

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN IN THE FIGHT FOR THE MASSES

SPEECH BY COM. H. POLLITT.

COMRADES, in spite of the desperate efforts of the British capitalist class to find a way out of the crisis, the outstanding feature of the situation in England to-day is not an alleviation of the crisis, but a steady deepening and this in spite of the fact that a revolution is taking place in the fiscal policy of England, expressed in the traditional free trade country embarking upon the system of tariffs. And now the temporary gains which the change in fiscal policy and the going off the gold standard undoubtedly brought to a certain section of industry last autumn have disappeared. The position in basic industries is steadily getting worse. The Ottawa Conference not only revealed the growing disintegration in the Empire, but it has also considerably sharpened the conflicting interests between various groups of British capitalists and its meaning for the British workers as a whole is a tremendous increase in the cost of living.

What have been some of the social consequences of the crisis in Britain? Even Government figures have to admit an unemployed army of three million. If we take into account the hundreds of thousands of workers who are no longer registered unemployed, we have in England an unemployed army of $3\frac{1}{2}$ million. In 1920 the average earnings of a miner were £5 1s. 6d., whereas to-day they are £1 15s. 10d. For a building worker they were £5 2s. 6d., to-day they are £3 12s. 6d. For a railway porter £3 12s., to-day they are £2 6s. In 1920 the average earnings of a woman weaver in Lancashire were £1 9s. 6d., to-day they are 11s. 4d. This tremendous fall in wages, in spite of the growing resistance of the workers to-day, has demonstrated to the workers better than any theory could have done that wage reductions do not bring back the old conditions.

In many big industrial centres which were formerly looked upon as beehives of industry and prosperity, such as Glasgow, Sheffield, Open-

shaw, etc., there are tremendous factories, not a single worker is employed to-day. In many principal mining towns not one worker is employed.

Another important factor which sometimes in our propaganda we did not make sufficient use of, is the deliberate destruction of the factories, which is now being carried through on instructions of the banks to limit competition, and the further fact of the complete rationalisation of British industry which the banks are aiming at.

For example, in the last twelve months, twelve big shipbuilding yards closed down, seventy-one berths have been destroyed, and in one case, a shipyard, which in 1920 was laid down with every phase of labour-saving machinery, since then has not constructed a single ship, and the machinery has been burned and sold for scrap iron. In one of the biggest combines in Manchester before the war, and which recently employed 7,500 workers, to-day there is employed only 500 workers. In 1920 the directors of this firm constructed a new factory which was filled with the latest type of heavy engineering machinery, amongst which at that time was considered to be the finest set of electrical turbine engines in the country. That machinery never produced a single thing. It is now being sold for scrap iron.

The National Government came into power on an unprecedented majority, with the slogan of "work and wages," men and women, which undoubtedly succeeded in deceiving masses of workers into voting for the National Government at the last election.

It is now clear to all, as the last two by-elections showed, that disillusionment with the Government's policy has already set in; that the chief line they are trying to carry through is attacks on the working class and this is their line on an international scale.

Firstly, they carry through their programme of economies and cuts prepared by the Labour

Government. This is a significant fact which our Party, of course, is tireless in driving home to the working masses.

Now the National Government is preparing new cuts after carrying through the whole programme of the economy cuts—a programme that met with the fiercest resistance from that section of the working class no one ever thought would resist, namely, the sailors of the Atlantic Fleet in Invergordon last September. That historical incident in the history of the British navy is one that will have increasing repercussions in the coming autumn, when undoubtedly new attacks will be made on all sections of State employees. The mutiny of the Invergordon sailors forced the National Government to make concessions to the army, the police and the air force which cost millions of pounds. Reductions which the Government had been confident it would be able to put throughout without any resistance. Now the Government is preparing a new plan and aims to reduce State expenditure by £100,000,000 between September and next March, by reducing the benefits of the unemployed and reduced expenditure on all vital social services.

In foreign policy its whole line has been to intensify the basic antagonism of imperialism, namely, the Anglo-American antagonism. This is shown in the decision reached at the Lausanne Conference; it is seen in the line being prepared for the coming world economic conference. It is reflected in the policies pursued by the British Delegation at the Geneva Disarmament Conference; it has been seen more strongly at the Ottawa Conference. Immediately the Conference had begun, President Hoover made a speech which was a warning signal to Britain that America understood very well the whole of the war ambitions which Ottawa signified as far as American imperialism was concerned. While it is true that the whole line has been to intensify this old antagonism between England and America, the Ottawa Conference was especially directed against the Soviet Union. This has also been seen in the secret agreements made at Lausanne; in support for Japan in Manchuria. This was also reflected in the "gentlemen's agreement" arrived at between England and France, where it speaks of a certain policy in regard to European affairs and no one can have any doubt that this is simply the policy of Britain and France towards the U.S.S.R. It has been reflected in the large exports of munitions and war materials from Britain to Japan for the latter's predatory ambitions in Shanghai. Ottawa also showed an open attempt to create more effective war preparations even at the expense of certain sections of British manufacturers who are anxious to work

on orders for the Soviet Union. But, finally, in this aspect of foreign policy, Ottawa has not only shown the disintegration within the Empire itself. It means that the workers are going to have to pay more money for bread and meat and all forms of tinned foods they consume, unemployment will increase, and the Trade Agreement with the Soviet Union will probably be destroyed.

The policy in regard to India is one of brutal and ruthless repression. We have to-day a situation where more men and women are in prison in India than ever in the history of that country, and the latest decision of the Government in proposing a so-called solution of the communal question in India further divides and disunites the forces in India fighting against British imperialism.

But even a more significant development, more significant from the point of view of the drive being carried out by the National Government, namely, towards Ireland, is the fight against the Irish Free State.

This is not simply a question that it wants to force De Valera to pay the three million pounds due from Ireland to Britain every year, on account of a settlement made in regard to land some years ago; or to force De Valera to sign the oath of allegiance to King George, the underlying motive is to make the Irish people once and for all understand that the National Government will never allow Ireland to become an independent republic.

What is the position of the British working class in this situation? Is it a down-and-out working class; is there no fight and militancy in the British working class?

We have any number of facts to show the tremendous developments taking place, even though developing unevenly. First, is the fact of the policy of disaffiliation from the Labour Party of the I.L.P., a policy carried through under mass pressure, and this reflects the increasing disillusionment with the Labour Party on the part of vast sections of the working class.

The growing revolt of the trade union branches against the iron rule of the trade union officials; the mass pressure which has compelled leaders in unions like the engineers, railway clerks, electricians, etc., to reinstate expelled Communists who had been expelled by the union for periods of from one to three years. It is reflected in the character of the speeches and resolutions which have been made and adopted at a whole number of important trade union conferences, such as the engineers, railwaymen, etc., this year, where the leaders of the trade union movement have made demagogic speeches which is the reflection of the mass pres-

sure upon them and they are now endeavouring to canalise that mass pressure so as to keep the rebellious elements from coming into the revolutionary camp. The wave of radicalisation is also expressed in the growth of the anti-war sentiments, in the splendid and unprecedented attitude of trade union delegates at the anti-war conferences, in the election of seventy-one workers—dockers, engineers, miners—who were sent to the Amsterdam Anti-War Congress. It has been reflected in the mass unemployed demonstrations, particularly those of last autumn (October, November, December) where for the first time since 1926, the period of the general strike, hundreds of thousands of workers came out into the streets and demonstrated. This militancy and radicalisation has reflected itself during the past ten months in the various economic struggles that have taken place (10,000 weavers in Great Harwood, 10,000 dockers in London and Liverpool, 3,000 London Lightermen, 10,000 Lucas workers, and the strike of the 3,000 Leicester hosiery workers) and in the present strike of the 200,000 Lancashire weavers and the whole series of other strikes this year. In England we can therefore see a fighting working class, and although radicalisation is proceeding unevenly, we see deep and fundamental changes taking place which only the more sharply emphasise the weaknesses of our Party, the serious lagging behind of our Party and our isolation from the masses, which is the warning note to the whole Party to improve its methods of work so that we can give that leadership for united action to this growing mass movement that can only come from the Communist Party.

What has been the policy of the reformists during this period? It is absolutely true to declare that the Labour Party stands to-day very largely discredited in the eyes of the British working class, but it is undoubtedly making every effort to make a come-back. It does this by the use of demagoguery, by bringing forward of programmes disguised as Socialism. For example, for the coming Labour Party Conference in October, a whole series of resolutions have been prepared dealing with finance, land, industry, trade, etc., and the essence of all these resolutions is that the Labour Party, given a Government with a majority, will reorganise the whole of the economic life of England; that by a series of corporations representing the employers, the consumers and the workers, it will be possible in this common family to be able to constructively begin in England the planning of industry and trade. This is Labour Socialism, but a careful examination of the Labour Party's policy on every one of the questions they are dealing with, reveals

the fact that, stripped of its phraseology, its line is an anti-working class line, a capitalist line.

How cunningly and skilfully these left manoeuvres are to deceive the masses is seen on the question of the Means Test. It is true to say that nothing is so hated as the Means Test. The Labour Party, when it was the Government, was the Government which introduced the Means Test, and it won the recent bye-elections in Wakefield and Wednesbury, both important industrial centres, simply on the ground that it was fighting the Means Test, when, in reality, it was the father of the whole scheme.

The Trade Union Congress opens in Newcastle on September 5th. The chief programme before the Congress of the General Council is a programme which is described as public control and regulation of industry and trade, and the General Council leaders of the Trade Union Congress have worked out a complete scheme whereby every industry can be brought under public control, with each of these industries being run on the lines of a public corporation, and they will then give a square deal to the workers, employers and trade unions. They define the goal of organised labour as the following: That it is to make industry a public service functioning in the interests of the whole community and organised on a model scientific line, with the aim of securing the maximum welfare for the people, and they are asking the delegates to reaffirm this policy.

The Trade Union Congress talks about fighting the Means Test. It also talks about the necessity of having shorter hours, the necessity of a forty-hour working week, but while it talks like this it is putting into operation the splitting of the unemployment movement.

Now just a word or two about the I.L.P. It would be wrong to underestimate the decision of the I.L.P. to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. It was on the initiative of the I.L.P. that the Labour Party was formed, and it represents a tremendous change in the traditional attitude that a decision should now be carried through that the Party which formed the Labour Party should leave the Labour Party. This decision was carried through at a recent conference in Bradford, there being 241 votes for disaffiliation and 142 against disaffiliation.

This disaffiliation takes place at a time, not when Labour is a Government, and when the results of its policy as a Government are so obvious to the workers; it takes place at a time when the Labour Party is in so-called opposition to the National Government, and so deep is the disillusionment of the masses with the policy of Labour as an opposition, that the I.L.P. as the so-called left wing within the ranks of the Labour

Party, now senses this feeling down below and it puts the question of leaving the Labour Party in order to become an independent political force.

In the ranks of the I.L.P. there has been a split since this policy was carried through, and one section of the I.L.P., called the loyal section, is to remain affiliated to the Labour Party and it is undoubtedly carrying on a big campaign.

It would be wrong to underestimate to the slightest extent the importance of this decision.

It is interesting to know how the conference in Bradford was organised—the conference to carry out the policy of disaffiliation. The first business of the conference was to pay a tribute to the memory of the Hungarian comrades executed; secondly, to send a tribute to the prisoners at Meerut; and thirdly, to pay tribute to the leaders of the C.P.S.U. for services rendered to world Socialism.

After these three items had been got through, then the ordinary business of the conference took place. At the conference a whole plan for Socialist Britain was brought forward. There is everything in that plan, except how the revolution shall be achieved, and the main thing of the plan is that everything is there, and everything can be achieved without a revolution. This is described as being the revolutionary Socialist policy for Britain.

But when it comes to the policy of the I.L.P. on economic struggles—for example, the present cotton strike—this is what the I.L.P. has to say: "The I.L.P. must continue to encourage resistance to wage-cuts and the tyranny of the employers, but must also point out to the cotton workers that they are doomed by capitalism, and a thorough-going to Socialism is the only hope of the workers."

There is in the I.L.P. a revolutionary policy group whose only line of action against war is to blow up the munition trains and ships lying in the docks. This is the kind of propaganda they have been bringing forward in London in speeches and articles, but the simple question of instructing their I.L.P. members who are members of trade unions to refuse to handle these munitions, to get a one-day strike or a ten-mniute protest strike has never been brought forward.

Just a few remarks in regard to the tasks of our Party in the united front movement. There are many dangers confronting the Party as far as carrying out the united front from below is concerned. The chief danger, of course, comes from the right, but despite this our biggest task is to wage relentless war on the sectarian elements in the Party. At the Plenum of our Central Committee, the following was stated regarding the united front:

"The supreme issue now confronting the workers is the struggle against imperialist war, the taking of the offensive against all war moves and the beating back of the starvation attack, which is part of the war offensive. Therefore, the urgent and imperative task before the Communist Party is the organisation of a broad united front of the working class and the mobilisation of all forces for a decisive advance of the entire Party."

This was contained in the June resolution of the Plenum of our C.O.

How is the Party to carry out that task? How is the Party to mobilise its forces to carry out what it declares to be the most urgent and imperative task before the Party?

First, to overcome the sectarian tendencies which prevent us from carrying out the united front work and activity; secondly, to take the initiative for developing the united front activity and action to effect our end; thirdly, to convince our entire Party that the united front is not a phrase and fetish but only a concrete way in which the workers can fight against the capitalist offensive and develop a mass movement; fourthly, we must make a determined effort to win the rank and file of the I.L.P., at the same time to avoid creating the impression that there are no fundamental differences between our Party and the I.L.P.

We must also explain why the C.P. cannot drop the right of criticism when engaged in united front work.

Finally, on this question comes the question of the popularity of our language. The sooner we begin to understand how to say what we want to say in ordinary language, the more effective will the whole line of our propaganda become.

Now some remarks about economic struggles, our work in the trade unions and the question of the fight against unemployment.

In 1931 our Party participated in many economic struggles and made many mistakes which led to a complete distortion of the line of independent strike leadership and organisation. Comrade Kuusinen referred to some of them, particularly the South Wales example, where a self-appointed committee of about twenty Communists called itself the Central Strike Committee of South Wales. However, as a result of the criticism of the Comintern and the R.I.L.U., decisive changes were made and these are now being put into effect. In our experience this year we are now trying to find a way to apply independent leadership that has a mass character to it. The experience of a whole series of struggles this year have brought out the necessity of the utmost flexibility being utilised in order to be able to

win every bit of contact in developing the strike leadership. Some interesting factors have come out of an analysis of the strike struggles which we must take into consideration in formulating the correct slogans of the fight. One of the most interesting things in England, so far as economic struggles and the resistance of the workers is concerned, is the fact that on some aspects of rationalisation, the fight is more bitter than when it is a fight against wage-cuts. For instance, the magnificent fight of the Lucas workers was the fight against the Bedaux System. The London busmen's resistance, which will probably take the form of a strike in the end of September, is not primarily against the threatened wage-cut. The new rationalisation scheme for the railwaymen, which in nine months will put 30 per cent. of them on the streets, is what the railwaymen are mainly fighting against, and this fact of relentless opposition to rationalisation is very important. And in Lancashire to-day, although the wage-cut is playing an important part in the fight, the central feature is the resistance of the workers to the More-Loom System because the weavers understand that it will put 50 per cent. of them on the streets.

And if we understand this, then in formulating our slogans, they must always take into account this factor.

I will not give all the figures in regard to the progress of the economic struggles in England during the last two or three years, but just a few examples: There were 250 strikes from January to July, involving 150,000 workers, and 905,000 working days lost. This is not taking into consideration the new situation in Lancashire, and strikes in London at present.

One or two remarks in regard to experience in a few economic struggles. The Lucas strike was incorrectly referred to by Comrade Kuusinen, the real mistake not being brought out; but he may have the wrong information.

What was our mistake in the Lucas situation. It was of a two-fold character. First, our comrades began to argue as to whether to form a new union or not, instead of concentrating all their resources on building an organisation within the factory, within each department, and linking this up with a factory committee; the second mistake, made by the C.C., was in not building up the M.M. and in not recruiting members to its ranks during the course of the strike, but rather concentrating on the question of building factory contacts and a committee.

The basic mistake was the mistake of getting discussions and arguments going as to whether a new union should be built or not, instead of the mobilisation of all our energy for the building

up of factory, department and union organisations that would have formed a real mass revolutionary trade union opposition in the Lucas factory.

Take another strike—the London Lightermen. We had not a single contact with these men when the strike began. The question was how to get this contact. Finally, comrades were selected to go down and try to get some idea of what the lightermen's conditions were, to get the story written up in the "Daily Worker," and then try to get the "Daily Worker" among the strikers. This was done and the "Daily Worker" was sent to the chairman of one of the lightermen's locals and this man, who had never had any use for the paper before, took it to a meeting of 500 strikers, read the story to them and the strikers said: "That is the only paper which has told the truth about our fight." That gave us our first break. As a result of the interest aroused by that first story, we were then able to build up a big influence, and in two of the most important branches a special meeting was organised at which twenty lightermen joined our Party. In one of those branches we still have a big influence. But the important thing was the rôle that the "Daily Worker" began to play among a number of workers who had never heard of the paper before.

Now with regard to the strike of the Lancashire weavers. Our Party is very weak in the textile areas. This year some special concentration has been made on Burnley, which we looked upon as being the storm centre of any struggle which would take place in Lancashire. Some weeks ago we had nine Party members and eleven workers who were sympathetic to the Party in this town. Concentration had been made on the decisive mill, but we had not succeeded in getting new members into the Party from that factory. We did succeed, however, in widening the influence of the Party in that factory. However, eighteen weeks ago in a little place called Earby, the employers demanded another cut of 7½ per cent. Some 400 workers came out on strike. Our comrades went into that village and were received with definite hostility. Our comrades were told: "We want no Communist agitators here. The strike is being run by the union and it can be won by the union." After seven weeks, our comrades had so continued the struggle that they not only broke down all hostility against them, but were able to call out five other mills in this place. We succeeded in getting meetings of the strikers in each of these mills and in electing a rank and file strike committee from each one of the five mills in Earby. The strikers then asked for the use of the Weavers' Institute for a rank

and file strike meeting; the union officials said they could not have it; the comrades organised a march of all the strikers who forcibly took possession of the Weavers' Institute, and had it ever since. It was a little strike, but it was the first spark which set into a flame in Lancashire, where 200,000 workers are out at present for five weeks.

I will give another example. In Burnley the employers posted a notice of reduced wages; the union called a strike with the belief that the workers would not respond. Twenty per cent. of the workers there are unemployed; the Means Test has wrought havoc in every home there, and the union leaders thought that if there was no response, it would give them an excuse and mandate to sign a wage-cut agreement with the employers, with whom they were already negotiating. To their astonishment, and to the astonishment of the Party, every weaver in Burnley came out on strike, and in doing this, we can say that the decisive factor was undoubtedly played by the Party in organising, on the day before the strike, a meeting at which 5,000 Burnley weavers participated.

At this meeting the line was given as follows: the union leaders are calling you on strike; they do not believe that you will strike; we call upon all the weavers to strike in the mills and to mass-picket these mills. The next morning the comrades went on the picket lines, and one of the most important results was that all struck work, and these strikers approached our women comrades who were working in the mills and asked: which mills shall we go to picket? And for two days, under the leadership of our comrades, under the leadership of our Party—this is an undoubted fact—every mill in Burnley was picketed until every mill stopped.

This complete stoppage immediately brought a new situation throughout the whole Lancashire textile industry, and in every other textile town talk began to be heard of all being out together.

Subsequently a strike was called on August 27th and 200,000 of the weavers in Lancashire are now out on strike. By the end of this week scores of spinning mills will have to close down and that will make 100,000 spinners. In another three weeks 200,000 spinners are due for a wage-cut. If the spinners will now join the ranks of the weavers, that will be a power that nothing in Lancashire can defeat, and the job of the Party and the revolutionary opposition is to bring forward this slogan in the sharpest and most convincing manner possible in order to bring about such a position.

As the strike develops there is, of course, the danger of government intervention. We must be on our guard against this. We must utilise

all our influence in the union committees and particularly developing independent strike meetings and getting from these meetings provisional organisations that can lead to effective committees of action which in turn can lead to an all-Lancashire Conference of elected strikers from the meetings of the strikers themselves to appoint an authoritative independent strike leadership which is really representative of all the strikers. The Lancashire strike is one of the most important strikes which have taken place in England, the consequences of which will be felt throughout the entire country. Our small Party was able to collect £350 for the Lancashire strikers in the first three weeks. In one week it has also collected seven tons of foodstuffs from the workers in London and sent three motor lorries from London to Lancashire. This is arousing great enthusiasm from the workers along the whole lines of route from London to Lancashire.

Now I want to speak on some of the lessons which have resulted from these struggles.

First, we must continue to make war on the conception that independent leadership and united front activities can be separated, and make it clear that the independent leadership and activities we speak of is not the leadership and activities of a handful of Communists, but is the independent leadership and activities of the masses and not of a few Communists or supporters of the Minority Movement. And when once that conception can be got across to the entire Party and the M.M., then the whole line of methods of approach will undergo a whole change.

I want to bring forward a controversial point. I bring it forward, not to counterpose it in any way to work in the factories or to the objective we all have—the election of representative strike committees as a result of meetings in factories or mills—but I bring it for consideration out of the strike experiences. This point is the line of approach on the question of strike strategy.

What are the chief lessons of the boilermakers' strikes of 17 weeks, of the lightermen's strike of 7 weeks, of the miners' strike in South Wales, of the response of the London busmen; and what is the chief reason for the tremendous strike movement in Lancashire? In my opinion it is the under-estimation by our Party of the authority and importance of the trade union branches and the decisive rôle these trade union branches play in struggles.

If we have in Lancashire at present, as a result of activity in the mills and unions, on 4 of the 36 union committees, Communists or members of the revolutionary trade union opposition, we would be able to write a different story so far as that strike is concerned at present.

In South Wales there is the mining village, and the centre is the lodge. We talk to the miners in the pit. This is absolutely correct, and we must increase our work to get pit committees—the most cardinal principle must be factory organisation, but we must not be blinded to the fact that, while doing that, that miner with whom we are discussing the question of wages will say: What is the Lodge Committee going to do; and what is the Lodge Committee going to say? And unless we make a sharp turn in understanding the trade union branches and how to use them, we are going to neglect one of the most important methods to use, so far as carrying out strike activity is concerned.

I therefore hope that this question will be given the attention which it requires.

Now with regard to the question of work in the reformist unions. I would like to strongly support the thesis which gives added emphasis to this question and also the speeches of Comrades Kuusinen and Thaelmann where they dealt with it. Again I want to make it clear that I do not stress the decisive importance of this work in England from a trade union standpoint or from a viewpoint of being opposed to work in the factories, but from the experiences of life itself, because we hold the view that there can be no successful mass work in the factories independent of the mass work in the trade unions and vice versa.

Our policy must be to make the workers convinced that we want to make their union branches and committees powerful weapons in their fight when once they take them into their own hands. Wrong formulations on this question of the trade union movement which have given the impression that we are out to smash and disrupt the trade union movement have placed weapons in the hands of the Amsterdammers. Our task is to win the masses of the trade union members and speculations as to whether we can win the whole union or the branch only conceals the refusal to work in the reformist trade unions and prevents any work from being carried out in these unions. Objectively, this sort of speculation is merely capitulation to the trade union bureaucracy. We must realise that there are tens of thousands of workers in England and other countries who though not yet ready to join the Communist Party are ready to work and help carry out the policy of the revolutionary trade union opposition. And those workers have to be organised; they must be developed and made the basis of a mass revolutionary trade union opposition.

Regarding the question of work in the trade unions. We endeavoured to make an improve-

ment of work in this connection, and this is seen in the fact that in the last months we have been able to get 19 of our leading comrades in the engineers' union, who were expelled, reinstated, and a leading comrade in the Stevedores' Union reinstated and on the Executive Committee of that Union. Other examples of our trade union work can be seen in the fact that since January to the end of July of this year, 57 trade union branches passed resolutions and sent them to the "Daily Worker," protesting against the action of the Japanese in Shanghai, and this means that scores of others must have passed them and did not notify the papers; that 19 branches of the Engineers' Union protested against the attack on the Soviet Union made in their journal; it is seen in the fact that a delegation of 71 was sent to Amsterdam, principally trade unionists; and it is seen in the attendance of trade union branches now taking place in the united front trade union conference.

What are the weak sides? At the Newcastle Congress, opening on September 5th, out of 700 delegates, we have got only 4; at the recent miners' conference, we had 1 delegate; at the recent conference of railwaymen we had only 1; and it lies in the fact that in Lancashire we have not a single member on one union committee throughout the whole of the textile centre; it is seen in the fact too that in January of this year, when the question of work in the reformist unions was discussed, out of 81 of the leading comrades present, when they were asked how many were active in the trade unions, only 13 could show they were active, and if that is the situation on the top, we can have a good idea what it is like below, but figures indicate an improvement this year so far as work in the unions is concerned.

One or two words in connection with the revolutionary trade union opposition. Many sharp criticisms which are absolutely justified can be levelled at our Party for its neglect in developing the mass revolutionary trade union opposition, but what do we find in this respect? We find as a result of experiences that we cannot develop the Minority Movement in a strait jacket. Just one or two facts to prove this. In South Wales we have an unofficial union of the tinplate workers. This movement has the support of 62 branches and runs a monthly paper called the "Workers' Voice." In the engineers we have another unofficial movement which is known as the Members' Rights Movement. This movement has succeeded in getting our comrades reinstated. It is supported by 120 trade union branches and 4 area councils of the A.E.U. It also publishes a monthly paper called the "Monkey Wrench," which has a circulation of over

5,000. Among the London dockers, for the first time, we have established a London port workers' unity movement which is now rapidly developing. This movement publishes two monthly papers with a circulation of 900. With the busmen, the whole of the line that has been carried out, has been carried out by the busmen's militant groups and they have the support of 27 of the most important garages. 4,500 copies of the last issue of their paper were sold in 3 days in the garages and trade union branches. Among the printing workers militant groups have been established. This movement also has a monthly paper with a circulation of 3,000.

The lesson that we can see is that these movements are developing according to the concrete circumstances which face these particular types of workers in the respective industries, and, secondly, that the call of unity as expressed in so many of these names is bringing many sections of workers which have hitherto been outside our ranks nearer to us and the job now is to have the perspective for continuing the campaign to consolidate them wherever possible on a district and national basis. And we ought to be able to find some name which will be more suitable and applicable to English conditions.

One or two words on the fight against unemployment. Comrade Thaelmann said that in Germany the Prague resolution had practically been a dead letter. This is true also in Britain. In Britain we have an unemployed organisation with 386 branches and a dues paying membership of 50,000, but we have not yet been able to convince our comrades in this organisation, with all its possibilities, that it must become the fighting core for the carrying out of broad mass activities against unemployment and the development of broad unemployed councils. The thing which has held the unemployed organisation back from doing this is the fear that it will be liquidated. On the contrary, I contend that if the N.U.W.M. could have taken the initiative for the drive forward in carrying out the Prague resolution, it would have become a more powerful organisation than heretofore.

What is the weakest part of the fight against unemployment in Britain? It is the fact that, although we have the unemployed organisation of 50,000 paying members, it is largely an organisation of unemployed workers who have been unemployed for many years, and we have failed to draw into the organisation these hundreds of thousands of skilled and semi-skilled workers who have close ties with the trade union branches, who have been unemployed, for the first time in their lives, and are outside the influence and scope of our organisation.

The lessons of last autumn must be learned when demonstrations at which unemployed and employed workers participated took place we did not draw them in—but we still have good connections with workers inside the factories. This means we lost tremendous opportunities for making a fight against unemployment, not only a fight of the unemployed, but a fight of the whole working class movement, and particularly a fight of the trade union movement and a presentation of demands for the finding of work. Not only this aspect but every other gives the Party opportunities for bringing out its whole revolutionary lines.

One last point. I do not propose to speak in regard to the anti-war campaign because one of the other comrades will give a separate report on this on the special item on the agenda dealing with it, but I want only to say that, whilst the Party made many big improvements in the anti-war work, we did not succeed in stopping a single ship or munition train, nor did we succeed in getting one short protest strike.

The resolution of our C.C. Plenum in January gave the line for the Party's work in the immediate future for the strengthening of the mass movement of resistance and the overcoming of the Party isolation from the masses. The most important questions dealt with were the following :

First, the methods and tasks of carrying out revolutionary mass work.

Secondly, the necessity of combining our revolutionary political line and leadership with tireless detailed work in the factories, unions and exchanges, in relation to the concrete situation and issues.

Thirdly, from this work to develop a revolutionary mass organisation that would have its permanent expression in the Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition.

Fourthly, as the red thread running through all this work, to build up the Party through continuous recruiting and the building up of the circulation of the "Daily Worker."

Four districts were chosen for concentration so as to carry out this resolution—London, South Wales, Lancashire and Glasgow. Further, every leading member of the Party was instructed to be attached to some factory cell and to some local Party organisation and the whole of this work was to be checked up and controlled by the District Committees and the Pol-Bureau. It is now possible to give an estimation of what has been done in the six months concentration period.

First, we can say that there has been a marked improvement in nearly every phase of the Party's work. Secondly, there has been better prepar-

ation and participation in local struggles and particularly in economic struggles. Thirdly, that the Anti-War Campaign and the winning of trade union support represents active achievement in that direction. Fourthly, definite results in increased influence in some factories and in some unions.

These results, comrades, are only small but they point the way for the whole Party and in this respect I would like to give particular experiences from these districts which show the work of this concentration. First, I want to take a miners' village in South Wales. Here we had a Party cell of four members. This cell had very little influence in the pit in the village but after the discussion of the resolution, the cell began to apply the line of that resolution to its work. It took up a number of questions in that particular pit and analysed them. It formulated demands. It took up questions which we had formerly considered beneath us. For instance, questions in regard to timber and another question in regard to piece work. It wrote all this up in an article which was published in the "Daily Worker" which was afterwards distributed among the miners in the pit. As a result of this first step the management was compelled to rectify grievances which had been outstanding for some considerable time. As a result of this concrete activity, two new members were recruited to the cell. The cell asked the "Daily Worker" to give them a whole page in the "Daily Worker" stating that they would supply the material for it if we would publish it. The "Daily" said that it would. 36 dozen copies of the issue which had this special page were sold. Our pit cell has now increased to 11 and we have bigger influence in this pit than we have had since the formation of the Party as far as this area is concerned.

Secondly, an example from Glasgow. We had no contact whatever among the Glasgow dockers in December. In fact definite hostility to our Party expressed itself. After discussion a new approach was made. The comrades were able to find out one or two grievances of the dockers in this particular place. Use was made of a letter sent by one of the dockers from Odessa. This was printed in thousands of copies. It caused a lot of excitement. At a special meeting of the dockers we had made some contact for the first time and recruited one or two members into our Party. As a result of that first meeting of 1,000 the dockers were not only able to take up some of the grievances on the Clyde, but they also elected a delegate to come to the U.S.S.R. This cell now issues a dock paper.

A further example from London, from a railway depot cell. This railway depot, where we

had a Party cell of 14, is very important for the transport of munitions. Within the last three months we succeeded in recruiting three new members. The cell had been able to take up a number of simple questions which a year ago every comrade in that cell would have felt were beneath his notice.

For instance, a broken window in a dining-room—an insignificant thing—still we took the question up. The matter was put right, and that led to other questions.

A comrade elected to a railway depot committee was able to utilise this to get grievances settled; a comrade running for a position got 405 votes, an increase of 100, the highest vote recorded in that depot; our factory paper started with a circulation of 200 but has increased in the last two months by 200; we were able to get a delegate to Amsterdam Congress and collected all expenses to send the delegate, and now we have a very big influence in one of the most important railway branches attached to that depot through which passes munitions from one of the biggest munition dumps ready for transmission abroad.

Perhaps to some Parties represented here this is insignificant, but to our Party they represent great improvements, and we must convince the Party that this can be done throughout the whole country providing the whole membership can be mobilised.

What are our weaknesses in the last six months? First, the Party has not increased its membership, but, on the contrary, it has failed to retain all the new members recruited at mass meetings. Out of this question has emerged an interesting point — where recruits have been gained from factory cells, we have not lost one member, but where recruited from big mass meetings, through insufficient attention to them, through a light-hearted attitude on their part in joining the Party, we have not been able to retain a large number that joined; thirdly, while the Party work in the economic struggles improved, we have not been able to build up the revolutionary trade union opposition.

The circulation of the Party paper has been static. These weaknesses represent a warning signal to the whole Party to orientate itself at the earliest possible moment. The reasons for this weakness are: only 25 per cent. of the Party members are actively carrying out the resolution: the majority remain in the old sectarian rut. There is the most urgent need for convincing the whole Party of the importance of taking up these concrete demands — what we call in England "small issues," and in taking them up, we must understand how to combine them with our revo-

lutionary line of propaganda, with the presentation of the revolutionary way out of the crisis. The whole Party does not yet understand this question of concrete daily work. This work alone is not going to advance the Party if it has with it no mass contact, no mass character, and we in the Party who are in contact with the masses know this.

This, roughly, is the outline of the January resolution, its achievements and reasons for our shortcomings.

Upon the next tasks of the Party. These are now the fight against imperialist war and armed intervention against the Soviet Union. Second, the fight against the National Government, intensified offensive, economic campaign, unemployed work, fight against the Means Test, social service cuts, and against repression in the colonies, and especially India and Ireland, and in connection with these countries, our Party has seriously lagged behind the requirements and the demands of the situation, because in England, so far as Ireland is concerned, in every important industrial centre there are tens of thousands of Irish workers whom we can win in the great imperialist fight against what is taking place in Ireland so far as the National Government is concerned at the present time.

The third task is the fight against the offensive of the employers as expressed in the attack against the textile workers, the bus and tube workers, the miners and the railwaymen.

Fourth, the urgent need for the development of a broad united front of the working class against hunger and war.

Fifthly, the development of revolutionary trade union opposition in the factories and unions

And sixthly, to use the same phrase again, the red stream that runs through the whole of these tasks is the recruiting for the Party in the cells and in the local unions, and the building up and

strengthening of the Party and the "Daily Worker."

Finally, comrades, in looking back over the progress of our Party since the XI Plenum we can state that the Party has made some progress, that with the help of the International we are breaking through the isolation which has for so long characterised the Communist Party of Great Britain. We are making the first beginnings of the turn. Why do we say this? Is it because we are in a self-satisfied mood? Of course not. We say it only to emphasise the possibilities which confront our Party if only these small beginnings can be taken up by the whole membership to show what the whole Party can do. Why must we speed up this work? Because during the next three months we are going to see in England the biggest attacks that have ever taken place. We are convinced that there will be the biggest mass movement than has ever occurred in the British working class movement. We must concentrate our efforts to win the leadership of this movement and avoid the mistakes which were proven by the bitter experiences of last autumn when we had the mass movement under our influence but were not able to lead it and to keep it. By profiting from these experiences, understanding the deadly urgency of the fight against hunger and war, our Party is pledging itself at the XII Plenum to carry out its heavy and responsible tasks with redoubled energy and to see that the line of the E.C.C.I. is carried out. We must profit by the mistakes and criticism of our Party which were revealed to us last December and I want to say while these are only first beginnings, they are beginnings of a permanent character and will give the International a guarantee and assurance that the Communist Party of Great Britain understands how to fulfil its duties in this hour of emergency.

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