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THE AXE TO THE ROOT

AND

Old Wine in New Bottles

**JAMES
CONNOLLY**

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THE AXE TO THE ROOT AND OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

INTRODUCTION

The class struggle is a fact of life. To the employer, any employer, the worker is a part of the cost of production and everyone knows that costs must be kept as low as possible.

The workers wish to be paid a decent price for knowledge, effort or skill is in conflict with the employer's need to keep down costs; the employer gives jobs in order to make a profit from the work and skill of those employed.

Workers sell their labour and skill in order to obtain money to live, to eat, dress and secure shelter. They approach the employer as individuals seeking employment and if they were to remain individuals most in normal times - when it is difficult to get a job - would be completely at the mercy of the employer.

Workers combine in trade unions in order to use their combined strength to secure improvements in pay and working conditions: the union is the worker's weapon in the struggle between employing class and working class.

'The Axe to the Root' and 'Old Wine in New bottles' give Connolly's ideas on the sort of weapon the workers should forge for use in the class struggle. Again and again he stresses the need for solidarity, for militancy, for an organisation which will best foster these qualities.

In 1921 the Irish Transport and General Workers Union reissued Connolly's statements on trade unionism. The union's introduction to the new

edition shows that they were at that time still committed to Connolly's views of the class struggle - fight the employers on a day-to-day basis for improvement in pay and conditions - build an organisation designed to take the means of production from ownership by the employer and transfer it to the ownership and control of the working class.

Connolly saw the difficulties of mobilising the working class, the essential productive force, to take over society; he gave instances of the employer's skill in dividing the working class. Unions which pursued sectional interests, or craft interests, to the exclusion of every other consideration he saw as a weakness in the labour movement. A section or craft fighting alone can seldom stop the employers profit, completely shut down a firm's industrial machine.

What did Connolly advocate and is it in conflict with what is normal industrial practice today? Did Connolly see the 'two sides of industry' pulling together as a team for the benefit of all? He did not, he recognised that there is a class struggle and that the battle is continual; he advised the workers to forge a weapon to help them make war on the employer class.

The history of trade-unionism in Ireland since Connolly died has proved that the establishment of industrial unions is not enough to ensure that the working class goes from strength to strength. The organisation he helped to build has been split for the past fifty years; the biggest section, by far, of the Irish working class, a section having complete identity of interest, is split in two.

The battle for what Connolly called *'the conquest of political power'* by the working class cannot be

won by trade union activity alone but a class conscious outlook should be fostered within the trade union movement which will enable workers to realise that they must win political power on a class basis; that they must vote, struggle and agitate on a class basis.

By stressing militancy, solidarity and class consciousness Connolly was pointing out some of the qualities needed to make a revolution; few people today would question that Connolly was working for social revolution and that he died as he had lived.

Connolly's works were allowed to go out of print so that his message of class war could be muted or silenced; in the forties and fifties a policy of class collaboration was pushed by the organisations that Connolly helped to build. We have re-published Connolly's '*Axe to the Root*' and '*Old Wine in New Bottles*' because we believe that this clear voice should be heard again - preaching class war. We are trying to forge a weapon which will enable the working class to become owners of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

In the battle to scrap a society run by profit-makers for profit-makers the industrial union has an important part to play - the big UNITED industrial union. Workers should certainly take a good hard look at the whole trade union structure in Ireland today - the mass of small craft unions, the small union representing sectional interests, the breakaway unions; ask is this the best weapon to win the class battle.

If the sack, the redundancy notice, high prices and high rents are to disappear from this land the working class must make war on the profiteer.

Connolly once said: *"If a worker has all the patriotism of Robert Emmett, all the religion of a saint, he still has no right to live in this land unless a capitalist can see a way to make a profit from his labour"*.

We republish this pamphlet so that workers will be encouraged to take its message into their union branches and help to foster there the virtues that Connolly propagated - solidarity, militancy and class-war.

The working class cannot win political power and establish a workers republic through trade union activity in isolation from the political struggle; the class-war must be fought on the political as well as on the industrial front. Sinn Fein is a revolutionary organisation pledged to winning the workers republic, we reissue this pamphlet so that workers can once again benefit from Connolly's advice.

This is especially important when native capitalists are being joined by powerful new forces - the multi-national corporations. The native capitalists and their new imperialist allies want above all a docile Irish working class which will not interfere with their search for super-profits. We see the strengthening of the working class will and capacity to resist this threat as the struggle for national liberation.

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## INTRODUCTION TO NEW EDITION

The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union is the only Irish working-class organisation definitely based upon a plan, constructed out of experience by men of the working class. That experience was gained by Jim Larkin and James Connolly, first as workers in actual toil, and secondly as Trade Union organisers.

The plan, the methods, and the aims of the I.T. & G.W.U. are those set forth in this, the most popular of James Connolly's works.

In the first chapter he exposes the continual betrayal of the workers by the mere form of old-fashioned trade unionism that divides the workers into skilled and unskilled, and after that into smaller groups, according to the craft they follow. Craft unionism divides the workers in field, factory, and workshop, that is, in the place where the workers have real power if they unite.

It is as the actual producers of the world's daily supply of necessities (and luxuries, too) that the workers are powerful, nay, indispensable to society. The separation of workers in any industry into separate craft unions, although all are contributing to produce the same finished article of commerce, prevents that power being used effectively. Tear down the walls of separation raised by the craft unions, make one compact band of all the workers, "by hand or brain", in the same industry, and the workers from that moment begin to increase their control over the instruments of production.

James Connolly was a thinker and worker who left nothing to chance that human brains and human will could plan and arrange. When he spoke of

Socialism, he knew both how to bring it about and how to sustain it when created. He knew, too, that it must grow out of human experience, and that its material forms and organisation must be constructed out of the means and instruments at hand.

In the second chapter he shows that in the winning of social freedom, and in holding it, the Labour unions, organised industrially, will be the main instruments of the revolution. The history of Russia since the Bolshevik Revolution confirms Connolly's reasoning, only this must be noted. In Russia the Industrial Union had to be fashioned after the Revolution. In Ireland we are building it now against the day when *"the new society will spring into existence, ready equipped to perform all the useful functions of its predecessor."* *"I believe it to be incumbent upon organised Labour to meet the capitalist class upon every field where the latter can operate to our disadvantage."* In that sentence there is compressed the purpose and history of James Connolly's life, and the justification, from the Socialist standpoint, of the final act of insurrection, which puzzled so many of his Socialist friends outside Ireland. If, in discussing *"The Future of Labour,"* he makes no reference to the military factors in the situation, the story of his career supplies the deficiency.

It should be remembered by the reader that this essay on the *"Political Action of Labour"* was written in the year 1908. and written for the guidance of the American working-class in its struggle for freedom. Conceived in no narrow spirit, but following faithfully the lines of the historical development of capitalism, this work has proved of value in all countries. It has circulated in many editions in America and Great Britain. It was adopted by Tom



Mann as the guide to the One Big Union of Australia. It is fitting, therefore, that the first Irish edition should be issued by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, to which the author devoted his constructive genius in the last fruitful years of his life.

To the present edition has been added "Old Wine in New Bottles," an article written by James Connolly and published in "The New Age" April 30th 1914. The doubts he expressed about the inefficiency of the National Transport Workers' Federation have been justified by the facts of its existence.

The permanent value of "Old Wine in New Bottles" is, however, in its under-scoring of the doctrine that *"the development of the fighting spirit is of more importance than the creation of a theoretically perfect organisation."* "The Axe to the Root" stresses organisation; the addition of "Old Wine in New Bottles" in this edition may prevent the student of the former seeking for the perfection of the form of organisation at the expense of the vitalising energy of comradeship, without which the most comprehensive organisation is but a soulless machine.

This work is but one portion of the legacy of thought and example Connolly has bequeathed to us. It is our duty to work out in action the principles for which he lived and died.

We are doing so when we strengthen the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, developing its structure and its tactics as the economic situation changes, keeping in mind that its mission is not to make slavery tolerable, but to overthrow it, and to replace it by a free and independent Workers' Republic.

# "THE AXE TO THE ROOT"

## Part 1.

### POLITICAL ACTION OF LABOUR

#### Chapter 1—Industrial and Political Unity

At meetings throughout this country one frequently hears speakers labouring to arouse the workers to their duty, exclaiming:-

*"You unite industrially; why, then, do you divide politically? You unite against the bosses in strikes and lock-outs, and then you foolishly divide when you go to the ballot-box. Why not unite at the ballot-box as you unite in the workshop? Why not show the same unity on the political field as you do on the industrial battlefield?"*

At first blush this looks to be an exceedingly apt and forcible form of appeal to our fellow-workers, but when examined more attentively it will be seen that in view of the facts of our industrial warfare this appeal is based upon a flagrant mis-statement of facts.

#### THE CHARGE:

The real truth is that the workers do not unite industrially, but, on the contrary, are most hopelessly divided on the industrial field, and that their division and confusion on the political field are the direct result of their division and confusion on the industrial field. It would be easy to prove that even our most loyal trade unionists habitually play the game of the capitalist class on the industrial field, just as surely as the Republican and Democratic workers do it on the political field.

Let us examine the situation on the industrial field and see if it justifies the claim that economically the workers are united, or if it justifies the contention I make that the division of the workers on the political field is but the reflex of the confused ideas derived from the practice of the workers in strikes and lockouts.

#### THE PROOF:

Quite recently we had a great strike of the workers employed on the subway and elevated systems of street car service in New York. The men showed a splendid front against the power of the mammoth capitalist company, headed by August Belmont, against which they were arrayed. Conductors, motormen, ticket-choppers, platform men, repairers, permanent way men, ticket sellers - all went out together, and for a time paralysed the entire traffic on their respective system.

The company, on the other hand, had the usual recourse to Jim Farley and his scabs, and sought to man the trains with these professional traitors to their class. The number of scabs was large, but small in proportion to the men on strike, yet the strike was broken.

It was not the scabs, however, who turned the scale against the strikers in favour of the masters. That service to capital was performed by good union men with union cards in their pockets. These men were the engineers in the power-houses which supplied the electric power to run the cars, and without whom all the scabs combined could not have run a single trip.

#### THE SYSTEM WRONG:

A scab is a vile creature, but what shall we say of the men who helped the scab to commit his act of

treason? The law says that an accessory before the fact is equally guilty of a crime with the actual criminal. What, then, are the trade unionists who supplied the power to scabs to help them to break a strike? They were unconsciously being compelled by their false system of organisation to betray their struggling brothers. Was this unity on the industrial field? And is it any wonder that the men accustomed to so scab upon their fellow-workers in a labour struggle should also scab it upon their class in a political struggle?

*Is it not rather common sense to expect that the recognition of the necessity for concerted common action of all workers against the capitalist enemy in the industrial battle-ground must precede the realisation of the wisdom of common action as a class on the political battlefield?*

The men who are taught that it is all right to continue working for a capitalist against whom their shop-mates of a different craft are on strike are not likely to see any harm in continuing to vote for a capitalist nominee at the polls even when he is opposed by the candidate of a Labour organisation. Political scabbery is born of industrial scabbery; it is its legitimate offspring.

Instances of this industrial disunion could be cited indefinitely.

The longshoremen of the Port of New York went on strike. They at first succeeded in tying up the ships of the Shipping Trust, great as its wealth is, and in demonstrating the real power of Labour when unhampered by contracts with capital. The Shipping Trust was taken by surprise, but quickly recovered, and as usual imported scabs from all over the country. Then was seen what the unity of the working class on

the industrial field amounts to under present conditions. As scab longshoremen unloaded the ship, union teamsters, with union buttons in their hats, received the goods from their hands, loaded them into their wagons, and drove merrily away.

As scab longshoremen loaded a ship, union men coaled it, and when the cargo was safely on board union marine engineers set up steam, and union seamen and firemen took it out of the dock on its voyage to its destination.

Can men who are trained and taught to believe that such a course of conduct is right and proper be expected to realise the oneness of the interests of the working class as a whole against the capitalist class as a whole, and vote and act accordingly? In short, can their field of vision be so extensive that it can see the brotherhood of all men, and yet so restricted that it can see no harm in a brother labour organisation in their own industry being beaten to death by capital?

#### UNITY WINS:

Constrast this woeful picture of divided and disorganised "unionism" in America with the following account from the New York *Sun* of the manner in which the Socialist unionists of Scandinavia stand together in a fight against the common enemy, irrespective of "craft interests" or "craft contracts":-

"A short sojourn in Scandinavia, particularly in Copenhagen and the southern part of Sweden, gives one an object-lesson in Socialism. In some way or other the Socialists have managed to capture all the trade unions in these parts, and between them have caused a reign of terror for everybody who is unfortunate enough to own a business of any sort. Heaven help him if he fires one of his help or tries to assert himself in any way. He is immediately declared in 'blockade'.

"This Socialist term means practically the same as a boycott. If the offending business man happens to be a retail merchant, all workmen are warned off his premises. The drivers for the wholesale houses refuse to deliver goods at his store; the truckmen refuse to cart anything to or from his place, and so on; in fact, he is a doomed man unless he comes to terms with the union. It is worth mentioning that boycotting bulletins and also the names and addresses of those who are bold enough to help the man out are published in leaded type in all the Socialistic newspapers. A law to prevent the publication of such boycotting announcements was proposed in the Swedish Riksdag this year, but was defeated.

"If the boycotted person be a wholesale dealer the proceedings are much the same, or, rather, they are reversed. The retailers are threatened with the loss of the workmen's trade unless they cease dealing with such a firm; the truckmen refuse to haul for it. It has even happened that the scavengers have refused to remove the refuse from the premises. More often, however, the cans are 'accidentally' dropped on the stairs. These scavengers belong to the cities' own forces, as a rule, and receive pensions after a certain length of service, but they have all sworn allegiance to the Socialist cause.

"In reading the foregoing it is well to remember that practically all the working men of such cities - that is, practically all Sweden and Denmark - are union men, i.e. Socialists, and are, therefore, able to carry out their threats."

Here we have a practical illustration of the power of Socialism when it rests upon an economic organisation, and the effectiveness and far-reaching activity of unionism when it is inspired by the Socialist ideal. Now, as an equally valuable object-lesson

in craft unionism, an object-lesson in how not to do it, let us picture a typical state of affairs in the machine industry.

"DIVIDED WE FALL".

The moulders' contract with the boss expires and they go out on strike. In a machine shop the moulder occupies a position intermediate between the pattern-maker and the machinist, or, as they are called in Ireland, the engineers. When the moulders go out, the boss, who has had all his plans laid for months beforehand, brings in a staff of scabs and installs them in the places of the striking workers.

Then the tragi-comedy begins. The union pattern-maker makes his patterns and hands them over to the scab moulder; the scab moulder casts his moulds, and when they are done the union machinist takes them from him and placidly finishes the job. Then, having finished their day's work, they go to their union meetings and *vote donations of a few hundred dollars to help the strikers to defeat the boss, after they had worked all day to help the boss to defeat the strikers.* Thus they exemplify the solidarity of labour.

When the moulders are beaten, the machinists and the patternmakers, and the blacksmiths, and the electricians, and the engineers, and all the rest, take their turn of going up against the boss in separate bodies to be licked. As each is taking its medicine its fellows of other crafts in the same shop sympathise with it in the name of the solidarity of labour, and continue to work in the service of the capitalist, against whom the strike is directed, in the name of the sacred contract of the craft union.

When the coalminers of Pennsylvania had their famous strike in 1902 the railroad brotherhoods hauled in scabs to take their places, and when the scabs

had mined coal the same railroad men hauled out this scab-mined coal.

Need I go on to prove the point that industrial division and discord is the order of the day amongst the workers, and that this disunion and confusion on the economic field cannot fail to perpetuate itself upon the political field? Those orators who reproach the workers with being divided on the political field, although united on the industrial, are simply misstating facts. The workers are divided on both, and as political parties are the reflex of economic conditions, it follows that industrial unity once established will create the political unity of the working class.

I feel that we cannot too strongly insist upon this point:-

*Political division is born of industrial division.*

*Political scabbery is born of industrial craft scabbery.*

*Political weakness keeps even step with industrial weakness.*

It is an axiom enforced by all the experience of the ages that they who rule industrially will rule politically, and, therefore, they who are divided industrially will remain impotent politically. The failure of Mr. Gompers to unite politically the forces of the American Federation of Labour was the inevitable outcome of his own policy of division on the industrial battle-ground; he reversed the natural process by trying to unite men on class lines whilst he opposed every effort, as in the case of the brewers, to unite them on industrial lines.



### THE NATURAL WAY:

The natural lines of thought and action lead from the direct to the indirect, from the simple to the complex, from the immediate to the ultimate. Mr. Gompers ignored this natural line of development and preached the separation into craft organisations, with separate craft interests, of the workers, and then expected them to heed the call to unity on the less direct and immediate battleground of politics. He failed as even the Socialists would fail if they remained equally blind to the natural law of our evolution in class consciousness.

That natural law leads us as individuals to unite in our craft, as crafts to unite in our industry, as industries in our class, and the finished expression of that evolution is, we believe, the appearance of our class upon the political battle-ground with all the economic power behind it to enforce its mandates. Until that day dawns our political parties of the working class are but propagandist agencies, John the Baptists of the New Redemption; but when that day dawns our political party will be armed with all the might of our class; will be revolutionary in fact as well as in thought.

### THE LESSON OF THE LAND WAP:

To Irish men and women, especially, I should not need to labour this point. The historic example of their Land League bequeaths to us a precious legacy of wisdom, both practical and revolutionary, outlining our proper course of action. During Land League days in Ireland, when a tenant was evicted from a farm, not only his fellow-tenants, but practically the whole country, united to help him in his fight. When the evicted farm was rented by another tenant, a land-grabber or "scab", every person in the country-

side shunned him as a leper, and still better, fought him as a traitor. Nor did they make the mistake of fighting the traitor and yet working for his employer, the landlord. No, they included both in the one common hostility.

At the command of the Land League every servant and labourer quit the service of the landlord. In Ireland, it is well to remember, in order to appreciate this act of the labourers, that the landlords were usually better paymasters and more generous employers than the tenant farmers. The labourers, therefore, might reasonably have argued that the fight of the tenant farmers was none of their business. But they indulged in no such blindly selfish hair-splitting.

When the landlord had declared war upon the tenant by evicting him, the labourers responded by war upon the landlord. Servant boy and servant girl at once quit his service, the carman refused to drive him, the cook to cook for him, his linen remained unwashed, his harvest unreaped, his cows unmilked, his house and fields deserted. The grocer and the butcher, the physician and the schoolmaster, were alike hostile to him; if the children of the landgrabber (scab) entered school all other children rose and left; if the land-grabber or his landlord attended Mass everyone else at Mass walked out in a body. They found it hard to get anyone to serve them or feed them in health, to attend them in sickness, or to bury those dear to them in death.

#### THE BOYCOTT:

It was this relentless and implacable war upon the land-owning class and traitors among the tenant class which gave the word "boycott" to the English language through its enforcement against an Irish

landowner, Captain Boycott. It was often horrible, it was always ugly in appearance to the superficial observer, but it was marvellously effective.

It put courage and hope and manhood into a class long reckoned as the most enslaved in Europe. It broke the back of the personal despotism of the Irish landlord, and so crippled his social and economic power that Irish landed estates, from being a favourite form of investment for the financial interests, sank to such a position that even the most reckless money-lender would for a time scarce accept a mortgage upon them.

That it failed of attaining real economic freedom for the Irish people was due not to any defect in its method of fighting, but rather to the fact that economic questions are not susceptible of being settled within the restricted radius of any one small nation, but are acted upon by influences world-wide in their character.

But how great a lesson for the worker is to be found in this record of a class struggle in Ireland! The wage worker was never yet so low in the social and political scale as the Irish tenant. Yet the Irish tenant rose, and by sheer force of his unity on the economic field, sinks day by day lower towards serfdom. The Irish tenant had to contend against the overwhelming power of a foreign empire backing up the economic power of a native tyranny, yet he conquered, whilst even the wage worker able to become the political sovereign of the country, remains the sport of the political factions of his masters and the slave of their social power.

## UNITED WE STAND:

The Irish tenant, uniting on the economic field, felt his strength, and, carrying the fight into politics, simply swept into oblivion every individual or party that refused to serve his class interests; but the toilers remain divided on the economic field, and hence are divided and impotent upon the political - zealous servants of every interest but their own.

Need I point the moral issue? Every one who has the interests of the working class at heart, every one who wishes to see the Socialist party command the allegiance of the political hosts of Labour, should strive to realise industrial unity as the solid foundation upon which alone the political unity of the workers can be built up and directed toward a revolutionary end. To this end all those who work for industrial unionism are truly co-operating even when they least care for political activities.

## Chapter 11.

### Industrial Unionism and Constructive Socialism.

*"There is not a Socialist in the world today who can indicate with any degree of clearness how we can bring about the cooperative commonwealth except along the lines suggested by industrial organisation of the workers.*

*"Political institutions are not adapted to the administration of industry. Only industrial organisations are adapted to the administration of a co-operative commonwealth that we are working for. Only the industrial form of organisation offers us even a theoretical constructive Socialist programme. There is no constructive Socialism except in the industrial field."*

The above extracts from the speech of Delegate Stirton, editor of the "Wage Slave", of Hancock, Michigan, so well embody my ideas upon this matter that I have thought well to take them as a text for an article in explanation of the structural form of Socialist Society, In a previous chapter I have analysed the weakness of the craft or trade union form of organisation alike as a weapon of defence against the capitalist class in the everyday conflict on the economic field, and as a generator of class consciousness on the political field, and pointed out the greater effectiveness for both purposes of an industrial form of organisation.

#### ORGANISING CONSTRUCTIVELY:

In the present article I desire to show how they who are engaged in building up industrial organisations for the practical purposes of today are at the same time preparing the framework of the society of the future. It is the realisation of that fact that indeed marks the emergence of Socialism as a revolutionary force from the critical to the positive stage. Time was when Socialists, if asked how society would be organised under Socialism, replied invariably, and airily, that such things would be left to the future to decide.

The fact was that they had not considered the matter, but the development of the Trust and Organised Capital in general, making imperative the Industrial Organisations of Labour on similar lines, has provided us with an answer at once more complete to ourselves and more satisfying to our questioners.

Now to analyse briefly the logical consequences of the position embodied in the above quotation. -  
*"Political institutions are not adapted to the administration of industry."*

Here is a statement that no Socialist with a clear knowledge of the essentials of his doctrine can dispute. The political institutions of today are simply the coercive forces of capitalist society; they have grown up out of and are based upon territorial divisions of power in the hands of the ruling class in past ages, and were carried over into capitalist society to suit the needs of the capitalist class when that class overthrew the dominion of its predecessors.

#### THE OLD ORDER AND THE NEW:

The delegation of the function of government into the hands of representatives elected from certain districts, states, or territories represents no real natural division suited to the requirements of modern society, but is a survival from a time when territorial influences were more potent in the world than industrial influences, and for that reason is totally unsuited to the needs of the new social order, which must be based upon industry.

The Socialist thinker, when he paints the structural form of the new social order, does not imagine an industrial system directed or ruled by a body of men or women elected from an indiscriminate mass of residents within given districts, said residents working at a heterogeneous collection of trades and industries. To give the ruling, controlling, and directing of industry into the hands of such a body would be too utterly foolish.

What the Socialist does realise is that under a Social Democratic form of society the administration of affairs will be in the hands of representatives of the various industries of the nation; that the workers in the shops and factories will organise themselves into unions, each union comprising all

the workers at a given industry; that said union will democratically control the workshop life of its own industry, electing all foremen, etc., and regulating the routine of labour in that industry in subordination to the needs of society in general, to the needs of its allied trades, and to the department of industry to which it belongs; that representatives elected from these various departments of industry will meet and form the industrial administration or national government of the country.

BEGIN IN THE WORKSHOP:

In short, Social-Democracy, as its name implies, is the application to industry, or to the social life of the nation, of the fundamental principles of democracy. Such application will necessarily have to begin in the workshop, and proceed logically and consecutively upward through all the grades of industrial organisation until it reaches the culminating point of national executive power and direction. In other words, social democracy must proceed *from the bottom upward*, whereas capitalist political society is organised *from above downward*.

Social democracy will be administered by a committee of experts elected from the industries and professions of the land; capitalist society is governed by representatives elected from districts, and is based upon territorial division.

The local and national governing, or rather administrative, bodies of Socialism will approach every question with impartial minds, armed with the fullest expert knowledge born of experience; the governing bodies of capitalist society have to call in an expensive professional expert to instruct them on every technical question, and know that the impartiality of said expert varies with and depends upon the size of his fee.

### NO "SERVILE STATE":

It will be seen that this conception of Socialism destroys at one blow all the fears of a bureaucratic state, ruling and ordering the lives of every individual from above, and thus gives assurance that the social order of the future will be an extension of the freedom of the individual, and not a suppression of it. In short, it blends the fullest democratic control with the most absolute expert supervision, something unthinkable of any society built upon the political state.

To focus the idea properly in your mind you have but to realise how industry today transcends all limitations of territory and leaps across rivers, mountains, and continents; then you can understand how impossible it would be to apply to such far-reaching intricate enterprises the principle of democratic control by the workers through the ~~medium~~ of political territorial divisions.

Under Socialism, states, territories, or provinces will exist only as geographical expressions, and have no existence as sources of governmental power, though they may be seats of administrative bodies.

Now, having grasped the idea that the administrative force of the Socialist Republic of the future will function through unions industrially organised, that the principle of democratic control will operate through the workers correctly organised in such Industrial Unions, and that the political territorial state of capitalist society will have no place or function under Socialism, you will at once grasp the full truth embodied in the words of this member of the Socialist Party whom I have just quoted, that *"only the industrial form of organisation offers us even a theoretical constructive Socialist programme."*



## THE POLITICAL STATE AND ITS USES:

To some minds constructive Socialism is embodied in the work of our representatives on the various public bodies to which they have been elected. The various measures against the evils of capitalist property brought forward by, or as a result of, the agitation of Socialist representatives on legislative bodies are figured as being of the nature of constructive Socialism.

As we have shown, the political State of capitalism has no place under Socialism, therefore, measures which aim to place industries in the hands of, or under the control of, such a political State are in no sense steps towards that ideal; they are but useful measures to restrict the greed of capitalism and to familiarise the workers with the conception of common ownership. This latter is, indeed, their chief function.

But the enrolment of the workers in unions patterned closely after the structure of modern industries, and following the organic lines of industrial development, is *par excellence* the swiftest, safest, and most peaceful form of constructive work the Socialist can engage in. It prepares within the framework of capitalist society the working forms of the Socialist Republic, and thus, while increasing the resisting power of the worker against present encroachments of the capitalist class, it familiarises him with the idea that the union he is helping to build up is destined to supplant that class in the control of the industry in which he is employed.

THE UNIONS CAN BUILD FREEDOM:

The power of this idea to transform the dry detail work of trade union organisation into the constructive work of revolutionary Socialism, and thus to make of the unimaginative trade unionist a potent factor in the launching of a new system of society, cannot be over-estimated. It invests the sordid details of the daily incidents of the class struggle with a new and beautiful meaning, and presents them in their true light as skirmishes between the two opposing armies of light and darkness.

In the light of this principle of Industrial Unionism every fresh shop or factory organised under its banner is a fort wrenched from the control of the capitalist class and manned with the soldiers of the Revolution to be held by them for the workers.

On the day that the political and economic forces of Labour finally break with capitalist society and proclaim the Workers' Republic, these shops and factories so manned by Industrial Unionists will be taken charge of by the workers there employed, and force and effectiveness thus given to that proclamation. Then and thus the new society will spring into existence, ready equipped to perform all the useful functions of its predecessor.

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Part II.

THE FUTURE OF LABOUR

Chapter I - Lesson of History

In choosing for the subject of this part such a title as "The Future of Labour" I am aware that I run the risk of arousing expectations that I shall not be able to satisfy. The future of labour is a subject with which is bound up the future of civilisation, and, therefore, a comprehensive treatment of the subject might be interpreted as demanding an analysis of all the forces and factors which will influence humanity in the future, and also their resultant effect.

Needless to say, my theme is a less ambitious one. I propose simply to deal with the problem of labour in the immediate future, with the marshalling of labour for the great conflict that confronts us, and with a consideration of the steps to be taken in order that the work of aiding the transition from Industrial Slavery to Industrial Freedom might be, as far as possible, freed from all encumbering and needless obstacles and expense of time, energy and money.

THE THREE STAGES OF STRUGGLE:

But first, and as an aid to a proper understanding of my position, let me place briefly before you my reading of the history of the past struggles of mankind against social subjection, my reading of the mental development undergone by each revolting class in the different stages of their struggle, from the first period of their bondage to the first dawn of their freedom.

As I view it, such struggles had three well-marked mental stages, corresponding to the inception, development, and decay of the oppressing powers and as I intend to attempt to apply this theory to the position of labour as a subject class today, I hope you will honour me by at least giving me your earnest attention to this conception, and aid by your discussion in determining at which of these periods or stages the working class, the subject class of today, has arrived.

My reading, then, briefly is this:

That in the first period of bondage the eyes of the subject class are always turned towards the past, and all its efforts in revolt are directed to the end of destroying the social system in order that it might march backward and re-establish the social order of ancient times—"the good old days." That the goodness of those days was largely hypothetical seldom enters the imagination of men on whose limbs the fetters of oppression still sits awkwardly.

In the second period the subject class tends more and more to lose sight and recollection of any pre-existent state of society, to believe that the social order in which it finds itself always did exist, and to bend all its energies to obtaining such ameliorations of its lot within existent society as will make that lot more bearable. At this stage of society the subject class, as far as its own aspirations are concerned, may be reckoned as a conservative force.

In the third period the subject class becomes revolutionary, reckons little of the past for inspiration, but, building itself upon the achievements of the present, confidently addresses itself to the

conquest of the future. It does so because the development of the framework of society has revealed to it its relative importance, revealed to it the fact that within its grasp has grown, unconsciously to itself, a power which, if intelligently applied, is sufficient to overcome and master society at large.

THE HISTORY OF REVOLT:

As a classic illustration of this conception of the history of the mental development of the revolt against social oppression, we might glance at the many peasant revolts recorded in European history. As we are now aware, common ownership of land was at one time the basis of society all over the world. Our fathers not only owned their land in common, but in many ways practised a common ownership of the things produced. In short, tribal communism was at one time the universally existent order.

In such a state of society there existed a degree of freedom that no succeeding order has been able to parallel, and that none will be able to, until the individualistic order of today gives way to the Industrial Commonwealth, the Workers' Republic, of the future. How that ancient order broke up it is no part of my task to tell.

What I do wish to draw your attention to is that for hundreds, for a thousand years after the break-up of that tribal communism, and the reduction to serfdom of the descendants of the formerly free tribesmen, all the efforts of the revolting serfs were directed to a destruction of the new order of things and to a rehabilitation of the old.

Take as an example the various peasant wars of Germany, the Jacquerie of France, or the revolt of Wat Tyler and John Ball in England, as being the best

known; examine their rude literature in such fragments as have been preserved; study their speeches as they have been recorded even by their enemies; read the translations of their songs, and in all of them you will find a passionate harking back to the past, a morbid idealising of the status of their fathers, and a continued exhortation to the suffering people to destroy the present in order that, in some vague and undefined manner, they might reconstitute the old.

THE RISE OF THE BOURGEOISIE:

The defeat of the peasantry left the stage clear for the emergence of the bourgeoisie as the most important subject class, and for the development of that second period of which I have spoken. Did it develop? Well, in every account we read of the conflicts between the nobility and the burghers in their guilds and cities we find that the aggressive part was always taken by the former, and that wherever a revolt took place the revolting guild merchants and artisans justified their act by an appeal to the past privileges which had been abrogated, and the restoration of which formed the basis of their claims, and their only desire if successful in revolt.

One of the most curious illustrations of this mental condition is to be found in the "*History of the Rise of the Dutch Republic*" by Motley, in which that painstaking historian tells how the Netherlands in their revolt against the Spanish Emperor continued for a generation to base their claims upon the political status of the provinces under a former Emperor, made war upon the Empire with troops levied in the name of the Emperor, and led by officers whose commissions were made out by the rebel provinces in the name of the sovereign they were fighting against.

This mental condition lasted in England until the great Civil War, which ended by leaving Charles I. without a head, and the bourgeoisie, incarnated in Cromwell, firmly fixed in the saddle; in France it lasted till the Revolution.

ECONOMIC POWER BECOMES POLITICAL POWER:

In both countries it was abandoned, not because of any *a priori* reasoning upon its absurdity, nor because some great thinker had evolved a better scheme - but because the growth of the industrial system had made the capitalist class realise that they could at any moment stop the flow of its life-blood, so to speak, and from so realising it was but a short mental evolution *to frame a theory of political action which proclaimed that the capitalist class was the nation*, and all its enemies the enemies of the nation at large. The last period of that social evolution had been reached, the last mental stage of the transition from feudal ownership to capitalist property.

APPLYING THE LESSONS OF HISTORY:

Now, let me apply this reading of history to the development of the working class under capitalism, and find out what lessons it teaches us, of value in our present struggle. Passing by the growth of the working class under nascent capitalism, as it belongs more to the period I have just dealt with, than to the present subject, and taking up working-class history from the point marked by the introduction of machinery to supplant hand labour - a perfectly correct standpoint for all practical purposes, we find in the then attitude of the workers an exemplification of the historical fidelity of our conception.

Suffering from the miseries attendant upon machine labour, the displacement of those supplanted, and the scandalous overworking of those retained, the workers rioted and rebelled in a mad effort to abolish machinery and restore the era of hand labour. In a word, they strove to revert to past conditions, and their most popular orators and leaders were they who pictured in most glowing terms the conditions prevalent in the days of their fathers.

They were thus on the same mental plane as those mediaeval peasants who, in their revolt, were fired by the hope of restoring the primitive commune. And just as in the previously cited case, the inevitable failure of this attempt to reconstruct the past was followed in another generation by movements which accepted the social order of their day as permanent, and looked upon their social status as wage-slaves as fixed and immutable in the eternal order of things. To this category belongs the trade union movement in all its history..

CREDIT UNIONS ACCEPT CAPITALISM:

As the struggles of the serfs and burghers in the middle ages were directed to no higher aim than the establishing of better relations between these struggling classes and their feudal overlords, as during those ages the division of society into ruling classes of king, lords, and church, resting upon a basis of the serfdom of the producers, was accepted by all in spite of the perpetual recurrences of civil wars between the various classes, so, in capitalist society, the trade unionists, despite strikes, lock-outs, and black lists, accepted the employing class as part and parcel of a system which was to last through all eternity.

The rise of Industrial Unionism is the first sign that that — the second stage of the mental

evolution of our class — is rapidly passing away. And the fact that it had its inception amongst men actually engaged in the work of trade union organisation, and found its inspiration in a recognition of the necessities born of the struggles of the workers, and not in the theories of any political party — this fact is the most cheering sign of the legitimacy of its birth and the most hopeful augury of its future.

For we must not forget that it is not the theorists who make history; it is history in its evolution that makes the theorists. And the roots of history are to be found in the workshops, fields, and factories. It has been remarked that Belgium was the cockpit of Europe, because within its boundaries have been fought out many of the battles between the old dynasties; in like manner we can say that the workshop is the cockpit of civilisation, because in the workshop has been and will be fought out those battles between the new and the old methods of production, the issues of which change the face and the history of the world.

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## CHAPTER II

### The Political Action of the Industrial Union.

I have said that the capitalist class became a revolutionary class when it realised that it held control of the economic heart of the nation. I may add, when the working class is in the same position it will also as a class become revolutionary; it will also give effective political expression to its economic strength.

The capitalist class grew into a political party when it looked around and found *itself* in control of the things needed for the life of the individual and the State, when it saw that the ships carrying the commerce of the nation were its own, when it saw that the internal traffic of the nation was in the hands of its agents, when it saw that the feeding, clothing, and sheltering of the ruling class depended upon the activities of the subject class, when it saw itself applied to, to furnish finance to equip the armies and fleets of the kings and nobles; in short, when the capitalist class found that all the arteries of commerce, all the agencies of production, all the mainsprings of life, in fact, passed through their hands as blood flows through the human heart — then, and only then, did capital raise the banner of political revolt, and from a class battling for concessions became a class leading its forces to the mastery of society at large.

#### THE BATTLE AND ITS ECHO:

This leads me to the last axiom of which I wish you to grasp the significance. It is *this*, that the fight for the conquest of the political state is not the battle, it is only the echo of the battle. *The real battle is the battle being fought out every day for the power to control industry, and the gauge of the progress of that battle is not to be found in the number of voters making a cross beneath the symbol of a political party, but in the number of these workers who enrol themselves in an industrial organisation with the definite purpose of making themselves masters of the industrial equipment of society in general.*

That battle will have its political echo, that industrial organisation will have its political

expression. If we accept the definition of working-class political action as that which brings the workers as a class into direct conflict with the possessing class AS A CLASS, and keeps them there, then we must realise that NOTHING CAN DO THAT SO READILY AS ACTION AT THE BALLOT BOX.

Such action strips the working-class movement of all traces of such sectionalism as may, and, indeed, must, cling to strikes and lock-outs, and emphasises the class character of the Labour Movement. IT IS, THEREFORE ABSOLUTELY INDISPENSABLE FOR THE EFFICIENT TRAINING OF THE WORKING CLASS ALONG CORRECT LINES THAT ACTION AT THE BALLOT BOX SHOULD ACCOMPANY ACTION IN THE WORKSHOP.

I am convinced that this will be the ultimate formation of the fighting hosts of Labour. The workers will be industrially organised on the economic field, and until that organisation is perfected, whilst the resultant feeling of class consciousness is permeating the minds of the workers, the Socialist Political Party will carry on an independent campaign of education and attack upon the political field and as a consequence will remain the sole representative of the Socialist idea in politics. But as industrial organisation grows, feels its strength, and develops the revolutionary instincts of its members, there will grow also a desire for a closer union and identification of the two wings of the army of Labour.

Any attempt prematurely to force this identification would only defeat its own purpose, and be fraught with danger alike to the economic and the political wing. Yet it is certain that such attempts will be of continual recurrence, and multiply in proportion to the dissatisfaction felt at the waste

of energy involved in the division of forces. Statesmanship of the highest kind will be required to see that this union shall take place only under the proper conditions and at the proper moment for effective action.

TWO POINTS TO REMEMBER:

Two things must be kept in mind—viz., that a Socialist Political Party not emanating from the ranks of organised Labour is, as Karl Marx phrased it, simply a Socialist sect, ineffective for the final revolutionary act; but that also the attempt of craft organised unions to create political unity before they have laid the foundation of industrial unity in their own, the economic field, would be an instance of putting the cart before the horse. But when that foundation of industrial union is finally secured, then nothing can prevent the union of the economic and political forces of Labour.

I look forward to the time when every economic organisation will have its Political Committee, just as it has its Organisation Committee or its Strike Committee, and when it will be counted to be as great a crime, as much an act of scabbery, to act against the former as against any of the latter. When that time comes we will be able to count our effective vote before troubling the official ballot-box, simply by counting our membership in the allied organisations; we will be able to estimate our capacity for the revolutionary act of Social Transformation simply by taking stock of the number of industries we control and their importance relative to the whole social system, and when we find that we control the strategic industries in society, then society must bend to our will—or break.

In our organisations we will have Woman Suffrage, whether governments like it or not; we will also have in our own organisations a pure and uncorrupted ballot, and if the official ballot of capitalist society does not purify itself of its own accord, its corruption can only serve to blind the eyes of our enemies, and not to hide our strength from ourselves.

#### INDUSTRIAL UNITY MAKES POLITICAL EFFICIENCY:

Compare the political action of such a body with that of any party we know. Political parties are composed of men and women who meet together to formulate a policy and programme to vote upon. They set up a political ticket in the hope of getting people, most of whom they do not know, to vote for them, and when that vote is at last cast, it is cast by men whom they have not organised, do not know, and cannot rely upon to use in their own defence.

We have proven that such a body can make propaganda, and good propaganda, for Socialist principles, but it can never function as the weapon of an industrially organised working class. To it such a party will always be an outside body, a body not under its direct control, but the political weapon of the *Industrially Organised Working Class will be a weapon of its own forging and wielded by its own hand.*

I believe it to be incumbent upon organised Labour to meet the capitalist class upon every field where the latter can operate to our disadvantage. Therefore, I favour direct attacks upon the control of governmental powers through the ballot-box, but I wish to see these attacks supported by the economic organisation. In short, I believe that there is no function performed by a separate political party

that the economic organisation cannot help it perform much better and with greater safety to working-class interests.

THE FUNCTION OF THE O.B.U.:

Let us be clear as to the function of Industrial Unionism. That function is to build up an industrial republic inside the shell of the political State, in order that when that industrial republic is fully organised it may crack the shell of the political State and step into its place in the scheme of the universe. But in the process of upbuilding, during the period of maturing, the mechanism of the political State can be utilised to assist in the formation of the embryo Industrial Republic.

Or, to change the analogy, we might liken the position of the Industrial Republic in its formative period towards political society to the position of the younger generation towards the generation passing away. The younger accepts the achievements of the old, but gradually acquires strength to usurp its functions until the new generation is able to abandon the paternal household and erect its own. While doing so it utilises to the fullest all the privileges of its position.

So the Industrial Unionist will function in a double capacity in capitalist society. In his position as a citizen in a given geographical area he will use his political voting power in attacks upon the political system of capitalism, and in his position as a member of the Industrial Union he will help in creating the economic power which in the fulness of time will overthrow that political system, and replace it by the Industrial Republic.

### THE BASIS OF POWER:

. My contentions along these lines do not imply by any means that I regard immediate action at the ballotbox by the economic organisation as essential, although I may regard it as advisable. As I have already indicated, the proletarian revolution will in that respect most likely follow the lines of the capitalist revolutions in the past.

In Cromwellian England, in Colonial America, in Revolutionary France, the real political battle did not begin until after the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class, had become the dominant class in the nation. Then they sought to conquer political power in order to allow their economic power to function freely.

It was no mere coincidence, but a circumstance born of the very nature of things, woven, so to speak, in the warp and woof of fate, that in all the three countries the signal for the revolution was given by the ruling class touching the bourgeoisie in the one part that was calculated to arouse them as a class, and at the same time demonstrate their strength. That one sensitive part was their finance, their ownership of the sinews of war.

In England it was over the question of taxes, of ship money, that Hampden first raised the standard of revolt, whose last blow was struck at Whitehall when the king's head rolled in the gutter. In America it was over the question of taxes, and again the capitalist class were united, until a new nation was born to give them power. In France it was the failure of the king to raise taxes that led to the convocation of the States General, which assembly first revealed to the French capitalists their power as a class and set their feet upon the revolutionary path.

In all three countries the political rebellion was but the expression of the will of a class already in possession of economic power. This is in conformity with the law of human evolution, that the new system can never overthrow the old, until it itself is fully matured and able to assume all the useful functions of the thing it is to dethrone.

#### BUILD UP THE UNION:

In the light of such facts, and judging by such reasoning, we need not exercise our souls over the question of the date of the appearance of the Industrial Organisations of Labour upon the electoral field. Whether we believe, as I believe, that the electoral field offers it opportunities it would be criminal to ignore, or believe, as some do, that electoral action on the part of the economic organisations is at present premature, one thing we can be agreed upon, if we accept the outline of history I have just sketched—viz., that it is necessary to remember that at the present stage of development all actions of our class at the ballot-box **are** in the nature of mere preliminary skirmishes, or educational campaigns, and that *the conquest of political power by the working class waits upon the conquest of economic power*, and must function through the economic organisation.

Hence, reader, if you belong to the working class your duty is clear. Your union **must** be perfected until it embraces every one who toils in the service of your employer, or as a unit in your industry. The fact that your employers find it necessary to secure the services of any individual worker is, or ought to be, that individual's highest and best title to be a member of your union. If the boss needs him you need him more. You need the *open union* and the *closed shop* if you ever intend to control the means and conditions of life.



And, as the champion of your class upon the political field, as the ever-active propagandist of the idea of the working-class, as the representative and embodiment of the social principle of the future, you need the Socialist Party. The Future of Labour is bound up with the harmonious development of those twin expressions of the forces of progress; the Freedom of Labour will be born of their happily consummated union.

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PART III

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES.

Scripture tells us in a very notable passage about the danger of putting new wine into old bottles. I propose to say a few words about the equally suicidal folly of putting old wine into new bottles. For I humbly submit that the experiment spoken of is very popular just now in the industrial world, has engaged the most earnest attention of most of the leaders of the working class, and received the practically unanimous endorsement of the Labour and Socialist Press. I have waited in vain for a word of protest.

THE IDEA BEHIND INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM:

In the year of grace 1905 a convention of American Labour bodies was held in Chicago for the purpose of promoting a new working-class organisation on more militant and scientific lines. The result of that convention was the establishment of the Industrial Workers of the World—the first Labour organisation to organise itself with the definite ideal of taking over and holding the economic machinery of society. The means proposed to that end—and it is necessary to remember that the form of organisation adopted was primarily intended to accomplish that end,

and only in the second degree as a means of industrial warfare under capitalism —was the enrolment of the working class in Unions built upon the lines of the great industries. It was the idea of the promoters of the new organisation that craft interests and technical requirements should be met by the creation of branches, that all such branches should be represented in a common executive, that all united should be members of an industrial Union, which should embrace all branches and be co-extensive with the industry, that all industrial Unions should be linked as members of one great Union, and that one membership card should cover the whole working-class organisation.

Thus was to be built up a working-class administration which should be capable of the revolutionary act of taking over society, and whose organisers and officers should in the preliminary stages of organising and fighting constantly remember, and remembering, teach, that no new order can replace the old until it is capable of performing the work of the old, and performing it more efficiently for human needs.

FIGHTING SPIRIT MORE THAN MASS ORGANISATION:

As one of the earliest organisers of that body, I desire to emphasise also that as a means of creating in the working class the frame of mind necessary to the upbuilding of this new order within the old, we taught, and I have yet seen no reason to reconsider our attitude upon this matter, that the interests of one were the interests of all, and that no consideration of a contract with a section of the capitalist class absolved any section of us from the duty of taking instant action to protect other sections when said sections were in danger from the capitalist enemy.

Our attitude always was that in the swiftness and unexpectedness of our action lay our chief hopes of temporary victory, and since permanent peace was an illusory hope until permanent victory was secured temporary victories were all that need concern us. We realised that every victory gained by the working class would be followed by some capitalist development that in course of time tend to nullify it, but that until that development was perfect the fruits of our victory would be ours to enjoy, and the resultant moral effect would be of incalculable value to the character and to the mental attitude of our class towards their rulers.

It will thus be seen that in our view—and now that I am about to point the moral I may personally appropriate it and call it my point of view—the spirit, the character, the militant spirit, the fighting character of the organisation, was of the first importance. I believe that the development of the fighting spirit is of more importance than the creation of the theoretically perfect organisation; that, indeed, the most theoretically perfect organisation may, because of its very perfection and vastness, be of the greatest possible danger to the revolutionary movement if it tends, or is used, to repress and curb the fighting spirit of comradeship in the rank and file.

SUCCESS OF THE SYMPATHETIC STRIKE IN 1911:

Since the establishment in America of the organisation I have just sketched, and the initiation of propaganda on the lines necessary for its purpose, we have seen in all capitalist countries, and notably in Great Britain, great efforts being made to abolish sectional division, and to unite or amalgamate kindred Unions. Many instances will arise in the minds

of my readers, but I propose to take as a concrete example the National Transport Workers' Federation. Previous to the formation of this body, Great Britain was the scene of the propagandist activities of a great number of irregular and unorthodox bodies, which, taking their cue in the main from the Industrial Workers of the World, made great campaigns in favour of the new idea. Naturally their arguments were in the main directed towards emphasising the absurdity implied in one body of workers remaining at work, whilst another body of workers were on strike in the same employment.

As a result of this campaign, frowned upon by leading officials in Great Britain, the Seamen's strike of 1911 was conducted on, and resulted in, entirely new lines of action. The sympathetic strike sprang into being; every group of workers stood by every allied group of workers; and a great wave of effective solidarity caught the workers in its grasp and beat and terrified the masters.

Let me emphasise the point that the greatest weapon against capital was proven in those days to be the sporadic strike. It was its very sporadic nature, its swiftness and unexpectedness, that won. It was ambush, the surprise attack of our industrial army, before which the well trained battalions of the capitalist crumpled up in panic, against which no precautions were available.

WEAKNESS OF THE NATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION:

Since that time we have had all over these countries a great wave of enthusiasm for amalgamations, for more cohesion in the working-class organisations. In the transport industry all Unions are being linked up until the numbers now affiliated have become

imposing enough to awe the casual reader and silence the cavilling objector at Trade Union Meetings. But I humbly submit that, side by side with that enlargement and affiliation of organisations, there has proceeded a freezing up of the fraternal spirit of 1911; there is now, despite the amalgamations, less solidarity in the ranks of Labour than was exhibited in that year of conflict and victory.

If I could venture an analysis of the reason for this falling-off in solidarity, I would have to point out that the amalgamations and federations are being carried out in the main by officials absolutely destitute of the revolutionary spirit, and that as a consequence the methods of what would be militant organisations having the broad working-class outlook are conceived and enforced in the temper and spirit of the sectionalism those organisations were meant to destroy.

Into the new bottles of industrial organisation is being poured the old, cold wine of Craft Unionism.

The much-condemned small Unions of the past had at least this to recommend them, viz., that they were susceptible to pressure from the sudden fraternal impulses of their small membership. If their members worked side by side with scabs, or received tainted goods from places where scabs were employed, the shame was all their own, and proved frequently too great to be borne. When it did so we had the sympathetic strike and the fraternisation of the working class. But when the workers handling tainted goods, or working vessels loaded by scabs, are members of a nation-wide organisation, with branches in all great centres or ports, the sense of the personal responsibility is taken off the shoulders of each member and local officials and the spirit of solidarity destroyed. The

local official can conscientiously order the local member to remain at work with the scab, or to handle the tainted goods, "pending action by the General Executive."

RECENT EVENTS FORETOLD IN 1914:

As the General Executive cannot take action pending a meeting of delegates, and as the delegates at that meeting have to report back to their bodies, and these bodies again to meet, discuss, and then report back to the General Executive, which must meet, hear their reports, and then, perhaps, order a ballot vote of the entire membership, after which another meeting must be held to tabulate the result of the vote and transmit it to the local branches, which must meet again to receive it, the chances are, of course, a million to one that the body of workers in distress will be starved into subjection, bankrupted, or disrupted, before the leviathan organisation will allow their brothers on the spot to lift a finger or drop a tool in their aid.

Readers may, perhaps, think that I am exaggerating the danger. But who will think so that remembers the vindictive fine imposed by the N.U.R. upon its members in the North of England for taking swift action on behalf of a persecuted comrade instead of going through all this red tape whilst he was suffering? Or who will think so that knows that Dublin and Belfast members of the Irish Transport Workers' Union have been victimised ever since the end of the lock-out by the Head Line Company, whose steamers have been and are regularly coaled in British ports, and manned by Belfast and British members of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union?

TACTICS THAT WILL WIN:

The amalgamations and federations that are being built up today are, without exception, being used in the old spirit of the worst type of sectionalism; each local Union or branch finds in the greater organisation of which it is a part a shield and excuse for refusing to respond to the call of brothers and sisters in distress, for the handling of tainted goods, for the working of scab boats. A main reason for this shameful distortion of the Greater Unionism from its true purpose is to be found in the campaign against "sporadic strikes".

I have no doubt but that Robert Williams, of the National Transport Workers' Federation, is fully convinced that his articles and speeches against such strikes are and were wise; I have just a little doubt that they were the best service performed for the capitalist by any Labourer leader of late years. The big strike, the vast massed battalions of Labour against the massed battalions of capital on a field every inch of which has been explored and mapped out beforehand, is seldom successful, for very obvious reasons. The sudden strike, and the sudden threat to strike suddenly, has won more for Labour than all the great Labour conflicts in history.

In the Boer war the long line of communications was the weak point of the British army; in a Labour war the ground to be covered by the goods of the capitalist is his line of communication. The larger it is the better for the attacking forces of Labour. But these forces must be free to attack or refuse to attack, just as their local knowledge guides them. But, it will be argued, their action might imperil the whole organisation. Exactly so, and their inaction might imperil that working-class spirit which is

more important than any organisation. Between the horns of that dilemma what can be done? In my opinion, we must recognise that the only solution of that problem is the choice of officers, local or national, from the standpoint of their responsiveness to the call for solidarity, and having got such officials, to retain them only as long as they can show results in the amelioration of the condition of their members and the development of their Union as a weapon of class warfare.

ADVANCE OR RETREAT:

If we develop on those lines, then the creation of a great Industrial Union, such as I have rudely sketched in my opening reminiscence, or the creation of those much more clumsy federations and amalgamations now being formed, will be of immense revolutionary value to the working class; if, on the contrary, we allow officialism of the old, narrow sectional kind to infuse their spirit into the new organisations, and to strangle these with rules suited only to a somnolent working class, then the Greater Unionism will but serve to load us with great fetters. It will but be to real Industrial Unionism what the Servile State would be to our ideal Co-Operative Commonwealth.

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## POSTSCRIPT

That James Connolly had come to the conclusion that the time was ripe for combined political and industrial action, may be deduced from the fact that in 1912 he succeeded in persuading the Irish Trade Union Congress to adopt political objects and to participate as an independent Party in the political struggle of the day.

That Party, known as the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, is moving steadily forward towards the unity of industrial and political functions indicated above (pages 29-31). The most important factor in bringing this about has been the growth of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. At the beginning of 1920 the Irish Labour Party had a membership of 250,000 of which 130,000 were solidly organised in the IT&GWU. As the latter organises some industries completely, and a part at least of all other industries, its action in support of policies initiated by the former is the decisive factor in determining their success.

Recent movements, such as the conferences among the Unions catering for distributive workers on the one hand, and those catering for engineering, ship-building, and foundry workers on the other, will carry the industrialisation of Irish Labour Unions a stage forward towards complete solidarity in form and spirit.

In 1912 the conditions laid down in this pamphlet for the entry of the economic organisation of Labour upon the field of politics did not exist. Upon the strict literal interpretation of his own theory, James Connolly's resolution was not justified. But the subsequent growth of Industrial Unionism proved how accurately he interpreted the tendencies of the

times and circumstances. In this he was no prophet foretelling the unforeseen, but a scientific sociologist, weighing the facts and applying the tests of history and experience, to obtain the correct and inevitable solution.

Therefore, the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress must assume its historic mission in its fulness of power and responsibility. As the central organ of the Trade Union movement it must transform itself and its constituent unions into a perfected Industrial Union, and, as the political party of the Irish working class, carry on the struggle against capitalism in the governing bodies of the State.

Its success will depend upon the extent to which the rank and file of the movement master the principles of social action expounded by James Connolly in this book, to the end that the progress of Labour will depend less upon leadership and more upon the revolutionary initiative of the masses.

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