Place in the background pulling the wires and marshalling and coaching the witnesses. The evidence was so overwhelming that the Committee, despite the prejudices and animosity against the workmen with which it had started, reported strongly in favour of complete freedom of combination, and a Bill to repeal the Acts and legalise trade societies ran through Parliament without any opposition.¹

The immediate effect was an enormous crop of new Unions, with strikes, lock-outs and violent disturbances. In the next year the House of Commons appointed another Committee of Inquiry, shamelessly packed by the Government and the employers, who apparently intended to use it as a cloak under which to introduce a new Bill for the complete destruction of Trade Unionism. This danger was averted again by the skill and energy of Place, now warmly seconded by the Unionists all over the country. The testimony of the working-class witnesses, which was got in in the teeth of bitter opposition, finally overbore that of the masters, and the result was a fairly satisfactory compromise in the shape of an Act, which, despite certain defects, did effectually secure the right of industrial combination.²

Place was curiously mistaken in his prophecy as to the effects of the new law. He believed that the repeal of the Combination Acts would mean the disappearance of Trade Unions, which "are but defensive measures resorted to for the purpose of counteracting the offensive ones of the masters." As a matter of fact, the result was a triumphant burst of combinations, some

¹ "An Act to repeal the Laws relative to the Combination of Workmen; and for other Purposes therein mentioned" (1824), 5 Geo. IV. c. 95.

² "An Act to repeal the Laws relating to the Combination of Workmen, and to make other Provisions in lieu thereof" (1825), 6 Geo. IV. c. 129. The Act of 1824 had removed all criminal liability of combinations for advance of wages or alteration of hours of work, and even apparently legalised violence and intimidation. The 1825 Act left the immunity from criminal liability, but created the two new offences of "molesting" and "obstructing," punishable by imprisonment.

local and for immediate objects (such as higher wages, shorter hours, earlier closing of shops), others of a national scope, like the Steam Engine Makers' Society, and the Friendly Society of Operative House Carpenters and Joiners of Great Britain. Several Labour papers, too, were started in 1825, of which the most important, *The Trades Newspaper and Mechanics' Weekly Journal* (price 7d.), lasted for several years.

These high hopes and enthusiasms, however, were but short-lived; for hardly was the new Act on the Statute Book when the great financial crash of 1825 brought industry almost to a standstill and ushered in four years of disaster.

We now enter on the most revolutionary period in the history of English Trade Unionism. It was the day of the 'Trades Union,' of doctrines and tactics remarkably like those of the French *Confédération Générale du Travail* or of the Industrial Unionists in America at the beginning of this century. In 1829 the Lancashire Cotton Spinners launched a large scheme of national organisation, known as 'The Grand General Union of the United Kingdom,' and including all male spinners and piecers. This was followed almost immediately by another society with an equally high-sounding title, The National Association for the Protection of Labour. This federation presently enrolled about 150 different Unions, with 100,000 members, in the textile, metal and other industries, and published a sevenpenny weekly journal, *The Voice of the People*. In less than two years, however, both the 'Grand General' and the 'National Association' had dwindled into comparative insignificance, though the latter kept its hold in Yorkshire and some of the Midland counties till 1834. The Builders' Union next became the cynosure of all eyes. This militant society, known as 'The Trades Union,' embraced all sections of the building industry, and was distinguished by an elaborate ritual, with startling oaths and secret ceremonies. In 1832 it spread rapidly through Lancashire and the Midlands, and by the following summer found itself in violent disputes in Birmingham.

Liverpool, and elsewhere. The employers made a vigorous and united attack on it. Their chief weapon was the 'presentation of the document'¹—a demand that the men should sign an agreement renouncing membership of the Union, on pain of being locked out. The Builders' Union, ground between the upper and the nether millstones of the masters' opposition and its own internal dissensions, fought gamely on; but it was presently merged in, and eclipsed by, a still more formidable organisation known as the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. This body sprang from the fertile brain of Robert Owen, already famous as educationist, factory reformer, and father of the Labour Exchange Bazaars and other socialistic schemes.

Owen's doctrines appeared just to fit the needs of the time. Manhood suffrage had not been won by the Reform Act, and the working classes were bitterly disappointed at the failure of their political efforts. Owen offered them a magnificent scheme by which they might emancipate themselves. It was, in effect, a sort of Syndicalism, with the various trades organised in associations or parochial lodges, and united at the same time through delegates to a Grand National Council. Each Trade Union or Company was to be an independent unit, controlling its own industry throughout the country, excluding commercial competition and destined finally to supersede the State as well as the capitalist.

"We have long since discovered," he said, "that, as long as master contends with master, no improvement, either for man or master, will be possible: there is no

¹ The 'document' has frequently been used in succeeding periods. It appeared, for instance, in January 1914, when the master builders of London locked out all their workmen who refused to sign an agreement to work with non-Unionists. This agreement ran as follows: "I agree, if employed by you, to peacefully work with my fellow-employees (engaged either in your direct employment or in that of any sub-contractor) whether they are members of a Trade Society or not, and I agree that I will not quit your employment because any of my fellow-employees is or is not a member of any Trade Society; and I also agree that if I commit any breach of this agreement I shall be subject to a fine of 20s., and I agree that the amount of such fine may be deducted from any wages which may be due to me."

other alternative, therefore, but national companies for every trade . . . Thus all those trades which relate to clothing shall form a company—such as tailors, shoemakers, hatters, milliners and mantua-makers; and all the different manufacturers shall be arranged in a similar way; communications shall pass from the various departments to the grand national establishment in London.” Owen, however, though he was as anti-parliamentary as any modern Syndicalist, did not contemplate violence as the method by which the Promised Land was to be reached. The notion of militancy, based on an uncompromising avowal of the Class Struggle, came mainly from William Benbow, a shoemaker, bookseller and coffee-house keeper, who was at this time well known as one of the extremists of the ‘National Union of the Working Classes,’¹ and later became prominent in the Chartist movement. He advocated a general strike; the whole working class would proclaim a ‘holiday month’ and lay down its tools. This general strike was not to be an insurrection; a simple ‘passive resistance’ would suffice. The holding up of all labour for a month, or even a week, would be a good lesson; while the workers amused themselves with walks in the fields or the streets, there would be no bills of exchange honoured; business would be at a standstill; the *London Gazette* would contain long lists of bankruptcies; the whole machinery of government would be thrown into confusion; and link by link the chain which binds society together, would be loosened by the mere fact of the poor folding their arms against the rich.

Intoxicated with these ideas, the Trade Unionists embarked on their brief spell of revolutionary activities. The Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of Great Britain and Ireland was founded at the beginning of 1834, and in a few weeks it had enrolled something

¹ The National Union of the Working Classes and Others was a development of the Metropolitan Trades Union, which in its turn had come from Owen's ‘British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge.’ As the National Union became more and more democratic and political, Owen drifted out of connection with it, though many of his friends and disciples were members.

between half a million and a million members, including adherents from the most diverse industries—from chimney-sweeps to washerwomen, from Belfast cabinet-makers to Perthshire ploughmen. The avowed object of this leviathan Union was a general strike in all industries, but it found itself from the outset plunged into small sectional disputes all over the country, which were ruinously costly to the Union, and in which the workers were almost invariably worsted. In March a heavy blow was dealt it by the conviction of the "six Dorchester labourers." The amazing development of the Trades Union had not unnaturally struck the utmost alarm into the propertied classes—an alarm enhanced by the fantastic rites and secret oaths with which the workmen embellished their proceedings. The authorities, therefore, at the end of February, were only too glad to pounce on certain innocent and respectable farm labourers, who had established a branch in the village of Tolpuddle for the main purpose of raising their wages from 7s. to 10s. a week. They were treated with the utmost brutality, charged with administering unlawful oaths, and punished with the outrageous sentence of seven years' transportation.

This judicial atrocity rallied for the moment the flagging energies of the Grand National, and protests, petitions and demonstrations were organised on behalf of the convicted men. But in a few weeks there were more unsuccessful and expensive strikes, accompanied by serious internal dissensions in the Union. By mid-summer the Grand National was rapidly falling to pieces, and in August Owen converted it into The British and Foreign Consolidated Association of Industry, Humanity, and Knowledge, which was to take effective measures to reconcile the masters and operatives throughout the kingdom, and presently to inaugurate a New Moral World!

The collapse of the Grand National was not a death-blow to Trade Unionism, but it left it very sore and sick. Beaten on the industrial field, the workmen began to look again towards political action. The Anti-Corn Law League and the Chartist Associations were now

absorbing many thousands of those who had not long before marched so confidently under the 'Syndicalist' banner. In the dark years from 1837 to 1842, Chartism completely overshadows Trade Unionism. Though, of course, a great number of Trade Unionists took part in their individual capacity in the Chartist agitation, the Unions as such seem to have had no connection with it, and we find Feargus O'Connor in 1846 actually denouncing the 'trades of Great Britain' for their criminal apathy. From 1843 onwards, indeed, there was a very noticeable change in the Trade Unionist mind. The troublesome child, which had made itself the terror of society, now began "to be a good boy"—and incidentally to manifest new signs of vitality and growth.¹

¹ The potters, cotton-spinners, miners, printers, flint-glass makers, tailors, and shoemakers were all founding or reorganising their Unions at this time. And before long the Steam Engine Makers, Masons, Bookbinders, and other societies had begun to establish libraries, classes and journals.

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH OF THE TRADE UNIONS

Rise of the Modern Trade Unions and the Struggle for the Trade Union Charter—The 'New Unionism' and the Rise of the Labour Party—The Taff Vale and Osborne Cases—The Labour Unrest and the Growth of Syndicalism.

NOTHING shows more significantly the changed spirit of the Trade Unions than the attempt which was made in 1845 at uniting various trades in a national organisation. This new body represented a very mild form of Owenism. It was to be not a revolutionary 'Trades Union,' but a general federation of Trade Unions, whose object was to "protect the interests and promote the well-being of the associated trades by mediation, arbitration and legal proceedings, and by promoting all measures, social, political and educational, which are intended to improve the condition of the labouring classes."¹ The National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour, as it was called, included a fair number of adherents, and did some useful work; but the fresh trade depression, which began in 1845, and the resulting crop of strikes and internal dissensions reduced it within a few years to impotence.

The new spirit was apparent, too, in the zeal for education, which produced a number of Trade Union libraries, classes, and monthly or weekly journals, and, still more, in the general attitude to the strike. Distaste for and denunciation of striking became the vogue, and already in 1843 and 1846 we find the Stone Masons and the Ironmoulders taking away the right

¹ Even more significant was the way in which a number of the chief Unions held aloof from it, despite its mild programme. "Past experience has taught us," said the Manchester Stone Masons bitterly, "that we have had General Union enough."

to declare strikes from their local branches. In place of the strike, it was held, the only satisfactory method of improving the workman's position was the limitation of the supply of labour; for the Trade Union leaders had now accepted the Wages Fund Theory of the economists which taught them that, since the amount to be paid in wages was a fixed dividend, the only way to increase the quotient was to decrease the divisor—their own numbers.

This change in ideas and policy, tame as it may seem in many respects and mistaken as it certainly was in its economic basis, yet allowed the Unions to turn their energies to the problems of organisation and to lay the foundations of the great societies of to-day. All through the eighteen-forties the movement for closer union in the engineering industry was gaining ground, and in 1851 most of the competing sections of engineers, machinists, steam engine makers, smiths, millwrights and patternmakers were welded into one big Union under the name of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. This amalgamation did not solve all internal difficulties of overlapping and competition of crafts, but it was a remarkable achievement at the time. With its elaborate constitution and systematised friendly benefits, its membership of 11,800, and its contribution of 1s. a week, it seemed portentous both to the employers and to the Labour world. And the great lock-out of engineers in 1852, with the support received from the Christian Socialists and the public interest aroused in the newspapers, only served to enhance its prestige.¹

The example of the A.S.E. was closely followed in 1860 by the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, and in 1866 by the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses, and in almost every other trade, even if its model was not exactly copied, it exercised a profound influence.

In the comparatively quiet times of the 'fifties and early 'sixties, there was a steady growth of membership)

¹ For relations between Christian Socialism and Trade Unionism see the Webbs' *History of Trade Unionism* and also *Christian Socialism, 1848-1854*, by C. E. Raven (Macmillan, 1920).

and of funds in the Trade Union movement. In particular the important associations of the cotton operatives in Lancashire and of the miners, under the leadership of Alexander Macdonald, were emerging into prominence. This same period, too, witnessed the rise of Trades Councils, or local federations of Trade Unions. Such Councils were already in existence before 1860 in Liverpool, Sheffield, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The London Trades Council was formed in 1860, a development of the weekly delegate meetings which had been held to assist the building operatives in the great lock-out of 1854, and within a very short time, supported as it was by all the strongest Unions in the Metropolis and the ablest of their officials, it became one of the most important organisations in the Labour world.

About the middle 'sixties this quietude begins to be disturbed, and during the next few years we see the Trade Union movement recovering much of the old solidarity and class-conscious, aggressive spirit of Owen's day. The employers, alarmed by the growing strength of the Unions, began a regular campaign of lock-outs. At the same time they gained the willing assistance of the lawyers in prosecuting their workmen under the iniquitous Master and Servant Acts. As the law then stood, an employer who broke a contract of service was merely liable to pay damages. The workman's penalty for breach of contract (*i.e.* for a simple refusal to work) was three months' imprisonment, without the option of a fine. Even his trial was often a farce; he could be arrested summarily and sentenced by a single justice of the peace, from whose judgment there was no appeal. This regime of oppression was only ended, after a long struggle, by the passing of a reformed Master and Servant Act in 1867.

The Unions were badly hit, too, by the decision of the High Court, in the case of *Hornby v. Close*¹ in

¹ Law Reports, 2 Q.B. 153. This decision was negated in 1869 by the Trade Union Funds Protection Act (32 & 33 Vict. c. 61), which placed Trade Unions within the provisions of sections 24 and 44 of the Friendly Societies Act, 1855.

1867, that a Trade Union, as an illegal combination, could not protect its funds by registering as a Friendly Society. The Boilermakers, Engineers and other unions had adopted that course, satisfied that they were thus secure against the defalcations of dishonest officials, and this judgment was a rude shattering of their confidence. Finally, public opinion, ignorant, nervous and prejudiced as usual, was irritated into activity by the general inconvenience and loss caused by the constantly recurring industrial disputes. This irritation was soon turned into open anger by the 'Sheffield outrages'—a form of sabotage or 'rattening,' which ranged from removing the tools of non-Unionists (or of Unionists who were obnoxious to their fellow-members) to graver acts of terrorism with gunpowder. Of course, the Trade Union movement as a whole had nothing to do with these proceedings—and, indeed, strongly reprobated them; but the general public, as might be expected, were only too ready to believe every Trade Unionist a scoundrel's dynamiter.

When, therefore, a Royal Commission was appointed in 1867 to inquire into the organisation and rules of trade societies, the prospects were ominous. Obviously, it was necessary to secure a legal status, and the Trade Union leaders set to work to convert the country, with the invaluable aid of Frederic Harrison, Professor Beesly, Tom Hughes, M.P., and other middle-class friends who were as active on the workmen's behalf as Joseph Hume had been half a century earlier. In 1868 the first Trades Union Congress was held at Manchester, with the object of rallying the organised working class to the defence of Trade Unionism. Thirty-four delegates attended, representing 118,367 members. Meantime, an unexpectedly favourable impression had been made on the Royal Commission, and the Majority Report, though not very friendly, contained no hostile recommendations. The Minority Report, signed by Hughes, Beesly and Lord Lichfield, was a very skilfully drawn statement of the men's case. It soon became the basis of a Bill, and after two years of pressure on Parliament, all its main points were incorporated in the Government's measure.

the Trade Union Act 1871. But it was only a partial victory that had so far been won ; for with this 'Trade Union Charter' was coupled a Criminal Law Amendment Act, which visited with severe penalties 'picketing,' 'intimidation,' 'molestation,' 'watching and besetting'—which, in fact, under the specious guise of protecting public rights, prohibited all the incidents of effective combination.

The disappointment of the Trade Union world immediately settled down into a steady agitation, in which the lead was taken by the newly appointed Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress,¹ for the repeal of the obnoxious Act. The stupid brutality with which it was enforced, the numberless convictions and imprisonments of workmen up and down the country, added fuel to the fire. But the Liberal Party could not be shaken in its obstinacy—not even by a whole series of independent Labour candidatures. It was left for the Conservative Government, after Mr. Gladstone's defeat at the General Election of 1874, to complete the emancipation of the Trade Unions. The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875, replaced the Criminal Law Amendment Act ; peaceful picketing was legalised, and no act committed by a combination of persons in a trade dispute was to be treated as a criminal offence unless the same act committed by one person was punishable as a crime. "Collective bargaining," in short, to quote Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb, "with all its necessary accompaniments, was, after fifty years of legislative struggle, finally recognised by the law of the land."

Meanwhile, these political struggles and triumphs had been accompanied by an extraordinary burst of activity in the industrial sphere. In 1871, after a five months' strike, the engineers on the North-East Coast won a nine hours' day, and within a very short time similar victories were secured by Labour in the

¹ The third Trades Union Congress, held in London in March 1871, was attended by all the Trade Union leaders, brought together in opposition to the Government's anti-picketing proposals. This meeting elected a Parliamentary Committee, and the 'Conference of Amalgamated Trades,' which, in the persons of Applegarth, Allan, Odger and others, had managed affairs since 1867, was dissolved.

engineering shops and shipyards elsewhere, as well as in the building trade. This period, too, witnessed the rise, under the leadership of Joseph Arch, of the Agricultural Labourers' Union, which attained within a few months to a membership of 100,000.¹ Almost every industry, indeed, shared in the success of these years, and it is estimated that between 1871 and 1875 the number of Trade Unionists was more than doubled.

But unhappily this prosperity was but short-lived. By the middle of the decade there had set in a trade depression, which culminated in 1879 in one of the most disastrous commercial crises of modern times. Hundreds of industrial firms and business houses were reduced to bankruptcy, the army of the unemployed was swollen to an enormous figure, wages were cut down and working hours increased. Desperate strikes broke out, only to end in disaster to the workmen. In some districts, such as South Wales, Trade Unionism was actually wiped out. Everywhere the members of the Unions melted away, and the funds, even in the biggest societies, were barely able to stand the strain.²

This crisis in the fortunes of Trade Unionism is comparable in many respects to that of forty years earlier. The same depression of trade overwhelmed the same high hopes and swept away the same hard-won gains. In each case the attempt to organise the lower grades of labour—in the shape of the agricultural labourers' and women's unions—was foiled. And at both periods we see a similar frenzied outburst of strikes in the vain attempt to avert the oncoming disaster.

Nevertheless, the end of the crisis in 1879 left the

¹ The agricultural labourers were fiercely resisted and often savagely persecuted by the farmers and their abettors, the gentry and the clergy. The membership declined after a few years, and though Arch's Union continued to maintain its existence, the grant of the franchise in 1884, coupled with rising wages—and, it must be added, a good deal of internal friction—hopelessly weakened it. There was a temporary revival in the great wave of 1889-90, but by 1894, as Arch himself said, it died a natural death.

² The Boilermakers in 1879 had over twenty per cent. of their members drawing unemployed benefit. The A.S.E. paid out in 1878-80, under this head alone, £287,596. The Ironfounders were only saved from ruin by borrowing large sums from individual members.

Trade Union forces in very different condition from that in which they found themselves in the early 'forties. (Then; the movement was for the moment almost extinguished) now, though it was seriously strained and shaken, its vital forces were unimpaired. Trade Unionism had established itself firmly in the body politic as well as in the hearts of the working class, and its machinery, so patiently built up through the middle years of the century, was strong enough to bear the shock to which it was subjected.

The years following the recovery after the *débâcle* of 1879 form the transition period from the 'old' to the 'new' Unionism. The Unions had lost heavily, as we have seen, in membership as well as in funds. But they had also lost much of their old vigour. Even before the depression doubts and criticism had crept in. A spirit of aristocratic exclusiveness was beginning to show itself in the great Amalgamated Societies. The officers of the A.S.E. and other important Unions were choked with a mass of routine work and administrative detail, while the friendly benefit side of their activities was absorbing them more and more. As far back as 1866 a comparatively moderate critic writes that "the once powerful A.S.E. is now as incapable to engage in a strike as the Hearts of Oak or the Foresters." The narcotic of the current political economy was indeed having a deadly effect. Politically, the Trade Union movement was steeped in *laissez faire* individualism, and the leaders combined a policy of cautious opportunism in trade matters with an ardent adherence to Mr. Gladstone and the somewhat limited ideals of mid-Victorian Liberalism. But a change was coming. Modern Socialism appeared on the scene, uncompromising and optimistic. William Morris, H. M. Hyndman and their fellow-pioneers displayed a prodigious activity. The Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society were born in 1883, to preach the new gospel. Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, published in 1879, had already created a great stir, and the social investigations of Charles Booth and others now revealed the appalling

depths of degradation in which vast masses of the people were living. The condition of the unskilled labourers and sweated women in particular appealed to the forward spirits in the Labour movement, and threw into still bolder relief the backwardness of the Trade Unions, many of which, as Mr. John Burns said in 1887, had now become "mere middle and upper class rate-reducing institutions." At last the pot boiled over. The match-girls came out on strike in 1888, and won the sympathy of the public and better conditions. In 1889 the Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union was formed and speedily enrolled thousands of men, and within a few months the London gas stokers had won an eight hour day in a bloodless contest. Almost immediately after this came the historic Dock Strike, under the leadership of John Burns, Ben Tillett and Tom Mann. It began with a demand of the labourers at the South-West India Dock for an increase of their wage from 5d. to 6d. an hour, the abolition of sub-contract work, extra pay for overtime and a minimum engagement of four hours. The whole Thames-side promptly joined in the fray; substantial contributions, including £12,000 from the general public at home and £30,000 from Australia, poured into the strike funds; and, after the Port of London had been paralysed for nearly five weeks, the 'dockers' tanner,' together with practically all the rest of their claims, was conceded by the employers. The dockers' success gave an enormous impetus to the organisation of the unskilled labourers. The Dockers', the Gasworkers', the Sailors' and Firemen's, the General Railway Workers' and other Unions, showed an astonishing expansion, and in less than a year something like 200,000 of the "unskilled" were brought into the Trade Union ranks. These new societies, resembling in many respects the organisations of Owen's time, were militant bodies, with low contributions and little in the way of friendly benefits. "We have only one benefit attached," said the General Secretary of the Gasworkers in 1889, "and that is strike pay. I do not believe in having sick pay, out-of-work pay, and a number of other pays. . . ."

The wave spread even to the older and more 'aristocratic' societies, and the Engineers, Miners, Boot and Shoe Operatives, Bricklayers and many others increased their membership, in the course of these two or three years, by tens of thousands. There was a movement, too, for greater unity; and a number of federations were formed, while Trades Councils sprang up all over the country. The 'new Unionism' was triumphant.

The early 'nineties, then, witnessed a growth of membership in the Unions paralleled by that of twenty years before. But there was a new feature in the Socialism that was inspiring the younger men in the movement—a Socialism which meant a larger and very different political ideal from that held by the cautious leaders of the old school. This new conception of politics now becomes the main factor in the Trade Union development—its development on one side, that is to say, for we shall find it convenient, in bringing our account down to the present day, to deal separately with the political and the industrial activities of the Unions. Put shortly, the political history of Labour since 1890 is summed up in the birth and growth of the Labour Party.

An enthusiastic and tireless propaganda was being conducted by the Socialists at the street corner, in the Press and in the workshop. Independent candidates were run at the General Election of 1892, and three of them, Messrs. Keir Hardie, John Burns and Havelock Wilson, were returned. In 1893 the Independent Labour Party, which is now the largest Socialist body in the country, was founded, and at the next election in 1895 put forward no less than twenty-eight candidates, of whom none were successful. Meanwhile the campaign for independent Labour representation was prosecuted vigorously in the Trades Union Congress year by year, with the majorities against it steadily diminishing. At last, in 1899, the Congress was converted, and the Labour Representation Committee was born in the following year. Fifteen candidates ran under its auspices at the General Election, but of these only Keir Hardie and Richard Bell of the Railway Servants were successful. An enormous amount of steady spade-work in the

country, however, coupled with the feeling aroused throughout the Trade Union world by the Taff Vale Judgment, resulted in 1906 in the return of a compact Labour Party of twenty-nine. It increased its members to forty in 1910 by the accession of the miners' representatives, which, as it seemed, signalled the fall of the last stronghold of Liberal-Labourism. But "the whirligig of time brings in his revenges," and the very stalwarts who fought for independence now found themselves accused, by malcontents in their own ranks, of sacrificing the substance of what they had won by their subservience to the Liberal Party; while on the other flank they were assailed by the 'new Unionists' of the day, demanding that the futile weapon of Parliamentaryism should be abandoned for 'direct action.'

It is not necessary here to refer to the work of the Labour Party in Parliament, except in so far as its action directly affected the Trade Unions on three important occasions. In its first year it won a great triumph by the passage of the Trade Disputes Act, 1906, which at last rescued the Trade Unions from the position in which the Taff Vale Judgment had left them. The Government's Bill, as originally introduced, had provided entirely inadequate safeguards for the Trade Unions, and it was due largely to the insistence of the Labour Party, then regarded with very respectful awe by the Government, that this Bill was abandoned and its own proposals substituted. In neither of its other interventions was it so successful. Its support of the National Insurance scheme, though it had the endorsement of a specially summoned conference of its constituent bodies, was resented by a large minority, at least, of its friends, including four or five of its own Members of Parliament who were opposed to the contributory principle and actually cast their votes against the Bill on its third reading. This old controversy, however, is now dead; the Insurance system has been extended and developed, and is now accepted by all parties, despite its imperfections. The third important achievement in which the Labour Party took part was the Trade Union Act, 1913, under which the dis-

abilities imposed by the famous Osborne Judgment were removed. In this matter the Party had to accept a much smaller concession to its demands than in 1906, and though a special conference again authorised the acceptance of the Government's proposals, there was a general feeling that Trade Unionism had won but half a victory.

Turning now to internal organisation and the purely industrial side, we find from 1890 onwards a steady growth in membership of the Unions—with slight declines in the depressions of 1892, 1902-4 and 1907-9—until it reached at the end of 1913 a total of just under four millions. A large number of new societies was springing into existence—some of them in industries where previously combination was feeble or even unknown. Thus the Shop Assistants, Ship Stewards, Hotel Employees and Waiters, British Gardeners and Caretakers were all quite modern creations, as also were the associations of the 'black-coated proletariat,' such as the clerks, assurance agents, journalists and musicians, of public servants like the postmen and municipal employees, and of women workers of all grades, from midwives and milliners to domestic servants and jam and pickle girls. The process of consolidating has always been slow, and there were in 1914 over 1100 separate Unions in the Kingdom, many of them overlapping and competing one with another within the same industry.¹ The year 1899, however, which saw the birth of the Labour Representation Committee, was notable also for the foundation of the General Federation of Trade Unions, which was intended to be, in the words of its Secretary, "a strong central organisation, gathering to itself all the scattered forces of the movement . . . and backed by a gigantic central fund, the whole of which should be at the service of any society fighting to

It must not be supposed, of course, that all these are entirely isolated bodies; a great deal of federal organisation exists (see below, Chaps. V. and IX.). Nevertheless, when all this has been taken into account, there still remains a considerable amount of independence and confusion.

maintain its existence, or to improve the lot of its members.¹”

The policy of conciliation in trade disputes also made a very considerable advance with the growing strength of organised labour, though many of the workmen regarded it with a good deal of suspicion. In 1896 the Conciliation Act was passed, giving the Board of Trade power to inquire into industrial disputes and to mediate when called in by the combatants, while agreements were come to between employers and workmen in almost every trade for the use, in one form or another, of the machinery of conciliation. These arrangements, however, disappointed those who expected a diminution of strikes and lock-outs. In the few years preceding the War there was a greater number of stoppages than ever before. No less than 1462 trade disputes were recorded by the Board of Trade as having taken place in 1913, or more than double the average of the preceding twenty years. Many of the disputes—even before the end of the last century—are remarkable for the emergence of some of the peculiarly modern problems which Trade Unionism has to face. Thus in the coal strike of 1893 we find the miners for the first time demanding not merely higher rates but a ‘living wage,’ irrespective of fluctuations in prices or coal masters’ profits—a principle at last conceded in the Coal Mines (Minimum Wage) Act after the great strike of 1912. The contest in the boot and shoe trade in 1895 raged round the merits of piece-rates as opposed to time-rates. The claim to ‘recognition’—the right of the organised workmen, that is, to appoint a Trade Union official, or whom they choose, to negotiate in their collective behalf with their employers—has figured prominently in many of the later conflicts—notably the railway strikes of 1907 and 1911, and those of the transport workers in 1911 and 1912, while a desperate struggle in Dublin in 1913 was caused by the refusal of the employers not merely to ‘recognise’ the officials of the Irish Transport Workers’ Union, but even to employ

¹ See below, pp. 79 ff., for more detailed reference to the General Federation.

men who were members of that Union. Another cause of dispute which during this period was assuming larger and larger proportions was the objection of Trade Unionists to working with non-Unionists (this was at the bottom of the protracted lock-out in the London building trade in the spring and summer of 1914); while the increasing assertion of 'moral' rights is evidenced by the number of strikes against tyrannous conduct on the part of employers or foremen, unjust dismissals of fellow-employees, and the like.

But the outstanding features of the period are the two heavy blows aimed at the Trade Unions by the Law Courts, and the recurrence, with a sort of cyclical regularity, of 'new Unionism,' this time in the form of what is sometimes referred to, rather inaccurately, as Syndicalism.

In the summer of 1900 a strike broke out in South Wales on the Taff Vale Railway, in the course of which the Company, naturally enough, suffered a certain amount of injury. They applied to the High Court for an injunction not only against alleged individual wrongdoers, but against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants itself, whose agents these wrongdoers were. They also commenced a civil suit for damages against the Union in its corporate capacity. To the surprise of all who were familiar with Trade Union law and practice, and to the consternation of the Labour world, the A.S.R.S. was mulcted, in costs and damages, to the tune of £42,000, and it was decided that a Trade Union could be sued in its collective capacity, and its corporate funds made liable for a tortious act committed by any of its officials or members who could be deemed to be its agents.

Hitherto no one had dreamed but that the Act of 1871 afforded absolute protection to the Union funds, since Parliament at that time had deliberately refrained from giving a Trade Union the privileges and burdens of incorporation. It was a staggering blow, therefore, when the House of Lords held that a Union, though not strictly a corporation, possessed all the essential

qualities of a corporation that its enemies required. No society in a dispute could now feel itself safe, however carefully its officials and members might act; the engine of the law might be all too easily made an engine of oppression; and the funds of any Union, which should dare to make a move, were liable to be swept into the pockets of lawyers and employers. The judgment roused the whole Trade Union world to demand relief from such an impossible situation. The membership of the Labour Representation Committee, which stood at 356,000 in 1902, leaped up to 861,000 in the following year, and to nearly a million in 1904, and a vigorous agitation was carried on up and down the country. Despite all efforts, however, it was not until 1906 that the Trade Disputes Act was passed, providing that "an action against a Trade Union . . . or against any members or officials thereof on behalf of themselves and all other members of the Union in respect of any tortious act alleged to have been committed by or on behalf of the Trade Union shall not be entertained by any Court."¹

Hardly, however, had the Trade Unions settled down after this victory, before they were attacked on the other flank. Mr. W. V. Osborne, the Secretary of one of the branches of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, strenuously opposed the right of his Union to levy its members or contribute from its funds in support of the Labour Party. An action in the Chancery

¹ The Trade Disputes Act (6 Edw. VII. c. 47) also legalised peaceful picketing (sect. 2); made acts done in 'restraint of trade' (e.g. inducing a breach of contract of employment) not actionable, so long as no violence or threats are used (sect. 3); and, by providing that an act done by a combination of persons in furtherance of a trade dispute should not be actionable unless it would have been an actionable wrong if committed by one person, put the civil liability in respect of 'conspiracy' on the same footing as the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875, had put the criminal liability (sect. 1). It is worth noting that the Courts a few years later decided that a Trade Union need not be actually engaged in a dispute in order to gain the protection of the Trade Disputes Act. In the case of *Vacher v. London Society of Compositors* (1913, A.C. 107), a firm sued the Society for conspiracy to libel and for libel (by imputing, positively in a letter, and negatively by omission from the 'Fair List,' that the plaintiffs' was not a fair house). The House of Lords held that no action lay:

Court in 1908 went in favour of the Society ; but the judges of the Court of Appeal reversed this decision, and their judgment was finally upheld by the House of Lords. The effect of this was another revolution in the legal status of Trade Unionism. Trade Unions were again found to be, as they had been found in the Taff Vale case, if not corporations, at least 'quasi-corporations,' and they could therefore do nothing outside the purposes for which the statute had incorporated them. These purposes were discovered in the Trade Union Act Amendment Act of 1876, and among them there was no reference to the payment of Members of Parliament or to any other political activity. Consequently it must be held *ultra vires* for a Trade Union to indulge in political action, even though the whole of its members might be unanimous in desiring that it should do so. It is not necessary to criticise this judgment here ; suffice it to say that it was clearly contrary to the intention of Parliament in 1876 to limit the functions of the Union in this way, and the majority of the judges, in declaring that action of a political character by the Trade Unions was not contemplated by the House of Commons at that time, showed an astonishing ignorance of history. For the Labour movement the matter was very critical, since it required no great stretch of imagination to see that, on the basis of this judgment, many of their most important powers might be filched from the Unions, including the expenditure on education, on the publication of literature or newspapers, even on certain of their benefits. And the bitterness was still further enhanced by the feeling that class-bias was at the bottom of the judgment, and that the Courts were laying down one law for the workman and another for the capitalist.

As an immediate result injunctions were served upon one Union after another, political action, both local¹ and national, was crippled, and but for the State payment of Members' salaries, coupled with the voluntary

¹ In the case of *Wilson v. Amalgamated Society of Engineers* (1911, 2 Ch. 324), it was expressly held that the Osborne Judgment covered local as well as parliamentary representation.

support which many of the societies continued to give, the Parliamentary Labour Party itself would have been in an untenable position. The Trade Unions, of course, demanded a reversal of the judgment, but the Labour world showed itself somewhat apathetic about the whole question, and redress was delayed for more than three years, when a compromise, the best that the Labour Party found itself able to secure, was passed in the shape of the Trade Union Act, 1913. Under this statute, a Trade Union was authorised to include in its objects, on certain defined conditions, the expenditure of money on candidatures for Parliament or any public office, and on the distribution of literature, the holding of meetings, electoral registration work, and the maintenance of elected representatives.

The conditions were—(1) that a ballot of the Union must first have been taken, and a majority of those voting have declared in favour of such political action; (2) that the political fund must be kept separate, and no member obliged to contribute to it if he had given notice that he objected; and (3) that contribution to this political fund must not be made a condition of admission to the Union, nor must any member, who refused to contribute, be penalised on that account by being excluded from any benefits or put under any disability or disadvantage as compared with his fellows.¹

With this measure the Unions had to content themselves. Theoretically, no doubt, there is much to be said for the protection of the rights of a minority which conscientiously objects to supporting a political party, though, on the other hand, it is urged that this minority shares equally in the benefits secured by the majority through political action—just as the non-Unionist benefits by the improved conditions won through

¹ Up to 1926 rather less than three hundred Unions had balloted; only eighteen showed a majority against the political fund. The number of votes was small. In the registered Unions, with a total membership of over 3,000,000, less than one-third voted—683,272 for the levy, and 272,394 against. In the unregistered Unions, there were 478,828 for, and 305,804 against. The claims for exemption were still smaller: in the registered Unions they amounted only to 104,797.

industrial organisation—without paying his share of the cost. But the Act of 1913 always rankled with a certain section of the opponents of the Labour Party. Constant complaints were heard, especially in the years following the war, of the unfairness of the political levy, and allegations were made of widespread intimidation and persecution of Trade Unionists unwilling to pay it. These charges have been grossly exaggerated. Though there may have been cases of pressure here and there, the evidence is pretty clear that the rights of the minority had in general been fairly observed. Nevertheless, in 1927 Mr. Baldwin's Government yielded to the clamour of the extreme Conservatives, and introduced a clause into the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Bill drastically amending the Act of 1913.¹

The other feature—the 'new Unionism' of the time—was the child of the labour unrest which began to assume formidable proportions in the latter part of 1910. That unrest had a variety of causes—economic, moral, social. From the beginning of the century the cost of living was mounting steadily. Prices in general, according to the most moderate and official estimates, were nine or ten per cent. higher in 1910 than in 1901. In the same period wages were falling in many trades, and by the end of the decade, as we learn from the carefully compiled Reports of the Board of Trade,² the real wages of the manual workers as a whole were lower than they were at the beginning of the century. On the other hand, though statistics might not bear out the common assertion that the rich were growing richer, the national income was increasing, the gross inequalities in its distribution were becoming more and more patent, and the struggling poor were well able to see with their own eyes the way in which a great part, at least, of this enormous wealth was spent—indeed, they were often forced by the rich themselves to be spectators of such

¹ See below, pp. 181, 182.

² See Board of Trade Report on Changes in Rates of Wages and Hours of Labour (Cd. 7080), 1913. Cf. *Riches and Poverty*, by L. Chiozza Money, and *The Change in the Distribution of the National Income, 1880-1913*, by A. L. Bowley (1920).

an orgy of vulgar extravagance and barely concealed corruption as has but seldom been exceeded in history. And after forty years of general education, they no longer looked on with the wonder and envy of children, but with the eyes of understanding and the determination of men. The discontent was sharpened, too, by the growing concentration and aggressiveness of capital. In many industries the workmen were goaded into revolt by the action, sometimes deliberate (as, *e.g.*, in the Boiler-makers' dispute in 1910), of their employers.

Here then was cause enough, and more than enough, for a large upheaval. The Trade Union forces were bound to fight. But what were to be their tactics and their objective? There was a new spirit in the ranks, and new ideas in the minds of some at least of the leaders. These ideas did not amount to Syndicalism, but they were 'syndicalistic,' ranging from the anglicised 'Industrial Unionism' preached so assiduously by Mr. Tom Mann to a more or less vague dissatisfaction with the Parliamentary Labour Party. It was, no doubt, this disappointment with the Labour Party's achievements—a disappointment for which it is not fair to lay all the blame on the Labour Party—that was the principal factor in the situation, that opened the ears of the Trade Unionists to the gospel of 'direct action,' and thus stamped many of the disputes of these three years with their peculiar character. Just as the Trade Unionists in Owen's day eighty years before, worsted in their efforts to overthrow capitalism by 'direct action,' turned disillusioned to the political weapons of Chartism, so now there appeared a revulsion from the exaggerated hopes placed in parliamentary representation to the old methods of industrial warfare. But the comparison must not be pressed too far; for to assume a complete analogy would be to exaggerate unduly both the defects of the Labour Party and the influence of Syndicalism.

CHAPTER III

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE GREAT WAR

Effects of the War on Trade Union Conditions—Strength of Labour at the Armistice—Renewal of the Industrial Struggle—The Coal-mines Disputes—The Railway Strike—“The Council of Action.”

ON the eve of the great war, as we have just seen, the situation in the industrial world was one of severe strain. The working class, disappointed with the smallness of its achievements by legislation and lending a readier ear to counsels of direct action, was becoming more and more restive. The employers on their side were watchful and truculent. Though the disputes actually in progress were few, graver ones were threatened. But the catastrophe of August, 1914, immediately stilled this domestic strife. The Trade Unions were for the moment forced to bend all their energies to coping with the new problems caused by the dislocation of trade, with its accompaniment of widespread unemployment and distress. Those problems, however, soon solved themselves, as the younger men flocked to the colours, and industry adapted itself to providing for the needs of the armies in the field and of the nation at home.

Early in 1915, as the cost of living began to rise, there was a fresh outbreak of disputes in a number of industries—mining, the railways, engineering, wood-working, building, transport, textile—over wage-advances or ‘war-bonuses.’ But these were of small moment beside the arduous struggle with which the Trade Unions soon found themselves confronted. It was evident that the industry of the country had to be practically transformed; vast numbers of extra workers

were required for the making of munitions, equipment and the like, and there must be an intense speeding-up in all the factories and workshops. The Government presently demanded a wholesale abrogation by the Trade Unions of the rules and customs which had been so laboriously built up for the protection of their standard of life. Lines of demarcation between skilled and unskilled jobs, or between trade and trade, apprenticeship regulations, restrictions on the employment of women, limitations of overtime, even Factory Act provisions for health and safety—all, or most of them, were to be suspended for the duration of the war. Above all, the legal right to strike, which had been enjoyed for nearly a century, was to be abandoned in those industries judged vital to the prosecution of the war, all disputes being submitted to compulsory arbitration. To these sacrifices the Unions reluctantly but patriotically agreed, and the new code was eventually elaborated in a series of statutes, the Munitions of War Acts of 1915, 1916 and 1917, and a mass of orders and circulars. That great anxiety was felt at the risk that was being taken goes without saying, and the anxiety was shown later to have been justified; for after the war, when the time came for restoring the old conditions, the Government and the employers showed themselves by no means anxious to redeem their solemn pledges, and it was only with difficulty that many of the pre-war standards were re-established.¹

But, though the first and most obvious effect of the war was thus to chain up the Unions, there were compensating advantages, which in the end proved to have outweighed the temporary weakening. Their status was actually enhanced; for both in the establishment of the new industrial conditions and in their application throughout the war, the Trade Union leaders had to be consulted and negotiated with by the Government on

¹ See *History of Trade Unionism* (edition of 1920), by S. and B. Webb; *Women in Trade Unions*, and *Women in the Engineering Trades*, by Barbara Drake, and *Labour in War Time*, by G. D. H. Cole (valuable for the period down to the middle of 1915); and *The Restoration of Trade Union Conditions*, by S. Webb (1917).

terms of practical equality. It was plain, in a word, that Trade Unionism was a real power in the State; indeed, the Government was literally dependent on the goodwill and co-operation of the Unions for the organisation of labour and the prosecution of the war. Moreover, contrary to the expectations of many, the membership of the Unions did not diminish, but enormously increased. The mass of the new entrants into industry, and not least the women 'dilutees,' who poured into munition work or took the places of men on the railways or trams or in other trades, joined their Unions, and many of the 'old hands,' who had previously been indifferent, now realised the advantage and necessity of organising themselves. (For it was abundantly clear that the Trade Unions alone stood between the workers and the most disastrous exploitation, whether in the matter of low wages or excessively hard conditions of labour.) The attempts to sweat the women munition-workers in the earlier part of the war were peculiarly flagrant, and the greatest credit was due to the National Federation of Women Workers¹ and the late Mary MacArthur and her fellow-leaders for the struggle they waged against these attempts. Their efforts, though they did not ensure the women all they should have got, did immensely improve their position, and what was achieved by and for the munition-workers reacted favourably on the wages of women in other occupations.²

Meanwhile, there were below the surface signs of a profounder discontent in the more rebellious wing of the Trade Union movement. This did not, it is true, become of any great practical importance during the actual period of war, since the working class as a whole was as firmly set as other classes on "seeing it through." Nevertheless there were, as early as 1915 and 1916, significant premonitory symptoms, in the strikes of the South Wales miners and the Clyde engineers.) The causes of these outbreaks were partly psychological and partly economic. There was a small, but not unin-

¹ In 1921 this became the Women Workers' Section of the National Union of General Workers.

² See *Women in Trade Unions*, by Barbara Drake, especially ch. v.

fluent, section of Labour opposed from the beginning to the war, whether on general pacifist principles or on the view that this war was an affair of capitalist governments, with whom the proletariat had no business to make common cause. And when the Government and the employers attempted to impose particularly objectionable conditions in regard to wages and women's work on the engineering trade, the bolder spirits found their influence decidedly increased, even among the workmen who had little intellectual sympathy with their outlook. In Wales peace was restored after a struggle by the intervention of Ministers and the concession of a large part of the men's claims. On the Clyde the ferment was never completely suppressed, until in 1917 the Government took the drastic step of arresting and deporting the leaders of revolt. This ferment undoubtedly left its mark spiritually. And one practical development, at least, which must be dated from the Clyde troubles, is the Shop Stewards' movement, of which more will be said hereafter.

When the fighting ended in 1918, the British Labour movement was certainly stronger than it had ever been before. It had gained in numbers, in status and in self-confidence. On the outbreak of war in 1914, the total number of Trade Unionists was in round figures four millions. At the time of the Armistice in November, 1918, it was 6,500,000, and at the beginning of 1920 it had risen to nearly 8,000,000. (This increase was general in all trades, but it was most remarkable in agriculture, in general labour, among women, and among the non-manual workers.) The main cause everywhere was, no doubt, the general impetus to organisation under the pressure of war-time conditions. A lesser, but still considerable, cause is to be found in the growth of the 'democratic spirit.' Many thousands, especially of the 'black-coated proletariat'—clerks, typists, technicians, foremen and minor officials of all sorts, ceased to look on Trade Unionism as 'not respectable.' In some cases these 'brain-workers' took the step of allying themselves closely with the manual-workers; the Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen, for instance, affiliated

to the Trades Union Congress. Large strides in organisation were made also by the 'professionals' outside industry proper, such as teachers, journalists and actors. The farm-workers had a special stimulus given to them by the Corn Production Act, 1917, and the establishment of the Agricultural Wages Boards, which, in fact, have had an effect very similar to that of the Trade Boards in the low-paid urban industries. A certain proportion of the female membership in most of the Unions was, of course, purely temporary, since many of the women only acted as munition-makers or transport-workers "for the duration of the war," and returned, when peace came, to their homes.

In the political field, the prospects were good. The Labour Party had during the most critical part of the war loyally—there were some who thought too loyally—supported the Coalition Government. It had, it is true, in the course of the last year received some rebuffs, owing to its anxiety to find a way of putting an end to the bloodshed. Nevertheless, it seemed to stand high in popular favour; it had remodelled its constitution so as to admit freely any individuals, whether of the working class or middle class, in agreement with its policy; it had a generous programme of reform at home and it stood for peace with honour abroad. The General Election of December, however, disappointed the hopes of Labour. The majority of the electorate indulged itself in a final spasm of hate, was comparatively indifferent to reforms at home, and for Peace terms wanted vengeance and reparations. Many of the Labour candidates, even those who had fought in the war, were decried as 'pacifists' or 'pro-Germans,' and only 57 out of 361 were returned.

In the industrial sphere the situation was at first uncertain. Large hopes were entertained by politicians, by many middle-class people of genuine goodwill, and even by some of the working class, that a new era of peace in industry was about to dawn. Government Committees had been for a long time past working out schemes of 'reconstruction.' Machinery for the improvement of the relations between employers and

employed had been elaborated, notably in the shape of Joint Industrial Councils, or Whitley Councils as they are popularly called. Optimists even thought that the Trade Unions, now accustomed to compulsory arbitration, might be induced to accept it as a permanent institution and relegate the strike to limbo.

But it soon became clear that the vision of industrial peace was a mirage. The whole working class was seething with unrest. The reaction against the long strain at home and the discipline in the field showed itself both among the civilians and in the returning soldiers. The collapse of the great Empires in Europe and Asia and the triumph of the proletarian revolution in Russia excited new and dangerous thoughts. Presently there succeeded a profound disillusionment, as the Peace Conference at Paris steadily whittled away the new idealism, whilst at home (both employers and the Government showed the utmost reluctance to restore the Trade Union practices which had been suspended "for the duration of the war.") Meantime, economic conditions were worsening. The cost of living still mounted—in the summer of 1918 it had been 105 per cent. above the pre-war level; at the end of the year it was 125 per cent. above. Profiteering was rampant. Unemployment, due to the demobilisation of the armies and of the civilian 'war-workers,' was growing rapidly. Thus it was that, partly driven by sheer material pressure, partly in a spirit of vague discontent, partly under the inspiration of more definite 'revolutionary' ideas (of which we shall say more in a moment), Labour plunged again into the industrial fight.

During the year 1919 the number of trade disputes recorded by the Ministry of Labour reached a total of 1413, involving no less than 2,586,000 workpeople. The most important of these struggles occurred in the four great industries of coal-mining, engineering, transport and textiles. In the majority of cases they were concerned with wages or hours, though a few were fought on questions of demarcation, Trade Union recognition, and so on. But throughout, though the immediate claims might be purely economic, there was, becoming

more and more audible, another demand—the demand for the ‘democratic control of industry.’ This we shall discuss more fully later on; here it will be enough to say that this new spirit—new at least in its emphasis—has been the distinctive note of the industrial conflict as a whole since the war.

No statistics, of course, can give much idea of the character of this conflict. Nor even do these figures of disputes, high as they are, show the full extent of the upheaval. In 1919, indeed, they were within an ace of being swollen by a complete stoppage in the coal mines. Early in the year the miners put forward a triple claim, comprising (1) a 30 per cent. advance in wages (exclusive of the ‘war wage’ of 3s.), (2) the substitution of ‘six’ for ‘eight’ in the so-called Miners’ Eight Hours Act of 1908—a reform which would still have left the average working day at just under seven hours, and (3) the nationalisation of all the mines and minerals. Abortive negotiations took place with the Government on these demands, and a ballot was held to decide whether a strike should be declared. At the eleventh hour, however, the danger was averted by the appointment of a Royal Commission to consider the whole matter and report without delay. The Commission was composed of three representatives of the coal-owners, three business men nominated by the Government, three miners’ officials, and three persons (Sir Leo Chiozza Money, Mr. Sidney Webb, and Mr. R. H. Tawney) not connected with the industry but acceptable to the miners’ side, with a judge of the High Court, Sir John Sankey, as Chairman. The inquiry was pushed through rapidly, and by 20th March a Report—or rather three Reports—appeared. The coal-owners recommended an advance of 1s. 6d. a day for persons over sixteen, and 9d. a day for boys under sixteen, with a nominal seven-hour day underground and eight hours for surface-workers. The miners, and the three other Commissioners who signed their Report, recommended that the miners’ demands should be conceded. The third Report, signed by the Chairman and the remaining members, recommended a seven-hour day underground and an increase

of 2s. (with 1s. for boys under sixteen), and, while not agreeing immediately to the principle of nationalisation, stated that "even upon the evidence already given, the present system of ownership and working in the coal industry stands condemned, and some other system must be substituted for it, either nationalisation or a method of unification by national purchase and/or by joint control." The Government declared its intention of adopting the Sankey Report "in spirit and in letter," and after a short interval the Commission began its second stage. This was concluded in June, when four separate Reports were issued. The employers were implacably hostile to nationalisation. One member, Sir Arthur Duckham, favoured a scheme of management by publicly controlled 'trusts' or amalgamations of colliery companies. The miners and Mr. Justice Sankey both advocated national ownership, though they would have given a larger share to the workers in the management of the industry than he. The Government now, however, to the indignant surprise of the miners, changed its front, and the Prime Minister declared definitely against nationalisation. The Unions were not in a position at the moment to enforce their demands by a strike, and they set themselves, with the official support of all the Labour bodies, to a campaign of propaganda in the country. (The result so far, therefore, was that the miners had gained an advance in wages and a reduction of hours, but had been baulked in their larger aim.) There was no real settlement, but rather an exacerbation of feeling on both sides, and a certainty of further trouble before long.

In the autumn of 1919 occurred another great spectacular contest. The railwaymen had without any difficulty secured an eight-hour day, which came into operation on 1st February. But the adjustment of their wages, or 'standardisation' as it was called, was another matter. Negotiations between the Unions and the Government had dragged on all through the spring and summer. In August a settlement was made with the drivers and firemen organised in the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, but the

terms offered 'definitively' to the rest of the railway workers were such as could not be accepted by their organisation, the National Union of Railwaymen. In the middle of September, therefore, a dangerous crisis was reached. It is impossible here to go into the details of the events that led to the final explosion. There was a widespread belief that the Government wished to drive the men to desperate action in order to break them. It certainly had made all preparations for beating them should a strike be declared. It was argued on the Government's behalf that its intentions had been grievously misunderstood, and that there was no justification for the charge that wages were actually to be reduced. But it is certain that, if there was a misunderstanding, the Government's tortuous behaviour was mainly responsible for it. In any case there was a deadlock, and on 24th September a national strike was ordered at forty-eight hours' notice. It lasted for nine days, and it was in many ways veritably 'a nine days' wonder.'

Practically the whole of the manual workers on the railways came out. The drivers and firemen, members of the Associated Society, loyally supported their comrades of the N.U.R. The clerical and administrative staffs, organised in the Railway Clerks' Association, remained at their posts, but refused to act as strike-breakers. On the other hand, the excellence of the Government's preparations was at once revealed. Fleets of motor lorries were used for the supply of food, whilst a few trains were kept running each day by volunteers, mostly of the upper classes, aided by a handful of 'blacklegs.' The bitterest feeling was caused, not only among the railwaymen but throughout the working class, by the relish with which many of these amateurs threw themselves into the work of "smashing the Unions." (And their indignation was heightened by the attitude of the Prime Minister, who labelled the strike an "anarchist conspiracy," and of the Press,) which denounced it as a crime against the community. It was remarkable in the circumstances that there was practically no violence in any part of the country. Another

notable feature was the assistance given to the strikers by the Co-operative movement, an assistance without which the Union would have been hard put to it to carry on.)

But what was perhaps most remarkable of all was the way in which the contest was fought out. Both sides conducted an organised publicity campaign in the newspapers, by advertisements, articles, statistics and cartoons, on the screen of the cinema and on the hoardings in the streets. In this campaign the railwaymen started at a disadvantage, save for their one asset in the shape of the Labour paper, the *Daily Herald*. But within a week it was plain that their case was beginning to be understood by the distracted public, and was, in fact, winning on its merits. Eventually negotiations were renewed, and, mainly through the mediation of a number of Labour officials representing various sections of the Trade Union movement and the Labour Party, an agreement was reached and the strike was called off. The terms of settlement were claimed as a victory by each side; in fact, they were a compromise which gave the railwaymen a good deal of what they were demanding. In its broader aspects this struggle offered some significant lessons both to Capital and Labour. The Government learned that the crushing of Trade Unionism was by no means an easy task. The Unions learned that, if they were to engage in contests not merely with particular bodies of employers but with the State, either as protagonist or standing in reserve, so to speak, with all its resources, there must be a better organisation of forces in the Labour movement. And the general public at the same time learned that the new fashion of calling any large industrial dispute a "strike against the community" made but little appeal to the workman, who can put two and two together as easily as can a Cabinet Minister or a journalist.

The situation in 1920 was not essentially different from that of 1919. There were 1715 disputes, involving 2,019,000 workpeople; but, save in the coal mines and engineering, which accounted respectively for 1,414,000 and 152,000 of this total, they were of less magnitude.

As in the previous year, however, there was much unrest which did not actually break into strikes. Another national stoppage on the railways was barely averted in the autumn. There was considerable trouble over the question of 'ex-service men' in the engineering trades, and still more in the building industry, where a wrangle continued throughout the year between the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives and the Government. A strike in the transport industry was avoided by the reference of the claim for a minimum wage of 16s. a day for dock labour to a Court of Inquiry under the new Industrial Courts Act.¹

The contest between the Government and the miners began anew in the autumn. The miners had been restive all through the year, dissatisfied as they were with their own wages, the high cost of coal as well as of other articles of necessity, and the whole finance

¹ The Industrial Courts Act, 1919, sets up (1) an Industrial Court, appointed by the Minister of Labour from employers, workmen, women and 'independent' persons. To this Court the Minister may refer any trade dispute, either actual or apprehended, if both parties consent; or he may refer the dispute to arbitrators appointed by him, or to a board of arbitration representing the employers and workmen, with a chairman appointed by himself. There is no penalty attaching to a failure to comply with the Court's award. (2) Part II. sets up Courts of Inquiry, consisting of persons nominated by the Minister, who may refer any existing or apprehended dispute to them. The Court of Inquiry takes evidence on oath, which may be published by the Minister, and issues reports, which must immediately be laid before Parliament. This measure, as originally drafted, contained clauses which virtually established compulsory arbitration and made Trade Union funds liable for strikes of their members against the arbitrators' decisions. These, however, met with determined opposition from Labour, and were dropped. The dockers' inquiry was remarkable for several reasons. Their case was put with great ability by Mr. Ernest Bevin, of the Dockers' Union, and was based mainly on the necessity of a better standard of life as well as on the rise in the cost of living. The Court, in its judgment, rejected the principle of the 'sliding scale' basis of payment, and insisted that a living wage should mean "a right to have life ordered upon a higher standard." And it was severe upon the scandalous system of casual labour which used men "as the spare parts of an industrial machine." The principal recommendations were (1) a 16s. minimum per day on the basis of the 44 hours' week; (2) registration of all dock labour and maintenance of unemployed casual labour; (3) the constitution of a Whitley Council for the docks.

and administration of the industry as conducted by the Government and the employers. They now claimed that the surplus profits were such as to allow of an increased wage for themselves and a reduction in coal prices to the public. The second of these claims, which was denounced by the Government and by the greater part of the Press, was presently dropped, and after fruitless negotiations issue was joined on the demand for an immediate wage advance, with the promise of an impartial inquiry into the possibility of reducing prices. The Government denied that higher wages could be afforded by the industry, unless the miners would guarantee a greater output, and this vexed question of output eventually became the crux of the dispute. After a three weeks' stoppage of all the pits in the country a settlement was agreed upon. An advance of wage was conceded, which, however, should vary according to the aggregate output of the industry, whilst a new national wage scheme was to be prepared jointly by the coal-owners and miners. This basis of payment was, in the circumstances of the industry, a ridiculous one, as well as being vicious in principle. But it was not likely to be permanent, and indeed was only accepted with reluctance by the miners as a way out of a situation from which they were anxious to escape.

The struggle as a whole did not appeal to the public sympathy as had the railwaymen's case twelve months previously. The Press, which was almost unanimously hostile, had long before the actual rupture been monotonously chanting the tune of the "crime against the community," and it was the weak points rather than the strong points of the miners' case that were allowed to leak out.¹ For the Trade Union movement itself the main lesson was again the necessity for better organisation; for it was revealed to all the world that the sectional interests and policies of the (three partners in the Triple

¹ For the miners' case, see *Facts about the Coal Dispute*, published by the Triple Industrial Alliance, 2d.; and for a record of the strike and the terms of settlement, see *Monthly Circular* of the Labour Research Department, vol. vii. Nos. 4, 5 and 6.

Alliance¹ were tending to turn that formidable monster into a white elephant, if not an actual danger to Labour.)

Apart from trade disputes proper, the outstanding event of 1920 was the sudden and unexpected use of the industrial weapon for a purely political purpose. Early in August there appeared to be a grave danger that the Government, under militarist and anti-Bolshevik pressure, would rush the country to the help of Poland against the Soviet armies. While affairs were on a razor edge, a joint conference of the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party Executives was called on 9th August at a few hours' notice, and the following resolution was passed :

" That this Joint Conference, representing the Trades Union Congress, the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party, feels certain that war is being engineered between the Allied Powers and Soviet Russia on the issue of Poland, and declares that such a war would be an intolerable crime against humanity: it therefore warns the Government that the whole industrial power of the organised workers will be used to defeat this war.

" That the Executive Committees of affiliated organisations throughout the country be summoned to hold themselves ready to proceed to London for a National Conference.

" That they be advised to instruct their members to down tools on instructions from that National Conference.

" And that a Council of Action be immediately constituted to take such steps as may be necessary to carry the above decisions into effect."

Three days later the National Conference, consisting of 689 representatives of Trade Unions and 355 of local Labour Parties and Trades Councils, met and endorsed

¹ The Triple Industrial Alliance, comprising the Miners' Federation, the National Union of Railwaymen and the Transport Workers' Federation, was established in 1915 (though not formally constituted till 1917). It was based on the desire for better co-ordination between the great interdependent industries of coal and transport, and had an elaborate constitution regulating the powers and duties of the three bodies. See articles in the *Labour Year Book*, 1916 and 1919, and *Trade Unionism on the Railways*, by G. D. H. Cole and R. P. Arnot, ch. xiv.

the formation of the Council of Action. The Council was instructed to remain in being until it had secured not only guarantees against any British participation in the war, but also the "recognition of the Russian Soviet Government and the establishment of unrestricted trading and commercial relationships between Great Britain and Russia." Local Councils of Action sprang up all over the country, and preparations were made for a general strike at a moment's notice. But no strike was necessary; for it was evident that in the face of this unanimity war was impossible. The Prime Minister, indeed, sneered at the whole move as being quite unnecessary; the Government had not contemplated going to war, and the fears of Labour were a mere illusion. But the general public certainly did not believe this, and on all the evidence they were right in not believing it. Many, who were uncomfortable about the theory of direct action, readily agreed that a great peril had been averted by the promptitude and solidarity of the Labour movement.

The Council of Action was, of course, met with a chorus of indignation from the more conservative politicians and Press. It was denounced as subversive of democratic government and as open insurrection. That it was unconstitutional in a technical sense is undeniable. It was defended by the more moderate Labour leaders, who had hitherto been consistently opposed to direct action, on the ground that in the critical circumstances it was justified by sheer necessity. And it was argued with much force that Parliament had long been reduced by the Ministry to such a state of subservience and impotence that it was notoriously unrepresentative of the national will, and that the partisans of direct action were in fact upholding the spirit of the constitution in breaking its letter.

By the Left wing of Labour the Council was welcomed eagerly for what it promised in the future. The more optimistic saw in the machinery thus called into being the nucleus of a revolutionary organisation, which would be ready when the moment came for other and more far-reaching purposes. And in the new spirit

which animated the movement they divined the happiest omens. But these hopes were pitched too high. The formation of the Council of Action effected its immediate purpose, which was to prevent war. On that organised Labour was unquestionably united, and had, indeed, the support of the majority of other classes in the community. But when presently attempts were made to push the Council on to more positive activities in the way of forcing the Government to come to terms with the Soviets, the issue was no longer so clear and simple, and there was much less enthusiasm, if not less agreement.

CHAPTER IV

LEAN YEARS (1921-1927)

The Trade Depression—Unemployment and Wage Reductions—The Miners' Dispute in 1921—"Black Friday"—The Engineering Lock-out of 1922—The First Labour Government—More Trouble in the Mines—The General Strike and the Coal Lock-out of 1926—Repressive Legislation.

IN 1921 there began a period of lean years for the Trade Union movement. The trade boom, with its exaggerated hopes and its illusory gains, was ended, and depression swept like a flood over the industries of the country. Its causes were to be found in the effects of the long war, with its waste and exhaustion, the topsyturvy state of finance, the enfeeblement of European trade in general, and the loss, in particular, of markets in Germany, Russia and Austria. The opening of 1921 saw unemployment rising rapidly in nearly every industry and short time almost universal; while the Trade Unions, their funds heavily drained by out-of-work pay, were engaged in a tussle with the Government over the remedies to be applied.¹ The employers lost little time in insisting on all-round wage reductions. This policy was justified, they argued, and even necessary, in view of the drop in the cost of living; the Ministry of Labour index figure fell from 176 in November, 1920, to 119 in the following June. But many employers were not content with proportionate reductions in wage rates. They pushed their attack home savagely, and vast numbers of workers, even if they were lucky enough to be fully employed, were forced down to a lower standard of living.

The first serious blow was dealt at the miners, and

¹ The number of insured workpeople unemployed in Great Britain in May, 1921, reached the record figure of 2,549,000.

their obstinate resistance was only overcome after a three months' strike. They were dissatisfied with a settlement that had been reached in the previous autumn; things were going badly with the industry owing to the trade depression on the Continent and the deliveries of German 'Reparations' coal in France. Many collieries were put on short time, output decreased and earnings fell heavily. The owners proposed large cuts in the standard rates, and they were hankering after district wage settlements. Nevertheless there might still have been peace, but for the Government's decision to advance the date of decontrolling the mines on the ground that the burden was now too heavy for the Exchequer to bear. Control should have continued till 31st August, and its sudden discontinuance was regarded by both owners and miners as a breach of faith. It was obvious that the effect of this would be to make a satisfactory agreement on the wages question impossible, since it removed any chance of the industry pulling itself together, as it might have done if it had had the assistance of the State till the end of the summer. But the Government was deaf to all warnings. In March a Decontrol Bill was rushed through Parliament, and the parties were left to fight out their dispute. After protracted negotiations the owners' terms were rejected; the miners stood out for national wage negotiations and a 'pool' of profits, in order to avoid the glaring inequalities of wages which would otherwise be inevitable. The strike, which was declared for 1st April, promised to be of no ordinary character. On the first day of the stoppage, the Miners' Federation called for the aid of its partners in the Triple Alliance, the National Union of Railwaymen and the Transport Workers' Federation. There was considerable public alarm at the prospect of so vast a sympathetic strike; the Government proclaimed a 'State of Emergency' under the Emergency Powers Act, and troops were moved into colliery districts. On 8th April the railwaymen and transport workers agreed to come out; but a respite of four days was given. There were hectic negotiations with the Government, but the miners re-

fused the terms of settlement proposed by the Prime Minister, and orders were issued for the transport workers and railwaymen to cease work at 10 p.m. on Friday, 15th April. On the night of the 14th, however, Mr. Hodges, the Miners' Secretary, made a speech which indicated the possibility of an eleventh-hour settlement, and early the next morning the Prime Minister summoned the miners' and the owners' representatives to Downing Street. The Miners' Executive did not go; they sat in their own office and repudiated Mr. Hodges. He resigned, but was persuaded to withdraw his resignation, at least temporarily. All this was told to the executives of the Transport Workers and the N.U.R., who were in session at their headquarters, and immediately a fierce contest arose as to whether the orders for the railway and transport strike should be cancelled. They were cancelled—to the astonishment of all who were in the dark as to what had happened, and to the dismay of millions of Trade Unionists, inside and outside the Triple Alliance, who regarded this action as a gross betrayal, both of the miners and of the larger cause of Labour solidarity. We cannot go here into all the details of the episode of "Black Friday," as it was called. None of the parties was free of blame, but excuse could be found for all in the confusion and excitement that reigned, and there is no reason to believe that any of them were acting otherwise than in what they believed to be the best interests of those they represented. As for the calling off of the railway and transport strike, the experiences of 1926 may make us doubt whether it was such a disaster to Labour as it was painted at the time. And the demise of the Triple Alliance, unedifying and painful though the circumstances were, was perhaps a blessing in disguise.¹

The miners now went on alone. They clung stubbornly to their demand for the pool, though the owners and the Government were adamant against it, and a number of their own leaders, as afterwards transpired thought the fight for it was hopeless. The dispute

¹ See the reference to it on p. 43 above, which was written some months before "Black Friday."

dragged on till the beginning of July, when the miners at last gave in and accepted the best terms they could get. There was to be no pool, and no national wage settlement, but district boards with a joint national board to supervise. The Government promised a grant of £10,000,000 to the industry for three months, during which period wages were to be progressively reduced. After that there would be a permanent settlement, with standard wages in each district and a standard owners' profit (17 per cent. of the sum payable as standard wages), and also a fixed ratio for the division of "surplus profit"—17 per cent. for the owners and 83 per cent. for the men.

This struggle, though it brought little but suffering and defeat to the miners, did something to check the headlong fall of wages in other industries, since it served as a warning to employers generally to show discretion in their attack. But the attack continued, in the stronger and the weaker trades alike. (The repeal of the Corn Production Act deprived the agricultural labourers of their legal minimum wage.) They were offered the farcical machinery of 'voluntary' boards, and, of course, suffered heavy losses. A resolute offensive was launched against the Trade Boards, which, it was complained, were fixing and maintaining excessively high rates and causing unemployment. The employers got the ear of the Minister of Labour, and the Government appointed a Committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Cave, to inquire into the working of the Trade Board system. The Report of the Cave Committee was a reactionary document. It paid a tribute to the usefulness of the Trade Boards in preventing sweating and improving organisation in the weakest industries. It did not propose, therefore, to destroy the system, but only to emasculate it. It recommended that the Trade Boards should be restricted to their original anti-sweating function, that they should fix minimum rates for the lower grades of workers, but should not meddle with the higher grades. To use the machinery of the Boards to make standard rates, it was declared, was an oppressive exercise of the powers of the State. This recommendation, coupled with others calculated to reduce the rates

even of the lowly-paid, meant in effect putting the Trade Boards Act of 1918 into the wastepaper-basket, and returning to the feebler principle of the 1909 measure. The whole Labour movement was up in arms against this retrogression. The Government, however, favoured the Cave proposals, and in 1923 brought in a Bill to give effect to them; but the opposition from all sides was so great that it could not be pushed through. The Labour Government in 1924 was, of course, on the side of the Trade Boards, and the Conservatives on their return to power in 1925 decided to leave the system as it was, but not to do anything to encourage its extension.

In 1921 some 7,500,000 workers, according to the returns of the Ministry of Labour, had suffered decreases of wages, amounting to a net aggregate of over £6,000,000 per week. The process continued in the following year, when 7,700,000 persons had a net decrease of £4,200,000 per week. A good many of the decreases, of course, were automatic under cost of living sliding scales, but even here employers were frequently able to enforce extra reductions. The Trade Unions were powerless to stem the attack; they were crippled financially, and they were losing heavily in membership.¹ Unemployment remained at an extraordinary level,² and the coal industry was in the slough of despond.

This melancholy state of affairs was enlivened in a grim way by an engineering lock-out in the spring of 1922. The Amalgamated Engineering Union had for some time been in dispute with the employers on the question of overtime. The Union claimed for its members the right to a voice in deciding when certain kinds of

¹ The total membership of Trade Unions at the end of 1920 was 8,334,000; 5,620,000 at end of 1921; 5,613,000 at end of 1922.

² The number of insured workpeople unemployed in Great Britain and Northern Ireland stood at 1,502,950 in June, 1922. In the same month the total number of persons in receipt of poor relief (in England and Wales alone) was 1,837,980—or 1 in 21 of the whole population. This heavy roll of pauperism was due to the failure of the Unemployment Insurance Act and relief works to meet the prevailing distress, and to the Government's policy of encouraging recourse to the Poor Law, and thus shifting as much of the cost of relief as possible from the taxes to the rates.

overtime work were necessary. The employers replied that this meant an interference with 'managerial functions,' which were theirs alone. After a good deal of wrangling, A.E.U. members were locked out on 13th March, but negotiations with other Unions in the industry continued for some weeks more. The aim of the employers was to keep the A.E.U. and the other craft and labour Unions divided, and their efforts to play on the difference of interests got more than a little support from the obvious lack of solidarity on the workers' side. Eventually, on 2nd May, lock-out notices were posted against all the other Unions. A Court of Inquiry was held which satisfied no one; its findings leaned to the employers' side, though it made some rather vague suggestions for a compromise. Renewed negotiations followed, from which the A.E.U. withdrew in dudgeon. The other Unions, sick of a quarrel which they felt had been forced upon them, came to a provisional agreement. They took a ballot, which showed a large majority for acceptance of the employers' terms, and a return to work was decided on. This forced the hands of the A.E.U., and they, too, balloted and surrendered. The dispute had a double significance. (It showed, in the first place, that Capital had small intention of yielding voluntarily even an inch to Labour's demand for a voice in control. And, secondly, it showed only too plainly the deplorable disunity in the engineering industry, and the need (of which we shall say more in a later chapter) of a drastic reorganisation.)

In 1923 the Unions for the most part were still on the defensive, and still losing members, though a 'Back to the Unions' campaign was carried on with such vigour as the low state of finances would allow. The miserable conditions in the rural districts were revealed by a strike of the Norfolk farm labourers in the spring for a 30s. minimum. And an acrimonious dispute between the Co-operative 'Wholesale Society and the National Union of Allied and Distributive Workers and the Shop Assistants' Union revealed an unpleasant, though not new, disharmony inside the Labour movement. In November, Parliament was dissolved. The

Conservatives, who went to the country on a Protectionist programme, lost heavily, and in February, 1924, the Labour Party took office for the first time. But the importance of this lay rather in its moral effects—in the stimulus that it gave to the whole movement, in the posing of new problems of policy and tactics—than in any material achievements.

The Labour Government could, indeed, hardly hope to achieve much. It was in a minority in the House of Commons, and it was unwilling to make any arrangement which would ensure it the support of the Liberals. It 'recognised' the Soviet Government, did the best it could with the Budget, grappled with the housing question, and restored the legal minimum wage for agricultural labourers. But no ambitious measure had any chance; a Bill for the nationalisation of the coal mines was introduced, but heavily defeated on second reading. In the late summer the Government got into difficulties, particularly over a treaty which it was trying to negotiate with Russia, and a general election in the autumn gave the Conservatives an immense majority. So far as the industrial movement was concerned, the Labour Party's tenure of office made little noticeable difference. There was no reason, in fact, why it should; the Cabinet was not in control of industry and had no power to make leopards change their spots. Unemployment was still very grave, though there was a slight decrease in the figures during the first eight months of the year. Unrest was marked in many trades, where the workers were trying to repair their losses.¹ Of the disputes that took place during the year, the most notable were in building, shipbuilding, the docks, and the railway and London tube, bus and tram services. The miners were again pressing their demands for better conditions, but stopped short of a national strike. A Court of Inquiry was held into the wages of the industry, and eventually an agreement was reached which promised some improvement. The promise was not

¹ There was a slight increase of wages in a number of trades in 1924, and a rise in the total of Trade Union membership (5,534,000 in 1924; 5,413,000 in 1923).

fulfilled, however. A heavy slump set in in both the home and the export trade ;¹ nearly every district was hard hit, and wages fell to the bare minimum.

It was now pretty clear that the coalfields were the forcing-bed of trouble. The situation became rapidly worse during the spring and summer of 1925, and the moves made by the Government, by the Miners' Federation, and by the General Council of the T.U.C. and the executives of other Unions, were the prelude to the upheaval of the following year. (The coal-owners put forward proposals for abolishing existing minimum rates and for district settlements on a basis which would make profits take precedence of wages.) These were indignantly rejected by a delegate conference of the miners. A Court of Inquiry was set up which declared that a minimum wage should be a first charge on the industry. The owners, angered by this report, prepared for a lock-out to enforce their terms. On the other side the General Council of the T.U.C. and the railwaymen and transport workers were preparing to assist the miners ; and on 30th July their plans were endorsed by a conference of Unions affiliated to the Congress. On the same day a Cabinet meeting was held, as a result of which Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister, announced that the Government would grant the subsidy which he had hitherto maintained to be impossible. The subsidy provided for payments up to £10,000,000 for nine months (it actually came in the end to £23,000,000), and a Royal Commission, with Sir Herbert Samuel as Chairman, was appointed to inquire into and report upon the conditions of the coal industry. So the danger was averted for the moment.

The Royal Commission made a prolonged investigation. The owners put their case before it, demanding longer hours, lower wages, and settlements on a purely district basis. The miners, in conjunction with the

¹ The occupation of the Ruhr by the French in 1923 had reduced the production of German coal by over 70 million tons and given a temporary fillip to the British mines. Our coal exports amounted to 79,189,000 tons in 1923 (as against 64,198,000 tons in 1922). In 1924 they fell to 61,651,000 tons, and in 1925 to 50,800,000.

General Council of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party, stood for a reorganisation of the industry under public ownership. The Commission, in the report it issued on 10th March, 1926, took a line of its own. It insisted that there must be reductions of wages, but it made certain recommendations which would, it believed, ease the blow. It declared against the lengthening of hours. It strongly criticised the bad organisation of the industry, and proposed various improvements, but did not favour compulsion on the owners to amalgamate collieries. Mining royalties should be nationalised, but not the mines.) The subsidy was vicious and should be discontinued.

This report met with a cold reception. It offered neither of the disputants what they most wanted, while all those who took a longer and deeper view deplored its timidity on the crucial point of reorganisation. It pointed out clearly enough that drastic reorganisation was imperative; but what real hope was there that the owners would do anything effective of their own free will? However, the Prime Minister declared that the Government would accept the report and introduce the legislation necessary to implement it, provided that both miners and owners signified that they also would accept it. The owners gave a grumbling and doubtful assent; the miners refused to look at a reduction of wages. Throughout the latter part of April there were discussions and negotiations which brought agreement no nearer. Towards the end of the month the owners posted their new terms at the pits, involving heavy cuts in wages; and the lock-out notices took effect on 30th April. Meantime the General Council of the T.U.C. had been working closely with the Miners' Executive and vainly trying to find some formula in regard to wages on which the miners and the Government could agree. A specially summoned conference of executives of Unions affiliated to the T.U.C. endorsed its efforts and declared for the continuance of negotiations, on the condition that the lock-out notices were withdrawn. They were not withdrawn, and the deadlock was complete. On Saturday, 1st May, the conference of Union

executives voted, by an overwhelming majority and amid great enthusiasm, for a national sympathetic strike, to begin on the following Tuesday, unless a last-hour settlement could be reached. Desperate attempts were made by the negotiating committee of the General Council to find a satisfactory formula, and on Sunday night there seemed a chance of averting the stoppage. But suddenly and unexpectedly the Government hardened its heart. At midnight Mr. Baldwin summoned the General Council representatives to inform them that negotiations could not continue, unless there were an "immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the instructions for a general strike," together with a repudiation of the printers who had just refused to print the *Daily Mail*. This latter action the General Council had known nothing about. It appeared that members of the National Amalgamated Trade Society of Operative Printers and Assistants (commonly called Natsopa) in the *Daily Mail* office had struck suddenly and without authorisation against an offensive anti-Labour article which it was proposed to publish the next day. Whatever the rights and wrongs of this action might have been, it was an incredibly trivial ground for abandoning the hope of peace. The fact seems to be that it was no more than a pretext seized upon by the Die-hard section in the Cabinet, who were willing, if not eager, to try a fall with the Trade Unions.

The General Strike began on 3rd May and lasted till the 12th. Actually it was not 'general'; certain Unions only were called out. But these were in 'key' industries such as transport, railways and printing, whose stoppage, together with that of the coal mines, was sufficient to cause widespread paralysis; and, moreover, the General Council was empowered to call out other Unions if and when it was judged necessary.¹ In principle, therefore, the strike was general.

¹ The total number of strikers (exclusive of the miners) was officially given as 1,580,000, in the transport, railway, building, printing and heavy metal industries. Towards the end (on 10th and 11th May) the flour-mill workers and engineers and shipbuilders were instructed to come out. But it was now too late, and the call met with only a partial response.

(The stoppage of the printers must be regarded as a tactical error. Not only was it an interference with the freedom of the Press, which gave offence to many who were in sympathy with Labour ; but it weakened rather than strengthened the fighting power of the strikers.) It made communication of both news and propaganda more difficult. It deprived the Unions of the chance—which was by no means a bad chance—of getting their case put fairly in some, at least, of the capitalist newspapers. And it speedily gave the Government the whip hand. Hopes of carrying on the *Daily Herald* were foiled, and the General Council had to make shift with a substitute under the name of the *British Worker*. The rest of the newspapers, after two or three days' suspension, appeared in a truncated form, typed or hand-printed or machined by blackleg labour. But the most serious antagonist of the *British Worker* was an official news-sheet produced under the direction of Mr. Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had commandeered paper supplies and borrowed the printing offices of the *Morning Post*. This organ, the *British Gazette*, was a remarkably unscrupulous production, which made no pretence of impartiality, but distorted or suppressed news, speeches and opinions (including an appeal for conciliation made by the Archbishop of Canterbury), for propagandist purposes. Its seven days of existence cost the taxpayers some £10,000 ; it inflamed passions on both sides, and it no doubt did some damage to the Trade Unions' cause.

The actual conduct of the strike reflected great credit on those who were engaged in it. Both the strikers and the public, as a whole, showed restraint and good temper ; though there were a few incidents—some of them deliberately provoked by mischief-makers—violence and panic were conspicuously absent. The Government had, of course, made elaborate preparation, as it was bound to do, for keeping order and maintaining food supplies and other essential services. The bourgeoisie provided many volunteers for strike-breaking (including, in the words of the Annual Register for

1927, "large University contingents conspicuous alike in manners and habiliments"), and in the course of a few days a moderately efficient skeleton transport service began to develop in London and elsewhere. It was clear from the outset that the Government, with all the resources at its command, could not be forced to capitulate. It was soon equally clear to the General Council that the prolongation of the strike would only mean defeat by attrition, and ultimate disaster for the whole Trade Union movement, without any advantage to the miners. The Government, on its side, insisted that the strike was a threat to the constitution, if not a revolution, and that it must be called off unconditionally before negotiations could be resumed on the mining quarrel. This contention, based as it was on a false assumption (for the general strike did not, of course, aim at the overthrow of the constitution, or even at the displacement of the existing Government),¹ was opposed by a large section of the public, as well as by the General Council, and strenuous efforts were made to find a basis for a compromise. On 10th May it was hoped that such a basis had been found. Sir Herbert Samuel, the Chairman of the Coal Commission, intervened as a mediator, and formulated new proposals for a settlement of the mining dispute. The essence of these proposals was that wage reductions should only take place after adequate assurances had been given that measures of reorganisation in the industry would be put into effect; that a Mines National Board should be set up, to include representatives of miners and owners

¹ Desperate attempts were made on the Government side to prove that the strike was 'illegal,' and that Trade Union officials who called out their members were not protected by Section 3 of the Trade Disputes Act, 1906, against actions in tort for procuring breaches of contract. Support was given to this view by a judgment of Mr. Justice Astbury on 11th May, 1926, in the Sailors' and Firemen's Union case. But the so-called 'Astbury judgment' was merely an *obiter dictum*, and the weight of legal opinion was in the opposite direction. It required the passage of the Trade Unions Act, 1927, to make the general strike illegal. (For a discussion of the point, see *The Law Quarterly Review*, July, 1926; *The Solicitors' Journal*, 15th May, 1926; and *The Economist*, 22nd and 29th May, 1926.)

with a neutral element and an independent chairman ; and that this Board should aim at a simplified wages agreement, which would not touch the existing rates of the lower-paid men, and would fix an irreducible minimum for all grades. The general strike should be called off on the understanding that the Government would agree to get the lock-out notices withdrawn and to reopen negotiations on this basis. The Government did not unequivocally pledge itself to this course ; but the General Council were satisfied, and urged the miners to accept the 'Samuel Memorandum.' The miners, however, rejected it, despite all attempts at persuasion and pressure.

The position was now lamentable. The General Council regarded the Miners' Executive as perverse in throwing away this opportunity of securing the utmost that could be hoped for. They were convinced that the strike was weakening and that it was their duty to terminate it while their forces were still in good order rather than let it peter out in confusion, anger and despair. On 12th May they unconditionally called it off. There was some heartburning, naturally enough, and charges of treachery and cowardice were levelled at the members of the General Council. But there is no evidence that they were frightened, as their accusers maintained, by threats that the Government would repeal the Trade Disputes Act, sequester Trade Union funds and arrest Trade Union leaders. Some of these leaders had, of course, disliked the strike from the beginning ; all of them were now agreed that the miners' attitude made its continuance futile. And they were supported by the great majority of the rank and file. The result was a bitter disappointment, though this was tempered by the feeling that the working class had acquitted itself well, that it had shown moderation as well as courage, that a fine proof of solidarity had been given, and that these ten days had brought many converts to the Labour movement.

The immediate aftermath, however, was deplorable. In the first moment of relief, indeed, the Prime Minister

showed his better self, and expressed the almost universal feeling of the country, by issuing a public appeal for a conciliatory attitude on the part of the employers. But few of them heeded him; reprisals, swift and hard, became the order of the day. Strikers returning to work were shown the door, or taken back only provisionally, or on condition of paying a forfeit or accepting reductions of wages or grade. The companies exacted from the railway Trade Unions a humiliating apology for their breach of contract, and even then refused reinstatement to a number of their employees. And other employers followed their example, though with rather less ferocity. But the storm blew over before long, and, although a good many individuals continued to suffer, in general work was resumed on the old terms. One rather dangerous-looking legacy of the strike, however, appeared a few weeks later. Certain employers set about forming 'Company Unions'—private organisations of their own employees, who would be required to abandon membership of their proper Trade Unions, or, if they kept the double membership, to pledge themselves not to damage their firm's interest by striking at the order of the "outside" body. The *Manchester Guardian* newspaper was most prominent in this move. Its proprietors had always been on excellent terms with their employees, and only after full consultation with them drew up an elaborate agreement, which did indeed promise fair enough conditions to all the members of the 'Manchester Guardian and Evening News Society,' as the new organisation was called. But the challenge to the larger principle of Trade Unionism, and the fear of what would happen if this example should be widely followed, naturally caused irritation and anxiety in the Labour world. In fact, however, very few attempts were made to follow the example—or very few, at any rate, were successful—and the *Manchester Guardian* experiment stands practically alone.

(After the collapse of the General Strike, the miners' struggle went on with unabated vigour. The Prime Minister ignored the Samuel Memorandum, and put

forward a new set of proposals of his own which included legislation on colliery amalgamations, a levy on royalties for pit baths, a National Wages Board similar to that in the railway service, a National Fuel and Power Commission, and a Government grant to the industry of about £3,000,000. The miners were required to accept reductions of wages, and the owners to forgo profits during a specified period; a Bill for the lengthening of hours would be prepared, if the parties consented. These terms were rejected. The miners insisted that before they agreed to any wage reductions they must be assured of a genuine reorganisation in the industry. The owners pressed for longer hours and purely district settlements. The Government then proceeded to ignore the findings of the Royal Commission and the protests of the miners by rushing through Parliament a permissive Eight Hours Bill,¹ together with a feeble measure of reorganisation. On important recommendations of the Commission, such as State purchase of royalties, municipal selling of coal and legal pit committees, it turned its back. It was, in effect, taking sides openly with the owners, whilst still asserting that only the miners' stubbornness prevented a satisfactory settlement. A number of bishops and leaders of the Non-conformist Churches now came into the field with suggestions for a settlement; but they were snubbed by the Government, and their proposals were rejected by a vote of the coalfields. In September, during the absence of the Prime Minister, it looked for a moment as if Mr. Winston Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, might pull off a settlement with a proposal to set up a National Appeal Tribunal to deal with questions of wages and hours. But the owners treated

¹ The official title is the Coal Mines Act, 1926. It is in force till 1931, and it allows eight hours to be worked in the mines on any number of days in the year. Since 1919 the statutory day had been seven hours (which might be extended to eight on not more than sixty days in the year). The miners' eight-hour day actually means eight and a half or more underground, since 'winding time' (*i.e.* the time spent in lowering or raising the shift) is not included in the legal maximum. See *Report of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry* (1925), chap. xiii.

him with contumely; Mr. Baldwin presently returned to London, the Churchill policy was coolly dropped, and the Government again pressed unacceptable terms on the miners. By now it was clear that the fight was hopeless. There was not only acute distress in the coalfields, but dissension was growing and men were slowly drifting back to work. In certain areas the integrity of the Miners' Federation itself was threatened by the formation of independent Unions.¹ Desperate efforts were made by Mr. A. J. Cook, the secretary of the Federation, and by other leaders, to stop the rot. The railwaymen and transport workers were urged to put an embargo on coal, and all Unions to impose a levy for the miners. The first request was refused, the second was accepted only in the form of a voluntary levy which nobody supposed would be of much avail. The General Council of the T.U.C. made a last attempt at mediation, and the Government issued its final proposals, which were put to the vote of the mining districts. They were rejected, but the rejection was only a gesture of despair, and the end came with the opening of district negotiations with the owners. The agreements come to varied in different areas; here the working day was fixed at 7½ hours, there at 8, whilst wage rates were heavily cut in some districts and in others, e.g. Nottinghamshire, temporarily increased.

This fight, which lasted nearly seven months, was the severest in the history of British industry. It brought defeat at every point to the miners, and came within an ace of wrecking their Federation. It accentuated class bitterness and bred bad blood within the Labour movement itself. Its total cost to the country was estimated at not less, and perhaps considerably more, than £400,000,000. And it solved no single problem of the coal industry; indeed, the 'peace' of November, 1926, secured nothing save the certainty of a renewal of war.)

¹ These 'non-political' Miners' Unions, as they were called, did not actually come to much. They were started principally in Notts and Derby and South Wales, and their total membership in June, 1927, was said to be between 60,000 and 70,000.

It is not easy to apportion the blame for this disaster. The coalowners behaved throughout both brutally and stupidly; the inefficiency of their industry had long been a notorious scandal, but the majority of them would listen neither to persuasion nor warning in their determination to pursue a selfish and shortsighted policy. The Government was all too ready to abet them; it could, by the exercise of courage and common sense, have prevented the fight, or stopped it at an early stage. As for the miners' leaders, it is impossible to absolve them from a considerable share of blame. Their position was, indeed, supremely difficult, and it is not surprising that they should have made some mistakes. But they made too many mistakes; they threw away chances; they showed an obstinacy which would have been heroic in a body of sergeants, but was folly in a general staff. They were superbly loyal to their principles and to their constituents; but they would not, or could not, face inexorable facts.

In the spring of 1927 the Government, after long deliberation, brought in a Bill for the regulation of Trade Unionism. It created consternation not only in the Labour movement, but among many Conservatives, who regarded it as far too drastic and as likely to sharpen the class-war spirit in industry. For the Bill did not stop short at proscribing "general strikes." It made various forms of the sympathetic strike illegal. It introduced new restrictions in picketing of so severe a character as to threaten the effective carrying on of an ordinary legal strike. It severely limited the right of combination of civil servants. It forbade local authorities to require their employees to be members of a Trade Union. And it aimed a blow at the Labour Party by altering the machinery which had been established by the Trade Union Act of 1913 for the collection of the political levy. It was fought vigorously but vainly in Parliament by the Labour Party, and by a good many of the Liberals. Some concessions were made by the Government; but the amendments were not on points of substance, and the

measure passed into law laden with the promise of mischief.¹

¹ See Appendix II. for the text of the Act, and Chapter VIII. below for a criticism of certain of its features.

The Bill in its original form contained no reference to illegal lock-outs—an omission which was naturally seized on as evidence of the Government's malice. Another objectionable feature was the definition of intimidation in the original Clause 3. Under this a person might be "intimidated" if he had a "reasonable apprehension of exposure to hatred, ridicule or contempt." On that showing any striker who went within speaking distance—or even within sight—of a "blackleg" would be in danger of a fine or imprisonment! The grotesque phrase, "exposure to hatred, ridicule or contempt," was afterwards deleted.

CHAPTER V

TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

Primitive Democracy—Growth of Bureaucracy and of Representative Institutions—Government of some typical Trade Unions—Engineers, Compositors, General Labourers, Railwaymen, Cotton Spinners, Miners—Finances of the Unions—Structural Developments—Amalgamations and Craft and Trade Federations.

THE Trade Union movement at all times and in all lands takes the form of what has aptly been called 'an industrial democracy.' But the forms of democracy are not one but many, and the elaborate organisations of the engineers, or the textile operatives or the miners, not only represent a remarkable advance on their fore-runners, the local Trade Clubs or Lodges of a century ago; they show very considerable points of difference among themselves, whilst the variations between the British and some of the continental types (especially the Russian) are still more striking.

In their early days the practices and proceedings of the Unions revealed a somewhat crude conception of democracy. Every detail was decided by the whole of the members assembled in mass meeting—as, indeed, was not only easy but natural, when a single club-room sufficed to contain the whole society. The officers—President, Stewards (who kept the door and fetched the drinks) and Committee-men—were generally chosen to serve in rotation. To take one's turn of office was compulsory, the penalty for refusal being a fine varying from a shilling to half a guinea.¹ As the societies

¹ This practice survived down to our own day—*e.g.* the Stone Masons, Bricklayers, Steam Engine Makers, etc., continued till quite recently to impose a fine of 1s. on a member refusing to stand his nomination for office in his lodge, and 2s. 6d. if he was elected and declined to serve, unless a satisfactory reason was given.

expanded, and branches or lodges had to be formed in different localities, the same idea of sharing the burden of office by rotation was extended to these lodges. The headquarters of the Union was regularly moved from place to place, each lodge taking it in turn to act as the 'Governing Branch,' and its officers and committee thereby becoming the central executive for the time being.

Another of the peculiar devices of democracy which found favour in the Trade Union world was the referendum. Indeed, the referendum and its twin, the initiative, were during the middle of last century almost worked to death. Practically any question could be submitted, not merely by the central executive, but by any branch, to the vote of the whole membership, and Mr. and Mrs. Webb give some startling illustrations of the extent to which this privilege was used. The Stone Masons, for example, took plebiscites of the society on the amount of beer to be allowed to the executive, and on the very thrifty proposal to put the office of General Secretary up to the lowest tender; whilst many of the Unions had to protest against the constant use of the referendum to abrogate the rules by paying benefits to members ineligible for them.

As time wore on, however, these older devices disappeared. The referendum was presently discredited, and its use generally limited to certain important matters—such as the decisions in regard to a strike or the affiliation of the Union to a political party. The 'Governing Branch' had passed away even earlier,¹ and the logic of facts had firmly established the modern plan of fixed headquarters with paid officials in charge of the society's affairs.

These paid General Secretaries at the head of the Unions are, it is hardly necessary to say, extremely important personages in the Trade Union world to-day. They are responsible for all the secretarial as well as a

¹ The 'Governing Branch,' however, lingered long in one or two Unions, and a relic of it might be found but a few years back in the rule of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, under which the central executive members must be drawn from the district round Manchester, where the General Office was situated.

large part of the financial business of the society. They often edit the monthly or fortnightly journal; they play, as a rule, the chief part in negotiations with employers, in peace or war; they have to exercise their authority in many internal disputes. They represent their society before the public—on the platform, in the Press, in the law courts. Sometimes (on the well-known principle of modern democracy that the busiest men should be made busier still) they are Members of Parliament into the bargain. In the larger Unions, of course, the Secretary is generally helped by assistant-secretaries, by paid 'organisers' and other officials.

In some cases there have been elaborate developments. Thus the Engineers, copied later by the Boilermakers, evolved a regular bureaucracy. The Amalgamated Engineering Union has in daily attendance at its headquarters in London a paid Executive Council of a Chairman (who is the President of the Union) and nine full-time members, elected by ballot from nine specially constituted electoral divisions. Side by side with this Council, and largely under its control, works the General Secretary with two assistants. These officers, as well as the President, are elected by the votes of the whole membership. For organising purposes there is a staff (under the direction of the Executive Council) of twenty-six Organising District Delegates, each elected for four years (and re-eligible) from and by the district in which he has worked and resided for the twelve months immediately preceding his nomination. The duties of the Organising District Delegates include the visiting and strengthening of branches, propagandist work, the attending of conferences, the interviewing of employers and so on. There is also a network of District Committees, varying in size according to the number of branches in the district, and empowered, subject to the approval of the Executive Council, to deal with questions of trade disputes, wages, hours and conditions of labour, and so on, in its area. The Committee men, who must be working at their trade, are elected annually; the Shop Stewards also have direct representation on the Committee to the extent of one seat for every 10,000 members

or part thereof. In London, Manchester, Newcastle and Glasgow the District Secretaries are whole-time officers elected for four years and assisting the Organising District Delegates. The remuneration of these various officials ranges from 1s. per meeting for the District Committee-men, up to £450 per annum (with residence at the General Office and rent, coal and gas free) for the General Secretary.

The Districts in their turn are grouped in Divisions, each with its Divisional Committee, for areas covered by the Organising District Delegates. The functions of the Divisional Committee are to review working conditions and wages, to promote organisation and to deal with matters referred to it by the Executive Council or by a District.

At the head of the whole organisation are the National Committee and the Final Appeal Court. The National Committee is the supreme legislative body. It is composed of two representatives from each Divisional Committee, together with the Executive Council and the Organising District Delegates, who may speak but not vote. It meets annually, or more often if required; it discusses and decides policy, it may instruct the Executive, and it has power in certain circumstances to call a national strike. And every fourth year it has a special meeting at which it is empowered to alter the rules of the Union. In an emergency the National Committee (or the Executive Council) may call a National Conference "for the purpose of getting a division on any question of vital importance." This Conference consists of all the members of all the Divisional Committees, together with the Executive Council and the Organising District Delegates, who may speak but not vote. And, lastly, there are international groupings. The Final Appeal Court is the supreme judicial body. It is composed of fifteen members from branches in the United Kingdom, elected from fifteen electoral divisions. It meets annually, and considers and decides all appeals against the rulings of the Executive Council.¹

¹ The Final Appeal Court of the Boilermakers is called the General Council, and is composed of seven members chosen by equal electoral districts. It has power to annul or set aside any act or decision of the Executive Council contravening the rules.

In the wealthy and powerful printing trade organisation of the Metropolis, the London Society of Compositors, the management is vested in a Committee elected annually by ballot.¹ The Executive officers, however, consisting of Parliamentary Secretary, Treasurer, Chairman, Secretary, Assistant and Organising Secretary, Assistants, Trustees and Auditors, are elected separately by the Annual General Meeting. The Secretary is "under the sole direction of the Committee," and the Committee itself is ultimately responsible to the quarterly Delegate Meeting,² representing the whole society, and in various important matters cannot act without authorisation given by a ballot of all the members. Such matters include any extension of the usual benefits or any proposal involving a regular charge on the income; all grants of money exceeding £30; any movement "for alteration of scale or advance of wages, and generally any question affecting the constitution or management of the Society."

The National Union of General and Municipal Workers has constituted its governing organs in a different way. The "supreme authority" is vested in the biennial Congress, composed of delegates from all districts into which the Union is divided—one delegate being elected for "every complete 3000 financial members in any district." The "government of the Union" is vested in a General Council composed of the President, General Secretary and two representatives from each district, one being the District Secretary and the other a lay member, with four additional lay members—one from each of the four districts with the largest

¹ The Society is divided into two sections—the Book Department (comprising all journeymen in offices where bookwork, jobbing and weekly newspapers are done) and the News Department (comprising all journeymen employed on daily newspapers). The account in the text refers primarily to the Book Department. The News Department has its own organisation and its own secretary; but its basis is almost identical, and on matters affecting the Society as a whole it is subject to the same rules as the Book Department.

² The Delegates are elected (1) from the different printing offices (in the proportion of one delegate for every twelve members, or part of twelve, in the office), and (2) from the unemployed members on the books, in the same proportion of one in twelve. Delegate Meetings are held quarterly, and on special occasions if requisitioned according to rule.

membership—and one of these four must be a woman. Subordinate to the General Council, and appointed by it, is an Executive Committee of ten, five of whom must be lay-members. The principal officials of the Union, including the President, General and Assistant General Secretaries, National Industrial Officers, and Chief Woman Officer, are elected by the votes of all the branches in the country. They are all paid salaries, and they hold their posts permanently, being only removable in case of misconduct or incompetence. The General Secretary is not, as in some other societies, the servant of the executive body, but sits as a colleague with the right to speak and vote. And he is, besides, the chief financial officer of the Union.

In the National Union of Railwaymen the "supreme government" is entrusted to an annual meeting of representatives, sixty in number, and elected by localities on the single transferable vote system, while the General and Assistant Secretaries and Organisers, as with the General Labourers, are chosen by ballot of the whole society. The four Assistant Secretaries, it is interesting to observe, are not merely required to assist in the correspondence and general work of the office, but, by a provision of considerable importance from the point of view of administrative efficiency, are made definitely responsible for four different departments—Finance, Legal, Movements and Organisation. The most striking feature of the whole scheme, however, is the recognition of sectional or professional interests in the appointment of the Executive Committee. This Executive of twenty-four members is chosen by ballot (again on the single transferable vote system) from six electoral districts. "Within those districts the various grades shall be divided into four electoral departments. The electoral departments shall be classified as follows: (1) locomotive department; (2) traffic department; (3) goods and cartage department; (4) engineering shops and permanent way." The value of this arrangement will be clearer presently, when we come to consider the problems of Trade Union structure and control.¹

¹ See below, Chap. IX.

Another remarkable development is the creation in the textile and mining industries of completely 'representative institutions.' Thus the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners, numbering some 50,000 members in Lancashire, has a parliament of representatives (not merely delegates), elected annually from the various provinces and districts included in the Association, and meeting quarterly with sovereign powers. It appoints its own Executive Council and officers, including the General Secretary himself, who are directly and continuously responsible to it instead of, as ordinarily in the Trade Union world, to the whole body of members of the society. The textile industry has, of course, its 'civil service,' in the shape of officials not only trained in the normal business of administration, but expert in the complicated details of technical processes, piecework rates and the like. But "the Cotton Spinners' Parliament," as Mr. and Mrs. Webb put it, "is no formal gathering of casual members to register the desires of a dominant bureaucracy. It is, on the contrary, a highly-organised deliberative assembly, with active representatives from the different localities, each alive to the distinct, and sometimes divergent, interests of his own constituents."¹ Other textile Unions, such as the Weavers, the Beamers, Twisters and Drawers, and the Card, Blowing and Ring-room Operatives, are governed on much the same principles, though their rules differ somewhat from those of the Spinners.

A typical example from the coal-mining industry may be seen in the constitution of the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation. Here the supreme body is "a general meeting of the Federation, called a Conference," meeting every four weeks, or oftener if necessary. It is composed of delegates from all the branches—or lodges, as they are called in the coal industry—besides the Federation officers, who are themselves elected each year by the Conference. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain, to which the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners, like those of all the other

¹ *Industrial Democracy*, p. 41.

coalfields, are affiliated, is itself ruled by a yearly conference and officers and an executive elected by that conference.

So far we have described the central management as it appears in certain typical Unions. But just as the organisation of an army is not to be seen only in its headquarters' staff, or that of a political state in its national government alone, so the working of a great Trade Union depends largely on its local branches. The amount of power possessed by the branch as against the whole Union varies in different cases, and gives rise to a very considerable problem which we shall discuss later. The particular feature which we have to note at the moment is the host of non-commissioned officers, as they may be called, comprised by the secretaries and the officials of the branches.¹ Many of these branch secretaries and committee-men are persons of great influence, and it is obvious that the efficiency of the Trade Union movement depends to an incalculable extent on their integrity and ability. These local officers are men working at their trade, and receiving, as a rule, only a very small sum for the discharge of their duties to the Union.

The financial business of the Trade Unions is very large, and it has been enormously increased and complicated for those which have become approved societies under the National Insurance Act. The income of the Union is, of course, mainly derived from the members' contributions, which range from 3d., 4d. or 5d. a week in the Union of Post Office Workers, and 6d. a week (3d. for women and youths) in the general labourers' societies, to 1s. 6d. in the Amalgamated Engineering Union, and even more in a few others, such as the United Patternmakers, the Iron and Steel Trades Association, and the London Society of Compositors. Contributions (*i.e.* ordinary subscriptions, levies, entrance

¹ Thus every branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union with not more than forty members is required to elect a President, Secretary, Treasurer and Check-book Keeper. If it has more than forty members it must have a Doorkeeper; if more than 100, a Vice-president; if more than 150, a Money-steward and an Assistant Secretary in addition.

fees and fines) normally account for over 90 per cent. of the total income.¹

The expenditure falls under three principal heads—benefits, affiliation fees to federations, congresses, etc., and administrative expenses. The benefits differ widely in the different Unions: the most complete list includes superannuation, out-of-work donation, dispute pay, sick, accident and funeral benefit; compensation for loss of tools, etc., by fire; emigration and travelling allowances; sometimes, as in the case of the railwaymen, there is also an orphan fund. The expenditure by the 100 principal Unions, with a membership of 4,073,111 in the year 1924, on these various items was as follows: unemployment, £2,927,000; dispute, £1,149,162; sickness and accident, £662,797; superannuation, £809,904; funeral, £423,412; special grants to other Unions, and affiliation fees to trades councils, federations, congresses, etc., £355,978; working expenses, £2,828,055; payments from political fund, £240,040—grand total, £9,406,348. The aggregate income for the year was £9,967,507, of which £7,581,123 came from members and £1,913,248 from the Ministry of Labour in respect of Unemployment Insurance payments.

Turning now from government to structure, we find a much slower development. Most of the old trade clubs and localised societies have, of course, passed into the great modern Unions extending over the whole kingdom—and sometimes, as with the Engineers, to the United States and the Dominions. But many industries still have a number of independent societies on the narrowest craft basis, and the recognition of the importance of closer unity has only lately begun to make headway. In the clothing trades, for instance, in the pre-war period, there were separate Unions of hatters, glovers, waistcoat makers, corset makers, fur-skin dressers, boot and shoe operatives, milliners, tailors and tailresses, and the most important of these still maintain

¹ If the sums paid over to the Unions by the Ministry of Labour, in respect of Unemployment Benefit, are reckoned in the total income, this percentage, of course, is lower for the years of depression since 1921.

their independence. In the metal industry, outside the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, there were iron-founders, tinsmiths, coppersmiths, brassfounders, sheet-metal workers, blacksmiths, steam-engine makers, pattern makers, tool makers, file makers, wire workers, chain makers, needle makers, scientific instrument makers. The only big fusion in those years was that of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, the General Railway Workers' Union, and the United Pointsmen and Signalmen's Society, which in 1913 combined to form the National Union of Railwaymen. But the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, and the Railway Clerks' Association, remained—and still remain—outside. As regards 'Industrial Unionism'—the grouping, that is to say, of all the different workers employed in a given industry, or 'form of production,' regardless of the process or material on which they are engaged—there was, and is, practically none, although in two important cases it may be said to exist in embryo. The National Union of Railwaymen is open to all employees of railway companies (though actually there are a great many railway-shop workers organised in general labour and metal Unions, as well as the clerks and the drivers and firemen in their separate societies); whilst in coal-mining it only needs the inclusion of the mechanics, craftsmen, deputies and under-managers in the Miners' Federation—by no means an impossible development—to establish a complete 'industrial Union.'

After the war, however, the closing of the ranks proceeded more rapidly. In 1920 there were thirteen amalgamations which covered no less than a million and three-quarter workers and eliminated thirty-one sectional Unions. The A.S.E., with nine other societies of metal workers, passed into the Amalgamated Engineering Union, which started with a total membership of over 400,000. And there were other notable amalgamations in the postal service and the building, wood-working, woollen, printing, tailoring and distributive industries. In 1921 came the fusion of most of the dock and road-transport Unions into one Transport and General

Workers' Union, and in 1924 three general labour bodies united in the National Union of General and Municipal Workers.¹

Apart from actual fusion, the linking together of the separate Unions has taken four main forms. First, we find federation among the various crafts comprising the different industries for the promotion of their corporate interests. Secondly, the individual Unions, or in some cases the federations, are affiliated, for the purposes which all have in common on the industrial field, to the Trades Union Congress and to a lesser extent to the General Federation of Trade Unions. Thirdly, for political purposes the majority of them adhere to the Labour Party. Fourthly, the branches or lodges of different Unions are generally united in Trades Councils or local Labour Parties, in the towns and districts where these exist, to promote locally the same industrial or political ends which the Labour Party or the Trades Union Congress promote nationally.

The trade federations are comparatively few in number, but they cover several million workers in half a dozen or more important industries—coal-mining, iron and steel, textiles, building, printing, engineering and shipbuilding. The degree of tightness or looseness in their organisation varies considerably, as also does their effectiveness. In some instances, the federation is practically a single Union. This is the case with the miners and the iron and steel workers.

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain, founded in 1888, includes practically every coal-miners' association in the country (apart from craft Unions), with a total membership of over 800,000. It is, so to speak, the grand parliament of the industry, dealing with wages, hours and working conditions of the miners generally, as well as promoting and financing Labour representation in the House of Commons. Its Executive of twenty-two members consists of representatives of the various districts, and each constituent

¹ There were a few new combinations during the war, the most important being the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, designed to absorb all the separate Unions in the industry.

association pays a contribution of 1½d. per member per quarter. All the affiliated bodies have financial autonomy and are free to decide their own policy; but the Federation can refuse its support to any which will not abide by the national policy. Its strength, as well as its weakness, was seen in the course of the great lock-out of 1926. The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation was established in 1917 with the deliberate purpose of gradually amalgamating all the Unions in the industry. Two new bodies were formed, a central Union called the British Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association (*Bisakta*), to which societies who wished to do so could transfer their members, and in which all new members were enrolled, and the Confederation itself, to which all negotiating and organising work was handed over. In the course of a few years, the majority of separate Unions became effectively merged, and it can hardly be long before complete unity is attained, when "*Bisakta*" will presumably take over all the functions of the Confederation.

A more genuine federal type is seen in the National Printing and Kindred Trades Federation, which includes compositors, bookbinders, lithographers, pressmen, paper makers—indeed, practically all the crafts in the industry. The constituent societies are represented according to their numbers on the governing body, the Administrative Council, and pay quarterly contributions to a central fund, out of which dispute benefit is allowed in duly authorised strikes. The objects of the Federation include the securing of unity of action and of uniform hours and conditions and the negotiation of settlements; but wage questions are not dealt with, except at the request of the Unions. Somewhat similar is the National Association of Unions in the Textile Trades, which comprises between thirty and forty societies of non-cotton textile workers, and aims at unity of action in cases of dispute, the improvement of organisation, and especially at promoting amalgamation. The big federation in the cotton industry, the United Textile Factory Workers' Association, is really a political body, its object being "the removal of every grievance from which its members

may be suffering, for which parliamentary or governmental interference is required."

The Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades Federation, founded as long ago as 1890, has twenty-four affiliated societies and nearly a million members, and is principally concerned with the business of conciliation in trade disputes and with demarcation questions arising between Union and Union. It is a good deal stronger on paper than in fact. It is true that its objects include the "maintenance of the right of combination," the "promotion of collective bargaining by securing the active co-operation of the affiliated bodies, the unification of agreements, and mutual support in local and sectional disputes"; but its internal arrangements are not very harmonious, and it is unrepresentative in that it does not include either the A.E.U. or the Boilermakers.

The building industry, on the other hand, has greatly improved its federal organisation, which formerly was only of a local and weak type. The National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, founded at the end of the war, comprises most of the important craft Unions, with a membership of about 250,000. Its objects include the consolidation of Unions, the securing of unity of action and uniform wage rates, the adjustment of disputes and the payment of benefit in strikes and lock-outs. It has proved an effective negotiating body, and it has been active in promoting amalgamation, despite peculiar difficulties, which we shall discuss in a later chapter.

We pass now to the organisations which transcend the limits of kindred crafts or industries and aim at bringing together all the Trade Unions in a district, or in the country, or in the world, into a local, national or international federation. With the purely political bodies we are not directly concerned. Of the industrial bodies the most important is, of course, the Trades Union Congress.¹ This is the annual assembly of the

¹ There are separate T.U. Congresses in Scotland and in Ireland, both of which include some members of Unions whose headquarters are in England. The Scottish T.U.C. does a good deal of co-ordinating work for the movement in Scotland, but its authority and scope are naturally limited. The Irish T.U.C. and Labour Party is a completely independent body.

Trade Unions, at which economic and social questions affecting the working class are discussed. Any *bona fide* Union is entitled to be represented by delegates (one for every 5000 members or part thereof) and to vote in accordance with its numerical strength. Membership of the Congress is not compulsory, but practically all the important manual workers' Unions are affiliated. Those that are outside (covering about one-fifth of the total of Trade Unionists) are for the most part small or else non-manual workers' Unions, like the National Union of Teachers. The Trades Councils were also formerly represented, but they have been excluded since 1895, with the result that the democratic character and efficiency both of the Trades Councils and of Congress itself have been impaired. The total number of Trade Unionists represented at the 1926 Congress was 4,365,619. The topics discussed cover a very wide field, but the Congress has no authority to enforce any decisions upon the individual Unions, and resolutions which have been passed again and again have sometimes been ignored by those principally concerned. The value of the Congress, of course, lies first in the opportunity afforded for debate, for exchange of opinion and for social intercourse, and secondly, in the appointment and instruction of its executive, the General Council.

The General Council was set up in 1920, to replace the Parliamentary Committee, whose feebleness had long been a reproach to the movement and had been brought into peculiar prominence by the railway strike of 1919. It is composed of thirty-two members, thirty of them representing seventeen different groups of industries, and two women representing women workers, but all elected by Congress as a whole.

The Council's functions are, first, to keep watch over all industrial movements and to co-ordinate action, and secondly, to promote common action by the Trade Union movement, not only on wages and hours, but on any question which may arise between Trade Unions and employers or between Trade Unions and the Government. The Council is empowered to assist any Union which is attacked on any matter of vital principle, to

carry on Trade Union propaganda and to promote solidarity with foreign Labour movements. It is financially responsible for the *Daily Herald*, and for some years it maintained, in conjunction with the Labour Party, departments for research, legal advice and publicity. The joint service was, however, given up in 1926, and the two bodies now run their own separate departments. They continue, however, the joint publication of the *Labour Year Book*, the *Labour Magazine*, and *Weekly Notes for Speakers*, and to maintain a joint reference library.

Close touch is kept with the political movement, both by means of regular monthly meetings between the General Council and the executive of the Labour Party, and through the National Joint Council. This body consists of representatives of the General Council, the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party, and its main function is to secure common policy and action, whether by legislation or otherwise, on all matters affecting the workers. Trade Union relations with the Co-operative movement have not been so easy. There was in existence for many years a joint committee which dealt with differences between the Co-operative Societies and Unions with members in their employ. But this came to be considered unsatisfactory, and in 1925 the joint committee was abolished, and new machinery set up, in which the General Council is not concerned. It continues, however, to be represented on a number of other joint bodies, such as the Trade Boards Advisory Council, the Joint Board for Trade Union Staffs, and the governing bodies of Ruskin College and the Workers' Education Association.

It will be seen that the functions and powers of the General Council are very considerable; they go far beyond those exercised in the old days by the Parliamentary Committee. But it is denied the supreme authority with which many hoped it would be endowed when the "General Staff" was set up. Attempts have been made at succeeding Congresses to give it this authority; but they have broken down before the hostility of the big Unions, which cling to their inde-

pendence, and will have nothing to do with proposals empowering the General Council to levy all affiliated members or to order stoppages of work. The change may come in the course of time ; but the effect of the General Strike, as appears from the discussion at the Bournemouth Congress in 1926, has probably been to harden the opposition.

The General Federation of Trade Unions, like the Congress, aims at bringing together the whole of the Unions, but with a different purpose. It was established, as we have already mentioned, in 1899, "to uphold the rights of Combination of Labour, to improve in every direction the general position and status of the Workers by the inauguration of a policy that shall secure to them the power to determine the economic and social condition under which they shall work and live, and to secure unity of action amongst all Societies forming the Federation . . . to promote Industrial Peace, and . . . to prevent strikes or lock-outs or disputes between trades . . . and where differences do occur, to assist in their settlement by just and equitable methods . . . and to establish a Fund for mutual assistance and support, and for carrying out the foregoing objects." Later it added to its functions by becoming an Approved Society under the National Insurance Act. The General Federation "does not interfere in politics, except when legislation threatens the interests of Trade Unions, and then only through the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party, whose political province it frankly recognises." It was formerly represented on a Joint Board with the T.U. Congress and the Labour Party, but in 1917 it was excluded on the ground of overlapping. It was also, before the war, the medium of communication on international affairs between the British and foreign Trade Union movements, but the General Council has now taken its place in this. Its governing body is a General Council consisting of delegates appointed by affiliated organisations in proportion to their numbers. The General Council chooses each year a Management Committee of fifteen, who together with the Secretary, elected at the annual meeting, form the executive of

the Federation. The contributions for each affiliated society are, "on the higher scale," 6d. and, "on the lower scale," 3d. per member per quarter—(these contributions may be doubled "under exceptional circumstances" by the Management Committee). Benefits on the higher or lower scale are allowed for any member involved in a strike or lock-out which is approved by the Federation.

"The Federation," says Mr. Appleton, its Secretary, "has only partially realised the dreams of the idealists who formed it." That is certainly true. It is weak both financially and numerically. The drain on its funds has all along been heavy, largely owing to the eagerness of affiliated bodies to pay in as little as possible and take out as much as possible. In 1906 the contribution was reduced by one-third, and in later years its income fell below its expenditure. As regards members, it rose from 43 societies with 343,000 members at its foundation to 146 societies with 1,086,000 in 1915. But at the beginning of 1927 its total membership was only 732,000; the miners, engineers, railwaymen, and most of the general labourers, to name only the bigger Unions, are outside it. The G.F.T.U. is, in fact, a side show.

The Trades Council seeks to unite all the branches of the diverse Unions in its town or district, as the T.U.C. unites the national bodies. This local machinery plays, or should play, a very important part in the work of organisation, propaganda and education, and in carrying out locally the national policy, industrial or political, of the movement. But though the Trades Councils have had a distinguished past and may have a distinguished future, they have, for a good many years, been the Cinderella of the Trade Union world. They have been weak in funds and in membership. Many of the big Unions have cold-shouldered them, regarding them as rivals to—or unnecessary duplications of—their own district machinery. Recently, however, there has been a recognition of their importance by those at the centre. In 1925 a Trades Council Joint Consultative Committee was set up, with the object of strengthening them and

developing their activities, and schemes of county and regional federation, and model rules and constitutions for the Trades Councils, have been elaborated. "The general idea," as it was put at the T.U.C. in 1926, "is that in time the Trades Council may become the local counterpart of the General Council, with a similarity of constitution." But the Congress still refused to restore the representation of the Trades Councils.

This activity on the part of the General Council and the national Unions has, no doubt, been stimulated by their anxiety to counter the efforts of the Communists to establish an influence in the Trades Councils. But there is more in it than that. The wiser men in the Trade Union movement realise that it needs hands and eyes all over the country and that, in the words of Mr. Citrine, "until the Trades Councils are dovetailed into the Congress plan of organisation, the absence of a really representative local agency will prove a considerable handicap."¹

The number of Trades Councils in Great Britain was 328 in 1913, and about 460 in 1926, with an affiliated membership of some two and a quarter millions. In addition, there are some "Trades Councils and Local Labour Parties," which are not purely industrial bodies, but are engaged in the electoral work of the Labour Party, to which they are affiliated.

Finally, there is the international organisation, in which the British Unions play a large part. There are two lines of organisation. One is the International Federation of Trade Unions, embracing all industries; the other consists of international groupings by industry, known as the International Trade Union Secretariats. Of these latter there are now (in 1927) twenty-nine; but only about two-thirds of them have British Unions affiliated. Their activity before the war was slight, being confined generally to the holding of conferences and the publication of statistics, though occasionally financial assistance might be given in strikes or attempts made to prevent the importation of blacklegs. The miners had a common international programme, in-

¹ See *The British Trade Union Movement*, by W. M. Citrine,

cluding a minimum wage, an eight-hour day and nationalisation. Since the war there have been signs of a greater interest and a more forward spirit. A number of resolutions have been passed in favour of socialisation and of concerted international action against war; but nothing very remarkable has been done.

The International Federation of Trade Unions, which was founded in 1901, was likewise of small importance before the war. It did little beyond circulating reports and bringing together every two years a number of Trade Union officials of different countries. In 1919 it was reorganised and furnished with a constitution, officers and a Committee, while its scope was enlarged to cover "the promotion of combined action on all questions of mutual Trade Unionism." This rejuvenated body has manifested a good deal of liveliness in conference and in various resolutions on the economic, political or military scandals of the world, and it has organised famine relief in Russia and elsewhere. But it would be absurd to pretend that it represents as yet any solid power or even any deep-seated common feeling, and it may be that, with its 'semi-political' character, it will continue to be ineffective. It is for the present, in any case, peculiarly weakened by defections both on the Right and the Left. Its strongest elements are the German and the British Unions, which together make up three-quarters of its total membership. The American Trade Unions will have nothing to do with it, because they regard its tone as too revolutionary, the Russians because they regard it as not revolutionary enough.¹

We may conclude with a brief summary of the main features of the Trade Union movement in Great Britain

¹ The Russians and a number of Communist Trade Unions in other continental countries are affiliated to a rival organisation—the Red International of Labour Unions, sometimes called the Moscow International, as the I.F.T.U. is called the Amsterdam International. Strenuous efforts were made during 1924, 1925 and 1926 by the British Trade Unions to bring the two together. But the Russians fenced, while the majority of the Amsterdammers were profoundly suspicious of any *rapprochement* with Communism, and the negotiations ended in smoke.

to-day, and an indication of the problems before it. There were, at the beginning of 1927, some 5½ million Trade Unionists, grouped in about 1100 separate Unions, with local branches amounting in the aggregate to hundreds of thousands. But the "separateness" of all these bodies is, of course, a relative term; for, as has been pointed out, many of them are closely linked in federations, and the bald statement that in the mining industry, for example, there are ninety or more independent associations, obviously conveys a false impression to one who does not know the facts. And it should be observed that something like 90 per cent. of the total of Trade Unionists in the country is concentrated in seventy Unions, 60 per cent. in twenty-seven and 40 per cent. in seven. Geographically, the distribution of this Trade Unionism is uneven. It masses itself in the North rather than the South, and, of course, in the urban and not the rural districts. The strongest points are the coal-fields of the Northern and Midland counties and of South Wales and Scotland, the textile area in Lancashire, the boot and shoe and hosiery districts in the Midlands, the shipyards of the Clyde, the Tyne and the Tees, and the big engineering and metal-working centres in different parts of the country. The building, printing and certain other trades are, naturally, more widely distributed. The weakest spots are the agricultural areas.

The grand total of membership, though it has fallen heavily since the peak year, 1920, shows a substantial increase on the pre-war figure. (The 1913 total was 4,135,000.) The increase has, it seems, been pretty general, but it is very marked in certain organisations, especially those which take in the unskilled workers—*e.g.* in building, transport and railways, and general labour. And there has been a rapid extension of Trade Unionism among the non-manual workers, such as teachers, and even in quarters where previously organisation had been practically unknown.

Among the lowest-paid workers the influence of the Trade Boards Acts has been considerable. The creation of wages tribunals, including representatives

of the workers, undoubtedly gave, especially in the early days, a valuable stimulus to combination.¹ In the organisation of the women in the sweated industries the Women's Trade Union League was indefatigable. This League was not itself a Trade Union, but worked for the promotion of Trade Unionism among women,² and helped to enrol many thousands of members in the National Federation of Women Workers, which is now merged in the National Union of General Workers.

The total number of women Trade Unionists in Great Britain was 831,000 in 1926, as compared with 433,000 in 1913, and 1,340,000 in 1920. They are strongest in the cotton industry—the female membership of the Amalgamated Weavers stands at about 130,000—and in other branches of the textile trades. For the rest, there are Unions with a considerable female membership in the boot and shoe, clothing, pottery, printing and paper, and distributive trades, and in the public services. Despite the progress that has been made, however, there obviously remains much to be done. The number of organised women in industry and commerce represents only about 25 per cent. of those who are eligible for Trade Union membership, as compared with some 65 per cent. of the men. The chief obstacles to the better organisation of women are two—the one social and psychological, the other economic. As regards the first, the bulk of the women in industry only expect to be engaged for a certain number of years; normally they look forward to marriage withdrawing them from the factory or the workshop, and it is hard,

¹ The early Trade Board trades were chain making, lace finishing, paper-box making, bespoke tailoring, hollow-ware making, sugar confectionery and food preserving, shirt making, linen embroidery. For an interesting illustration of the effects of the Act in the fustian trade in the Hebden Bridge district, see *Economic Journal*, September, 1913, pp. 442 ff. The local branch of the Clothiers' Operatives' Union rose from 29 (male) members to over 300 in a few months. And see *Minimum Rates in the Chain-making Industry*, by R. H. Tawney (1914). Note also the effect of the Agricultural Wages Board under the Corn Production Act, 1917.

² The work it did is now carried on by the 'Women Workers' Group of the T.U.C. and the Women's Trade Union Guilds fostered by this Group.

therefore, to arouse or to maintain in them any appreciation of the advantages of Trade Unionism. As for the economic difficulty, it is the merest truism that the trades where wages are lowest are the most unorganised and the most unorganisable. But as conditions improve with the advance of political and industrial democracy, we may hope that this difficulty will grow less. The solution of the other must be looked for mainly in the spread and improvement of education, which is gradually beginning to make itself felt among the women wage-earners.

If now we look below the surface of the Trade Union movement, we shall see that beside the great growth in numbers there exists considerable disunion—a disunion both in purpose and in structure. There is opposition between the 'Leftwingers' and the 'moderates.' There are differences of opinion over the questions of arbitration and conciliation in trade disputes. There is, again, a lamentable degree of competition between similar Unions in the same industry, producing confusion, quarrels and discouragement. And among a certain section there is open dissatisfaction with the government of the Unions, and a demand for greater popular control over officials. One need not, of course, look upon this internal unrest as altogether a bad thing—indeed, it is a healthy sign that the movement is busy about its problems. Of these the most obvious, since the total organised represents only a minority of the wage-earners,—albeit a minority which in energy and character far outweighs the inert majority,—is how to increase its numbers. But this, in so far as it is not simply a matter of slow and steady education, hinges in the main on another problem—the problem of how to consolidate the members who are already inside, how to unify and make an efficient force of the present unwieldy host. Certain forms of this problem we have seen emerging from our survey—particularly the basis of organisation, whether it should be craft or industrial; the question of amalgamation or federation of existing craft Unions; the conflict of bureaucracy and democracy, of centralisation and local autonomy. And

last, but not least, there is the place of the Trade Unions in the State of the future—the part which they are to play in the control of the national industry. All these questions we shall discuss presently; but first, since their solution will largely depend on what we take to be the proper function and methods of Trade Unionism, we must proceed to examine those.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUNCTION OF TRADE UNIONISM

Capital *versus* Labour—Industrial Peace—Labour Co-partnership and Profit-sharing—Compulsory Arbitration—Trade Unions as State Machinery.

THE function of Trade Unionism is generally defined as the protection and improvement of the workmen's standard of life. Every genuine Trade Union, from the London Leather Breeches Makers' Club in the eighteenth century to the gigantic Miners' Federation of Great Britain to-day, from the respectable Catholic *syndicat* of Belgium to the revolutionary French *Confédération Générale du Travail*, has set this end before itself. When, however, we come to ask exactly what is meant by the phrase "the improvement of the standard of life," we find that it covers enormous differences. The claims made on behalf of the workmen by the orthodox leaders of our day would have been repudiated as visionary extravagances, if not as scandalously immoral, by the orthodox leaders of fifty years ago; the "Lib.-Lab." view that the mission of sane Trade Unionism lies in "bringing capital and labour together and thus promoting that better understanding that is so essential to social peace," excites nothing but derision in the Communist. The conception of the Trade Union, in fact, ranges from that of a useful means of raising wages and shortening hours in industry, to that of the chief instrument for the "abolition of capitalism and the wage system."

We have, then, two antagonistic theories, which may be called the 'war theory' and the 'peace theory.' The one is based on the philosophy of the Class Struggle, the other on the belief in, and desire for, immediate

industrial peace. The first is the theory of the Socialist and Communist Unions throughout the world; the second is the theory of the Christian and other anti-Socialist working-class organisations of the Continent, and of most of the middle-class economists and politicians outside the Trade Union ranks both here and abroad. The history of the movement in this country (if we leave out of account the short flash of Syndicalism in the eighteen-thirties) shows on the whole a gradual progression from the second to the first—from the notion of the Trade Union as a combination of wage-earners struggling for rather more tolerable conditions of life, to the Socialist ideal of the complete emancipation of the working class.) It is, of course, true that very many British Trade Unionists to-day do not see any farther than a little more wages and a little less work. } But it is also true that very few, if any, of them would deliberately refuse, if the opportunity were offered them, to push their standard beyond the limits laid down by the employing class and its supporters. } And—what is really significant—nearly all the leaders of the working class have now been driven to recognise pretty clearly the grim fact of the struggle of classes, and to see no end to it but through the ultimate victory of Labour over capitalism.)

We may take it, therefore, as the settled view of modern Trade Unionism that its business is to wage steady war on capitalism (though not necessarily by constant strikes, as we shall see later), since capitalism will always seek, if not to prevent any raising of the workmen's standard of life, at least to set definite bounds to it. We shall proceed presently to examine the practical rules with which the Unions entrench their standard, and the characteristic methods which they employ for the enforcement of those rules. But before we come to these, it will be convenient to discuss briefly the opposing theory of 'industrial peace,' which holds so considerable a place in the mind of the middle classes.

The most optimistic and simple-minded among the advocates of this theory, whilst recognising, as do their opponents, the brutality of the actual struggle between

Capital and Labour, find the remedy, not in the triumph of the one over the other, but in the harmonising of their conflicting interests by establishing definite relations of partnership between the two. The favourite device for achieving this is Labour Co-partnership, a development of profit-sharing, which would not merely make the workmen in a particular business partners with their employers, but might even, it is suggested, admit the Trade Unions to a regular place in the system.)

{ Now Co-partnership claims that it gives the workers, first, a greater share in the product of industry, and, secondly, a greater measure of control in the management. How far can this claim be substantiated? Theoretically, and at its best, it may give both, but in practice it gives very little of either, and that little only at a heavy price. For Co-partnership, it must not be forgotten, is advocated as something beneficial to the employer as well as to the workman. The opportunity of increased earnings and the general improvement of his condition will stimulate the workman to a higher efficiency in production; the profits of the business will be increased as well as the wages. And, in fact, in those enterprises where the introduction of Co-partnership has increased wages it has probably increased profits even more.

{ Profit-sharing schemes are of various kinds. In general the workers will get a certain proportion of the surplus based on their earnings. Sometimes, as in the case of the gas companies, there is a sliding scale according to the price of the product. Often a part—sometimes the whole—of the bonus, instead of being paid to the worker in cash, is put into a pension or provident fund, or allocated to him in the form of shares in the business. In many schemes the number of the employees entitled to share in the profits is limited by various restrictions as to age, length of service in the firm, and so on. The system has never enjoyed any great popularity in this country. At the end of 1925 the Ministry of Labour reported a total of 240 firms in Great Britain and Northern Ireland with profit-sharing schemes in operation. These firms employed altogether about 398,000 persons,

of whom only 191,000 were entitled to share in profits. The bonus ranged from *nil* up to 20 per cent. of the worker's earnings, the average for the whole lot being just over 5 per cent. Most of the schemes have been started since the war, and only thirty of them date back earlier than 1901. Profit-sharing, in short, is little more than a hobby of a few benevolent employers. It is generally regarded with suspicion by organised Labour as being detrimental to Trade Unionism.¹ To the individual worker it holds out no very substantial prospect of gain in return for his extra effort, and it may even exact something for nothing from him. For the amount of the profit in which he shares does not depend entirely, or even mainly, on his extra effort. Buying, marketing, managerial efficiency, all of which are outside the worker's control, play a large part. Miscalculation or incompetence on the employer's side, therefore, as well as bad luck, may result in a loss instead of gain, and the worker will get no reward for his harder or quicker work. And even if all goes well, he may feel himself defrauded, for though it is his effort which has increased the total output, say by 10 per cent., he will receive perhaps 5 per cent., while the other 5 per cent. goes into the employer's pocket.

But, it is argued, all this is changed when simple profit-sharing becomes Co-partnership. Is it? Co-partnership purports to make the worker a part-owner and controller of the business. This is done by a certain number of workmen representatives being placed on the Board of Directors. But these are almost invariably in a minority—generally such a hopeless minority that they could not, even if they would, exert any serious

¹ Some employers, both here and in America, have deliberately aimed at destroying or weakening Trade Unionism by profit-sharing. This point of view was naïvely put a few years ago by the head of an Edinburgh building firm: "The giving of a bonus certainly promotes zeal and greater interest. With some workers it promotes arrogance and a sense of over-importance and sometimes cheekiness. But to the prudent and discreet it makes better servants throughout and prevents the inclination to strike, and causes those who are getting a bonus to sever their connection with all Trade Unions, which is a great benefit to the employer." (See Board of Trade Report on Profit-sharing and Co-partnership, 1912. Cd. 6496.)

influence on the management. The workers' share in the control, in short, is a farce.¹

Proposals have indeed been made for making it less farcical. A scheme, for instance, has been put forward by two young engineers, anxious that capitalism should save itself by bold and generous concessions to Labour.² The basis of the plan is profit-sharing combined with payment by results; for "payment by results provides the worker with a direct incentive to improve his efficiency, while equitable profit-sharing provides all workers with an incentive to co-operate for the general good of the firm." But in addition capitalism must give the workers a real "voice in industry," which means "not merely a hearing, but a vote in industry as in government, and not a vote to elect representatives who have no power to decide the questions affecting all the conditions of working." This appears to involve making every worker a capitalist.

Increased profits would be allocated to all employees in the form of ordinary shares, but on a slightly different footing from the shares of the original capitalists. Let us call the original capitalists' shares Class 'A,' and employees' shares Class 'B.' Every year (every successful year, that is), so many new 'B' shares would be credited to the employees, provision being made that an employee on leaving might be paid in cash at par for his shares, or have them converted into 'A' shares at the option of the firm. Each class would have the same voting powers, but Class 'A' would be "senior capital, and would rank as cumulative participatory and voting shares." Gradually, if the business continued to prosper, more and more 'B' shares would be created, and their voting power would ultimately be greater than that of the 'A' shares—in other words, the control of

¹ Only a very few of the firms which have profit-sharing schemes have blossomed out into Co-partnership. The most important of them is the South Metropolitan Gas Co., which allows three employee representatives on its Board. These must be persons who hold at least £120 worth of stock in the company and who have been at least fourteen years in its service.

² See *Capital for Labour*, by W. Francis Lloyd and Bertram Austin, 1927.

the firm would pass from the original capitalists to the employees. And what, it may be asked, would happen then? If, after control has passed to the workers, there is a loss, they must be held responsible, and Class 'B' shares would be written down and their voting powers reduced in proportion. If the loss were big enough, the control would automatically revert to the original capitalists.

This audacious scheme would satisfy everyone, it is suggested. The original capitalist would get a return on his investment fixed at the figure he had been in the habit of receiving from the company, and he would have no need for anxiety since, if the firm progressed, his investment would become more secure, while, if the workers got command and made a loss, they would have to foot the bill out of their own capital. The public would be free to deal only in the 'A' shares, which would become less liable to violent fluctuation, and so the speculator would be discouraged. The workers on their side would have the double incentive of adding to their capital and of eventually becoming owners of the business.

The plan seems to be a desperate remedy for a desperate case; and indeed its authors do not conceal their belief that the case of capitalism is desperate. But there is no sign that the capitalists share that belief or that they will turn a kindly eye on the plan. Nor is Labour likely to jump at it, at least in the form in which it is put. A peaceful encroachment by the workers on the control of industry is, no doubt, a policy which they may very well consider, and which we shall discuss in a later chapter. But their aim in that case will not be to turn themselves into separate groups of 'bloated capitalists,' but rather, through the Trade Unions, to weaken and eventually eliminate control by capital. And the Trade Unions will continue, it may be expected, to look askance at any development of profit-sharing, which is opposed to their fundamentals of the 'common rule' and the solidarity of the working class. What Sir William Ashley said some years ago remains true to-day: "Profit-sharing assumes a community of

interest between employer and employed in each particular business, Trade Unionism between all the workmen in the trade against all the employers in the trade." ¹)

There is, however, another school of thought, which, unable to repose much faith in voluntary Co-partnership, and yet anxious to secure peace at any price, looks to the State to put down industrial warfare by express prohibition of strikes, while offering redress of grievances through compulsory Arbitration Courts. This prohibition of strikes is applied in certain countries to State employees, such as railway and postal servants, and the method of compulsory arbitration has been widely used in Australasia, though not, as we shall see hereafter, with complete success.²

Between these two extremes—the respective advocates of peace by persuasion and peace by compulsion—lies the main body, who, as one would expect in this country, are simply opportunists, recognising the value and even the necessity of Trade Unionism, but without any fixed idea of its real meaning or of its future. They are concerned chiefly, as practical persons, in seeing that the Trade Unions do not go too far or too fast, and naturally enough they find in the principles of conciliation or voluntary arbitration the most obvious means of 'keeping the peace.' These principles, which are really developments of that important method of Trade Unionism known as collective bargaining, we shall discuss in their proper place.³

But there remains still another view of the function of Trade Unionism, which it is important to notice. Suppose that we are not content to think of the Trade Unions as bands of workmen fighting bands of employers (with the State as the policeman round the corner), or, alternatively, laying down their weapons and pretending peace where there is no peace. Suppose that instead we envisage them as organs of the community, a recognised part of the machinery of the State,

¹ See *Quarterly Review*, October, 1913, pp. 509 ff.

² In Fascist Italy the right to strike is absolutely abolished.

³ See below, Chap. VIII.

not merely representing the professional interests of their members, but charged with high responsibilities in the conduct of industry. Such a conception is not to be laughed at as Utopian simply because it looks beyond the hurlyburly of to-day. It is, in fact, something which both Trade Unionists and the politicians, and the public who are made uncomfortable by the Trade Unions, ought to be thinking hard about. If Labour's aim is to compass a better social order, the Trade Unions must equip themselves to play their part in the new organisation. And, moreover, in so equipping themselves they will actually be helping to break down the old order and build up the new. As for the others, they will do well to ask themselves whether the giving of responsibility to organised Labour does not offer a better chance, than does repression, of getting the industrial truce they are so anxious for.

The policy of allowing some public functions to the Trade Unions is not, of course, quite novel. It first appeared in France in the early eighteen-eighties, with the establishment of *Bourses du Travail* under the auspices of the municipalities. Later came the Ghent system of publicly subsidising the unemployed funds of the Trade Unions. In this country the Labour Exchanges scheme (first started in London under the Unemployed Workmen Act, 1905) gave official recognition to the Trade Unions by inviting them to keep their vacant books at the Exchange. And later the Insurance Acts went a step or two further. Duties as well as rights were assigned to the Unions in the management of the unemployment funds, and they were also allowed to become Approved Societies for the administration of sickness benefit. They have acquired a more or less official status, too, in some industries by their representation on Trade Boards and on the wages boards set up under the Railways Act of 1921.

These privileges, however, have not been granted by the legislature with any ulterior object; they are purely opportunist arrangements, and they amount to very little in practice. It is possible that with the growth of democracy we shall before long see a further advance—

by concessions to the demand for 'workers' control' in industry, and by the assigning of definite functions to the Unions in such matters as technical education and welfare work and perhaps even factory inspection. Some may object that this is the road that leads to Bolshevik Russia, others that it will land us in Fascist Italy, where Labour has two masters—the capitalist and the State. But there seems no reason why the relations of the State to the Trade Unions should develop in this country either on Communist or on Fascist lines. They must, however, develop; they are at present profoundly unsatisfactory.

We shall refer to this point later; for the moment we must come back to the definition with which we opened this chapter. That definition, as we have seen, covers, in its ultimate analysis, widely divergent aims. But in actual practice the Trade Unions are engaged in the struggle to protect and raise the standard of life of the working class against the attacks of capitalism. Their immediate concern is necessarily with the practical details of wages, hours and conditions of labour, security or continuity of employment. And our task now is to see, first, how in general they frame the issues, and secondly, what are the weapons which they use in their struggle.

CHAPTER VII

TRADE UNION REGULATIONS

Standard Rates and Hours—Conditions of Work—Security of Employment—Restriction of Entry to the Trade—Apprenticeship and Boy Labour—The Competition of Women—Demarcation Disputes.

THE Trade Union regulations relating to the various heads of wages, hours, conditions of work and security of employment, represent the attempt to apply as far as possible a 'common rule,' not merely in this or that shop or factory or mine, but throughout the craft or industry. And the most important applications of this common rule are seen in the establishment of standard rates of wages and standard hours of labour.

The standard remuneration which every Union demands for its members is a minimum rate below which none may work. It is not a maximum, for in many cases higher wages are paid to specially skilled workmen, sometimes by express agreement between the employer and the Union.¹ The standard rate may take the form either of a time or of a piece-work rate. A large number of the Trade Unionists actually insist on piece-work, whilst many of those who recognise time-work will accept a piece-work basis also. It is obvious, therefore, that the Trade Unions as a whole make no claim to equal wages for all; the principle asserted is simply that of equal pay for equal effort, which is clearly consistent with quite unequal weekly earnings even for men on precisely similar jobs.²

¹ Occasionally also, under strictly defined conditions, the Trade Unions will allow old men to work below the standard rate.

² This is sufficient answer, if answer be needed, to the absurd allegation sometimes made that Trade Unionism endeavours to

The reason for the preference of time-work to piece-work, or *vice versa*, is to be found in the nature and special circumstances of each trade, and the determining factor is always, broadly speaking, the greater effectiveness of the one or the other in protecting the standard. The piece-work system, to put it in one word, is in many industries the only real barrier against 'speeding-up'—against the employer's power, that is to say, to drive the workman to the utmost limits of his endurance, and so, in effect, by overworking him to reduce the standard rate. The cotton and the boot and shoe operatives have found it necessary to protect themselves in this way against the machinery which they manipulate. And similarly the coal-miners in former days could only prevent the exactions of the buttyman by insisting on piece-work for all hewers.¹

The various crafts in the building industry, on the other hand, the carpenters and joiners, bricklayers, stonemasons or painters, favour a time-work basis. For here it is not a matter of constantly repeating an identical process, as in coal-getting, boot-making or cotton-spinning. Every job differs in a greater or less degree from every other, so that under a piece-work system a new contract would have to be made on each occasion, and a uniform standard rate would become impossible. Moreover, the state of the weather and of the materials handled makes it very difficult to measure

reduce all to the level of the most inefficient or lazy. As for the highly controversial question of the ethics of remuneration—(whether every man ought to be paid according to his ability and his output, or whether it is not a more equitable principle to reward the quick and the slow equally, provided only that both are equally industrious and conscientious)—it is not necessary to discuss that here. It is worth while, however, to remind the reader that the latter principle is applied in the Civil Service, the Army and the Navy, the scholastic profession, etc. etc., and that it is accepted there without question by those who cry out the loudest against its application to the manual workers.

¹ Under the butty or charter-master system the practice was to let out different parts of the mine to working contractors, who hired the coal-hewers to work with and under them. The butty-master, who paid his gang a daily time wage, and himself set the pace, would naturally always have an interest in speeding-up the hewers, since the faster they worked, the better would his own profits be.

effort fairly by output. The engineering trade is for the most part in the same position, and the Amalgamated Engineering Union has admitted piece-work only in a guarded way. There is an agreement with the employers that men on piece-work shall be guaranteed the district rate of wages, and prices must be such as will enable a workman of average ability to earn at least 33½ per cent. over day rates. The Union rules also forbid members to ask for or take work under any new system of payment by results without the approval of the District Committee. And a slight relaxation is found occasionally in the building trade. Thus the Manchester and Salford District Stone Masons some years ago agreed with the employers—"no piece-work to be introduced, but ornamental carving, turning small columns, balusters and the like, may be done by contract, but the roughing out of the same to be done by day work."

In other trades, such as printing, piece and time rates exist side by side. The compositors' work is such that there is little danger of their being 'speeded-up' under the one system, and little difficulty in pricing each job under the other. Certain classes of work accordingly are usually done on a time-wage—*e.g.* 'authors' corrections' and 'clearing away' (*i.e.* taking away head and white lines). But the setting up of the London morning and evening newspapers is piece-work.¹ And an agreement covering the whole of the country (except London) for working the Monotype keyboard provides both for time wages and piece-work, though the great bulk of the work is done on time wages. The boilermakers, again, practise both systems; a good deal of the work in the shipyards is done by groups or squads, of which the leading members (*e.g.* riveters and holders-up) are paid piece rates and the subordinates (*e.g.* rivet-heaters) a fixed weekly wage. A large number of dock labourers, too, are employed at piece rates, calculated by the weight or measurement of the cargoes handled, and

¹ 'Fudge,' however (*i.e.* matter specially set to fit a small contrivance attached to the printing machine for inserting 'Stop Press News' in the evening papers), is worked on a time basis.

very elaborate lists of prices are in force among the grain-porters, coal-trimmers, timber-porters and other sections.

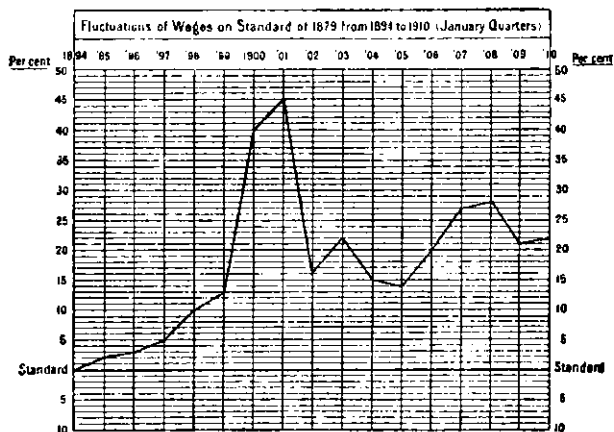
The system of 'payment by results' does not, however, stop at straight piece-work, under which one workman is paid a fixed price for each article or unit he produces. In certain industries, notably in engineering, there have been elaborate developments in the shape of 'Bonus' or 'Efficiency' systems. The Premium Bonus system was introduced into the engineering shops in 1901, and takes various forms which we need not go into here. Its fundamental principle is that, instead of a piece rate being fixed for a job, a 'basis time' is taken, in which the job ought to be done. If, then, the worker finishes the job in less than the basis time, he gets a guaranteed time rate for the time he has actually taken, plus a bonus or premium proportioned to the time saved. Another scheme is known as 'Collective Output Bonus.' Here a standard output is ~~calculated for a whole shop~~ or factory, and the bonus is paid on any output above this level to all the workers, including the higher grades of the staff, in proportion to their rates and hours worked. And other and more complicated systems have been evolved by the 'scientific management' experts in the United States.¹

There is another curious form of the standard rate which must be noticed. The blast-furnacemen, puddlers, forgemen, tin mill hands, etc., in the iron and steel trades, as well as a few iron and lime-stone quarrymen and miners, have their wages regulated by what is known as a Sliding Scale. A certain 'standard' or 'basis' of remuneration is fixed, based on a 'net average selling

¹ The father of scientific management was F. W. Taylor, an American engineer (died 1915), who claimed to have discovered an absolutely 'scientific' method of wage-fixing. His special invention was called the 'Differential Piece Rate.' Two piece rates, a higher and a lower, are fixed for the same job, and also a standard output per hour. If the worker reaches this standard in the hour, he is paid the higher rate; if he fails to reach it, he only gets the lower rate. Taylor's followers, with their 'time' and 'motion' studies, have worked up 'Taylorism' into a bewildering art. (See list of books in the Bibliography. A concise criticism will be found in G. D. H. Cole's *Payment of Wages*.)

'price' of the product, and according as the actual selling price, which is ascertained at regular intervals by chartered accountants, rises above or falls below that basic price, so the earnings rise above or fall below the 'standard' rate. Thus in the South Wales Siemens steel trade the 'standard' rate of wages is taken to correspond to a selling price of £5 per ton of steel tin bars. If the price falls, percentages are deducted from the workmen's pay at the rate of $1\frac{1}{4}$ on the 'standard'

CLEVELAND BLAST-FURNACEMEN FROM 1894-1910
SLIDING SCALE



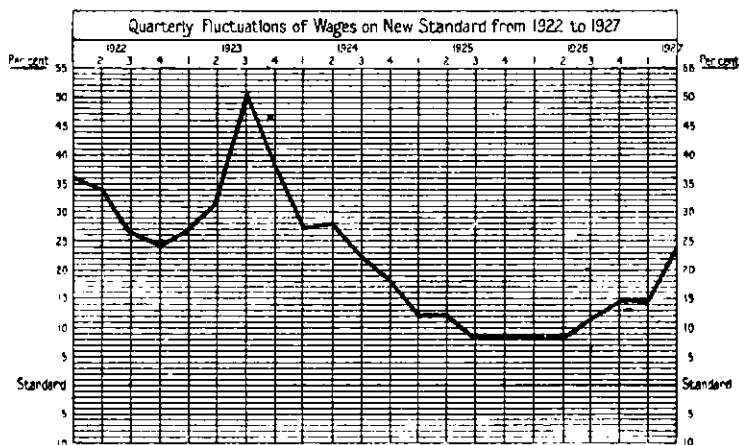
wage for every drop in price of 2s. 6d. per ton. And similarly, if the selling price goes up, the earnings go up in the same ratio.

In the iron and steel works in the Midlands, the North-East, Scotland and elsewhere, the principle is much the same, though the actual method of calculation may be slightly different.

This device of the Sliding Scale, it will be seen, while it maintains the principle of the 'common rule,' is based on an acceptance of the theory that supply

and demand should determine the worker's remuneration. That is a theory which, whatever its popularity may at one time have been, is now very properly rejected by the Trade Union world as a whole. It produces remarkable irregularities in earnings, as may be seen from the accompanying curves; and it does, in fact, as Mr. and Mrs. Webb have pointed out in *Industrial Democracy*, put the workman in "the position of a humble partner," entitled to a share in the product of the industry—but a partner without any voice in the management of the business, unable to exercise any control in the adjust-

CLEVELAND BLAST FURNACEMEN; SLIDING SCALE, 1922-1927¹



ment of the supply to the demand. And it was the recognition of this fact which, more than anything else, led the miners and others who formerly worked under it,

¹ The new basis price of 54s. per ton was fixed by agreement in November, 1919. But this was altered several times in the years 1922-26 to meet exceptional fluctuations. In January, 1922, the selling price was assumed to have been 90s. per ton in place of the realised price of £5, 11s. 2d., giving a percentage of 36 instead of 57. In July, 1922, the basis price was fixed at 61s. 6d. per ton; in January, 1924, it was altered to 67s. 6d., in October, 1925, to 62s. 9d., in January, 1926, to 57s. In October, 1926, it reverted to 54s. per ton on the previously ascertained price. In January, 1927, though the ascertained price had risen from 83s. 6d. to 104s. 4d., no increase in percentage was given.

to abandon the Sliding Scale. The accepted view now is that the workman's income must not depend on profits and prices, but that a living wage should be the first charge on every industry. The iron and steel workers, however, though they have been dissatisfied with the operation of the Sliding Scale in the last few years, have made no attempt to get it abolished.

A quite different, and far more general, kind of sliding scale is that which is based on the cost of living. Cost of living sliding scales came into vogue after the war, as a means of giving some sort of stability to wage agreements and awards. The principle is simple: for every rise or fall of a certain number of points (generally 5) in the Ministry of Labour's cost of living index figure, wages automatically increase or decrease by an agreed percentage—sometimes with the proviso that they shall not fall below certain fixed minima. Thus, by the building trades' agreement of September, 1926, the existing standard rates for various grades of towns are taken to correspond to a cost of living figure of 78, and for each variation of $6\frac{1}{2}$ points in that, wages vary by $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per hour. Cost of living sliding scales have been adopted by a number of Trade Boards and Whitley Councils as well as by the Railway Wages Board. They covered some $1\frac{1}{2}$ million workers at the end of 1920, 3 millions at the middle of 1922 and rather under $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions in 1927.

Though the Trade Unions aim at the enforcement of uniform standard rates, nothing like absolute uniformity is achieved. Considerable variations in the rates of the same class of workmen are found in different places. These variations are generally due to Trade Union weakness, though partly to deliberate arrangement to meet local differences in the cost of living. The National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, for example, have a scheme under which all towns or districts are classified in ten 'grades,' and a 'standard rate' for craftsmen and a 'labourers' rate,' agreed with the employers, are fixed for each grade. The standard rate, as fixed in 1926, was 1s. 8d. an hour for grade A,

the highest, decreasing by $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for each grade down to C1, the lowest. The labourers' rate runs from 1s. 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. down to 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. For the London area there are special additions to the Grade A rates. 'Regrading' is provided for in the agreement, applications being dealt with, first regionally and then nationally, by the 'National Joint Council for the Building Industry.'

On the whole, a great advance has been made in recent years in the levelling up of standard rates. Before the war wage negotiations were commonly on a local basis, and the result was many and wide disparities in the rates of craftsmen or mechanics in neighbouring towns—disparities with which cost of living had little or nothing to do.¹ But war conditions and wartime organisation made for centralised negotiations, and after the war the enhanced power of the Unions and Trade Boards and Whitley Councils all helped towards greater uniformity. Nevertheless, the position is still far from satisfactory, and the Trade Unions have their work cut out not only to pull up rates in the lower paid places, but to resist the attempts of the employers to pull down by reverting to local settlements.²

The normal working day may be regarded from two points of view. In the first place, the establishment of a definite minimum of leisure is clearly a good in itself—vital to the physical, mental and moral welfare of the worker.³ In all the contests waged by the Trade Unions for a shortening of hours this ideal has, of course, been present; sometimes—as in the 'early closing'

¹ See Reports on Standard Time Rates, 1913 (Cd. 7194), and Cost of Living of Working Classes, 1913 (Cd. 6955).

² Cf. the insistence of the coal-owners in 1926 on district settlements, and the reactionary recommendations of the Cave Committee in 1922 for the weakening of Trade Boards.

³ Thus, to give a striking illustration, in 1911 in the Durham and Cleveland iron industry, there were about 10 per cent. of the blast-furnacemen working twelve hours a day, as against the eight hours worked by the majority. Investigations made in a large Trade Union branch showed that the twelve-hour men drew 75 per cent. more sick-pay than those working eight hours, despite the fact that the latter were doing heavier work. Over the whole district the death-rate among the twelve-hour men was out of all proportion greater than among the eight-hour men.

demands of the shop assistants, or in the energetic campaign for 'la semaine anglaise' (the Saturday half-holiday), which the Trade Union movement in France conducted a few years ago—it has been the dominant consideration. But in the second place, a regular number of hours is essential to the maintenance of the standard rate itself. Manifestly the length of the working day is a definite factor in the wage-bargain for all who are employed at time rates. With piece-rate workers the point is less obvious, since it would seem that longer hours must here mean higher earnings. But this, in fact, is to forget that longer hours also mean greater strain on the worker,¹ and will presently, as experience has shown again and again, tell upon the weaker operatives; whilst the very fact of the weekly wages, as judged by the earnings of the strongest and quickest workers, at once rising above the customary level will eventually be used by the employer as an excuse for cutting down the rate. On the other hand, it has been proved over and over again that a reduction of hours does not tend to reduce either output or wages. Thus it was found a good many years ago that the introduction of the forty-eight hour week in the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield, affecting nearly 2000 piece-workers, caused no reduction in output or earnings. And in Victoria an all-round lessening of hours to forty-eight per week was accompanied by large increases of wages (e.g. from 27s. 7d. to 33s. 8d. in the boot trade; from 15s. 8d. to 18s. 3d. for women in the clothing trade; from 27s. 8d. to 34s. 5d. for saddlers). More recently the investigations and experiments of the Industrial Fatigue Research Board and the National Institute of Industrial Psychology have furnished overwhelming evidence in favour of shorter hours, and opponents of the eight hour day are now a dwindling minority.

¹ A series of scientific experiments conducted by Professor Abbé, of the Zeiss Optical Works, Jena, covering two hundred and fifty-three processes, showed that a 4 per cent. larger output was obtained in an eight hour day than had previously been obtained in nine hours, though exactly the same machines were used.

Soon after the war the bulk of the workers in this country had, in fact, secured a standard of forty-eight hours per week, and some of them even less. Thus, in shipbuilding, engineering, pottery, iron and steel, furnishing and certain other trades, the working week is forty-seven hours, in building forty-six in summer and forty-four in winter. In agriculture the hours vary in different counties; in general they are forty-eight per week in winter and from fifty to fifty-four in summer. The coal miners, in 1919, got a seven hour day (for the underground workers) by Act of Parliament; but in 1926 Mr. Baldwin's Government carried another Act which enables employers to impose eight hours. A nominal eight hours for miners, it should be observed, means actually between eight and a half and nine.

In spite of this general reduction of hours, however, Labour is still dissatisfied. What is demanded is an eight hour day, or a forty-eight hour week, not merely by agreement between the employers and the Unions, but enforced by law. This has actually been secured in certain Continental countries—France, Sweden and Norway, and Russia. In 1919 the International Labour Conference at Washington urged all States to establish the legal forty-eight hour week; but the 'Washington Convention,' as it is called, was ignored by many of the Governments, including that of Great Britain. The British Government argued that it was unnecessary, since the forty-eight hour week was already so general in this country and could be made universal by collective bargaining. They objected also that a legal forty-eight hour week would be dangerous, because it would be arbitrary and inelastic, and that it would put British industry at a disadvantage, because other nations could not be relied on to enforce shorter hours, even if they adopted the principle. There was, however, no substance in the last two objections, obviously inspired by 'Big Business.' And the answer to the first was that there are many workers in weakly organised industries who need the support of the law to secure them a reduction of hours; and that even in the case of the more strongly organised a voluntary agreement could be

more easily got rid of by employers anxious to lengthen hours than could a statute.¹

Another weakness in the normal day is that it may be impaired by two practices common in the industrial world. The first of these is the working of overtime. The Trade Unionists have always recognised the evil of this, and have struggled steadily to restrict it within the narrowest limits. It is, of course, penalised in a general way by agreements that all hours beyond the standard shall be paid for at a higher rate—'time and a quarter,' 'time and a half,' or even 'double time.' But these penalties have unhappily often proved an incentive to the workmen to desire overtime, while they have not been sufficient to deter the employers from continuing it, and even making a system of it. Secondly, there is the constant tendency to 'speed-up.' That there is a great deal of feeble work and wasted exertion in industry to-day is undeniable, and the demand for harder or quicker work is in many cases justified. Nevertheless the fact remains that speeding-up, as often practised, is a robbery of the workmen. For, if an employer can justly claim that shorter hours are equivalent to higher wages, since they mean less output and less effort for the same remuneration, then the workman on his side is entitled to say that harder hours mean lower wages, since they mean a greater output and greater effort with no extra reward. The Trade Union naturally tries to resist overdriving, but the difficulty of checking it—sometimes even of detecting it—is enormous.

The general conditions of employment can, like the normal day, be reduced to terms of the standard rate, since the sanitation of a workshop, the state of the machinery, the riskiness or unpleasantness of a job, must properly be taken into account in estimating the worth of the workman's earnings. The Trade Unions have, therefore, always fought in one way or another for the amenities, the health and the lives of their

¹ The British Government in 1927 were still refusing to ratify the Washington Convention, and thereby encouraging a similar attitude in more backward States.

members, and the vast majority of workers do now enjoy a large measure—though by no means an adequate measure—of protection. The reader will easily recall the bulky code of factory legislation: the Workmen's Compensation Acts; the load-line regulations of the Merchant Shipping Acts; the statutes providing for the safety of miners and quarrymen and railway servants, for the prohibition of white phosphorous matches, for seats for shop assistants.¹ Besides this volume of legislative protection, the Unions often have bye-laws of their own for the same purpose. Thus, the Boiler-makers demand that a certificate of safety shall be given before a man is put on to certain classes of repairing work in the shipyards; the Potters insist that no 'oven-men' shall be forced to work in a temperature over 120°; and many of the building trades' Unions require the employer to provide places for shelter against weather and for safety for tools.

(Last, but not least in importance, there is the task of maintaining the greatest possible security of employment for the worker.) Unemployment is one of the chief dangers which threaten the standard of life, and it is also under modern industrial conditions the hardest to cope with. The unemployed destitute workman, faced with the alternative of starvation or a job at any wage, is obviously the most direct menace to the standard rate and to Trade Unionism itself, and it was the recognition of this fact which originally caused the Unions to attach such importance to their out-of-work benefit, and later to support so energetically the palliative measures initiated by Parliament and the municipalities. The abnormal depression that followed the war was, of course, far beyond the power of the Unions to cope with out of their own resources, and led to a general recognition of the State's responsibility, and an immense development of the Unemployment Insurance system. All this it is outside our province to discuss. But it is worth while to mention certain positive regula-

¹ There was an agitation after the war for the codification and improvement of the factory laws. But in 1927 the Government was still shilly-shallying over the passage of a new Factories Bill.

tions made by the Trade Unions, which, though they do not go very far, are of some interest. These fall under four main heads. First, we find the demand that the employer, in engaging a man, shall guarantee him a certain minimum period of work and pay him wages for that period, whether he is at work or not. Thus the Flint-Glass Makers long ago insisted on a minimum of thirty-three hours per week, and the compositors in London newspaper offices were similarly entitled to a guaranteed daily minimum of work or corresponding wages in the alternative. At the docks, where disorganisation and greed and stupidity have condemned a vast army of men to the constant miseries of under-employment, the Unions have for years struggled for regularisation.¹ And the building trades' operatives have long demanded (though without success, except in the case of the Building Guilds during their short period of existence) a less precarious system of engagement or payment. Secondly, rules have been made by certain Unions (e.g. brushmakers, compositors, saddlers) prohibiting the members of the Union from engrossing more than a normal day's work, or from working for a second employer after putting in the ordinary day. But these regulations are obviously only a form of the provision against overtime which is general throughout the Trade Union movement. The idea which underlies them, however, of mitigating the workers' insecurity by sharing the work round, is sometimes carried a stage further, so that we find a third type of positive regulation in the claim for 'distribution of work' to meet a depression of trade or seasonal slackness. Thus, among a large section of the tailors, who are subject to serious fluctuations, it is required that "during slack seasons a fair equitable division of trade should be compulsory in all shops." And similar stipulations are made in the glass-bottle industry. In Lancashire, if a furnace is put out owing to trade depression, an additional furnace may not be started within three months, unless half wages are paid to the men who have been stopped for the

¹ See *Dock Labour and Decasualisation*, by E. C. P. Lascelles and S. S. Bullock (King, 1924).

time they have lost ; while in Yorkshire the men displaced by a furnace being put out are to be allowed "as far as practicable to share work." The same principle, too, has for long been applied regularly in the coal and cotton industries—and during the post-war slump in many others—in a slightly different form, by the shortening of the working hours all round, so as to avoid the dismissal of any individual workman during the period of stagnant trade.

Finally, we have an altogether different class of regulation, in the attempt to obtain security of employment by strictly limiting the number of workmen in the trade. Historically, this restriction of numbers is the first and most essential function of the Unions, and if we were dealing with the Trade Unionism of a hundred or even fifty years ago, we should have had to give to apprenticeship the most prominent place among its regulations. Formerly, when the Wages Fund theory held sway, to limit numbers naturally seemed the only way of maintaining the workmen's standard of life. But now that theory is dead, and, moreover, the constant revolutionising of processes in modern industry makes apprenticeship practically impossible in many trades. It has, therefore, as every student of economics knows, ceased to be of much service either to the employer or to the community, and consequently its value to the Trade Unions, and their interest in it, has greatly diminished.¹ In point of fact, a large majority of the Unions, including the cotton operatives and miners, as well as the huge transport and general labour organisations, allow entrance to the trades without any restriction at all. Yet apprenticeship does still figure in many industries. Collective agreements for its regulation are in force in the building and furnishing and printing trades, among engineers, boilermakers, shipwrights, ship-painters, ironfounders, furriers, tailors, saddlers,

¹ In 1922, and again in 1923, the General Council brought before the Trades Union Congress some "constructive proposals" for the education and training of juveniles and the revival of apprenticeship. But no great interest was shown in the matter.

bakers, coopers, glass-bottle makers and others.¹ But when we look into the working of these agreements, we find that they seldom succeed in keeping the trade closed.² Despite strenuous efforts made by the Unions to maintain the effectiveness of their restrictive regulations, the developments of industry have generally been too much for them. The Engineers, for instance, have been faced by an enormous disintegration of their old craft. With the constant introduction of new machines and the ease with which a man passes from one to another, it has become extremely difficult to distinguish machine-minders who are 'engineers' from those who are merely 'labourers,'³ and the old policy of excluding the unapprenticed workman as an 'illegal man' has long been given up as useless.

Even in those few small and select crafts where apprenticeship has lingered longest, it is gradually decaying. Compulsory apprenticeship is enforced, for instance, among the painters' brushmakers in London,

¹ See Board of Trade Report on Collective Agreements, 1910 (Cd. 5366), pp. 432 ff.

² An inquiry made a few years ago showed that in forty-one typical firms in the building industry in London, with 12,000 employees, there were only 80 apprentices and 143 learners. The proper proportion, if the regulations were strictly kept, would have been 1600. Often the Unions do not aim any longer at restricting numbers. (See cases quoted in Board of Trade Reports on Collective Agreements. The Birmingham Bricklayers' Agreement, *e.g.*, to take one instance at random, imposes no limit on the number of apprentices, though requiring all boys to be legally bound to the trade before the age of seventeen.) And cf. Postgate, *The Builders' History*, p. 355. In recent years, however, the Building Trades Operatives have made an effort to renovate apprenticeship, as also have the Printers. The Boilermakers, whom Mr. and Mrs. Webb were able to cite twenty years ago as the one really important Union which still maintained apprenticeship in its old integrity, agreed in 1901 with the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation that there should be no limitation in the number of apprentices employed (in the North-East Coast yards), though the employers conceded "that it is not their intention to overstock yards with apprentices, and if the Boilermakers' Society finds it necessary to prefer a complaint respecting the number of apprentices, this must be done through the secretaries of the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation." In other shipyards, however, as at Cardiff, Barry, Southampton and Liverpool, a specific ratio of apprentices to journeymen (one to three or four) was agreed upon.

³ Though in this country the sanctity of the lathe proper (*i.e.* not capstan or automatic lathes) has been preserved. Only a recognised 'engineer,' who has been through an apprenticeship, can work it.

but it is almost dead in the same trade in Birmingham. And a similar fate has overtaken it in others of the Birmingham handicrafts, such as jewellery, sporting gun and rifle making, electro-plating and the glass trades. In the Sheffield cutlery industry the old system of 'patrimony'¹ is still maintained to some extent. Under this pseudo-apprenticeship the Razor Hafters, Table Knife Forgers, Scythe Grinders, and various other societies permit no boys to enter the trade except the sons of members, and the lads when they do enter are apprenticed not to a capitalist master but to the journeymen themselves. But it is to be observed that the number of these apprentices is not very narrowly restricted: each journeyman may have an apprentice of his own, and sometimes the rules allow a father to introduce all his sons to the craft. And it seems likely that another decade or two will see the end even of this survival.

But however little one may regret the passing of apprenticeship, unsuited as it is to modern industry, it is impossible to be satisfied with the system—or rather want of system—that has taken its place. The large supply of cheap untrained boy labour that is open to employers to-day is disastrous to the skilled journeymen, to the youths themselves and to the community. The Trade Unions have struggled energetically, but without much success, to restrict the evil. The number of juveniles can sometimes be kept down in districts where Trade Unionism is strong, and in classes of work where skilled workers are essential. But little can be done by the Unions to touch the low-grade shops and the small employers. The true remedy, as is now pretty clearly recognised, is the limitation not of the number of boys who shall be employed in a particular trade, but of the hours and conditions of their work. The

¹ It is interesting to notice that this 'patrimony' is practised also by certain Unions in the U.S.A. The Table Knife Grinders and the National Window Glass Workers, for instance, have made relationship a qualification for apprenticeship, while other Unions give a preference to sons of journeymen. Generally speaking, however, in America as here, very few Unions are able effectively to regulate apprenticeship.

raising of the school-leaving age, and the enforcement of the provision of the Education Act, 1921, for 'continuation schooling' for juveniles in industry, would go far to solve more than one serious problem.

Into the much debated question of the competition of women with men in industry we cannot go in detail here. There is a certain number of women employed not merely in the same trades with men, but on precisely similar work, and there is undoubtedly no lack of willingness on the part of many employers to supplant their men with lower-paid female labour. Various Trade Unions have tried—some with success—to exclude women altogether from their crafts.¹ But, broadly speaking, the old exclusionist feeling has broken down. In all the important industries, where a large number of women work side by side with the men—as in cotton, hosiery, boot and shoe manufacture, tailoring, cigar-making, pottery—the Unions admit the two sexes to membership, while trying to maintain their standard by insisting on the principle of 'equal pay for equal work,' or the 'rate for the job' as it is sometimes called. But for the most part the work is not actually equal, since the sexes tend to be employed at separate processes or perform different operations, and there is consequently no question of encroachment on the higher standard. In the cases where identical work is being done, there is generally a single rate which does not discriminate between the woman and the man.²

¹ The craft Unions in the engineering, shipbuilding and building trades do not admit women. The printers waged a struggle against the employment of women in the middle of last century; but in 1886 the Typographical Association and the London Society of Compositors agreed to admit women "upon the same conditions as journeymen, provided always the females are paid strictly in accordance with scale." This, however, made it practically impossible for women to become members, since employers would not consider them worth the high rates paid to male compositors. Only one woman joined the L.S.C.—and her case was exceptional (she was employed at Morris's Kelmscott Press). See *Women in the Printing Trades*, by J. R. MacDonald (1904).

² e.g. the Lancashire cotton weavers all conform to the same price list; the general difference in the weekly earnings of the women is simply due to the fact that they confine themselves to the lighter work. For a full discussion of this subject, see *Women in Trade*

There is one other form of the Trade Union claim to a vested interest for its members, which must be mentioned. The regulations we have been discussing so far represent the resistance to encroachment on the craftsman's security from below. But encroachment is obviously possible from the side also, and in certain industries where different trades tend naturally to overlap we find the Unions constantly occupied in protecting their members' jobs against workers in these allied trades. In the shipbuilding and engineering industries especially the demarcation disputes constitute a really serious problem. Boilermakers, Engineers, Plumbers, Shipwrights, Joiners, Patternmakers and various other societies have frequently been engaged in internecine conflicts about the right of their respective members to some particular class of work. Occasionally the bitterest quarrels have arisen over what seem ludicrous details, as, for example, in the historic dispute in the Tyne and Wear shipyards as to whether the fixing of 2½-inch pipes should be done by plumbers or by fitters, or in a more recent altercation between the angle-iron smiths, of the Boilermakers' Society, and the blacksmiths, of the Amalgamated Engineers, as to who ought to make bulwark stays. Changes in building methods have also led to many disputes in late years between building trades' operatives and metal workers. And plumbers quarrel perennially with other 'domestic engineers' over gas pipes, water pipes, calorifiers and the like. We shall have to recur to this demarcation question later; here we need only say that the Trade Unionists themselves are alive to the mischief of it, and that the best minds in the movement recognise that such a claim to a vested interest is no part of a sound Trade Unionism.

Unions, by Barbara Drake, and Report of the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry (especially Minority Report, by Mrs. Sidney Webb) (Cd. 135, 1919).

CHAPTER VIII

TRADE UNION METHODS

Voluntary Insurance—Political Action—Collective Bargaining—
Conciliation and Arbitration—The Strike.

TRADE UNIONISM has four principal methods of protecting its standards. The first is, so to speak, *internal*, the Union not being concerned directly with the employer or with the community, but constituting itself an insurance society for its own members. The second aims at the enforcement of the 'common rule' through legislation, either covering the whole industry of the nation or applying to particular trades or groups of trades. The third and fourth are forms of 'industrial action' or 'direct action.' Here the Trade Unions rely on their own power to enforce their demands, whether by diplomacy in the form of negotiation with the employers, or by actual stoppage of work till their terms are conceded. These four methods, which we call Voluntary Insurance, Political Action, Collective Bargaining and the Strike, are all in vogue to-day.

Their relative importance varies, and has varied, of course, according to circumstances. In the eighteenth century, when it was still customary for Parliament to take upon itself the regulation of industry, the primitive Unions and Trade Clubs, as we have already seen, turned naturally to the law for protection.¹ With the advent of the *laissez faire* philosophy, however, they were forced back upon their own resources, and volunt.

¹ A very early instance of collective bargaining is found among the printers. So far back as 1785 a "London Scale of Prices for Compositors' Work" was in operation, and this scale has actually formed the basis on which compositors have worked down to the present—with alterations, of course, made by the mutual consent of representative employers and workmen, from time to time.

insurance became important. After the repeal of the Combination Laws, the system of collective bargaining began to be built up, though, wherever chance offered, the workmen eagerly availed themselves of the help of Parliament, as in the case of the factory laws, whilst the weapon of the strike was never allowed to grow rusty. Later still, in the middle of the nineteenth century, as the Trade Unions' power outgrew their popularity, and the employers were as little favourable to collective bargaining as Parliament was to legal enactment, voluntary insurance was, in the words of one of the leaders of those days, "the usual and regular way in which the labour of the members of a trade society is protected."¹ Then, in the 'seventies the Unions received their charter from Parliament, their representatives went to Westminster, and 'political action'—of a rather timid kind, no doubt—was steadily pursued.

At the close of the last century and the beginning of this, the belief in the efficacy of legislation, sedulously fostered by the Socialists and presently enhanced by the advent of the Labour Party, was growing apace, though a remarkable elaboration of the machinery of collective agreements and conciliation was proceeding simultaneously. And it is probable that the reaction against political methods, which was so marked a year or two before the war, was largely the result of the over-emphasis which the Trade Union movement put upon its achievements and its possibilities in the House of Commons.

Voluntary insurance, as a method of Trade Unionism, means the provision of funds by common subscription to insure against certain risks either due to causes over which the members have no control, or deliberately incurred in the struggle to protect their standard of life. This covers not only the friendly benefits, such as funeral, sick and accident, and superannuation pay, but the 'trade' benefits, such as unemployment pay and

¹ See T. J. Dunning, *Trades Unions and Strikes: Their Philosophy and Intention* (London, 1860), p. 10.

the very important dispute pay granted to the members on strike or locked out.

Of the friendly benefits, funeral benefit appears to be the oldest, as well as the commonest. It is given by practically all the chief societies, with the exception of certain Miners' Unions, on the member's death and often on the death of his wife—sometimes even for the burial of his widow or children. The amounts paid in different Unions vary considerably. The Engineers, Boilermakers and Distributive Workers give £12, the Wood-workers £14, the London Society of Compositors from £4 to £25, according to length of membership, the Iron and Steel Trades as much as £40; whilst the Bleachers and Dyers pay £7, and the North Wales Quarrymen only £4. The amount paid on the wife's death is generally £5 or £6, which is in some Unions deducted from the member's own benefit, if his wife predeceases him.

Sick and accident benefits are a more recent introduction, though traces of the former are found here and there among the eighteenth-century Unions. The latter is, naturally, not of very serious importance, except in the more hazardous trades, and the amounts paid out in respect of accidents have considerably decreased owing to the Workmen's Compensation Acts. The aggregate annual expenditure on these two benefits makes a considerable sum (£818,600 in 1924). But only about half the Unions give sick and accident pay, among those which do not being most of the miners', textile and printing trades and transport Unions. The rate of the sickness benefit is sometimes as high as 15s. or even 20s. a week, but the average, speaking roughly, is about 10s. a week, with a decreased amount after a certain number of weeks.

Superannuation benefit is less general. It is confined, naturally, to the wealthier Unions, such as those in the metal, engineering and shipbuilding, building and printing trades. Few of the miners or weavers or labourers give it at all, though for the miners it is provided by 'Miners' Permanent Relief Societies.' The amount of this pension varies in

different societies, as does the age of eligibility. The Engineers, for instance, pay from 4s. to 10s. per week, according to length of membership, at fifty-five years of age, the London Society of Compositors from 24s. to 40s. at sixty.

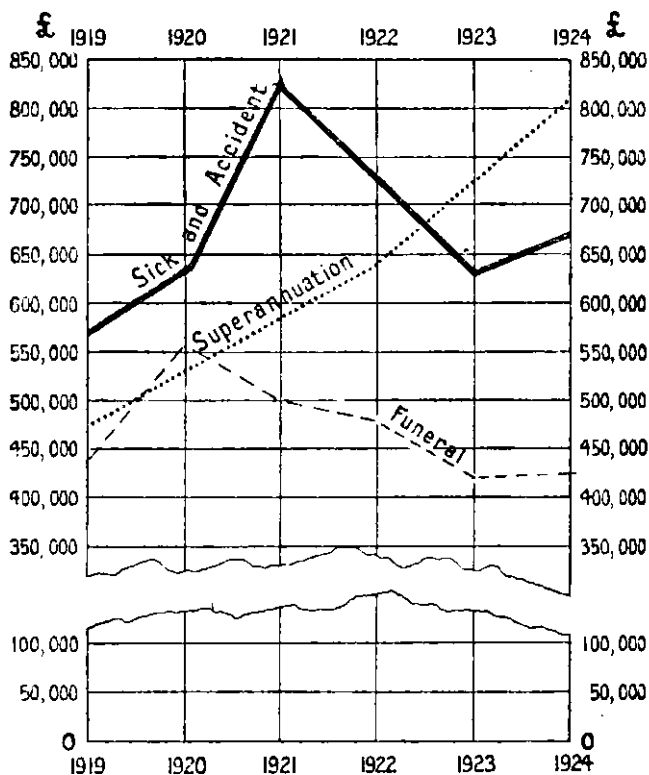
Unemployment benefit, or 'donation,' was in former times generally given as 'tramp benefit,' or travelling relief, to members in search of work, and in some of the building trades' Unions it still largely survives in this form. But for the most part it has been elaborated into one of the two most important of all the benefits, and it accounts for a large percentage of the total annual expenditure of the 100 principal Unions.¹ In the richer societies, especially in the printing trades, the amount of this out-of-work pay may run up to 25s. or more per week, but, generally speaking, it is 10s. or 12s. or 15s. Another form of unemployment benefit is found in the payments made, especially in the cotton industry, on account of stoppages of work due to fires, failures of firms, breakdowns of machinery or excessive slackness of trade. A few Unions also give emigration allowances. The London Society of Compositors, for instance, grants from £3 to £20 to a member going abroad, according to the length of time he has been in the Union.

Dispute benefit is provided by nearly all Unions, and in many of them holds the first place. The London Compositors, for example, are entitled to 36s. a week (for a period of ten weeks, which may be prolonged up to twenty-six) when on strike, while the National Union of General Workers gives 16s. (for ten weeks, with extension "if circumstances warrant it") and the Agricultural Workers 12s. Sometimes the amount is supplemented by extra allowances for children, as with the Spinners, who grant £1 a week, plus 2s. for each child under sixteen who is not a worker.

Lastly, there are certain minor benefits given occasionally in the shape of benevolent or distress grants,

¹ The percentage was 13·5 in 1919, 16·6 in 1920, 60·8 in 1921, 52 in 1922, 37·3 in 1923, 31·1 in 1924. The pressure was so heavy in 1921 that the majority of the Unions had to impose special levies, and presently to suspend the payment of unemployed benefits.

compensation for loss of tools by fire or water, legal assistance, orphan funds, or 'victimisation' pay allowed to members "prosecuted by employers for taking an active part in business connected with and authorised



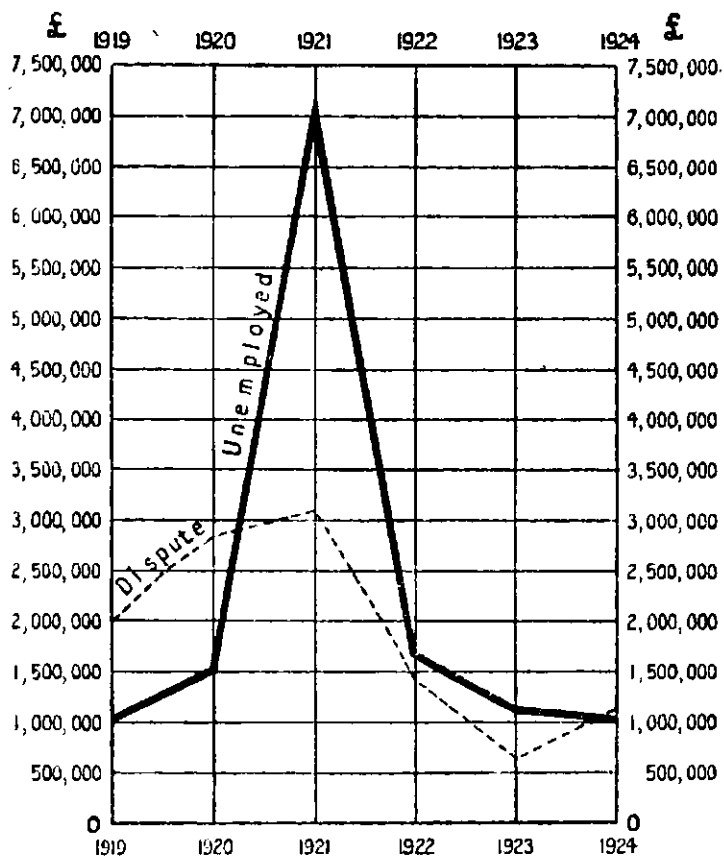
Variations of expenditure on Friendly Benefits by the 100 principal Trade Unions in years 1919-1924.

by the Society." The National Union of Seamen pays a 'shipwreck' benefit—from £2 to £6, according to the length of membership.

The accompanying diagrams show the variations of

expenditure on benefits over a period of years by the 100 principal Unions in the kingdom.

If now we have to answer the question, What is the exact value of the system of voluntary insurance?



Variations of expenditure on 'Trade' Benefits by the 100 principal Trade Unions in years 1919-1924.

we must begin by making certain distinctions. First, we must distinguish more or less sharply between the friendly benefits, the out-of-work benefit and the dispute benefit. And secondly, we must distinguish between

the advantage to the individual workman and the Union as a whole. Obviously the workman's object is to provide as far as possible against casualties and losses in the shape of sickness, accident, death or unemployment. As regards the first three, at any rate, of these particular risks, he might meet them by paying into a Friendly Society or a commercial Assurance Company. Indeed, he might well get greater security and better terms by so doing, and, in point of fact, many Trade Unionists do belong to such organisations as well as to their trade society. For the most part, however, a man finds it convenient not to have to join a number of different clubs, and if one subscription will cover a variety of risks, he prefers that arrangement. But it is not the first business of a Trade Union to be a Provident Society or a Sick Club, and the main reason for its 'friendly' activities is to be sought not in their intrinsic convenience to the individuals in distress, but in their value as a method of attracting and holding members.)

But out-of-work benefit stood from the beginning in a different category. For this the workman was bound to join his Union, since there was no other agency (until the entry of the State into the field under the National Insurance Act of 1911¹) to provide against the contingency of unemployment. Accordingly, from the Trade Union's point of view also, as well as the individual's, the unemployment benefit occupies quite a distinct position. Nevertheless, it is not an end in itself. Its prime importance, as is frankly recognised, lies in the fact that it is a means of protecting the members' standard of life. It is, in a word, a method of supporting the Trade Union regulations, helping, as it does, to prevent the unemployed workman, reduced to distress if not to starvation, from breaking back to individual bargaining and offering his labour to the employer on terms below the standard rate. The danger of such a position has been appreciated by the Trade Unions from

¹ The original State benefit was 7s. a week and was confined to certain trades. It has since been raised and extended to cover practically the whole of industry, except agriculture, the railways and domestic service.

the earliest days, and it is the overwhelming necessity of guarding against it which has sometimes led even to the depletion of the funds available for sickness or superannuation or burial, in order to pay unemployment benefit.

We have observed that it is not the chief business of a Trade Union to dispense provident benefits. But there are many who go still further than this, and say that it is not the Trade Union's business at all—that, in fact, it is a danger and a weakness for a Union to disguise itself as a Friendly Society. (The revolt against the excessive friendly activities of the older Unions began, as has already been mentioned, with the 'new Unionism' of the eighteen-eighties, and contempt has been poured by the more militant section on what was once called "the glorified goose and coffin club" idea.) There is doubtless some truth in the complaint that a system of large friendly benefits tends to make a Union conservative and over-cautious. The history of the great societies in the nineteenth century showed that only too clearly, and history has not failed to repeat itself. At the same time, to abandon this class of benefits altogether would undoubtedly be to abandon a very effective means of recruiting members, many of whom, when once brought in, are likely to turn out as bold as the most militant could desire. And, indeed, it seems futile to discuss such a step; the Insurance Acts have enormously strengthened the system and have involved the Unions so deeply in it, that it would be very difficult for a General Secretary to say, as one said five-and-twenty years ago, that he did not believe in having sick pay and out-of-work pay.¹ In any case, one need not unduly exaggerate the extent to which friendly benefits act as a drag. If and in so far as they obscure the true functions of Trade Unionism, they ought to be opposed; but the spirit which to-day animates even the most unprogressive of the Unions of yesterday is evidence that the possession of friendly benefits does not necessarily imply corporate selfishness and a policy of timidity.

¹ Cf. p. 20 above.

Twenty years ago, it is interesting to observe, there were many who confidently predicted that the friendly benefits would rapidly dwindle as State provision extended. But the State has moved very slowly, and the prediction has not yet been fulfilled. The Old Age Pensions Act of 1908 touches only the most necessitous—and these not till they are seventy—and its maximum allowance is the niggardly sum of 10s. a week. The Trade Unions, however, have to provide for their members ten or fifteen years earlier, and the effect of the Act on the superannuation funds has apparently been negligible.¹ The total expenditure on superannuation benefit by the hundred principal Unions has risen steadily year by year (except during the war). It was £408,132 in 1911, £578,413 in 1921, £809,904 in 1924. Nor have the Health and Unemployment Insurance Acts had any different result in this respect, the Trade Unions having in general simply added the State sickness and out-of-work benefits to their own. As regards funeral benefit, though there is a strong case for performing all burials at the public expense, nothing at all has been done. In course of time it is possible that we shall see an enlargement of communal provision, which will effectually lessen the need for voluntary insurance on the part of the Trade Unions. Meanwhile, it is futile to attempt a frontal attack on the friendly benefit system in the old and wealthy societies of this country, and what is generally advocated is the separation of the fighting and trade funds, on the one hand, and the friendly funds on the other, contributions to the former being universal and compulsory, and to the latter optional.

Another, and from a practical point of view more immediately important, criticism of certain of the friendly benefits is concerned with their actuarial basis. Some Unions have got into considerable difficulties by paying higher benefits than their contributions justified, and the necessity of actuarial soundness is by no means as fully appreciated as it should be.

¹ It is possible that the Act of 1925, under which a (contributory) pension is given at the age of sixty-five, may have a more marked effect.

It is clear that voluntary insurance, whatever its importance in the past, cannot be regarded at the present time as anything more than a supplementary method of protecting the Trade Union standards. But with political action, collective bargaining and the strike, the case is very different. The popularity of legislative intervention in the concerns of Labour has, as we have seen, had its ebbs and flows. We have already described how the eighteenth-century combinations went to Parliament with their grievances and demands, and how, at the close of the long period of *laissez faire* a hundred years later, the Trade Union movement returned with renewed zest to political action.

We have referred to the political machinery which was created, both for particular trades, such as the textile and mining, and for organised Labour as a whole—the local Trades Councils, the Trades Union Congress with its Parliamentary Committee, and finally the Labour Party itself. It would be too long to enumerate here all the laws, regulating wages and hours and conditions of employment, which have, at one period or another, been placed on the Statute Book mainly as a result of these activities. But a cursory glance at the history of the seven or eight years before the war will show the importance which the working class has attached to parliamentary action. Leaving aside such far-reaching measures as the National Insurance Act and the Labour Exchanges Act, we find, at the direct instigation of organised Labour, two large alterations of the status of the Trade Unions (in the Trade Disputes Act, 1906, and the Trade Union Act, 1913); the extension of the Workmen's Compensation and the Factory codes; the regulation of dangerous trades, such as the making of matches, of earthenware and china, of white and yellow and red lead, the casting of various metals, the bottling of aerated waters, and numerous other occupations; the legal limitation of the hours of vast bodies of workers, miners, shop assistants, policemen and others; the passing of the Coal Mines (Minimum Wage) Act, 1912, and the establishment and development of the Trade Board system.

After the war the rapid growth of democracy and Socialism enormously increased the importance of political action. And the brief spell of office enjoyed by the Labour Party in 1924, and the prospects of its returning to power in greater strength before many years have passed, have settled the old question which used to exercise men's minds, whether it was worth while for the Trade Unions to dabble in politics. This is not to suggest, of course, that other methods, collective bargaining and the strike, can be regarded as unimportant. It means simply that the value of the political weapon is beyond doubt.

Collective bargaining, the method of settling standard rates, conditions of employment, and so on, by direct treaty between employers and organised bodies of workmen, is by many regarded as the *raison d'être* of the Trade Union. It is certainly the normal means by which the common rule is applied throughout the whole, or large parts, of a trade, instead of each man making his own contract separately with his employer. Its primitive form is the 'shop bargain,' where representatives of all the workpeople, or all of a certain grade, in a particular shop or firm settle prices and the like with the foreman or employer. But with the growth of Trade Unionism on the one hand, and of combination among employers on the other, this practice has broadened out into an elaborate system of 'collective agreements,' culminating in many trades in Standing Joint Committees or Boards of Conciliation for the mutual arrangement, sometimes down to the minutest details, of matters in dispute.

These collective agreements, in one shape or another, are found now in almost every industry. According to the official Reports of the Board of Trade, there were no less than 1696 in force in the United Kingdom in 1910, covering directly nearly two and a half million persons, besides many more indirectly. In recent years they have spread much further, and now the great majority of the manual workers are regulated more or less by collective agreements (or by statutory bodies such as Trade Boards and Agricultural Wages Committees). There are three main types of agreement, the first and

commonest settling wages and hours ; the second dealing with conditions of work, ventilation, sanitation, conveniences or amenities ; and the third marking a definite interference of the Trade Union in the 'management,' through stipulations on such questions as the employment of non-Unionists, or apprenticeship, or the number and class of men to be employed on a particular job. Very often, of course, the same agreement will cover the whole ground, though occasionally the third point is expressly excluded. The normal method of bargaining is discussion between representatives of the employers and the workers, either locally or nationally. The tendency now is to centralise negotiations, at least in all matters of importance, which means that the parties are the national association or federation of employers in the industry and the national Trade Union.

In the system of conciliation the principle of collective bargaining is carried a stage further, by the establishment of permanent machinery for the discussion and settlement of matters in dispute. This machinery consists in Boards of Conciliation—courts or committees manned by equal numbers of employers and employed—occasionally set up by official mandate, as in the case of the Railway Boards constituted under the authority of the Board of Trade before the war (and remodelled on a different basis by the Railways Act of 1921), but in general by voluntary pact of masters and men. There are now several hundreds of these permanent Boards, the bulk of them dealing with particular trades, but a few being 'District Boards,' offering their services as mediators at large, so to speak, in industrial differences. A notable development, too, is the Joint Industrial Councils—Whitley Councils, as they are popularly called—set up since the war in some seventy different industries. Most of them are in the smaller or weakly organised trades (*e.g.* Bobbins and Shuttles ; Elastic Webbing, Metallic Bedsteads, Needles, Fishhooks and Fishing Tackle), though a few are in more important industries, such as Printing, Boots and Shoes, Pottery, Civil Service, and Local Government. The Whitley Councils are national bodies, and have—or are sup-

posed to have—District Councils and Works Committees functioning under them. They are composed of equal numbers of representatives of employers' associations and of Trade Unions, and they deal with a variety of matters—wages and bonus, disputes, apprenticeship, welfare, research, trade organisation. They have not fulfilled the hope that they would secure "a permanent improvement in the relations between employers and workmen";¹ some of them, indeed, have broken down over wage disputes. But, taken as a whole, they have helped to improve industrial organisation and to standardise wage rates, and they constitute a fairly substantial addition to the permanent machinery of negotiation and conciliation.²

In one important industry this machinery has been set up by Parliament. Under the Railways Act of 1921 there is an elaborate system of departmental committees, sectional and railway Councils, and central and national wages boards, for dealing with wage rates and conditions of service in all the four great railway companies. The Central Wages Board is composed of sixteen members, eight being representatives of the companies, and eight of the railway Trade Unions. The National Wages Board is the supreme tribunal, and includes, besides six representatives of the companies and six of the railway Unions, four representatives of the users of the railways—one nominated by the General Council of the T.U.C., one by the Co-operative Union, and the other two by employers' federations. Any

¹ See Whitley Report on Joint Standing Industrial Councils, 1917.

² Whitley Councils are voluntary bodies, not statutory like the Trade Boards. And their decisions have not, as the Trade Board determinations have, the force of law. The demand has been made, however, that Whitley agreements should be legalised over the whole of an industry, and a Bill to this end has been promoted by the Association of Joint Industrial Councils, but Government has so far not given it its blessing. There is a division of opinion on the matter among the Trade Unions, and the Trades Union Congress in 1923 rejected the policy. At the 1925 Congress, however, a resolution was carried, instructing the General Council to press the policy on the Government. The General Council were not satisfied with the Bill referred to above, but proposed to draft a new one of their own, "limited to the enforcement of an agreed minimum wage" and laying obligations on employers only and not on workmen.

dispute referred to the National Wages Board must be dealt with within twenty-eight days, and a strike or lock-out is forbidden until the expiry of the twenty-eight days. The decisions of the Board are not legally binding on the parties, but in practice they have great weight.

There are some who favour the extension of the plan of compulsory conciliation, on the lines of the Canadian Industrial Disputes Investigation Act of 1907.¹ This Act, generally known as the Lemieux Act, provided that, in the event of a dispute in the mining industry or in public utility services (lighting, water, sanitary, transport), application may be made by either employers or employees for the appointment of a Board of Conciliation and Investigation; while in the case of the railways, a Board may be appointed on the application of outsiders or even on the Minister's own initiative.

And until this Board has concluded its inquiry and issued its report, a strike or lock-out is illegal. The Industrial Disputes Prevention Act of the Transvaal, passed two years later, is based on the same principle, but goes rather further, in that, first, it covers not only the mining industry and public utility services, but many other trades, including practically all sections of building and engineering; and secondly, it extends the period during which a strike or lock-out is illegal for a month after the issue of the Board's report. Whether such a method could be applied in this country at present seems very doubtful. There may be indeed strong argument for imposing some measure of delay on the workers in the public utility services, before they are allowed to turn the community topsy-turvy. But the Trade Unions are not likely, in view of recent events, to look favourably on any further restrictions of their rights, and they may easily see the Lemieux plan as a step towards compulsory arbitration, to which, as we shall show in a moment, they are strongly opposed. The plan requires, in order to be a success, the cheerful acceptance of both parties and a tribunal that commends itself to both parties. The British railway scheme has

¹ This Act was, owing to judicial decision, remodelled with a more limited scope in 1925.

precisely this advantage over the Canadian Act. The Wages Boards were not inventions forcibly imposed by Parliament on the railway service; they were a piece of machinery voluntarily adopted and used before they were given legal sanction in 1921. It will be time to 'Lemieuxise' other industries, when Trade Unions and employers both ask for it.

In some cases we find the system of voluntary conciliation carried a step further, and provision made for an arbitral settlement of disputes. Thus, under the 'Terms of Settlement' in the boot and shoe trade, when all the preliminary stages of investigation and discussion have failed to produce an agreement, resort is had to an independent umpire, upon whom the two sides agree and whose decision they undertake to accept. During all these stages no strike or lock-out may be declared, under a heavy penalty. And the same principle, that there must be no stoppage of work till all the stages of conciliation have been gone through, is found in most of the industries where the policy has been adopted.

This private arbitration is supplemented by the State, which lends its assistance, if required, through the Ministry of Labour. This it may do either under the Conciliation Act of 1896, or under the now more important Industrial Courts Act of 1919.¹ The machinery of the Industrial Courts Act has been used to a moderate extent. During 1925 there were 81 arbitration settlements made under it, 65 by the Industrial Court, 8 by single arbitrators, and 8 by *ad hoc* arbitration boards. The majority of the disputes were in the railway service; 20 were in the Civil Service, and 20 in engineering and shipbuilding. But, as has been mentioned above, this State-aided arbitration is purely voluntary. The Industrial Court can only function with the consent of the parties to the dispute, and its awards are not legally binding. Compulsory arbitration, which is firmly established in Australasia and has recently been introduced in Italy, finds little favour in this country with either employers or workers, though

¹ See *Wages and the State*, by E. M. Burns, 1926.

it was accepted more or less cheerfully as a temporary measure during the war. It cannot be said, indeed, that even voluntary arbitration enjoys any widespread popularity. A self-imposed prohibition of strikes and lock-outs like that in the boot and shoe industry, with provisions for forfeiture of monetary guarantees in case of stoppages, is very rare. There is, in general, a prejudice against the intervention of 'outsiders' in the concerns of an industry with which they are not familiar. And this prejudice is strongly reinforced by the workman's fear that the 'impartial' arbitrator will not make an impartial award; that, however honest he may be, he will inevitably be biased by the training and traditions of his class.¹ And, apart from this, there is another objection that may very properly be urged. Arbitration is a sound method of dealing with disputes over the interpretation of rights and duties under an existing agreement. But the serious disputes in the industrial world are not, as a rule, of this kind. They are over questions of principle and policy, of new rates and wages, of the employment of non-Unionists, and so on. And these are questions which are clearly much less suitable or easy for the impartial outsider to settle.

The method of collective bargaining, then, has evolved into an elaborate scheme of diplomacy which is designed not only to protect the workmen's standard of life, but also to obviate, as far as possible, the resort to industrial war. Nevertheless the long annual lists of industrial conflicts show the extent to which the Trade Unions make use of their final weapon of the strike.

The table on the following page gives a general comparison for the years 1911-26.

The majority of the disputes are concerned with questions of wages, and a smaller number with hours of work. Other common causes are objections to foremen and other officials, to non-Unionists, or to changes in arrangement or conditions of work, demands for the reinstatement of dismissed employees, demarcation

¹ If it were the custom to appoint workmen, or members of the Labour Party, as arbitrators, this fear would, no doubt, disappear. But then the employers might object!

Year.	Number of Disputes.	Number of Work-people directly or indirectly involved.	Aggregate Duration of Working Days lost.
1911	872	952,000	10,155,000
1912	834	1,462,000	40,890,000
1913	1459	664,000	9,804,000
1914	972	447,000	9,878,000
1915	672	448,000	2,953,000
1916	532	276,000	2,446,000
1917	730	872,000	5,647,000
1918	1165	1,116,000	5,875,000
1919	1352	2,591,000	34,969,000
1920	1607	1,932,000	26,568,000
1921	763	1,801,000	85,872,000
1922	576	552,000	19,850,000
1923	628	405,000	10,672,000
1924	710	613,000	8,424,000
1925	603	445,000	7,952,000
1926	320	2,751,300	162,233,000

questions, the employment of boys and women in substitution for men, and various forms of 'sympathetic' movements.

The exceptionally high figures in certain years are generally accounted for by quarrels in one or more of the large industries. Thus the miners were on strike in 1912, the railwaymen in 1919, the miners again in 1920 and 1921, while the General Strike and the protracted mining lock-out combined to create the record of 1926. But ordinarily it should be remembered that the numbers, high as they are, of persons involved in

any one year represent but a small proportion of the total number engaged in industry. In 1924 this proportion amounted only to a little over 5 per cent. of those insured under the Unemployment Insurance Acts, in 1925 to about $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., while the average for the years 1919-25 is about 10 per cent.

But, of course, the strike is not a topic that can be dismissed lightly. Every strike is a serious matter for some one; a stoppage in a great industry may amount to a national disaster, or a general strike may shake the foundations of the State. Controversy has raged for years over both the efficacy and the morality of the strike. There are some who would abolish the right to strike and substitute a system of arbitration for the settlement of disputes. The strike, they say, is a 'method of barbarism,' unworthy of a civilised community; and it may even be regarded as a boomerang which generally recoils on the strikers' own heads, and inflicts more damage on the working class than on any one else.

But the hope of establishing a universal system of arbitration for the strike seems, under present conditions, to be Utopian. We have already referred to the deep-rooted objections to compulsory arbitration, and it is of little use to point to the happy results achieved in Australia. The Australian system, as a matter of fact, has not been entirely successful in producing industrial peace; there have been a good many strikes and lock-outs in breach of the Arbitration Court awards. And, moreover, what success arbitration has had in Australia is largely due to the relatively good position of Labour there; if the Australian workers were as poorly circumstanced as the British, it is not likely that the system would have found any general acceptance. It is possible, no doubt, to envisage a time when we shall have built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land, and the strike will be voluntarily abandoned. That time, however, is not yet. It is also possible to envisage some English Mussolini imposing a system of industrial slavery on England's green and pleasant land. But until the working classes (and, it

must be said in fairness, the bourgeoisie also) have changed their character, that prospect, too, may be regarded as Utopian.

As for the argument that the workers are blind to their interest in clinging to the strike, the facts hardly bear it out. It is true that industrial warfare inflicts suffering and loss on them. But it is not true that no strike ever pays. And it is probable that, taken as a whole, the use of the strike weapon yields a balance of gain, though it is impossible to measure that gain with any accuracy. Every year, of course, a certain number of strikes are won or lost outright; sometimes the percentage is in favour of the employers, sometimes of the workers. But every year also shows a large number of partially successful strikes, and it may very well be that most, if not all, of the compromises thus gained were worth fighting for.¹

Moreover, even those disputes which are officially described as 'settled in favour of the employers' often lead to the victors presently conceding a part, and perhaps the whole, of what the workmen had demanded. And, finally, it must not be forgotten that the threat of a strike means a valuable asset in collective bargaining. Much that the Trade Unions have won by negotiations would never have been won had they not had this power in reserve.

The advocates of compulsory arbitration are confronted at the other end of the scale by another school of extremists. These want not fewer strikes, but more—and as many as possible. Industrial warfare, they say, may be barbaric, but so is capitalist society. The present order rests on force, and must be fought by force, in season and out of season. And the strike is the most potent—indeed, the only potent—weapon in the workers' armoury. This idea was preached and popularised in the early years of this century by the Syndicalist Trade Unions in France. These were 'non-

¹ The official classification of all the industrial disputes from 1910 to 1924 shows 26 per cent. settled in favour of the workers, 30 per cent. settled in favour of the employers, and 44 per cent. ending in a compromise. (See *Labour Gazette*, July, 1925.)

political' in theory and anti-parliamentarian in practice, despising Parliament as a futile bourgeois institution and pinning all their faith to 'direct action.' The most important part of direct action was the strike in its various forms—local, sympathetic, general, or 'partial general.' Every strike must be looked on as an episode in the Social War; every strike is a *gymnastique révolutionnaire*—a training for the supreme struggle of the revolutionary general strike, which will one day overthrow capitalism and the wage-system, together with the whole fabric of existing society. Every strike, therefore, has an educative value altogether apart from its immediate success or failure. This philosophy, as we have mentioned above, had some little influence in Great Britain for a year or two before the war. But Syndicalism is now hardly more than a memory; Communism has taken its place as the revolutionary creed. The Communist does not, of course, subscribe to all the theories and tactics of the Syndicalists; but he shares their belief in violent methods, and he aims at fostering the fighting spirit and moulding the organisation of the Trade Unions so as to fit them to play their part in a catastrophic revolution. Of this we shall say more presently when we come to deal with the general strike. For the moment we need only note the existence of this school of thought which, though it does not, like the Syndicalists, regard any and every strike as a good in itself, stands, broadly speaking, for the promotion of industrial warfare. It comprises, besides the handful of avowed Communists in this country, a certain number of 'Left-wingers' who are temperamentally inclined to violence or hopeless of peaceful methods of reform.

Between these two extremes lies the main body of opinion, upholding the right to strike, but cautious about its exercise. In their view the strike is a regrettable necessity. It is necessary because the denial to the workers of the right to withdraw their labour involves too serious an infraction of liberty. It is regrettable because it is a painful and costly method of settling differences. But, granted the right, ought there to be any limitations to it? Is there a case for prohibiting

certain kinds of strikes, or strikes in certain industries? From the repeal of the Combination Laws in 1825 down to 1927 there was only one such express prohibition on the Statute Book. This was contained in Sect. 4 of the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875, which forbids 'lightning strikes' by those engaged in the supply of gas and water.¹ But for a considerable period before 1926 the consolidation of the Trade Union forces, their more aggressive policy, and a number of big stoppages in vital industries—particularly coal and transport—were causing a good deal of apprehension. There was much discussion of the 'strike against the public' (the popular phrase used to cover any national strike, e.g. on the railways, which caused general inconvenience and loss), and various vague suggestions were made for dealing with it. The General Strike of May, 1926, brought all this feeling to a head, and led, a year later, as we have shown, to the drastic limitations of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act.

The main object of this measure, according to its authors, was to protect the community against a 'general strike.' In fact, of course, it makes not only a general strike, but in certain circumstances a strike in a single industry, illegal, and it puts a heavy ban on sympathetic strikes. In doing that it is dealing a blow at what has always been regarded as a legitimate right. There is nothing inherently immoral in a sympathetic strike; in point of fact it is generally the most altruistic in its motives. Sympathetic strikes may be, and often are, ill-advised and futile; but that is a matter of tactics, not of ethics. The question that we are really concerned with, however, is the general strike. We need not split

¹ Electricity is added to these by the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1919, Sect. 31.

The offence consists in wilfully and maliciously breaking a contract of service, "knowing or having reasonable cause to believe that the probable consequences of his so doing, either alone or in combination with others, will be to deprive the inhabitants of that city, borough, etc., wholly or to a great extent of their supply of gas or water." The penalty on conviction is a fine of £20 or three months' imprisonment.

In the postal service the Trade Union (Union of Post Office Workers) has voluntarily imposed on itself a 'no-strike' policy.

hairs over the difference between a 'full' general strike and a 'partial' general strike; obviously, if a sufficient number of important industries and services are called out, the stoppage will be general enough to paralyse the community. But it is desirable to distinguish three kinds of general strike. A general strike may be economic—*i.e.* may be concerned simply with an industrial grievance—wages, hours or conditions of labour—or it may be political, either (a) with a limited aim, *e.g.* some constitutional reform, or (b) for the subversion of the existing regime, in which case it is clearly revolution pure and simple. It is possible, of course, that one of these may lead to another, and it may be argued that the danger of any general strike is so serious that Government can make no distinction; all must be declared illegal. But why must they? Why not leave them all alone? The pretence that this Act offers an effective safeguard against any really dangerous general strike is quite hollow. The revolutionary general strike is obviously illegal; no declaration of its illegality will make it more so, or have any effect on men who are prepared to destroy the Constitution. The political general strike with a limited purpose may be reprehensible, but that will depend to a considerable extent on the circumstances. There was a general strike in Belgium in 1913 for a reform of the franchise, which could be justified on the ground that the working classes had no other effective way of getting the fair representation in Parliament that the electoral laws at that time denied to them. But in a country with adult suffrage and a Parliament amenable to public opinion, a strike to coerce the Government on any ordinary political issue would certainly offend against sound democratic theory. Such a strike, however, is so unnecessary and so improbable here that it is surely not worth while to legislate against it. But what of a different kind of issue—a 'political-industrial' demand, say, like the nationalisation of the mines or railways? A general strike for such an end would again offend against democratic theory, but again it would seem to be unnecessary and improbable. The case for legislating against it is

not in reality strengthened by the fact, or allegation, that the General Strike of May, 1926, was an attempt to coerce the Government on a 'political-industrial' issue. For the result of that strike makes the repetition of it not more, but infinitely less, likely. On the other hand, it is possible to imagine a general strike for a purely political end declared in an emergency in which it was impossible to consult the electorate. Such a strike might be for a laudable object, *e.g.* the prevention of a war, and it might have the solid mass of public opinion behind it.¹ Here, once more, legal prohibition appears futile.

As for the purely industrial general strike, that is not illegal, provided that all the strikers have a dispute with their own employers and are not merely out in sympathy with someone else. There is not much likelihood, of course, of any such occurrence. It is no doubt possible to conceive of a simultaneous demand by the workers in every industry, say, for a six-hour day, and a united refusal by all the employers, resulting in an all-round stoppage. But it is a wild improbability.

The sum of the matter, then, seems to be this. The legal prohibition of general strikes affords very little protection to the community. If you define your terms in such a way as to cover general strikes and nothing else, your law will be hardly worth the paper it is printed on. If you extend your definitions, with the ostensible object of giving them greater precision, the result will be to prohibit proper as well as improper activities, and to stir up enmity and resistance. That is the effect of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act. The best, and only valid, safeguard for the community is to be found in the sense of responsibility of the Trade Unions themselves. British Trade Unionists have learnt that the general strike is not a thing to be played with, and they are not likely to try it again save in circumstances where the fact that it is a crime will be no deterrent.

¹ It might, indeed, be a strike in defence of the Constitution, as the German general strike against the "Kapp Putsch" in 1923 was. But in that case no question of its illegality would arise, since its object would be not to coerce, but to assist, the Government.

Jean Jaurés, the great French Socialist, laid down a good many years ago three conditions which he regarded as indispensable for the success of a general strike. First, he said, the working class must be genuinely convinced of the importance of the object for which it is declared. Secondly, a substantial section of the 'general public' must recognise the legitimacy of that object. Thirdly, the general strike must not appear as a pretext for violence, but as the peaceful exercise of a right on a vaster and more systematic scale. To these we must clearly add two other conditions—a high degree of solidarity and the most thorough organisation in the Labour forces. And against all this we must put the probability—indeed, the certainty—of an elaborate counter-organisation on the Government's part, even without any such measure as the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act on the Statute Book. If the Trade Unions are alive to all these considerations, they will hesitate long before committing themselves to so risky an adventure. There seems no reason to doubt that the Trade Unions in general are alive to them, and that the authors of the Act of 1927 had better have left well alone.

CHAPTER IX

INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF TRADE UNIONISM

Problems of Structure—Amalgamation and Federation—Industrial Unionism—Demarcation Disputes—Workshop Organisation and Democratic Control—The Shop Stewards' Movement—Relations with the Labour Party and the Co-operative Movement.

WE come back now to the actual organisation of British Trade Unionism. Here, despite the progress that it has made, despite its great growth in numbers, there are, as we have said, very serious problems confronting the movement. The organisation of the workers has not properly adapted itself to the developments of modern industry. The remarkable evolution of machinery, on the one hand, is more and more weakening the old craft distinctions, throwing processes and operatives, as it were, into the melting-pot, blurring the old lines of demarcation, displacing the tradesman by the labourer, the 'skilled' man by the 'unskilled' and 'semi-skilled.' On the other hand, the organisation of the employers has steadily advanced, and in many a dispute of recent years Labour, in its struggle with Capital, has been in the position of an army attacking a fortress with cross-bows. And some would say that the forces of Labour are not an army at all, but a collection of independent bands, badly led, badly financed, and, worst of all, dissipating their energies in internecine quarrels. The Trade Union world still shows a deplorable amount of confusion and overlapping, of competition for members, of jealousies between leaders, of vested interests and sectional aims.

How, then, is greater unity to be attained? The first problem is clearly one of structure, and the most

heroic solution offered of this is the theory of industrial Unionism, which, as originally propounded in America, set out to organise the workers not according to the nature of their particular craft, but, following the lines of capitalist organisation, according to the nature of their employers' business. Thus an engineer might be in a shipbuilding Union together with all the other mechanics, labourers, clerks, and so on, who are employed in a shipyard, or he might be in a miners', a municipal employees', or a textile or a railway Union. But this short way with sectionalism, plausible as it looks, is blocked in this country by practical difficulties, and when, further, it ignores vital professional differences, as it has done in the hands of the Industrial Workers of the World, its chances of success are not very great. It has, in fact, as Mr. Cole showed some years ago, broken down in the United States.¹ The Industrial Workers of the World set themselves to revolutionise American Trade Unionism. They were faced, on the one hand, by the American Federation of Labour with the narrowest system of 'craft Unionism' existing anywhere in the world, and, on the other hand, by a gigantic development of capitalism absorbing vast numbers of cheap, unskilled 'hands,' and pushing out the skilled men more rapidly and in a more wholesale fashion than anywhere in the world. Between these two classes—helots and aristocrats of Labour—lay an enormous gulf, and the attempt to bridge it by pretending it was not there was foredoomed to failure. The I.W.W. took as its unit the 'local Industrial Union,' which embraced all the workers of a given industry in a town or district. These local Unions were combined into a National Industrial Union; the national Unions of closely allied industries into 'Departmental Organisations' (e.g. "Steam, Air, Water and Land National Associations of the Transport Industry, formed the Transportation Department"); and the Industrial Departments themselves into the 'General Organisation,' and ultimately into an 'International Organisation.' On the other hand, the local Unions were to be subdivided into language branches

¹ See *The World of Labour*, by G. D. H. Cole.

(in order to meet the difficulties arising from the babel of immigrants), shop branches, department branches in large industries, district branches in big cities and widely extended areas, and Industrial District Councils, combining all the local Industrial Unions of the district. The one kind of grouping which was avoided was the 'craft' branch.¹

But, as Mr. Cole observes, "there is no trace of the functioning of Industrial Councils, and there is only one National Union, that of the Textile Workers. . . . In everything save theory, the I.W.W. is the 'One Big Union,' which is a denial of the 'Industrial' basis, a pure 'class' Unionism." Craft interests, in short, are not so lightly to be disposed of; the American Federation of Labour easily withstood the attack, and what the Industrial Unionists in fact achieved was something quite different from, though not perhaps less valuable than, what they started out to do. The I.W.W. "sought one thing and found another; in seeking to unite skilled and unskilled, it found out how to organise the great mass of the unskilled."²

What has failed, however, in America, has succeeded in Russia. The Soviet dictatorship has fitted the whole of its organised workers³ into twenty-three Unions, on the simple basis of "uniting all workers and employees of a given industry independently of the particular functions they perform." The fundamental principle is 'one factory, one Union,' and this means that in an engineering works, for example, not only the skilled and the unskilled metal-workers, but wood-workers, clerks, or any other categories, are members of the Metalworkers' organisation.

But the Bolsheviks started with a clean slate in 1917,

¹ See *The I.W.W. : Its History, Structure and Methods*, pamphlet by Vincent St. John, New York, and *The I.W.W. : A Study in American Syndicalism*, by P. F. Brissenden, Columbia University (King, 1920).

² But the I.W.W. never attained any great strength. Its total membership in 1926 was returned as 30,000, as against the American Federation of Labour's 3,384,000.

³ According to the Soviet Union Year Book, 1927, the total membership of Russian Trade Unions, in July, 1926, was 9,200,000.

and could shape their Trade Unionism as they chose. In this country the conditions are very different. It is not that there is no belief in industrial Unionism. On the contrary it has become widely recognised that the craft basis, natural and even necessary as it may have been in earlier days, is now, in view both of the employers' organisation and of the aims of the modern Labour movement, quite unsuitable over the greater part of industry.¹ There still remain, of course, strong partisans of craft Unionism, but many have been won over by the recognition of the fact that, as has been pointed out in an earlier chapter, industrial Unionism does not necessarily imply the ignoring of all differences of craft or all the special interests of separate grades. Both the highly centralised N.U.R. and the looser federations of the miners allow adequate representation to the interests of their diverse groups, and it is clear that theoretically, at any rate, no serious objection can be raised on this head to industrial Unionism.

The substantial difficulties are not theoretical, however, but practical. They appear prominently in such industries as engineering or shipbuilding, where there is a great gulf between the skilled mechanics and the unskilled or 'semi-skilled' labourer; or in building, where not only the strong craft feeling of one or two important Unions, but widely differing contributions and benefits, and varying forms of government, have proved obstacles to industrial Unionism. It is clear that there is no short way, either by compulsion or by gentle persuasion, of altering the growth of generations. The highly skilled metal-workers in this country have a tradition, an outlook and material standards which have not only justified the popular view of them as 'aristocrats' of the Labour world, but have bred in them some

¹ The Trades Union Congress in 1924 passed the following resolution: (a) That the time has arrived when the number of Trade Unions should be reduced to an absolute minimum; (b) that the aim should be, as far as possible, organisation by industry, with every worker a member of the appropriate organisation. . . . And the General Council was instructed to consider and draw up a scheme. An interim report of the General Council's work on the subject will be found in the Report of the 58th T.U.C., 1926.

of the vices as well as the virtues of aristocracy. To the unskilled in the engineering industry the gulf between them and the skilled has seemed unbridgeable, and they have been forced to organise themselves in their own way. There is, of course, a large section among the skilled metal-workers, as well as in shipbuilding and other trades, eager to transform their Unions from a craft to an industrial basis, and in time the change will doubtless be accomplished. At the moment, however, it appears remote, and it becomes harder, and not easier, to accomplish with the rapidly growing strength of the general labour Unions. For, as their membership and power increase, their independence and confidence also increase, and the old antagonism tends to harden. The A.E.U. has, indeed, taken a step forward; by its amended rules, adopted in 1926, "any male person sixteen years of age and upwards employed in the engineering industry" is eligible for membership. But it is too soon yet to say what the result of this may be. A possible line of development is that suggested by Mr. Cole¹—that is to say, both sides may consolidate on their own lines, the skilled men uniting more and more closely as metal-workers, and the unskilled extending their combination with general labour in diverse industries on the 'One Big Union' principle, while the policy and action of the two forces is harmonised through a Shop Stewards' movement.

In the building industry, and in several others, federation may be the line of least resistance. The National Federation of Building Trades Operatives is in itself an important move towards the goal of unity, and its leaders are preparing to move further. They agree that complete amalgamation can only be achieved gradually, and they contemplate as the next step a scheme of 'confederation,' which shall include a "pool of the industrial contributions," a development of the central-

¹ See *Chaos and Order in Industry*, by G. D. H. Cole, ch. viii. But the prospects of amalgamation among the many Unions of skilled metal-workers seemed very far off when the General Council reported on this matter in 1926 (see Report of 58th T.U.C., 1926, p. 151).

ised machinery, and provisions for safeguarding technical or craft interests.¹

In one or two other industries, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, the plan of federation has been a success—notably in iron and steel, transport and coal-mining. The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation is a definite scheme of amalgamation by instalments. The Transport Workers' Federation was practically superseded a few years ago by a single body, the Transport and General Workers' Union, in which all the important transport Unions, except the seamen, were amalgamated. The Miners' Federation is as near as it can get to being an industrial Union; but it is weak in its central control and its central finance. There, indeed, is the test of efficient federation. What is wanted is the combination of a strong central fund and adequate central control with the greatest possible degree of Union autonomy. The weakness of a federation tends to lie in the excessive independence of its affiliated units, just as the natural defect of an amalgamation is in its tendency to place too much power in the hands of the central executive. Whether amalgamation or federation is the better method must evidently be decided by the conditions in each industry, and it is impossible to argue from one case to another without a close inquiry into the particular circumstances. But in every case the answer to questions about the craft and the industrial basis is the same. The industry should take precedence of the craft, but it must not ignore it or overwhelm it. The interests of each are important and should be, as far as possible, harmonised. The craft must not be allowed to interfere with the organisation of the industry as a whole; the organisation of the industry as a whole must not be such as to obscure the individuality of the craft. Otherwise, industrial Unionism, so far as this country is concerned, will be a castle in the air.

The demarcation disputes, to which we have already made some reference, are one of the most vexing problems

¹ See *The Operative Builder* (organ of the N.F.B.T.O.), December, 1926.

of Trade Unionism. They are caused partly by fear of the unemployment that threatens the members of a trade or craft, if it should lose its control over a particular process or class of work, and partly by the craftsman's feeling that he has an established and exclusive right to his craft. As a principle, the 'right to a craft' is, of course, in the present stage of industrial development an absurdity, though in practice there is sometimes substance in the claim, because different Unions in dispute over a certain job may have different rates of pay for it. But the proper solution of this difficulty is obviously to establish a standard rate for the process. The fear of unemployment is less easy to dispose of. Amalgamation should help, but it is not likely, in the present conditions of the industrial world, to be a complete remedy. Certain of the Trade Unions have attempted to deal with the demarcation problem by special agreements providing for courts or boards of arbitration, in some of which the employers take part, while in others the workers alone are concerned. But in recent years the practice has grown of referring cases to a special tribunal representative of the whole movement—the Disputes Committee of the General Council. This Committee deals every year with a number of demarcation quarrels, and its prestige ensures a pretty general respect for its decisions.

The same Committee deals also with disputes over 'poaching,' which is another prolific source of trouble. Poaching consists either in seducing men from one Union into another, or in the enrolling of unorganised workers by a Union for which it is contended they are not eligible. Instances of the former kind may be found in the railway service, where the National Union of Railwaymen and the Locomotive Engineers and Firemen come into conflict, or among the seamen, who have two rival Unions competing for them. The latter kind is even more widespread, and is seen at its worst in the efforts of the Workers' Union to enrol farm labourers and even skilled men in the metal trades who should be in their appropriate craft societies. The whole scandal of poaching would, of course, disappear with a proper

organisation of Trade Unionism on the industrial basis.

Another serious problem is that of internal government. The history of the German and French Trade Union movements reveals two opposite models of organisation—the one based on extreme centralisation of control, the other allowing extreme local autonomy. The British Trade Unions stand at various points between these two extremes, without the discipline and docility which characterise the German working class, without that enthusiastic conception of liberty which makes the normal Frenchman regard the German system with such distaste.¹ They have, for the most part, developed in a more or less haphazard fashion, and their sound practical instinct naturally has been to combine the advantages of both systems. But this has frequently resulted merely in the attempt to eat their cake and have it, and it is pretty clear that Germany teaches the right lesson. A Union with a weak Central Executive and branches enjoying a large independence is not the form of organisation suited to the general conditions of the industrial struggle to-day. Nor are guerrilla fighting, sporadic and spontaneous strikes, the tactics most suited to the British temperament.

But at this point comes the inevitable conflict of efficiency and freedom. Will not such a centralisation of control simply deliver the Trade Unions bound hand and foot to an intolerable bureaucracy? The problem of the official is indeed one of some difficulty. Without subscribing to all the wild suspicion and abuse of 'leaders,' which are so fashionable in certain circles, one can recognise how easy it is for a Trade Union

¹ Many British Unions have gone far in the centralisation of their funds, though this has not always been accompanied by a corresponding centralisation of control. Some, like the Boilermakers, have completely separated the fighting funds from the ordinary benefits, putting the payment of dispute benefit and the initiation and sanction of disputes entirely in the Executive Council's hands. Others, like some of the Miners, are in a confused condition, the lodges often enjoying a large degree of independence, while the Miners' Federation of Great Britain itself has been hampered by the fact that it can only raise strike funds through special levies, as well as by its slow and cumbrous machinery for the declaration of strikes.

official to become an autocrat,¹ and the crude views of democracy prevalent in so many Trade Union branches do not, it must be confessed, offer much of a check. One very ancient device to prevent the growth of a governing caste was to limit more or less narrowly the term of office for which a man might serve. Thus the Stone Masons prohibited a member from sitting on the Executive for more than two years consecutively, while the Operative Bricklayers only allowed two years' tenure of office in any six years. But this, while it perhaps prevents a committee-man from becoming a despot, tends also to put the General Secretary in a still stronger position. Some of the French Unions, especially in the building trades in Paris, more logical, have gone so far as to make their secretaries and other officers not re-eligible after a year's or two years' service. But this practice again produces its own nemesis by weakening the administration. Other societies, like the Engineers or the Boilermakers, going beyond this primitive method,

¹ The problem is rendered still more difficult by the well-known unwillingness of Trade Unionists to dismiss, or to refuse to re-elect, their officials. Men who are supposed to be widely unpopular are re-elected over and over again; and many Trade Union secretaries enjoy, as it has been said, a permanency of tenure equal to that of a High Court judge.

It may perhaps be desirable to remind the reader, who is not very familiar with the Trade Union movement, that the Union official is not quite the same thing as the State official whose interference is so offensive to many liberty-loving citizens. This political officer—the civil servant—is the expert administrator acting under the authority of a responsible Minister. But the Trade Union official is commonly the civil servant and the Minister in one—and a Minister, too, who is in practice not nearly so closely controlled as are the members of the national Government. The objection made to him, therefore, is not analogous to the feeling against inspectors, tax-collectors and the like, but rather to that against an autocratic leader.

So far as the 'civil servant' functions of his officials are concerned, the ordinary Trade Unionist does not trouble himself, as much as he perhaps ought, about the matter. Some Unions, it is true, have been at pains to secure the service of efficient experts. Among the Lancashire cotton operatives, for instance, the officials, who require a high degree of knowledge of all the complex details of the industry, are subjected to an elaborate examination system. But many Unions do not realise the value of having properly trained men for their business: they expect the same person to be equally capable of negotiating with employers, of administering the Insurance Act and of performing the duties of a Member of Parliament.

have attempted to balance the power of the General Secretary by a full-time council of elected representatives. But experience has shown that this is only partially successful. It is likely to result either in a lamentable friction between the executive and the General Secretary, such as was seen some years ago in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, or in a practical combination between the Secretary and the executive, which amounts to a strengthening of the very thing that it was desired to prevent. This, in fact, was what occurred a generation ago in the Boilermakers' Society where, as Mr. and Mrs. Webb pointed out,¹ Mr. Robert Knight, the able General Secretary, was a sort of permanent Prime Minister, with the nominally independent District Delegates as his Cabinet. And something of the same sort might easily result from the 'Syndicalist' proposals that once had a vogue in the South Wales coal-field, under which the present districts would be abolished, and the whole organisation controlled by a monthly meeting of delegates from the lodges, the officials simply being their servants.² It is not difficult to see that the rank and file would have their work cut out to prevent those officials becoming masters of the situation!

The fact is that, whether we like it or not, officials are a necessity in the complicated Trade Union democracy. The Trade Union movement needs leadership—not 'bossing,' but clear and bold guidance—as much as it ever needed it, and the policy of sowing distrust of every elected officer throughout the Unions can only end in disaster. But this does not mean that all Trade Union leaders are the best and wisest that can be found, and that the whole membership owes them a sheeplike obedience. Blind loyalty is not the stuff of which a genuine democracy is made. What is wanted is a

¹ See *Industrial Democracy*, p. 30.

² See *The Miners' Next Step* (Davies, Tonypany, 1912). It should be observed that the authors of this pamphlet, like many other strong opponents of officialdom, were not against centralisation. On the contrary, they supported it as a means of extending the sphere of democracy and "killing the parochialism and petty leadership" fostered by excessive local autonomy.

more effective control over them, and the only way to secure that is by the development of representative government.

We have already referred to the 'representative institutions' of the Lancashire cotton trade, though, as has been pointed out, the peculiar localisation of that trade makes it a difficult model for other industries, and to the constitution of the National Union of Railwaymen. This last is of very great importance, since, like the German Metalworkers' Union, and unlike our Amalgamated Engineering Union, it does give what is essential to a sound system of popular government, a due representation of distinct craft and local interests. The Railwaymen have recognised clearly enough the value of centralisation, and have deliberately laid it down that the Executive Committee shall have the power "to inaugurate, conduct and settle all trade movements, and the method of conducting such movements shall be determined by the Executive Committee as circumstances warrant." But this absolute official control is substantially tempered by the careful provisions for the election and responsibility of those officials. The Union, as we have shown, is divided into six electoral districts, with a subdivision within the district into four electoral departments, embracing locomotive, traffic, goods and cartage, and engineering-shop and permanent-way men, whilst the Executive itself is divided into four corresponding Departmental Committees, each responsible for the interests of its particular section. "Thus," as Mr. Cole says, "in the electoral district the local unit is recognised, and, in the electoral department within the district, the interest of the sections in each locality; while the Departmental Committees are a recognition that sectional interests are national as well as local. Where the interest concerned is that of the employees of a particular Railway Company, or where for some reason adequate sectional representation is not secured by these provisions, special conferences of those concerned may be called. Thus, at every step, the Executive is at least certain of ascertaining clearly the feeling of the sections or localities involved, and, where

this is so, it matters less in whose hands the final power is placed.”¹

It is not to be supposed, of course, that this system can be applied universally, in all its details, any more than can that of the cotton operatives; the conditions of the industry will largely determine the form of constitution in each case. The concentration of the textile industries, the general uniformity in the coal-fields, the multiplicity of crafts in the metal trades, the natural localism in the building industry, must all influence the machinery of organisation. But in every case centralised funds and centralised control are required in one form or another, and in every case that control must be reconciled with the real will of the whole society by the proper representation of localities and sectional interests.

But there is another and a more definite criticism of which we must take note. The failure of democracy, the weakness of the rank and file in the Trade Unions, it is said, is due principally to their wrong basis of organisation. The unit ought to be the workshop and not the geographical branch. For a man's keenest interest is in the matters which touch him most closely, that is to say, in the grievances and aspirations and problems in his own place of work. And the most natural and the liveliest association will be the association of actual workmates. The ordinary Trade Union branch, on the other hand, collects together a number of individuals who happen to live in the same district. These, though they are in the same trade, are generally in different workshops or factories, and have different problems and grievances. Their common interest, important though it may be, is too remote, and hence inevitably comes the slackness of the many and the excessive influence and power of the few. As a corrective of this, therefore, it is argued that the workshop should be substituted for the branch as the real unit of Trade Unionism.

This form of organisation is actually found in one or two industries. The printers' 'chapel' is an institution of very long standing; and the peculiar nature of coal-

¹ *The World of Labour*, p. 263.

mining results in the miners' 'lodge' being composed of men from the same pit or group of pits. But the geographical branch remains the general rule, and attempts have been made to remedy the weakness by works committees or shop stewards.

The 'Shop Stewards' movement,' as it was called, became very prominent during the Great War. The Shop Steward himself was not a new invention. It had long been the practice in certain Unions to appoint one of their members in a workshop for the purpose mainly of seeing that all contributions were duly paid and that newcomers were organised. But these minor officials, generally speaking, played an unimportant part. In the peculiar conditions of the war, however, when workshop problems, especially in the engineering industry, became more urgent, and at the same time more difficult for the Trade Union officials outside to deal with (and when strikes were prohibited and Trade Unions did not usually venture to defy the law), the Shop Stewards' functions were inevitably extended, often to the conduct of negotiations on a large scale. Meantime, side by side with these regular officials, there emerged in many of the factories a set of 'unofficial' stewards, appointed without central sanction by the rank and file. This movement was generally in avowed opposition to, and in some important centres literally substituted itself for, the orthodox machinery of the Unions. This was notably the case on the Clyde, to which reference has already been made. There, under the leadership of revolutionary theorists, the Shop Stewards' Committees developed into a Strike Committee (in February, 1915), and the Strike Committee in its turn into a more permanent organisation, the Clyde Workers' Committee. This movement mixed up the official Shop Stewards with the unofficial; but so far as the Unions were concerned, it was of course unconstitutional. Before long it was imitated elsewhere, and Shop Stewards' and Works Committees sprang up all over the country.

It would be a mistake to regard the movement as everywhere inspired by a deliberate antagonism to the

established Unions. But it clearly was in its essence a challenge to the existing basis of organisation, and it was indeed definitely proclaimed as such by its aggressive leaders. It was at once the demand for greater autonomy for the rank and file workers as against the control of the central official, and for more effective organisation against the power of the employer. It was elaborated presently into a complete scheme for the reshaping of the whole body of Trade Unionism. In every workshop, it was urged, there should be a Workshop Committee composed of Shop Stewards elected by each of the sections of workers in the shop (e.g. members of the A.E.U., members of each general labour Union, women workers' and so on). Delegates of the various Workshop Committees would unite into a Works or Plant Committee, and above this would come Local Workers' Committees, representing the different works in a district, and a National Industrial Committee representing all the districts. Such was the conception outlined by Mr. J. T. Murphy, one of the apostles of the movement.¹ A little later, after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, this scheme was hailed by the Communists as providing the right machinery for achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat in Britain. Neither on its political nor on its purely industrial side, however, did it win any such acceptance as to cause uneasiness to the orthodox. And by 1922 the Shop Stewards' movement had petered out. But its fundamental principle, the importance of workshop organisation, won a considerable recognition. It was, in fact, recognised to some extent in 1920 in the constitution of the newly formed Amalgamated Engineering Union, which gave the Shop Stewards larger powers in the workshop as well as direct representation on the District Committee of the Union (1 Shop Steward for every 10,000 members or part thereof). And earlier than this the principal Trade Unions had made an agreement with the Engineering Employers' Federation providing for

¹ See *The Workers' Committee*, by J. T. Murphy (Sheffield Workers' Committee, 2d.); cf. *Workshop Organisation*, by G. D. H. Cole (Oxford University Press, 1922), the fullest treatment of the whole problem,

the recognition of Shop Stewards and Works Committees in negotiations on workshop questions.

The Shop Steward, although he has bulked large only in engineering, has made his appearance in other industries—wood-working, boot and shoe and textile—and the institution is plainly capable of a wider extension without offering any threat to the established Unions. It is also clear that such an extension must be favoured by those who aim at industrial Unionism. It is, in fact, an indirect method of approach to the ideal, helping as it does to break down the craft and sectional divisions by the common interest and common action of the workshop.

It remains to say a word about the relations of the Trade Union movement with the Labour Party and the Co-operative movement. These relations are not perfectly satisfactory, nor are they quite easy to understand. They are indeed rather an oddity and typically British in their illogicality. This is chiefly due to historical causes. The Trade Unions and the Co-operative movement grew up quite independently, and though both are working-class organisations engaged in a struggle against capitalism, and though the majority of the five million Co-operators are, no doubt, Trade Unionists, the two bodies have never had any organic connection. Their contacts are in the main of two kinds. On the one hand, the Co-operative Stores and the Co-operative Wholesale have frequently been appealed to to help the Trade Unions in times of strike, and they have as a rule responded generously. The railwaymen in 1919, and the miners in their disputes both in 1921 and in 1926, owed much to the aid given by the 'Co-ops.' and the C.W.S. Bank has on various occasions made advances to Unions which were hard pressed.

On the other hand, the Co-operative Societies, as large employers of labour, come from time to time into conflict with their employees,¹ and efforts have been made to find the right machinery for settling what are

¹ The employees of the Co-operative movement number in the aggregate something like 200,000, of whom rather more than a half are engaged in distribution. These are organised mainly in the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers.

often unedifying squabbles between two sections of the proletariat. As has been mentioned above, the Joint Committee of Trade Unionists and Co-operators, which had functioned for many years, was given up in 1925, and an agreement was come to for the establishment of a National Conciliation Board. This Board is composed of six representatives of Trade Unions and six of the Co-operative Societies, with an independent chairman, who, if the parties to a dispute consent, may act as an arbitrator and give a binding award. This scheme was agreed to by a number of Unions which have members in Co-operative employ, and by the retail Co-operative Societies, but not by the Co-operative Wholesale. It remains to be seen whether the new machinery will prove more satisfactory than the old.

With the Labour Party the Trade Unions have a far more intimate connection. The Labour Party is, in fact, the child of the Trade Union movement (its other parent being the Socialist movement), and was brought into being by a resolution of the Trades Union Congress in 1899. Originally, the Party consisted solely of affiliated Unions, Socialist bodies and Co-operative Societies, though now (under its reorganised constitution of 1918) it admits individual members through the Local Labour Parties which have been established throughout the country. The affiliated Trade Unions, however, continue to be the largest constituent of the Party, and to supply, through the 'political levy,' a substantial portion of its annual revenue.¹ The Labour Party is thus quite definitely the political organ of the Trade Union movement, though no Union is compelled to affiliate to it, and individual Trade Unionists in any case may be Conservatives or Liberals or Communists. There is also, as we have explained in a previous chapter, a system of co-ordinating machinery between the political and the industrial wings, in the shape of a National Joint Council containing representatives of the Party and of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress.

¹ The affiliation fee paid by the Trade Union to the Labour Party is 3d. per member per annum. For the legal regulations concerning this payment, see pp. 181, 182.

Opinions differ about the proper relationship of the three sides of the Labour movement. Some hold that it would be better both for the Labour Party and for the Trade Unions if, instead of being bound together in this way, they were independent, though remaining of course close friends, as are the Social Democratic Party and the Trade Unions in Germany. On the other hand, there are those who look enviously at Belgium, where Labour Party, Trade Unions and Co-operative are a trinity.¹ The Belgian General Federation of Trade Unions is practically a section of the *Parti Ouvrier*, and the consumers' Co-operative Societies are likewise all militant political organisations. The founders of the Belgian Co-operative movement some fifty years ago deliberately set out "to use this form of association to create and develop a Socialist Party. What guided them, above all, was not the object of getting for themselves and their class merely cheaper bread,² but the pursuit of a political and social ideal which they desired to realise by the organisation of the proletariat. Without this ideal they could never have devoted themselves to the baking of bread, the selling of groceries, the opening of premises for the sale of beer, and the housing of the various working-class associations that were springing into existence."³ Every member of the Co-operative Society, accordingly, is automatically affiliated to the Labour Party, as his membership book expressly tells him. From the Trade Union point of view the Co-operators are model employers. In all the large societies, like the *Maison du Peuple* of Brussels, the *Vooruit* of Ghent, the *Progrès* of Jolimont, every member of the personnel, from the manager down to the porters, the grocery assistants and the waiters in the café, must be a Trade Unionist, and the wages

¹ *i.e.* the Socialist Trade Unions. There is in Belgium, as in other continental countries, a rival movement of Christian Trade Unions, run by clerical leaders and patronised by the Catholic Church, and standing, of course, outside the *Parti Ouvrier*.

² The baking and selling of bread is the basis of the Co-operative movement in Belgium.

³ See *Fédération des Sociétés Co-opératives Belges (Office Co-opératif)*, *Congrès du 21 Août 1910*, p. 33. Ghent, 1910.

and hours are far better than those prevailing outside.

Moreover, the premises of the Belgian Co-operative are invariably the headquarters of the local or national Trade Union organisation, as well as of the local or national committees of the Labour Party. Offices, meeting rooms, congress halls and libraries are put at their disposal, free or at a nominal rent, whilst considerable sums are given out of the profits to the Socialist and Trade Union propaganda and Press.

In an industrial dispute the Co-operative not only affords, like the *Bourse du Travail* of the French Trades Council, a rallying-place and headquarters for the strike committee, but can, and does, in the most effective way, supply out of its stores provisions for the strikers and their families. It is, in fact, hardly possible to exaggerate the extent to which the success of the strike in Belgium has depended on the Co-operative movement.

It is vain to suppose, however, that the Belgian system could be transplanted into this country. Changes we shall no doubt see in the relations of the Labour Party, the Trade Unions and the Co-operatives. But they will come gradually and in accordance with the particular needs and circumstances of Great Britain. On the political side the Co-operators are already moving slowly towards coalescence with the Labour Party. Presently, when the Labour Party comes to its full maturity, and when and if the Trade Unions assume more important functions in the business of production and the control of industry, they may cease their political affiliation. The problem of effective harmony between the Trade Unions and the Co-operators is clearly the most troublesome. There seems to be no short-cut to its solution; but that does not justify its being put on the shelf.¹

¹ A motion was carried at the Co-operative Congress in June, 1927 (by 1960 votes to 1843), for a definite working alliance between the Labour Party and the Co-operative Party. The Co-operative Party had been formed about ten years previously, and its members in the House of Commons had always worked in complete harmony with the Labour Party. The resolution of 1927 does not bind any Co-operative Society to alliance with the Labour Party, but it is a step forward, in that it gives formality to the existing practice.

CHAPTER X

THE GOAL OF TRADE UNIONISM

The New Spirit—Demand for the Control of Industry—Whitley Councils—Syndicalism, Collectivism and Guild Socialism—The Miners' Schemes, Building Guilds, etc.—'Workers' Control' in Foreign Countries—The Problem of Method: Revolution and the Alternatives.

If some Rip van Winkle had fallen asleep in the middle of the Trade Union movement at the beginning of this century, and waked up to-day, he would find more to surprise him than the material development in membership and organisation which we have described. He would find a striking spiritual change, a new mentality, new tactics, new influences at work. This had begun in the years before the war. During the war it was developing steadily, though but little noticed; now it is seen plainly as a fact of tremendous importance to our whole social structure. (The industrial struggle is still largely the old rough and tumble—a babel of day-to-day quarrels over wages and jobs. But it is not necessary to look far below the surface to see that it is also something more than that. It is becoming actually what it formerly was only in theory, a struggle for the mastery of industry.) The workmen no longer ask merely for a better distribution of the surplus, a higher standard of comfort; they are making a bid for freedom, or, which is the same thing, for power. This demand for industrial democracy is at its mildest a request for 'a share in the management.' In its extremest form it means the abolition of capitalism and the substitution of the working class as the masters of production in place of the bourgeoisie. Of differences of policy and method in the pushing of these demands we shall say

more presently ;' but it is desirable first to see what answer capitalism makes to the challenge.

Now it has become evident that the capitalist organisation of industry is by no means so efficient as its defenders have always assumed. Its difficulties in providing the goods and services the world requires are great, and they are increased by the reluctance of Labour to settle down patiently into the old pre-war routine. The first problem, therefore, that presents itself in the new epoch is how to conciliate the workman and stimulate him to intenser efforts. Certain easy-sounding solutions have, of course, been tried without much success. Employers have striven to extend the system of payment by results. Elaborate bonus and efficiency systems have been introduced. Scientific management has been preached eagerly, and practised here and there. Profit-sharing has been held out as a bait, and in its more developed form of Co-partnership even as a splendid ideal. But, broadly speaking, all these efforts have been met by the Trade Unions either with hostility or indifference.

Besides manipulations of the wage-system, however, designed to satisfy the claim for more pay, there have been some attempts to meet the claim for a share in the control of industry. Of these the most notable is the Whitley Councils scheme.

The objects of the Whitley Committee were " (1) to make and consider suggestions for securing a permanent improvement in the relations between employers and workmen, and (2) to recommend means for securing that industrial conditions affecting the relations between employers and workmen shall be systematically reviewed by those concerned, with a view to improving conditions in the future." ¹ Great hopes were based on the recommendations put forward ; but these hopes, as we have said in an earlier chapter, have been disappointed. The bigger and well-organised industries in general did not want Whitley Councils ; where Conciliation Boards and

¹ See *Reports on Joint Standing Industrial Councils* (Cd. 8006 and 9002, 1d. each) and *Industrial Reports*, Nos. 1 to 4, issued by the Ministry of Labour (1d. each).

the like already existed, this new piece of machinery seemed merely superfluous. In some of the weaker trades the Whitley Councils may have been used, as many predicted they would be, for anti-social purposes. They have, in fact, afforded some opportunities to employers and workmen of joining hands to exploit the public, by the keeping up of prices, for example, or by endeavouring to get protective tariffs imposed. In several cases quarrels over wage-demands have led to deadlocks and reduced the organisation to futility.

On the other hand, they have no doubt been useful within a limited sphere. They have produced in certain industries an improvement in organisation. They have helped to raise rates of wages in some backward areas, and to improve the machinery for the settlement of disputes, so that fewer strikes are caused by trifling differences. They have also been the means of giving a number of Trade Unionists practice in administration and a greater knowledge of their industry. But of that sort of control which will really satisfy the Trade Unions they give but the shadow. And there is certainly no one so optimistic now as to see in Whitleyism the way to the Promised Land.

What, then, is the control for which Labour is contending? The answer cannot be given in two words; for as soon as we pass beyond abstract phrases like 'self-government in industry,' we find disagreement among different schools of thought. Let us begin, therefore, by seeing how the main theories which have influenced the Trade Union movement approach the question. All those theories start on common ground; they all aim at the destruction of the capitalist system. It is clear that British Trade Unionism long ago passed the stage where it could be looked upon merely as a shield, a defensive organisation for the workman against the power of the employer. Early in this century, with the rise of the Labour Party, the Trade Unions were an integral part of the aggressive movement of Socialism. Essential as they were, however, they were by no means regarded as all-important by the generality of State Socialists. Many, indeed, if

asked what would be the position of the Trade Unions in the society of the future, were ready to answer that with the disappearance of capitalism they would have done their work, and there would be no further need of them. Against this view and its practical corollary—the tendency to subordinate the Trade Unionist to the politician—there set in a reaction, as we have seen, a few years before the war, in the shape of revolutionary Industrial Unionism and Syndicalism. The Syndicalist's view of the Trade Unions' place in the future society was very different from that of the State Socialist. It was that the Trade Unions—duly developed, of course—would dominate society. The whole business of wealth-production and distribution, and much else besides, would be in their hands and no one else's.¹

The Syndicalist doctrine, uncompromisingly and rather vaguely set forth as it was in France, and even more vaguely by its votaries in this country, laid itself open to a heavy fire of criticism. Its anti-parliamentarism,

¹ The reader should bear the following points in mind in this chapter: (1) Syndicalism, as preached in this country before the war, was derived partly from France and partly from the Industrial Unionism of the U.S.A. Syndicalism proper, as evolved by the French, and the American Industrial Unionism are not precisely the same thing, but they are near enough in essentials to justify us in coupling them here under the one name. In the discussion in the text, therefore, Syndicalism means any theory of revolutionary Trade Unionism whose aim is to establish corporations of producers uncontrolled by the State or any recognised consumers' body.

(2) Syndicalism in this sense is not now a potent force. It practically disappeared in France when the C.G.T. adopted the new programme described below. In this country and elsewhere it was superseded by Guild Socialism or by Marxian Industrial Unionism, Communism, etc. I have devoted some little space to it, partly because of its historical significance and partly because of the confused notions which still prevail about it.

(3) To discuss adequately the tenets of the various groups of Industrial Unionists, Communists, etc., would take too long. Some of them are decidedly vague directly they go beyond the "organisation of the Revolution." Where they are clear, however, they have generally been with the Guild Socialists in allowing rights and functions to the citizens or consumers as against the producers' bodies. (See, e.g., *The Bolshevik Theory*, by R. W. Postgate.) Many have criticised the Bolsheviks for putting too great a control on the Unions, and reducing them in effect to organs of the State. But this control has now been relaxed. (See I.L.O. Report, *The Trade Union Movement in Soviet Russia*.)

its reliance on the general strike—whether advocated seriously as a practical method or treated as a 'social myth' to enthuse the working class—and its exaltation of sabotage, were all hotly disputed.

But more important for our present purpose than its methods is its goal, which is, put shortly, a community based exclusively on associations of producers, each freely controlling its own industry, without any interference either from that engine of oppression, the State, or from any organisation of consumers as such. Now the Syndicalist society, if it is to work without any share of control being allowed to the consumers, really implies an Anarchist Utopia, in which all difficulties are disposed of by simply assuming a regime of perfect brotherhood. This, in effect, is pretty much the assumption that we find in the writings of some of the French apostles of the gospel.¹ On the other hand, it is easy to see the danger of a society dominated by a number of powerful and irresponsible corporations, able and eager to exploit the public. That, indeed, is how Syndicalism has been conceived by most of its opponents. But it is naturally not admitted by the Syndicalists themselves; they have, in fact, insisted that the consumers would be adequately protected through an elaborate machinery of local and central Councils or Boards. On these Boards representatives of all industries would have a place, and each industry would find any improper claim on its part met by a powerful opposition, since all the rest would be consumers as against it. Few, however, are convinced by this argument, and the Syndicalist philosophy has never won any general acceptance, precisely because it has proposed no reasonable representation of the consumers, and has not properly considered the needs and rights and organisation of the citizens as citizens, outside their purely professional or industrial functions.

Nevertheless, the Syndicalist movement, historically considered, has played an important rôle. Apart from

¹ See *Comment nous ferons la Révolution*, by E. Pataud and E. Pouget (Tallandier, Paris). This is a book throughout which, said Prince Kropotkin, "can be felt the life-giving breath of Anarchism."

its undoubted influence in helping to bring political action into disfavour, which may be regarded as a minor and temporary effect, it must be given credit for something more fundamental and lasting. The essence of its doctrine is the right of the worker to control the conditions of his work. This claim of the producer is not, of course, a new one; it has always been admitted by Socialists;¹ but it was formerly quite overshadowed by the insistence upon the rights and interests of the consumer on the one hand, and upon the importance of efficiency in wealth-production on the other. The orthodox 'Social Democracy' of the beginning of this century, in fact, put a good deal more emphasis on the 'social' than on the 'democracy,' at any rate so far as industry was concerned. The coal-miner or the cotton-spinner was to exchange the service of the autocratic capitalist or limited liability company for that of a bureaucratic State. He would still be a 'wage-slave' with little, if any, more voice in deciding his own conditions.

While, therefore, Syndicalism, championing the claims of the producer, but pushing them too far, and Collectivism, insisting on the rights of the consumer, but pushing them too far, stood confronting one another, there came into the field a new theory, destined soon to exercise a deeper influence. This was Guild Socialism.² The Guild Socialists saw the weak and the strong points both of Syndicalism and Collectivism, and offered a

¹ Mr. and Mrs. Webb stressed the point many years ago in their *Industrial Democracy* and again in *Problems of Modern Industry*.

² Guild Socialism was not definitely connected in its origin with Syndicalism. It had appeared independently before the Syndicalist theories became fashionable in this country. Its birth may perhaps be put in 1906, when Mr. A. J. Penty's book, *The Restoration of the Guild System*, was published. The Guild principles were in the course of the next few years elaborated in the *New Age* by Mr. A. R. Orage and others. Guild Socialist literature later became voluminous, and revealed differences of opinion among the Guildsmen in many important details, if not on fundamentals. For the student of Trade Unionism the most important books are *Self-Government in Industry*, *Guild Socialism Re-stated*, *Chaos and Order in Industry*—all by G. D. H. Cole; *The Meaning of National Guilds*, by M. B. Reckitt and C. E. Bechhofer; *The Acquisitive Society*, by R. H. Tawney; *National Guilds and the State*, by S. G. Hobson; *National Guilds*, by S. G. Hobson and A. R. Orage.

new basis on which the claims of producers and consumers to a share in the control of industry might be reconciled. It is not the business of this book to discuss in detail the Guild theories, covering, as they do, not merely industrial structure, but the whole organisation of the community. We must confine ourselves to their bearing on industry and the development of Trade Unionism.

The Guild Socialist ideal is the organisation of each industry or public service as a self-governing association of all those engaged in it, whether as manual-workers or brain-workers, skilled or unskilled. This does not mean, of course, that every Guild would be organised on a uniform pattern. Many details must naturally depend on the nature of the industry; mining and railways, building and agriculture, obviously could not all be cast in precisely the same mould. But the fundamental principles would be the same. Every Guild, so far as its internal affairs were concerned, would be a democracy—that is to say, it would aim at securing to all its individual members and grades or crafts the maximum of self-determination. As regards its external relations, whilst exercising complete autonomy in all its working conditions and the processes of production, it would not own the industry—mines, railways, factories or what not. The ownership would belong to the community, and further, the community, whether represented through the State or the Municipality, or another form of association, such as the Co-operative Society,¹ would exercise a control in the matter of quality, quantity and price of the goods or services supplied by the Guild.

What part does the Trade Union play in this struc-

¹ The Co-operative consumers' associations may be expected to fill an important rôle in the democratic society of the future. The Co-operative movement of to-day, with its network of Stores, its great Wholesale Departments, its millions of members and its hundreds of millions of turnover, is, in Great Britain and on the Continent of Europe alike, not only a powerful force, but a genuine popular growth. For many purposes it offers the ideal form for the representation of consumers in their relations with the organised bodies of producers. But it does not seem possible for it to extend its activities, as some enthusiasts imagine, over the whole industry of the nation, and by itself to supplant capitalism. (See *Co-operation and the Future of Industry*, by L. S. Woolf.)

ture? The answer is that the Trade Union is the embryo of the Guild. The complete Guild would be the Trade Union developed in two main ways. First, it would, as we have said, include all those in the industry, from the most expert technician to the least-skilled labourer, from the manager to the typist. Secondly, its function would be transformed; the Trade Union to-day is occupied in fighting for the interests of its members, the Guild's task would be to carry on the whole business of production. All that clearly implies not the destruction or diminution of the Trade Union, but its enlargement and its development into a 'profession,' with a broader scope and higher standards.

The theory had to meet a fire of criticism. Some of its more ignorant or less scrupulous opponents refused to distinguish it from Syndicalism.¹ Others, while avoiding this misrepresentation, still feared that the autonomy claimed for the Guild involved a danger to the community. There would not be sufficient stimulus, it was urged, to efficient service on the part of the Guild members; there would be an inevitable tendency to conservatism, a resistance to new developments, to changes of process and so on. Yet again, it was said, the internal democracy of the Guild would end in disaster. If the workers are to elect their own foremen, discipline will break down, as it has constantly broken down in the self-governing workshops that have been set up in the past.²

These are objections of substance to which answers are clearly required, and answers will, in fact, be found

¹ e.g., Mr. Ramsay Muir in *Liberalism and Industry* (Constable, 1920) calls Guild Socialism "kid-glove Syndicalism." This seems to be about as sensible as it would be to call democracy "kid-glove aristocracy," or Liberalism, whose cause Mr. Muir is arguing, "kid-glove Conservatism." But presently he even drops the "kid gloves," and says roundly (p. 195) that the proposal of "Syndicalism or Guild Socialism is that every industry should be brought under the direct ownership and control of the workers in the industry, with whom even the State should have no power to interfere."

² See *Guild Socialism*, by G. C. Field (Wells Gardner, 1920). Cf. also *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain*, by Sidney and Beatrice Webb (Longmans, 1920), especially chap. vi ("The Reorganisation of the Vocational World").

in the Guild Socialist writings. Some of them, doubtless, are not convincing, but we cannot go into details here; we need only refer briefly to one or two of the main points. So far as motive is concerned, the Guildsmen, like all other Socialists, look for an increased zeal in the service of the community, when it is for the community, and not primarily for private profits, that men are working. But more than that, they lay stress on a further motive, which is wanting in a bare system of State Socialism—the professional pride or honour, the sense of responsibility which should spring from corporate freedom.¹ These things may seem of small promise to a sceptical age which has seen industry carried on mainly under the stimulus of fear and hunger. Yet this same sceptical age can also see very plainly that men are less and less willing to respond to that stimulus; the capitalist machine is creaking ominously, and new methods will have to be tried. Arguments based on the proved selfishness of particular crafts under present conditions, or on the narrow conservatism of the ancient or the mediæval Gilds, are not necessarily conclusive about the wider organisation envisaged in the future. Nevertheless, it is legitimate to want a more definite safeguard; and such a safeguard might be found in the power that the community will always have to increase its share of control, if what it has should prove inadequate. As for the fear that efficiency will be killed by too much democracy in the workshop, that too might be dispelled by the development of higher professional standards in the future. For the present, however, it must be admitted that this democratic control could only be very carefully and gradually introduced. It must be admitted also, in fairness to the Guild Socialists, that their proposals are in any case not so crude as is often represented; they do not suggest that every group of workers should be at liberty to elect a foreman or manager in the morning and dismiss him out of hand in the evening.² But it is certain that the demand for

¹ See on this point *The Acquisitive Society*, by R. H. Tawney.

² See on this point *Guild Socialism Re-stated*, by G. D. H. Cole, pp. 51 foll.

'freedom in the workshop' is one to which the largest possible concession will have to be made, if industrial democracy is to be anything more than a name.

It is not, however, the minutiae of Guild Socialism that make its importance. Indeed, it may be said that Guild Socialism no longer exists as a coherent practical programme. But what lives is the inspiration given by its general principles. It is no exaggeration to say that these principles—the insistence on genuine democracy for the producers, side by side with a fair representation of the interests of the community and the 'professionalising' of the Unions—have been one of the most constructive and the most pervasive influences of our time. This does not mean that the Guild Socialists can claim exclusive credit for the change of thought and the shaping of policy in the Labour movement. But they have unquestionably had a large effect on the Collectivist philosophy; they have brought to bear the most damaging criticism both on the present industrial system and the Syndicalist remedy; they have given definiteness to vague aspirations in the Trade Unions. This again, of course, does not mean that millions of Trade Unionists were ever 'converted' to Guild Socialism. Most of them, indeed, probably understood little or nothing of it, and some, who did understand it, rejected it. But this is obviously a state of things by no means peculiar to the Labour movement. Every principle, or set of principles, in a modern society, from Divorce Law reform to bloody revolution, is understood and applied by an active minority, and acquiesced in, with a greater or less degree of intelligence, by a more passive following. The strength of an idea is not to be measured solely by counting the number of individuals who profess a formal adherence to it.

How far the principles of the Guild theorists have actually penetrated, may be seen in such instances as the Miners' Federation schemes for the socialisation of the coal industry, the programmes of the railwaymen, or the remarkable experiments in the building trade, as well as in similar post-war movements on the Continent and in the United States.

The miners' scheme set out in the Nationalisation of Mines and Minerals Bill, 1919, did not create a fully fledged Guild, but it was a definite step towards it. Its essence was ownership by the State and management by the industry itself. This management was to be exercised by a National Mining Council, presided over by a Minister of Mines, responsible to Parliament, with District and Pit Councils functioning below it. On each of the first two bodies half the members were to be chosen by the workers (*i.e.* by the Miners' Federation); while the actual workers in and about the mine would elect the Pit Councils. The other half were to be appointed by the State in the case of the National Council, and by the National Council in the case of the District Councils. In addition there was to be a Fuel Consumers' Council appointed by the State, with advisory powers to represent specifically the consumers' interests. For this scheme another and more complicated one was substituted by the Miners' Federation when they gave evidence before the Coal Commission in 1926.¹ For the actual conduct of the mining industry the machinery suggested is much the same—a National Coal and Power Production Council, under the presidency of the Minister of Mines, and Provincial Councils and Pit Committees. But coal production is made part of a larger whole, and a Power and Transport Commission is proposed, to "survey the problems of power and transport development as regards both needs and possibilities," and in various ways to supervise or administer power and transport undertakings. And the Consumers' Council is strengthened both in its composition and its authority. It would include representatives of employers and workers in industries using coal and power, of Local Authorities and Co-operative Societies, and of a body which would deal with the export trade. Its business would be to consider questions of prices, transport rates and methods of distribution, and it would play an important part in the determination of the miners' wages.

¹ See *Report of Royal Commission on the Coal Industry (1925)*, vol. ii. (Part B), Minutes of Evidence, pp. 1017 foll.

Both these schemes have their weak points, no doubt, and neither might be workable exactly as it stands. But that is a matter we are not concerned with here. We are simply noticing their general character and their main features—the elimination of the capitalist entrepreneur, the partnership of the community and the industry organised on a self-governing basis, the attempt to bring the manual-workers and the brain-workers together in the business of control, the 'workshop democracy' in the Pit Committees.¹

The Building Guilds formed in 1920, first in Manchester and later in London and elsewhere, represented a different line of approach to the same goal. They were an experiment initiated by the building trades Unions after the breakdown of a more ambitious project.² This project was drawn up at the close of the war by a special committee of the Industrial Council for the Building Industry, commonly called the 'Building Trades Parliament,' and consisting of representatives of employers and Trade Unions. A report was issued, which was signed by seven operatives and three employers, and which made some far-reaching proposals, with a view of "welding the whole building industry of Great Britain into one great self-governing democracy of organised public service." Its main proposals were that (1) general supervision should be exercised by a national committee, and regional and local councils, each composed of equal numbers of employers and operatives, together with an architect appointed by the Royal Institute of British Architects; (2) employers should be transformed into salaried 'owner-managers'; (3) capital should receive a limited but guaranteed rate

¹ See *Nationalisation of the Mines*, by Frank Hodges, and *Further Facts from the Coal Commission*, by R. Page Arnot. For the 1926 scheme see *Coal and Commonsense* (Labour Party and T.U.C.). For the question of democratic control of the railways, see *The Case for Nationalisation*, by A. Emil Davies, pp. 267 foll., and *Chaos and Order in Industry*, by G. D. H. Cole, ch. vi. (A discussion will be found here not only of the demand for control on the British railways, but also of the similar demand in America, known as the 'Plumb Plan'.)

² See *The Industrial Council for the Building Industry* (Garton Foundation, 1919).

of interest ; (4) the surplus earnings of the industry should be publicly declared every year, and devoted to the development of the industry, to education and technical research, and to superannuation schemes for its personnel. This report shone brightly for a while in the glow of the 'Reconstruction' idealism at the end of the war. But that light was fading fast ; the report was rejected by the majority of the employers, and went with the ashes of other hopes into the dustbin.

The Trade Unions then launched their own scheme on definite Guild Socialist lines. The Building Guilds, of course, excluded the capitalist employer ; they aimed at the inclusion of technicians, architects, surveyors and the like, but in this they had little success, and remained, therefore, in practice associations of Trade Unionist workmen, undertaking jobs by and for themselves. During the two or three years of their existence they did a good deal of first-class work in house-building, mainly for Local Authorities, and they inspired groups of workers in a few other industries to form Guilds after their pattern. But they were handicapped from the start by the opposition of the capitalist builders, and by the discouraging attitude of the central authority, the Ministry of Health, and they were weakened by some of the same internal difficulties of management which had killed the Christian Socialist workshops in the eighteen-fifties. Financial troubles finally extinguished the movement.

There is no space here to discuss all the developments which took place after the war in the foreign Trade Unions ; but it is worth while to notice the growth in other countries of this same demand for 'workers' control' which we have been examining at home. In Germany the conditions after the war, and particularly the sudden attainment of power by the Socialists, naturally raised high hopes. The plans for the 'socialisation' of a number of industries have not, indeed, come to much ; the hold of capitalism is still powerful throughout central Europe. But the system of Works Councils (*Betriebsräte*), set up after a protracted struggle

in 1920, represents an advance in the status of the workers. The system is very complicated; but its main feature is the Works Council, which the law requires shall be elected in every undertaking employing twenty or more persons. (Where there are more than five and less than twenty, a Shop Steward is elected.) The Council is elected by the votes of all employees over eighteen years of age, male or female, wage-earners or salaried. Its powers, on paper at least, are considerable, including the right to be informed about matters connected with the business which may affect the workers' interests (though not about 'trade secrets'), to examine wage records, to receive regular reports on the conditions of the industry, to exercise certain limited functions in regard to the hiring and dismissal of workers, and to send one or two members to take part in meetings of the board of directors. In practice, however, the employers can, and do, put spokes in the wheels of this system, and, though the Trade Unions (except the Communists) take it seriously, they can hardly be said to be satisfied with it. The importance of the Works Councils, in short, lies in what they may become rather than in what they are.

In Italy a year and a half of violent struggle culminated in the summer of 1920 in the seizure of a number of factories in the Northern towns by the metal-workers. Eventually, after the intervention of the General Confederation of Labour and the Socialist Party, a settlement was made, by which the Government conceded the principle of a share in administration and financial and disciplinary control by the workers. Early in 1921 legislation was introduced for the setting up of Workers' Committees in each factory and also of central committees comprising employers and workers. The Workers' Committees were given powers of seeing to the execution of all Labour laws, the right to call for the production of books and documents, and a voice in administration and discipline. But this victory was shortlived. The Italian Labour movement was presently ground to powder under the heel of Fascism, and the pinchbeck Unions created by Mussolini in

1926 are bound hand and foot to an all-controlling State.¹

In France, too, there was a movement of some promise, followed by disappointment. The *Confédération Générale du Travail* in 1919 abandoned its narrow Syndicalist basis for a broader programme, which on essential points brought it into line with the general tendency in other countries. The French Trade Unions founded, in conjunction with the Co-operators and the technicians or brain-workers, an Economic Labour Council with a view of fitting themselves for the ultimate taking over of control of industries and social services in a 'partnership of producers and consumers.' This Council consisted of three members of the C.G.T., three of the technicians' organisation (Union of Technical Workers in Industry, Commerce and Agriculture), three of the National Federation of Co-operative Societies, and three of the National Federation of Public Employees. It set up nine sections to deal with (1) transport and power, (2) national economy, (3) industrial production and raw materials, (4) agriculture, (5) finance and credit, (6) social administration, (7) general and technical education, (8) commerce and distribution, (9) the devastated regions of France. On the reports of those sections the Council was to elaborate its programme and work out methods of realisation.

So far as any practical achievements are concerned, however, the French Trade Unions have lagged hopelessly in the rear. They have split into two factions, the one adhering to the C.G.T., the other adopting the full programme of Communism and affiliating, under the name of the *Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire*, to the Moscow International.

But then, it may be said, does not the history of the 'lean years' from 1921 onwards, do not all the instances we have been considering, point to the weakness rather than the strength of the movement for workers' control? Ought not that movement to be regarded, like the outburst in Robert Owen's day, as a flash in the pan?

¹ For an excellent short account of the Fascist Labour Laws, see *The Round Table*, March, 1926.

Is it not likely that Trade Unionism, buffeted, crushed and dispirited, will abandon its ambitions and be content to resume the old plodding fight for sixpences? Nothing seems more improbable. It is true that the great trade depression, the widespread attack on wages, and political reaction, have checked the demand for workers' control, both here and abroad. But they certainly have not extinguished it. Even in Italy it is alive, though it is driven underground (and may, for that very reason, break out in a dangerous form one day); while in this country it is plain enough in all Labour projects for economic reorganisation. The movement for industrial democracy is, no doubt, a ragged movement, without any common direction. Those who lead it or inspire it are by no means in agreement about its final aims, nor even about the proper methods to employ. Those who are following—the vast mass of the Trade Unionists—have few if any theories at all about it. Nevertheless, if we look at the particular demands or actions in one trade or another, we may detect, beneath sectional differences and Right and Left wing wrangles, a fundamental union among the mass and the leaders and the theorists, and the signs of a common purpose. That common purpose it is which makes the 'new Trade Unionism.' The Trade Unions have now acquired very far-reaching rights of interference in industry. They have established a variety of checks upon the autocracy of the employers—standard rates of wages, limitation of hours of work, rules relating to conditions in the workshops and factories, the employment of certain kinds of labour on certain jobs and so on. But all this means that their function in the industrial system is in essence a negative one. They have very little positive function in the sense of responsibility for the carrying on of production. It is towards that positive function that they are now struggling, by the encroachment of the workers on the actual management or direction of their industries. The aim is thus clearly something far beyond Whitleyism; for a Whitley Council concedes nothing positive. It amounts to no more than a domestic conference in which the master of the house consults with his servants

about their interest and his own. They may as a result be more comfortable in the 'servants' hall,' and their work may go more smoothly; but they are still the servants, taking their orders and their dismissal from their master. The house is his,

But how is the control of industry to be won? What ought to be the strategy and the tactics of the Trade Union movement? Here is the cleavage between 'revolution' and 'evolution,' which has of late appeared in a sharper form. Direct action, as we have seen, became enormously more popular after the war, from causes which were partly economic, partly political and partly psychological. But direct action manifestly has various shades of meaning, from an active strike policy to a complete organisation of the workers for a violent revolution. This latter conception has, of course, received its most powerful fillip from the Russian Bolsheviki. Their success has brought—or has seemed to bring—a catastrophic overthrow of bourgeois society into the realm of practical politics throughout Europe.

It is impossible to discuss adequately here the desirability of bringing about a new social and industrial order—or the chances of the ordinary workman winning any real freedom—by a bloody upheaval under a dictatorship of the proletariat.¹ But in any case the prospect of achieving a successful revolution in this country seems decidedly remote. The Russian experiment has been a failure as well as a success. It is idle to deny that, however much it may be judged to be the misfortune rather than the fault of the Bolsheviki, their regime has produced a widespread disillusionment. If some can still be inspired by it, others are as definitely repelled, and many more remain indifferent. Abstract arguments will appeal to few: people who can swallow Marx or Lenin whole are born and not made. Neither their actual conditions nor their character predispose the British working classes to revolution, though what

¹ See *The Meaning of National Guilds*, by M. B. Reckitt and C. E. Bechhofer, for an attack on the Bolshevik policy, and *The Bolshevik Theory*, by R. W. Postgate, for a defence. Cf. also *Communism*, by H. J. Laski (Home University Library, 1927).

are called 'extremist' doctrines will naturally present attractions to many minds in times of serious discontent.¹ But even if it be argued that the few may be enough to sweep on the many, there still remains another thing needful. Unless the proletariat can dispose of military force, its chances are poor. The old notion, cherished by 'peaceful revolutionaries,' of ending capitalism by a sort of 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoon' general strike, is derided by the Communists, as it was derided long ago by the German Socialists who called it 'general nonsense.' The walls of Jericho certainly will not fall merely because the workers 'fold their arms.' How then is the proletariat to dispose of armed force on the Revolution morning? The plan of sapping the allegiance of a professional Army and Navy by an insidious propaganda can hardly be taken seriously. It would be an interesting but somewhat lengthy task, likely to be handed on from generation to generation! One set of conditions perhaps might provide the opportunity, and that is the crisis of another great war. Some enthusiasts may be content to work—or wait—for that. The rest will remain sceptical about the Revolution.

If industrial democracy is to be achieved peacefully, parliamentary action will naturally be of the greatest importance. That does not mean, however, that the Trade Unionists are to leave everything to the politicians. The Trade Unions have a purpose and they have ideals; but they have no clear policy, and it behoves them to think one out. What it ought to be is not the business of this book to suggest. But it is worth while to refer to one possible, if not probable, development which the Trade Unions will have to consider. It is evident that, while politically we are moving towards social democracy, industry remains autocratic and individualistic. That is an anomaly which cannot last; the community will have in its own interest to extend its authority over

¹ Communism, despite the efforts of its few apostles and the organisation known as the Minority Movement in the Trade Union world, has made singularly little headway in this country. If it ever does become a serious force, the fault will lie at the door of Conservative stupidity.

the greatest of its institutions. It is not likely to do that, however, by attempting at one blow, or within any brief period, to nationalise all the means of production, distribution and exchange. The problem is far too complicated for any such easy solution. What is feasible is a gradual and piecemeal extension of public control—the degree and kind of control varying according to the particular case. In some industries, such as coal-mining, national ownership may be the best, or the only, way of securing efficient production and a fair price. Others, such as building or printing, may lend themselves more naturally to a guild-like development of the sort we have spoken of above, with little or no State intervention.

But the real difficulty arises over a number of important industries that lie between these two extremes. What is to be done about them? The State is not in a position to take over and run all the engineering and chemical works, or all the textile mills and boot factories in the country. Yet it is imperative that the directors of these businesses should cease to enjoy their present wide freedom to "do what they like with their own"—which means, in fact, putting private profit first and the public interest last. Responsibility, in a word, must take the place of privilege.

Now it is possible to impose a certain degree of public control on these industries (in regard, *e.g.* to prices, materials and business policy), while still leaving them for the present in private hands, so that they would be what Mr. J. M. Keynes has called "semi-autonomous bodies within the State." Schemes of that kind have been proposed in the coal industry,¹ and the Electricity Act of 1926 has actually set up such a body, in a rather complex form, to manage the bulk transmission of electricity. There is no reason why engineering and shipbuilding, textiles and chemicals, and a dozen other staple industries, should not pass thus under a measure of public control. The process of integration is already going on rapidly through combines, cartels and trusts.

¹ Cf. the plan of Sir Arthur Duckham, in the Report of the 1919 Coal Commission.

The capitalists are, in fact, socialising themselves, so far at least as the scale and form of their industries are concerned. Where they lag is in their relations to the public on the one hand and to their employees on the other.

If, then, industry is to be moralised, by having imposed upon it definite obligations to the public, it will be the business of the Trade Unions to insist on an extension of the workers' rights. It is not possible to lay down precise and uniform rules for the workers' share in the management. In many cases it might be a matter for careful experiment. But clearly a share in the management must mean something more than simple schemes of Works Committees and Shop Stewards. The workers' representation ought to go right through the industry, and the matters they are allowed to concern themselves with ought not to be confined merely to wages or workshop conditions. That does not imply that any unskilled labourer can decide large questions of policy, or should trespass on specialist functions, whether technical or administrative. What it does imply is that every unskilled labourer should have a vote and a voice in the conduct of his industry.

Some may regard all this as an 'unholy alliance' with capitalism; others will see in it a half-way house to Socialism. In any case, it is hardly possible for the Trade Unions to refuse to take any interest in such a development. For it would promise them a large measure of that responsibility in industry which they demand, and for which they have yet to fit themselves. They can claim the fullest sympathy and support in their struggle for freedom. But the attainment of freedom means the attainment of power. Timid or embittered members of the middle classes cry out at the prospect of government passing into the hands of workmen "who are intelligent, very energetic, and intensely selfish."¹ It may be said they are wrong in their fears, or that, if they are right, they do not deserve much sympathy. A century of greedy plutocracy, preceded by several centuries of oppressive aristocracy, could hardly be expected to produce a working class

¹ Dean Inge in *Outspoken Essays*.

composed of angels. Yet clearly all of us, and not least the workers themselves, want something more than the assurance that the new democracy will not be worse than the old oligarchy. If Labour is to be efficient as well as free, it will have to translate its high ideals into practice. Not merely structural reforms, but discipline, knowledge and a wide outlook are necessary. None but a fool supposes that the Trade Unions can be driven back into their old humble position of clubs of workmen fighting spasmodically for elementary rights. The real alternative in the future, by whatever methods the transformation may be effected, is whether they shall be selfish corporations dominating society like the trusts of Big Business, or organised professions, co-operating to render service to the community.

APPENDIX I

TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP—1926¹

(From *The Ministry of Labour Gazette*, November 1927)

Group of Unions.	No. of Trade Unions at End of 1926.	Membership at End of 1926.		
		Males.	Females.	Total.
Agriculture, Horticulture, etc.	2	38,341	992	39,333
Mining and Quarrying	121	783,418	3,533	786,951
Pottery and Glass	21	16,392	11,874	28,266
Metals, Machines, Conveyances, etc. :				
Iron, Steel, Tinplate, etc., Manufacture . .	7	83,552	1,052	84,604
Engineering, Ironfoundry, Shipbuilding, Other Metal Working and Vehicle Building	109	566,891	6,336	573,227
Textile :				
Cotton	172	140,874	225,718	366,592
Wool, Worsted and Shoddy	28	51,353	42,534	93,887
Flax and Jute	23	10,274	25,672	35,946
Hosiery	6	4,736	14,584	19,320
Bleaching, Dyeing, Finishing, etc.	33	58,755	17,845	76,600
Other Textile	25	11,124	15,188	26,312
Clothing :				
Boot and Shoe	9	61,749	28,942	90,691
Tailoring and Other Clothing	20	30,429	44,895	75,324
Food, Drink and Tobacco	7	24,239	5,314	29,553
Woodworking and Furnishing :				
Furnishing	8	26,084	3,399	29,483
Other	26	33,015	909	33,924
Paper, Printing, etc.	27	142,974	44,208	187,182
Building, Public Works Contracting, etc. :				
Bricklayers and Masons	4	66,173	..	66,173
Carpenters and Joiners	1	114,989	..	114,989
Painters and Decorators	7	48,954	..	48,954
Builders' Labourers	7	51,461	..	51,461
Other	21	46,566	..	46,566
Other Manufacturing Industries	36	17,621	6,776	24,397
Transport :				
Railway Service	9	487,786	4,075	491,861
Water Transport	15	97,720	180	97,900
Other (Road Transport, Dock Labour, etc.)	17	374,810	12,050	386,860
Commerce, Distribution and Finance :				
Commerce and Distribution	16	100,384	38,819	139,203
Banking and Insurance	21	72,177	5,809	77,986
National and Local Government : ²	262	272,392	59,678	332,070
Teaching	17	69,493	130,597	200,090
Entertainments and Sport	7	26,995	5,507	32,502
Miscellaneous	43	42,668	3,978	46,646
General Labour	2	426,967	46,578	473,545
TOTALS	1,129	4,401,356	807,042	5,208,398

¹ These figures are approximate. Some Unions, e.g., cannot state exactly their male and female membership. In the grand total of 5,208,398 are included about 58,000 persons in Irish Free State and other overseas branches, mostly engineers, railwaymen and other transport workers. There is also some duplication in the case of the Teachers. The net total of Trade Unionists in Great Britain and Northern Ireland may be put at nearly 5,140,000.

² These figures do not include teachers, tramway workers and general labourers, who are included under "Teaching," "Transport" and "General Labour."

APPENDIX II

TRADE DISPUTES AND TRADE UNIONS ACT, 1927.

[17 & 18 GEO. 5. CH. 22.]

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

SECTION

1. Illegal strikes and lock-outs.
2. Protection of persons refusing to take part in illegal strikes or lock-outs.
3. Prevention of intimidation, &c.
4. Provisions as to political fund.
5. Regulations as to organisations of which established civil servants may be members.
6. Provisions as to persons employed by local and other public authorities.
7. Restraint of application of funds of trade unions, &c., in contravention of s. 1 of Act.
8. Short title, construction, interpretation, extent and repeal.

SCHEDULES.

AN Act to declare and amend the law relating to trade disputes and trade unions, to regulate the position of civil servants and persons employed by public authorities in respect of membership of trade unions and similar organisations, to extend section five of the Conspiracy, and Protection of Property Act, 1875, and for other purposes connected with the purposes aforesaid. [29th July 1927.]

BE it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal,

and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :—

1.—(1) It is hereby declared—

(a) that any strike is illegal if it—

(i) has any object other than or in addition to the furtherance of a trade dispute within the trade or industry in which the strikers are engaged ; and

(ii) is a strike designed or calculated to coerce the Government either directly or by inflicting hardship upon the community ; and

(b) that any lock-out is illegal if it—

(i) has any object other than or in addition to the furtherance of a trade dispute within the trade or industry in which the employers locking-out are engaged ; and

(ii) is a lock-out designed or calculated to coerce the Government either directly or by inflicting hardship upon the community :

and it is further declared that it is illegal to commence, or continue, or to apply any sums in furtherance or support of, any such illegal strike or lock-out.

For the purposes of the foregoing provisions—

(a) a trade dispute shall not be deemed to be within a trade or industry unless it is a dispute between employers and workmen, or between workmen and workmen, in that trade or industry, which is connected with the employment or non-employment or the terms of the employment, or with the conditions of labour, of persons in that trade or industry ; and

(b) without prejudice to the generality of the expression " trade or industry " workmen shall be deemed to be within the same trade or industry if their wages or conditions of employment are determined in accordance with the conclusions of the same joint industrial council, conciliation board or other similar body, or in accordance with agreements made with the same employer or group of employers.

(2) If any person declares, instigates, incites others to take part in or otherwise acts in furtherance of a strike or lock-out, declared by this Act to be illegal, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding ten pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years :

Provided that no person shall be deemed to have committed an offence under this section or at common law by reason only of his having ceased work or refused to continue to work or to accept employment.

(3) Where any person is charged before any court with an offence under this section, no further proceedings in respect

Illegal
strikes
and lock-
outs.

thereof shall be taken against him without the consent of the Attorney-General except such as the court may think necessary by remand (whether in custody or on bail) or otherwise to secure the safe custody of the person charged, but this subsection shall not apply to Scotland, or to any prosecution instituted by or on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

(4) The provisions of the Trade Disputes Act, 1906, shall not, nor shall the second proviso to subsection (1) of section two of the Emergency Powers Act, 1920, apply to any act done in contemplation or furtherance of a strike or lock-out which is by this Act declared to be illegal, and any such act shall not be deemed for the purposes of any enactment to be done in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute :

Provided that no person shall be deemed to have committed an offence under any regulations made under the Emergency Powers Act, 1920, by reason only of his having ceased work or having refused to continue to work or to accept employment.

2.—(1) No person refusing to take part or to continue to take part in any strike or lock-out which is by this Act declared to be illegal, shall be, by reason of such refusal or by reason of any action taken by him under this section, subject to expulsion from any trade union or society, or to any fine or penalty, or to deprivation of any right or benefit to which he or his legal personal representatives would otherwise be entitled, or liable to be placed in any respect either directly or indirectly under any disability or at any disadvantage as compared with other members of the union or society, anything to the contrary in the rules of a trade union or society notwithstanding.

(2) No provisions of the Trade Union Acts, 1871 to 1917, limiting the proceedings which may be entertained by any court, and nothing in the rules of a trade union or society requiring the settlement of disputes in any manner shall apply to any proceeding for enforcing any right or exemption secured by this section, and in any such proceeding the court may, in lieu of ordering a person who has been expelled from membership of a trade union or society to be restored to membership, order that he be paid out of the funds of the trade union or society such sum by way of compensation or damages as the court thinks just.

(3) As respects any strike or lock-out before the passing of this Act but since the first day of May, nineteen hundred and twenty-six, which, according to the law as declared by this Act, was illegal, this section shall have effect as if it had been in operation when the strike or lock-out took place.

3.—(1) It is hereby declared that it is unlawful for one or more persons (whether acting on their own behalf or on behalf of a trade union or of an individual employer or firm, and notwithstanding that they may be acting in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute) to attend at or near a house or place where a person resides or works or carries on business or

6 Edw. 7.
c. 47.
10 & 11
Geo. 5. c. 5

Protection
of persons
refusing to
take part in
illegal
strikes or
lock-outs.

Prevention
of intimidati-
on, &c.

happens to be, for the purpose of obtaining or communicating information or of persuading or inducing any person to work or to abstain from working, if they so attend in such numbers or otherwise in such manner as to be calculated to intimidate any person in that house or place, or to obstruct the approach thereto or egress therefrom, or to lead to a breach of the peace; and attending at or near any house or place in such numbers or in such manner as is by this subsection declared to be unlawful shall be deemed to be a watching or besetting of that house or place within the meaning of section seven of the Conspiracy, and Protection of Property Act, 1875.

38 & 39 Vict.
c. 86.

(2) In this section the expression "to intimidate" means to cause in the mind of a person a reasonable apprehension of injury to him or to any member of his family or to any of his dependants or of violence or damage to any person or property, and the expression "injury" includes injury to a person in respect of his business, occupation, employment or other source of income, and includes any actionable wrong.

(3) In section seven of the Conspiracy, and Protection of Property Act, 1875, the expression "intimidate" shall be construed as having the same meaning as in this section.

(4) Notwithstanding anything in any Act, it shall not be lawful for one or more persons, for the purpose of inducing any person to work or to abstain from working, to watch or beset a house or place where a person resides or the approach to such a house or place, and any person who acts in contravention of this subsection shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding twenty pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months.

4.—(1) It shall not be lawful to require any member of a trade union to make any contribution to the political fund of a trade union unless he has at some time after the commencement of this Act and before he is first after the thirty-first day of December, nineteen hundred and twenty-seven, required to make such a contribution delivered at the head office or some branch office of the trade union, notice in writing in the form set out in the First Schedule to this Act of his willingness to contribute to that fund and has not withdrawn the notice in manner hereinafter provided; and every member of a trade union who has not delivered such a notice as aforesaid, or who, having delivered such a notice, has withdrawn it in manner hereinafter provided, shall be deemed for the purposes of the Trade Union Act, 1913, to be a member who is exempt from the obligation to contribute to the political fund of the union, and references in that Act to a member who is so exempt shall be construed accordingly:

Provisions
as to political
fund.

2 & 3 Geo. 5.
c. 30.

Provided that, if at any time a member of a trade union who has delivered such a notice as aforesaid gives notice of withdrawal thereof, delivered at the head office or at any branch office of the trade union, he shall be deemed for the purposes of

this subsection to have withdrawn the notice as from the first day of January next after the delivery of the notice of withdrawal.

For the purposes of this subsection, a notice may be delivered personally or by any authorised agent and any notice shall be deemed to have been delivered at the head or a branch office of a trade union if it has been sent by post properly addressed to that office.

(2) All contributions to the political fund of a trade union from members of the trade union who are liable to contribute to that fund shall be levied and made separately from any contributions to the other funds of the trade union and no assets of the trade union, other than the amount raised by such a separate levy as aforesaid, shall be carried to that fund, and no assets of a trade union other than those forming part of the political fund shall be directly or indirectly applied or charged in furtherance of any political object to which section three of the Trade Union Act, 1913, applies; and any charge in contravention of this subsection shall be void.

(3) All rules of a trade union made and approved in accordance with the requirements of section three of the Trade Union Act, 1913, shall be amended so as to conform to the requirements of this Act, and as so amended shall be approved by the Registrar of Friendly Societies (in this Act referred to as "the Registrar") within six months after the commencement of this Act or within such further time as the Registrar may in special circumstances allow, and if the rules of any trade union are not so amended and approved as aforesaid they shall be deemed not to comply with the requirements of the said section.

(4) Notwithstanding anything in this Act, until the thirty-first day of December, nineteen hundred and twenty-seven, it shall be lawful to require any member of a trade union to contribute to the political fund of the trade union as if this Act had not been passed.

(5) If the Registrar is satisfied, and certifies, that rules for the purpose of complying with the provisions of this section, or for the purposes of the Trade Union Act, 1913, as amended by this Act, which require approval by the Registrar have been approved by a majority of the members of a trade union voting for the purpose, by the executive or other governing body of such a trade union, or by a majority of delegates of such a trade union voting at a meeting called for the purpose, the Registrar may approve those rules and those rules shall thereupon have effect as rules of the union notwithstanding that the provisions of the rules of the union as to the alteration of rules or the making of new rules have not been complied with.

(6) Section sixteen of the Trade Union Act, 1871 (which provides for the transmission to the Registrar of annual returns by registered trade unions), shall apply to every unregistered trade union so far as respects the receipts, funds, effects, expenditure, assets and liabilities of the political fund thereof.

5.—(1) Amongst the regulations as to the conditions of service in His Majesty's civil establishments there shall be included regulations prohibiting established civil servants from being members, delegates, or representatives of any organisation of which the primary object is to influence or affect the remuneration and conditions of employment of its members, unless the organisation is an organisation of which the membership is confined to persons employed by or under the Crown and is an organisation which complies with such provisions as may be contained in the regulations for securing that it is in all respects independent of, and not affiliated to, any such organisation as aforesaid the membership of which is not confined to persons employed by or under the Crown or any federation comprising such organisations, that its objects do not include political objects, and that it is not associated directly or indirectly with any political party or organisation :

Regulations as to organisations of which established civil servants may be members

Provided that the regulations made in compliance with the provisions of this section shall not prevent—

- (a) any person who is at the commencement of this Act an established civil servant from remaining a member of any trade union or organisation not composed wholly or mainly of persons employed by or under the Crown of which he had, at the commencement of this Act, been a member for more than six months, if under the rules thereof there had on the fourth day of April, nineteen hundred and twenty-seven, accrued or begun to accrue to him a right to any future payment during incapacity, or by way of superannuation, or on the death of himself or his wife, or as provision for his children ; or
- (b) any person employed at the commencement of this Act by or under the Crown who thereafter becomes an established civil servant from remaining, so long as he is not appointed to a position of supervision or management, a member of any trade union or organisation, not composed wholly or mainly of persons employed by or under the Crown, of which he is a member at the date when he so becomes an established civil servant, if under the rules thereof there has at that date accrued, or begun to accrue, to him a right to any future payment during incapacity, or by way of superannuation, or on the death of himself or his wife, or as provision for his children ; or
- (c) a person who in addition to being an established civil servant is, apart from his service as such, also engaged in some other employment or occupation from being a member, delegate, or representative of any trade union or organisation, of which the

primary object is to influence or affect the remuneration or conditions of employment of persons engaged in that employment or occupation.

(2) Subject as hereinafter provided, any established civil servant who contravenes the regulations made under this section shall be disqualified for being a member of the Civil Service :

Provided that, in the case of a first offence, a civil servant shall forthwith be warned by the head of his department, and the said disqualification shall not take effect if within one month after such warning the civil servant ceases to contravene the said regulations.

(3) In this section—

(a) the expression " established civil servant " means a person serving in an established capacity in the permanent service of the Crown, and includes any person who, having been granted a certificate by the Civil Service Commissioners, is serving a probationary period preliminary to establishment ; and

(b) the expression " conditions of employment " means in relation to persons other than persons employed by or under the Crown the conditions of employment of persons employed under a contract of service.

6.—(1) It shall not be lawful for any local or other public authority to make it a condition of the employment or continuance in employment of any person that he shall or shall not be a member of a trade union, or to impose any condition upon persons employed by the authority whereby employees who are or who are not members of a trade union are liable to be placed in any respect either directly or indirectly under any disability or disadvantage as compared with other employees.

(2) It shall not be lawful for any local or other public authority to make it a condition of any contract made or proposed to be made with the authority, or of the consideration or acceptance of any tender in connection with such a contract, that any person to be employed by any party to the contract shall or shall not be a member of a trade union.

(3) Any condition imposed in contravention of this section shall be void.

(4) There shall be added to section five of the Conspiracy, and Protection of Property Act, 1875, the following provision, that is to say :—

" If any person employed by a local or other public authority wilfully breaks a contract of service with that authority, knowing or having reasonable cause to believe that the probable consequence of his so doing, either alone or in combination with others, will be to cause injury or danger or grave inconvenience to the community, he shall be liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding ten pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months."

Provisions
as to
persons
employed
by local
and other
public
authorities.

7. Without prejudice to the right of any person having a sufficient interest in the relief sought to sue or apply for an injunction to restrain any application of the funds of a trade union in contravention of the provisions of this Act, an injunction restraining any application of the funds of a trade union in contravention of the provisions of section one of this Act may be granted at the suit or upon the application of the Attorney-General.

Restraint of application of funds of trade unions, &c., in contravention of s. 1 of Act.

In the application of this section to Scotland, there shall be substituted therein for references to an injunction references to an interdict, and for the reference to the Attorney-General a reference to the Lord Advocate.

8.—(1) This Act may be cited as the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927, and shall be construed as one with the Trade Union Acts, 1871 to 1917, and this Act and the Trade Union Acts, 1871 to 1917, may be cited together as the Trade Union Acts, 1871 to 1927.

Short title, construction, interpretation, extent and repeal.

(2) For the purposes of this Act—

(a) the expression "strike" means the cessation of work by a body of persons employed in any trade or industry acting in combination, or a concerted refusal, or a refusal under a common understanding of any number of persons who are, or have been so employed, to continue to work or to accept employment;

(b) the expression "lock-out" means the closing of a place of employment or the suspension of work, or the refusal by an employer to continue to employ any number of persons employed by him in consequence of a dispute, done with a view to compelling those persons, or to aid another employer in compelling persons employed by him, to accept terms or conditions of or affecting employment; and

(c) a strike or lock-out shall not be deemed to be calculated to coerce the Government unless such coercion ought reasonably to be expected as a consequence thereof.

(3) This Act shall not extend to Northern Ireland, except that the provisions of this Act relating to civil servants shall apply to civil servants employed in Northern Ireland in the administration of services with respect to which the Parliament of Northern Ireland has not power to make laws.

(4) The enactments mentioned in the Second Schedule to this Act are hereby repealed to the extent specified in the third column of that Schedule.

SCHEDULES

FIRST SCHEDULE

Section 1.

FORM OF POLITICAL FUND CONTRIBUTION NOTICE

Name of Trade Union.....

Name of member's branch (if any

POLITICAL FUND (CONTRIBUTION NOTICE)

I HEREBY give notice that I am willing, and agree, to contribute to the Political Fund of the Union and I understand that I shall, in consequence, be liable to contribute to that Fund and shall continue to be so liable unless I deliver at the head office, or some branch office, of the Union a written notice of withdrawal: I also understand that after delivering such a notice of withdrawal I shall still continue to be liable to contribute to the political fund until the next following first day of January.

A.....B..

Address .

Membership number (if any)..

.....day of.....19....

Section 2.

SECOND SCHEDULE

ENACTMENTS REPEALED

Session and Chapter.	Short Title.	Extent of Repeal.
2 & 3 Geo. 5. c. 30.	Trade Union Act, 1913.	In subsection (1) of section three the words from "and for the exemption" to "objects to contribute"; subsection (2) of section four; section five; section six; the Schedule.

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