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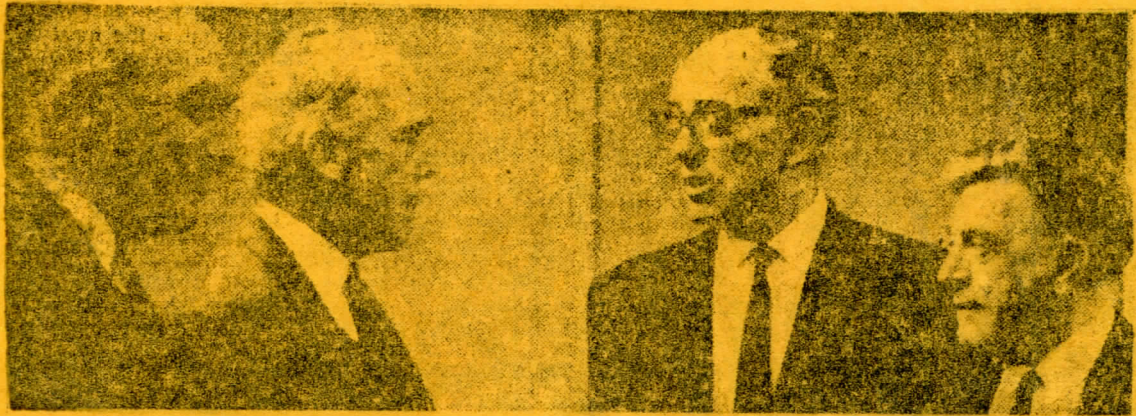


# COMMISSION ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

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# EXPOSED



The CIR troubleshooters (left to right): Blakeman, Woodcock, Flanders and Paynter

Price 3d



# C.I.R. EXPOSED.

## INTRODUCTION

We would like to take a look at the government body called the Commission on Industrial Relations. Is it another of those harmless things that governments set up for the benefit of ex trade union officials, company directors, ex personnel managers and the like; who having given of their best to their masters, can now spend their remaining days in peace, and graze away contentedly on good pensions!!

If we look at it more closely, this so called "HARMLESS COMMISSION" is not as harmless as so many trade union leaders and "experienced shop stewards" would have us believe.

The C.I.R. was a direct recommendation of the Donovan Commission on the trade unions. It is therefore necessary to examine the motives and aims of this royal enquiry first. The background to the setting up of the Donovan Commission was the increasingly widespread drive of the employers for productivity deals and other ways of speeding up workers. While many trade union leaders welcomed this form of smashing shop floor organisations. The rank and file responded with growing militancy particularly in the form of unofficial strike. The need of the employers to overcome this militancy found its expression in the Tories demand during and before the 1964 election for government intervention in strikes. These demands were set out in their blackleg's charter, ironically called "Fair deal at work".

The Labour Party rejected these demands.

Then in 1965 the Donovan Commission was established by a Labour government - in breach of its election pledges. It was common knowledge at the time that foreign bankers were demanding "Copper bottomed" guarantees that the trade unions would be prevented from advancing wage demands, and the newly elected Labour government was clearly prepared to adopt Tory policies and comply. It made no attempt to introduce socialist policies.

## DONOVAN

The Donovan commission's findings resulted in the Labour government drawing up a white paper called "In place of strife". Mass opposition from trade unionists prevented the government implementing most of the white paper, but it did set up - in line with a Donovan recommendation - the C.I.R. ; a body able to poke it's nose into all factory floor disputes and organisations. This government brainchild has adopted much of Donovan as a guide-line for it's activities; for example :- 1) Trade union officials should take more control, keeping all negotiations in their own hands. 2) That all shop floor wage disputes should be replaced by job evaluation schemes and productivity deals. The C.I.R. was specifically instructed to keep a close watch on all productivity agreements to make sure that workers weren't getting away with anything and "to advise the secretary of state on whether legislation for the enforcement of procedure agreements has become imperative, if such legislation is enacted to make proposals for its application"

It is very clear the C.I.R. is part of a move by employers and their governments, Labour or Tory, to bash shop stewards and shop floor organisations - organisations which have been solely responsible for any real advances on the wage front. As Mr Carr, then Tory spokesman on industrial matters, said " We welcome some of its (the report's) principal recommendations which are very much in line with some of the main proposals in the conservative policy document "Fair deal at work".

## WHO'S WHO ON THE C.I.R.

If we look at the members of the Commission, will we find men noted for their unbiased attitudes in the field of industrial relations !!! Who are <sup>the</sup> Commission on Industrial Relations !!!

# TRUSTY GEORGE.

George Woodcock, former secretary of the T.U.C., 'Our right trusty and well-beloved counsellor George Woodcock, commander of the most excellent order of the British Empire', as the London Gazette described him. For being so trusty and well beloved Woodcock is paid an annual salary of £11,500 as chairman of the C.I.R. Woodcock's habit of co-operating over the years with all governments paved the way for this appointment. If the Wilson Government met with opposition over its wage freeze policy, well, Woodcock was there to pull their irons out of the fire with his T.U.C.'s vetting of wage claims. In other words, Woodcock and the T.U.C. became an extension of Mrs Castle's D.E.P.

Governments may come and go, but trusty George goes marching on as the number one Labour lieutenant of Capital...only now he's paid £11, 500.

## An ex-Ford man

Mr. Leslie Blakeman joined the C.I.R. from Fords. There he was labour relations manager at the time of Fords attack on the shop floor trade union organisation at Dagenham from where he sacked a large number of shop stewards.

Just before his £6, 500 a year appointment to the C.I.R., Mr. Blakeman tried to introduce the notorious anti-strike penalty clauses into a wage packet deal at Ford's. He also took both the A.E.F. and the T. & G.W.U. to the High Court in an attempt to prevent them supporting their members who were in dispute with the Ford motor company in 1968.

## The Scholar

Next in line is Mr Allan Flanders, a former professor of industrial relations at Oxford University. He has published a number of books, one of which praised the first productivity deal at the Fawley refinery of Esso. This agreement smashed the shop floor trade union organisation and caused Fawley workers to drop from among the highest paid in the refinery industry in 1960 to amongst the lowest paid in 1966, as a direct result.

A further book edited by Flanders called 'collective Bargaining ; Prescription to change' argued that managements must try and regain control from the shop floor. He is a keen supporter of all productivity deals designed to weaken shop floor organisations.

# From the C.P. to the C.I.R.

Well, well, fancy that, yes it is, its Will Paynter. Now Will has come a long way since he resigned from the communist party. Yes, he's on a £6, 500 like the rest- well, we should all be equal, shouldn't we?

Paynter was general secretary of the National Union of Mine-workers. Because of his appointment to the C.I.R. many people are kidded into believing that the Commission is 'fair', 'unbiased' 'non-aligned'. After all, isn't he a left winger and therefore sympathetic to the workers?.

The best way to judge if Paynter is any different from the other anti shop stewards, productivity-loving members of the commission is to look at his record in the mining industry-in particular at his relation to the miners crucial fight against pit closures. One of the main reasons for pit closures is the burden of interest payments that are doled out to the ex-owners. But who does Paynter turn his fire onto? Is it the government, still handing out vast sums of money to ex owners who are living off an industry supposedly nationalised since the war? No, not on your life. Paynter went gunning for the miners! In a speech in south Wales in April 1967, Paynter blamed the miners for the crisis in the mining industry: 'Absenteeism by miners threatened the jobs of men both inside and outside the industry'.

While there may be a minority of men with a bad record for absenteeism every miner knows that this is being used as an excuse by the management to intensify discipline against the miners. Encouraged by Paynter's statement, right wingers in the N.U.M. called for sacking of absentees, thus providing the thin end of the managements offensive against militant miners.

It is worth pointing out that Paynter was a long standing member of the Communist Party. This is not surprising since the history of the C.P. is one of class collaboration, with its complete support of Stalin's regime, and of the tanks that crushed the workers revolt in Hungary, 1956. A £6, 500 a year carrot was sufficient to wean him from his so-called radical position when he left the C.P. to join the C.I.R. in 1968.

## The Part-Timers

There are two part-timers on the C.I.R. One is Alf Allen, at present also drawing salary as full time general secretary of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. Brother Allen is another well known supporter of productivity deals that keep you slim. In April this year at the 24th Annual Delegate meeting of the U.S.D.A.W. in Blackpool, he made it clear

that the union leadership fully supported the then Labour government's drive for productivity deals. Motion no. 26 on the agenda of the conference was from two South London branches, calling for "£20 without strings to be backed up by strike action if necessary." Winding up the debate on wages Allen called on the conference to defeat this 'objectionable' motion. Small wonder shop workers are one of the lowest paid sections of the working class. Unlike Allen they can't draw two wage packets.

STILL THINK THE MEN ON THE C.I.R. ARE NEUTRAL ?

Well what about Mr Joseph Edwards, the other part-timer ? You may not have heard of Mr Edwards, he's the chairman of Harland and Wolff, the shipbuilders, and also a director of Joseph Lucas Industries. Oh, by the way, Joseph Lucas factories on Merseyside are the latest case to be probed by the commission. So much for the 'Impartial Examiners.' You can bet Mr Edwards will be impartial when it comes to his own workers and profits.

## THE C.I.R. IN ACTION

The best way to show most clearly the real role of the C.I.R. is to give examples of how it has operated in concrete situations .

The first General Report of the C.I.R. was published in July 1970. It covers eight cases put before the Commission. We will look at some of the main examples.

### BSR recognition dispute

Reference no.5 in the Commission's General Report covers the B.S.R. dispute, which took place last autumn in East Kilbride Scotland. The strike by 800 workers ,mainly women, lasted 15 weeks and was for union recognition . The workers faced the usual alliance between management ,police, and the state (in the shape of the C.I.R.). The police were especially provocative and brutal. They clashed with workers on many occasions ..girls were kicked and manhandled, pickets thrown into police vans and crowded into police cells. The Press of course said nothing of all this, nor did the C.I.R. Enquiry.

The C.I.R. declared that the union should be recognised. But what price recognition! The A.E.F. ,the union involved gave acknowledgement of 'Flexibility and mobility of employees within the factories'. The Commission also saw to it that the shop floor had little or no power.

The report says 'The Commission also was concerned to see a sound framework for the conduct of industrial relations established for the future'. It recommended that the management strengthened itself at all levels. It also advised that the trade union strengthened its representation of full time officials within the factory. It was also anxious 'To review shop stewards constituencies so as to keep the number of shop stewards as low as consistent with effective coverage.' and to ensure that the shop stewards should receive adequate training. The report ends 'As recommended by the commission the company has called upon the services of the D.E.P.'s Manpower and Productivity Service'

What harm will it do to the bosses at B.S.R. to recognise a Union when they are dealing mainly with full time officials who already agreed to co-operate with mobility and flexibility and with more and more productivity deals, aimed at cutting down on workers and speeding up the ones that are left? All of which the D.E.P.'s manpower department will have had a guiding hand in.

## BIRMID QUALCAST

The Birmid Qualcast report has been the most important one issued so far. This firm makes main castings for the car industry. There are 3 plants in the Birmid Qualcast Group- Birmingham Aluminium Castings, Dartmouth Auto Castings, and Midland Motor Cylinder. Through out the whole group the past year has been one of unprecedented conflict, especially amongst the immigrant workers. In the early '60s according to the shop stewards, immigrant workers had been treated 'like cattle.'

Any worker raising objections to wages, conditions or safety precautions had been sacked. Workers would put in 80 hours for as little as £16. Trade union membership had initially been low but had gradually grown to encompass around 90% of the workers. When they did eventually feel strong enough to take up the struggle, it was in bitter unofficial action, largely independent of control by union officials, and with few illusions that compromise was possible.

Wages, as a result, were pushed up, especially in the Midland Motor Cylinder plant. £34 - £35 per week for 45 hours, and in many cases far higher have been achieved.

It was against this background, and because of the important place of the Birmid Group in the car industry that the C.I.R. intervened. The C.I.R. report in the section entitled 'A Programme for Reform' makes it clear to anyone who still doubts that the C.I.R. is indeed a weapon of the employers, not an independent organ of a state from which reforms can be expected.

an end to peicework and an introduction of job evaluation was the main demand, along with the curbing of the shop stewards' authority and the increase of managerial disciplinary powers.



It also recommended that shop stewards should be sent on courses where 'There is a particular need for changes in attitudes and for an understanding of the basic principles of industrial relations' (i.e. good old class compromise)

This Report also called for strict rules governing the elections of shop stewards and for the centralisation of negotiations in which full time trade union officials would be dominant. This would inevitably reduce the power and numbers of the shop stewards, and thus, the voice of the shop floor. These demands were, of course, a main feature of the Report in the B.S.R. dispute.

## The CIR with Tory teeth.

Since their return to power, it is clear which way the Tories intend to use the instrument of the C.I.R.

The Guardian of August 10th carried an article headed: 'Carr Likely to Give Legal Teeth to Woodcock's C.I.R.' It goes on to say 'The C.I.R. will be a major instrument in Conservative plans for the reform of industrial relations' This time Woodcock is to be given legal powers and the C.I.R. is to be put on a statutory basis when the Tory government's planned industrial relations bill becomes law. This will enable it to force witnesses to appear and produce documents under penalty of law. Therefore the Tories are seen to be following Labour's lead in the attempts made by Wilson and Castle to legislate against trade unions. Measures such as the wage freeze, the Prices and Incomes Policy, and the infamous 'In Place of Strife' were directed against the power of the shop floor; to solve the problems of the bosses at the expense of the workers.

Wilson dropped the anti-trade union white paper in face of mass opposition; but all it stood for is alive and well and living in the government body of the C.I.R. The Guardian goes on to say 'More controversially, the government is flirting with the possibility of enforcing some of the C.I.R.'s findings through a beefed up version of the industrial courts on which trade unionists and employers as well as lawyers already sit. This possibility springs from pressure within the Tory Party (I.E. the big business interests, unquote) to force the unions to accept discipline when 1) there is a bad record of unrest in a plant or industry 2) The unions are unwilling or unable to stem unrest.'

This threat of legislation now facing the working class is upheld by all those who tell us that the C.I.R. as it stands is harmless. Maybe when a worker is jailed by the Tories in the not so distant future, Hugh Scanlon will begin to object, but, in the meanwhile he and others are telling us to work and co-operate with the Tories and the bosses. in the C.I.R.

'Keep politics out of the unions'; how many times do we hear this cry? But the intervention by the state in the unions is a political act; its purpose is to protect the employers from shop floor action and organisations.

The C.I.R. and other agencies of the state do one thing- they show that there are only two options facing the trade unions: either they become a part of the state (state controlled unions) or we can make them weapons in the hands of the working class in the struggle for workers power and socialism, the only final solutions to the rotten system under which we live. A system characterised by the constant threat of unemployment, the constant battles against the moves of the employers for speed-ups etc.

All those who find themselves in agreement with this pamphlet should start discussing, organising and fighting

- \* KEEP THE CAPITALIST STATE OUT OF THE UNIONS.
- \* FIGHT PRODUCTIVITY DEALS.
- \* NO CO-OPERATION WITH THE C.I.R..
- \* REMOVE FROM OFFICE ALL TRADE UNION LEADERS WHO CO-OPERATE AND WORK IN THE INTERESTS OF THE EMPLOYERS AND THEIR STATE.  
FIGHT FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF THE UNIONS.
- \* BRING DOWN THE TORY GOVERNMENT.
- \* WORKERS CONTROL OF INDUSTRY - FORWARD TO SOCIALISM.

" Such negotiations (for wage increases under measured day rate) on a factory basis, only taking place periodically, would remove from the stewards their present continuous function of being active negotiators on peicework bargaining to which they owe much of their importance and influence... The stewards would be most concerned to retain their bargaining strenght , but the unions as responsible organisations would probably accept the change "

From the 'Blue Book' published by the  
Coventry Engineering Employers Federation.