

THE WORKING CLASS, PAST PRESENT & FUTURE ?

"In order to know how it shall be done it is necessary to know how it is."

Because of the world revolutionary struggle the British capitalist class is much weaker, therefore the hastening to a corporate state, a departure from bourgeois democracy and a punitive action against the opposing class, the working class. Therefore the necessity for laws against the Unions stemming from the weakness of the employers. The theme of the need for the law is "discipline over labour power" and this in the year 1970, which at its peak of bourgeois indiscipline produces $7\frac{1}{2}$ million work days lost in strikes. This from 26 million workers. Compare this with 1912 when 38 million work days were lost through strikes, a much higher revolutionary situation as seen throughout Europe.

The shrinking British Imperialist Power under the direct tutelage of United States Imperialism and the direct U.S. penetration into Britain, dictates the circumstances of British Capital. The whole plan of the anti-working class legislation is designed to reduce the labour movement to an effigy of the U.S. working class subservience to U.S. Capital. The pressure of U.S. Imperialism on Britain to join the Common Market, the destruction of the British Aircraft Industry, the intrusion of West German capital investment in Britain, irrespective of the alleged indiscipline in the British Labour Movement brings the conclusion that British Capital is no longer its own master but directly the servant of U.S. Imperialism.

Remember no strike is registered if of one day or less, or concerns less than ten people.

1970	7,500,000.	million	work	days	lost	in	strikes
1912	38,000,000.	"	"	"	"	"	"

1970 Industrial Relations Bill

Reference 1. N.B. Careful perusal of the summation of the proposals of the Bill is an imperative.

June 5th 1969 T.U.C. reply to "In Place of Strife" - Programme for action.

T.U.C. position was to oppose "unfavourable" Government legislation - "leave discipline to us."

1969 "In Place of Strife" Stationery Office Cmmd 3888 3/6
Barbara Castle argued for Government intervention in industrial relationships that had been traditional. 28 days "cooling off" period. "Due to the weakness of the Employers strong sections of organised workers took advantage at the expense of the population", she said. This was to be a law, passed by a Labour Government, against the strength of the people.

1945-6-7

After the Second World War, leaders of hundreds of London Gas workers were charged with striking. They pleaded "guilty", when charged under Conspiracy Act 1305, on

advice from the Revisionists.

Dock workers in a similar situation refused to plead guilty and won their case.

Both charges were made under a Labour Government, the Prosecutor being Shawcross.

Legislation of the War Years

1305. Essential Works Order.

No strikes.

No worker could change job.

No employer could discharge a worker.

There were set up Committees of 3, an employer, a Trade Unionist and an "independent" Chairman to arbitrate.

Workers went to prison or were fined.

No employer was imprisoned; a few were fined until they learned from High Court Action resulting from Ultra Electric sacking a woman steward "to pay wages but not employ".

This was all Bevin legislation under a National Government.

Revisionists sat on "lateness and absentee committees" in factories and had workers penalised even to Court action resulting in imprisonment.

War Years

There was a great acceleration of union recruitment because of the ending of the depression, led by engineers particularly aircraft. Some joined C.P.G.B. Towards the end of the war alleged membership was 50,000. Many joined because of Red Army successes.

1940. Swifts Scales. 7 Shop Stewards including a woman were charged at the Old Bailey with strike, arising out of the dismissal of the Convener, a Jamaican, under Regulation 38AA. They were convicted and received 3 year sentences, suspended when the U.S.S.R. entered the war. This again was the work of Bevin under a National Government.

Up to 1938. The Means Test. An unemployed worker was entitled to 13 weeks dole and then had to appear before a Tribunal to prove he was in need. As the need grew greater, fathers or brothers could be called upon to support the worker. This led to the break up of families, sons had to leave home or fathers left and the son kept the family.

Government Training Centres were set up peopled mostly from the North and Wales.

"Slough Concentration Camp" where husbands and wives met at the boundary of camp.

1931 Cuts in wages, particularly among engineers. National Government formed under McDonald. All social services were cut, including Civil Service, education etc. (The Geddes Axe)

1931 Invergordon Mutiny because of pay cuts.
Alexander the Co-op Chief First Lord of Admiralty
Sailors won
Cuts raised
 $2\frac{5}{4}$ - $3\frac{1}{4}$ million unemployed out of working population of

18 million

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1929 This was result of the U.S. financial crash which led to the depression.

Norman, Governor of the Bank of England closed the shipyards. The most depressed city was Whitehaven in Cumberland.

The Unemployed Struggles - A fight for maintenance or work. Hundreds of people learnt to deal with bureaucracy under Mean Test but there was an inability to involve those who were working.

1927 Trades Disputes Act. A worker had to contract-in to pay the political levy.

1927. Mond Turner. Class collaboration of T.U.C. (Mond in Nickel, "philanthropist", Turner leader of T.U.C.)

1926 General Strike. Started by miners because of wage cuts. Joined by all trades. Triumverate were Miners, Railwaymen, Transport. Failed.

1925 First battles of miners over wages.

1922 13 week lock-out of engineers. 260,000 workers. Days lost 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ million. Ostensibly struggle about managerial functions and overtime. Executive of Union recommended acceptance and of York Memo, Procedure to institute changes pending negotiations and employers to be sole judges of necessity for overtime. Members rejected Executive Council by 50,000 to 35,000 and lock out began.

1920 Jolly George. Dockers refused to assist intervention against U.S.S.R.

1919 Unions had reached peak

Police on strike

Fight for reduction of hours, Glasgow 47 hours
London 44 hours

Clyde revolt in War years, economic, rent battles, accused of sabotage against war effort.

1921 Engineers asked for increase but answered by proposed 15% cut on piece work. Put to ballot and workers by small majority accepted.

A.E.U. suffered first severe defeat and employers gained £50,000,000 a year.

Between 1910 and 1926 there was perpetual war by workers on employers alternately attack and defence thus 38,000,000 days lost in strike in 1912.

1900 Osborne Judgment.

Osborne, a member of the Amalgamated Railway Engineers, with help of capitalists, argued that Trade Unions could not use funds for political purposes. Won case.

January 1906. General Election. 50 independent candidates, pledged to repeal Toll Vale judgment, stood representing the Labour Representative Committee. 29 headed poll.

In addition 12 workmen, mostly miners, were elected under the auspices of the Liberal Party. All came over to the Labour Party in 1910.

- 1871 Legal recognition of Trade Unions
- 1872 Union of Agricultural Workers
- 1880 New "Unionism" of "unskilled" workers.
- 1870-1914 Depression. Marxism. Parties Europe
- 1873-1896 Great Depression - World Wide.
- 1871 Nine Hour League centred in Newcastle-on-Tyne.
- 1868 Trades Union Congress under control of "Junta"
Allen (Engineers) Newton and Applegarth
- 1858-67 Trades Councils formed to deal with local emergencies.
- 1860 London Trades Council, originating in a strike committee supporting Building Operatives
- 1856-62 Cartels Trusts
Bank Charter
Limited Liability Companies and Joint Stock Banks
- 1848 Louis Blanc followed some ideas of French Revolution.
Influenced bourgeois intellectuals.
Kingsley (Water Babies) Hughes (Tom Brown's Schooldays).
Formation of Christian Socialists
Syndicalists "Trade Unions will not only strike for less work and more wages, but will ultimately abolish wages, become their own master and work for each other; labour and capital will no longer be separate but they will be indissolubly joined together in the hands of the work-men and work-woman" wrote "A Member of the Builder's Union."
Positivists Professor Boesley following Auguste Comte tried to come to terms with workers believing that "social regeneration could be achieved by application of science to society and politics."
- 1838-48 Chartist Movement
- 1842 Lord Shaftesbury's Bill. Women and children no longer to work underground in mines.
Engels said of Irish workers in England "the mixing of the more facile, excitable, fiery Irish temperament with the stable, reasoning, persevering English, must in the long run, be productive only of good for both."
- 1834-40 Chimney Sweep Acts
- 1834 Grand Consolidated Trade Union (Owon)
Tolpuddle Martyrs - agricultural workers deported to Australia.
Union collapsed.
- 1833 Relief of Poor. Speenhamland. Subsidy of farmers.

1833 "Manifesto of the Productive Classes of Great Britain & Ireland was addressed to the "Governments and People of the Continents of Europe and of North and South America" commencing "Men of the Great Family of Mankind". There was discussion of common alliance with trade unionists of England, France & Germany and sympathetic support for Poles, Belgium and Lyons Weavers. Influence of 1830 French Revolution.

"Large Scale Industry did not create the proletariat or capitalist organisation, it completed their evolution" Manton a French Historian.

Before the Industrial Revolution there were persons working in factories. "In every part of Europe 20 workmen serve under a master for one that is independent". Adam Smith in "Wealth of Nations."

"The Industrial Revolution throw open the doors to adventure, enterprise and industry and the men who pressed in were spinners, weavers apprentices, anyone who could borrow a little money and was prepared to work like a slave and to live like a slave master. Many came from yeoman stock - Robert Owen was apprenticed to a small shopkeeper and set up in business with £100, borrowed from his brother, a mill owner Brotherson had been a schoolmaster. Gaskell remarks that few who entered the trade were rich ... the men who did establish themselves were raised by their own efforts pushing their advance by unceasing exertions, having a very little capital to start with or even none at all save their own labour".

Hammonds.

"The blind Metcalf had found the art of making roads; Telford, a shepherd's son had thrown a bridge across the Menai Straits; the illiterate Brindley, the art of building aqueducts; Bell, a millwright's apprentice had launched the first steamer on the Clyde; Stephenson, the son of a fireman had driven his first railway engine; while a long line of inventors and organisers - Watt, Arkwright, Wedgwood, Crompton, Hargreaves and others - by their patience and their courage and their imagination had between them made England the workshop of the world."

The new industrial masters, not necessarily the inventors became very rich based on the work of children.

1844 Engels claimed workers not religious (Lancashire) Effects of Methodism against struggle of workers. Sunday schools.

1824 Repeal of Combination Acts. Francis Place devoted life to this. He was reformer, wanted industrial peace, became M.P., thought T.U.'s would wither away, but progressive in time and place.

1820 Cato Street Conspiracy. London bases, meetings planned industrial cities. Shoemakers supported plan, supported by Irishmen planning "to stir up Lower Orders of Irish to Rebellion". Conspirators arrested and leaders hanged. Ending of "Old Radicalism".

- 1816-20 Radicalism. Many papers. "Black Dwarf". "Political Register". "The Gorgon" (aimed at working class movements).
- 1817-22 Contest for liberty of the Press.
Effect of the Press such as above "a line of demarcation was drawn between the different ranks of society and a rooted antipathy and ferocious spirit of retaliation was engendered in the minds of the labouring class". In the North this not so effective, more influential friendly societies and trade unions.
- 1819 Peterloo. 80,000. demanding universal suffrage, ballot repeal Corn Laws.
Attached by yeomanry cavalry. Many killed and wounded.
This period of Oliver the Spy and other spies and provocateurs.
Term "Aristocracy of Labour" used, skilled craftsman having pride.
- 1800-1830 Population of Greater London rose by 865,000. to 1,500,000.
-50 Another million people.
They lived in "rookeries". London was a "sewer".
In the new towns of the north conditions as bad.
- 1823 Wages of Weavers 4/10d a week.
"We cannot hear without strong emotions our merchants boast their ability to undersell all other Nations while that ability is acquired by reducing us to the Borders of Starvation and keeping us one remove from Slavery".
The application of many thousands of power looms to weaving at the time when thousands of manual weavers returned from the Army was altogether unnecessary, because by that Reduction the number of Weavers was more than sufficient to supply the demand. Power-looms by diminishing the demand for manual labour has put the manual weaver in the power of his employer. The Employers can throw their weavers out of Employ when they please without injury to themselves while thousands are glad of Employ at any wages whatever. And their long endured poverty has made them incapable of removing to other places. Now is it not evident that Employers have more power over Workmen than any class of men ought to have?"
- 1819 "Six Acts", suppressed public meetings, enabled magistrato to search for arms, subjected all working class publications to crushing Stamp duty and rendered more stringent law of seditious libel.
- 1812 Luddism. Machine breaking long tradition.
Luddites well organised, secret, kept out spies.
Focus of confused insurrectionary tension. 12,000. troops in disturbed areas, greater force than Wellington had at Waterloo.
Lord Byron in House of Lords opposed Bill to make frame-breaking a capital felony. "When a proposal is made to emancipate or relieve, you hesitate, you deliberate for

years; but a death-bill must be passed off hand, without a thought of the consequences".

- 1811-12 Economic crisis. Unpopularity of French war; blockade by France and England and severance of American trade; poor harvests and high prices led to unrest. Machine breaking started by hand loom weavers but embraced others. Strong in West Riding of Yorkshire, Nottingham, Lancashire.
- 1816-17 Some Luddites executed or transported. Because of Combination Acts there was great secrecy in Trade Unions. Oaths taken, guards at door, fines for indiscretion etc.
- 1810 Society of Iron Founders met on dark nights in peaks and moors of Midland Counties.
- 1799-1800 Combination Laws brought illegal Jacobin and trade union strands together. 1799 Bill introduced by Pitt himself, then Chancellor "to prevent unlawful combinations", it created new crimes of so indefinite a nature that no journeyman or workman will be safe in holding any conversation with another on the subject of his trade or employment. "A single master" said Lord Jeffrey "was at liberty at any time to turn off the whole of his workmen at once if they would not accept of the wages he chose to offer. But it made an offence for the whole of the workmen to leave that master at once if he refused to give the wages they chose to require." Employers could use threat of prosecution to prevent even beginning of resistance.
- 1793 Tom Paine Rights of men. Exiled.
- 1789 Cobbetts Political Register. Popular with factory workers.
- 1726 Truck Act. Origin of "Tommy rot". Masters paid wages by means of Tommy-shops and tokens, not only could they reduce wages but raise prices in own shops. 2/3rds of wages in some trades paid in sugar, soap candles etc. Throughout eighteenth century domestic system in industry gradually giving way to factories, at first small. Inventions o.g. Kaup flying shuttle. Second Enclosure Act driving more people from country to towns. Famine at end of eighteenth and beginning of nineteenth centuries. Suggested that position of day-labourers referred to as a kind of hell into which peasants may fall if things not bettered. Freeborn men felt that to go voluntarily into factory was to surrender birthright defined by a Leveller (Cromwell's Army) as property in one's own person and labour. He thought wage-labourers should not vote as no longer freeborn Englishmen.

- 1777 Strikes among hatters.
- 1757 After strike in clothing industry J.P.s no longer assessed wages but left to free bargaining. In spite of various Combination Acts Unions still fairly strong, disguised as clubs or friendly societies.
- 1726 Riots and loom-breaking in wool-combing. Combinations of workers severely repressed. 14 years transportation for using violence in labour disputes, death for wilful machine breaking.
- 1720 7000 journeymen tailors in London struck. Combination in that particular industry forbidden by Act of Parliament.
- 1719 Coolmen of Newcastle struck for higher wages and a regiment of soldiers and a man-of-war sent against them.
- 1698 Irish worker industry killed by prohibition of export of work except to England.
By 1674 Netherlands, most dangerous commercial rival beaten. Navigation Acts of Charles II destroyed Irish trade.
- 1670 Hudson Bay Company. Charles II struggle with French.
- 16th & 17th Centuries. English, French and Dutch as traders followed Spanish and Portuguese conquests in New World. Great merchant princes in Britain.
In the seventeenth century many of the independent leadminers of Derbyshire ceased to own the mines they worked and became wage-labourers employed by Capitalists. The free tanners of Cornwall also became dependent. After 1640 Manorial tenants lost rights to work coal on their land in the coal bearing areas. In 1665 a soap maker of Shild had 1000 workers. By 1700 the silk industry was organised in units of 500 & 700 workers.
- 1600 Elizabeth I gave East India Company first Charter. Others were to Turkey, Levant, Muscovy, Eastland (Baltic Trade).
"The greatest triumph of the Tudors was the ultimately successful assertion of a royal monopoly of violence." Gunpowder helped expansion of towns because dissolution of monasteries broke up feudal households, enclosure of waste land, "The sheepe have eate up man" Sir Thomas More, made more people dependent on wage labour. Wage Labour and Poor Law rise together. Elizabethan Poor Law repressive. Move on. brand etc.
- 1598 Great poverty and harsh repression in London. A famine year. 2,000. executed, many for trivial thefts.
- By Thirteenth Century wool weaving so developed in England that able to be exported.
By Sixteenth Century woollen industry staple industry and

in hands of capitalist employers who purchased or "grew" own wool and paid workers to weave it in own homes. Domestic System. Increasing enclosures. Burleigh in reign Elizabeth I encouraged glass manufacture, needles, cutlery, shipping, fishing, ship building

- 1578 Ended power of merchants of Homeatic League (Northern Europe)
- 1348-9 Black Death hastened decay of manorial system and shattered economic basis of feudal system by eliminating $\frac{1}{3}$ rd to $\frac{1}{2}$ of population of England. Labour scarce. Peasants moved on, so lost rights of common land and pasture. Lords enclosed land for sheep runs. Now landless labourers.

Not clear differences and likenesses between Gilds and Modern Trade Unions. Theories:

- a) Predecessor of modern Employers' Association
- b) Predecessor of modern Trade Union
- c) Self-governing body of craftsmen initiating own trade regulations with authority of magistrate, for good of citizen, rather like a sub-committee of a present Town Council.

In 14th Century Gilds started to become livery companies receiving their charters from Edward III. The Craft Gilds were reconstituted as Chartered Companies and poor men had too little capital to compete with wealthy traders. Yeoman now trained workmen employed by livery men; the yeoman organised strikes to keep up wages aided by the unapprenticed serving men of their craft.

Because of militancy of town workers, cloth (worsted) manufacturers moved to country where workers asked less. By Chaucer's day rural cloth industry organised by capitalist clothier who brought the wool and distributed it for carding and spinning to country cottages. He collected the spun wool and took it to weavers then shearers, fullers and dyers - from craftsman to craftsman until the finished cloth was ready for him to carry on pack horses to market. Steady growth of cloth industry developed this. From the Twelfth century fulling mills and water power used.

SHORT NOTES ON MINERS IN NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM

Very early combination.

1662 2000 - petition

1671 riots in Newcastle-on-Tyne

1725 "They spit upon a stone as a token of solidarity".

1710-12 Strikes against owners taking 1d levy for hospital.

N.B. These were acts of men who were wage earners and know it. They were not attempting to reclaim lost gild status.

1765 Struggle against owners attempting to break yearly bond (actually $11\frac{3}{4}$ months) so miners could not go to Poor Law which required 1 year, turning it into a serf system. Owners withdrew.

"How can one take proceedings against a General combination of 4000?"

Black lists and advertisements "We earnestly ask all persons not to retain or employ any pitman". A declaration of pitmen "in answer to several scandalous and fake reports - the honourable gentlemen seek to reduce the industrious poor to the greatest misery - they conjecture to take away the ancient character of this kingdom as a free nation."

Wages 7/- a week

Butter 6d) a pound

Meat 3d) a pound

1810 Fought against binding and against fines. Hundreds arrested and put in Bishop's Stables. Lost after negotiation.

1819 Struggle against fines e.g. losing whole cost if cove (basket) of coal should measure less. In one pit wage 13/6

candle))
caller)	1/2½	fines
rent))
Pick))
			1/-

so $2\frac{1}{2}d$ deducted from wages.

"We are not ignorant of the great expense incurred in the working of the mine; yet princely fortunes have been amassed by our employers and even men from our ranks have grown rich by the emoluments coming from the mines."

By 1830 wages 8/- 10/-

From 1825 15/- guaranteed

1831 20,000. demonstration on Town Moor, Newcastle against

1) 9 day minimum for pay. Employers tried to close pits for three days before 9 days completed

2) against 14 hour day for boys

"Again another article binds the boys to work 14 hours from starting because of journey to face, leaving only 7 or 8 hours a day for every other purpose of life.

3) against workers being dependent on signing bond

4) against fines

Negotiations led to winning two demands after concession of 12 hours for boys

1. 33/- fortnightly minimum

2. no fraudulent fines

Owners answered that miners earned more than they stated and that if they got what they wanted 25% of miners out.

Strike. From the Tyne 'Mercury'. "It is clear that the servants have triumphed over the masters."

1832 Owners "We fear their art and ability in appeals to the public and their infinite discrimination in choosing delegates"

Profits increase. New Coal Act. Wages paid on weight not measure.

Import of lead miners at 7/- 8/- a week from Durham, Derby, Wales

N.B. Portrayals of pitmen as overpaid relative to fishermen, lead and tin miners. This persisted to Second World War. (the pitmen and his whippets fed on English beef).
After 20 weeks strike lost. Union dissolved.
"lead miners assailed in Gateshead by the pitmen's wives who not only cudgelled them with words but with stones".
Partial strike supported by 6/- in £1. levy on those in work. Some refused to pay.
Hopburn, made paid organiser by the men, blacked - became a ragged hawker of tea. Sued for work at Felling. Accepted on condition of no more union work. He said "If we have not been successful at least we, as a body of miners, have been able to bring our grievances before the public and the time will come when the golden chain which binds the tyrants together will be snapped, when men will be properly organised, when coal owners will only be ordinary men and will have to sign for days gone by. It only needs drive to bring this about." There have been many thousands of heroes like Hopburn who lose all and do not even get their names in the history books.