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341

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## THE LABOUR SITUATION.

Report from the Ministry of Labour for the week ending 30th July, 1919.

### SUMMARY.

*Part I : Some Points in the Winnipeg and Other Recent Strikes.*

*Part II : Demobilisation and Resettlement : The Progress of Resettlement.*

*Part III : Press Comments :*

(1) *Labour and Socialist Press : (A) Imperial and Foreign Affairs : Treaty of Peace Bill ; General Smuts ; Russia ; India ; Canada ; Other. (B) Home Affairs : The Industrial Outlook ; Coal Industry ; Other.*

(2) *The Press on Demobilisation and Resettlement : Unemployment among Ex-Soldiers.*

*Part IV : General Topics and District Reports.*

(1) *General : National Industrial Council ; Nationalisation and Coal Situation ; "Direct Action" ; Building Trade ; Railwaymen ; Engineering ; Engineering and Ship-building ; Baking ; Agriculture ; Police ; Ex-Service Men ; Disabled Men ; Printing Trade Conference ; Peace Treaty ; Income Tax ; Housing ; Amalgamation, etc. ; Trade Union Topics ; Withdrawals from War Loan ; Court of Arbitration ; Joint Industrial Councils ; Trade Boards.*

(2) *District Reports.*

*Part V : Disputes.*

(a) *Involving a Stoppage of Work.*

(b) *Not Involving a Stoppage of Work.*

### PART I.—SOME POINTS IN THE WINNIPEG AND OTHER RECENT STRIKES.

Fairly complete information is now available as to the events connected with the recent Winnipeg disturbances, and certain points of general significance emerge which are worth comment. The strike at Winnipeg began in the metal and building trades, where demands were made for better industrial conditions, coupled with a claim that negotiation should proceed by way of collective bargaining. The precise form in which this claim was originally made is obscure, but early in May the position of the local Metal Trades Council as a party to collective bargaining became a vital issue. The employers maintained that it was elected in co-operation with crafts which were not employed in the works where the dispute originated, and on this ground refused to deal with it. From this point unrest rapidly developed, and on the 15th May a general strike involving immediately some 25,000 trade unionists was declared. The labour affected comprised many industries and a large proportion of the Government and public utility services. The metal and building trades, book-keepers and stenographers, elevator attendants, cooks, waiters, bakers, labour concerned with delivery of foodstuffs, press stereotypers and machine hands, railway and commercial telegraphists came out. The postal services

and a proportion of firemen, gas and waterworks employees were similarly affected. The railwaymen on the whole preserved a detached attitude throughout the strike. The police voted sympathetic action, but were ordered to remain on duty by the Strike Committee. This Committee assumed and exercised control for apparently a week, providing restaurants for strikers and soldiers, delivery of necessities to hospitals, suspending the press with the exception of their own organ, and allowing the sale and delivery of provisions under cover of notices that this was done "by permission of the Strike Committee." Industrially the Committee adopted the One Big Union policy, for which its personnel had previously been propagandists, and demanded that every claim of every union should be satisfied before the strike was called off.

The situation was met by the formation of Citizen Committees to co-operate with the civic authorities in maintaining order and the continuation of public utility services. Military preparations were also made in case intervention of this kind were called for. The attitude of ex-soldiers' organisations was on the whole to co-operate in preservation of order, without prejudice to the Labour side of the dispute, though a considerable section were in sympathy with the industrial demands of the workers. The policy of the Dominion Government was to preserve order, to insist that Civil Service employees should not join the strike, and to attempt to conciliate the parties to the original dispute.

The events in Winnipeg are narrated as illustrating general tendencies. Similar sympathetic and industrial movements occurred in other parts of Canada, such as Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary and Edmonton, in varying degrees, but comparison may be more fruitfully made over a wider field, including the strikes at Seattle (Washington, U.S.A.) and Belfast in January and February of the present year, and the more recent disturbances in the Italian towns.

#### (1) *General Causes.*

The first point of general interest in the Winnipeg strikes is that the economic and other conditions which made for instability are not confined to Canada. The predisposing causes to unrest there were reported to be unemployment, the high cost of living, the impotence of the Government to check profiteering, and the fact that the prohibition law is circumvented by those who can pay the price for the prohibited article. The economic factors are all present in this country, and the disrespect for law, though not introduced by avoidance of prohibition, may be said to have its counterpart, rightly or wrongly, in the avoidance of other restrictions which it is alleged can be compassed by those who have the means, and in the effect upon the mind of Labour of the immunity believed to have been wrongly granted to certain political activities of recent times. In the Italian cities profiteering was more avowedly aimed at by the disturbance which occurred independently of any industrial dispute. On the other hand a potent factor in Canada has hitherto not acquired much influence in this country, viz., the One Big Union propaganda of the I.W.W. element. The strikers received considerable financial support from extreme organisations in the United States, and it was alleged that the latter derived their funds from Bolshevistic sources. Moreover, "Red" Kennedy, a well-known I.W.W. leader, came from Seattle to lead the strike when it was at its height, and it is noteworthy that of the Strike Committee four were Russians.

The strength of the foreign element no doubt intensifies the forces of unrest both in Canada and in the United States. But it would be rash to say that the One Big Union idea has no footing in this country. Certain social theorists have been urging this policy for a long time, and Mr. Cole has returned to the charge in a series of articles appearing recently in the "Herald." Amalgamation proceeds apace; direct action has reached the stage of a ballot; and the left wing of the shop steward movement during the war is not extinct. Any localised strike involving the branches of many trade unions naturally leads to co-operation upon a strike committee, providing a step towards the One Big Union which the advocates of this policy may use to further their objects.

#### (2) *Public Utility Services.*

This leads to the consideration of the next point of general importance emerging, namely the position of the public utility services in movements of this kind. In any strike of large dimensions the strikers are now coming to realise the necessity of providing themselves and the public at large with certain essential services, involving the supply of foodstuffs and the maintenance of order. The first step towards this is the appointment of a strike committee. In Winnipeg this Committee ordered the police to remain on duty,

after a vote had resulted favourably for a strike, and certain essential trades to be operated "by permission of the Strike Committee." In Seattle elaborate provisions were made for hospital supplies, protection against fire, delivery of milk to babies, city sanitation and kindred matters. In both towns the issue was seized by the civic authorities, as involving wider consideration than the public convenience or a temporary breach of discipline amongst civil servants. Someone has to be responsible for maintaining order and continuance of essential services, and if this responsibility is left to the strike committee the bridge is provided by which a new form of Government, Soviet or other, may pass to power. In the present attitude of vague sympathy towards Russia in the labour world, this is not without importance. In Winnipeg the Mayor dismissed the police and reinstated them only upon the guarantee noted above, and Citizen Leagues sprang into being to carry on essential services. In Seattle, the Mayor proclaimed that everyone exercising Governmental functions would be shot at sight, and later notified the strikers that unless the sympathetic strike were called off he would take steps to operate essential services, and if necessary place the town under control of the Federal Government. The strikes in Belfast early in the present year illustrate the same tendency. The Strike Committee, which was really a federation of the branches of the 22 unions involved, controlled the city for over a fortnight, gas and electricity providing the keys to power. The case is more significant in that in this case power was not aimed at, but was thrust upon the strike committee by the logic of events, coupled with a somewhat colourless policy on the part of the civic authorities. It was reported in the Press that these authorities held conferences with the strikers upon the distribution of electrical power for hospital and bakery use; and that the local Commissioner of Police requested co-operation of the Committee in keeping order; and the Postmaster is stated to have sent cordial thanks for a supply of electricity to enable him to carry on the service, his acknowledgment being printed in the strike bulletin issued from a commandeered press in the city. In the Italian towns the origin of the movements lay in public indignation at profiteering, but the result has in many cases been similar. The failure to check high prices on the part of the Government led to a popular movement against the retailers, and the Trade Councils (*Camera di Lavoro*) have commonly stepped in to organise supplies at lowered cost. The transition of power to unconstitutional socialist leagues seems to have operated most strongly in Romagna and Emilia, where the control of food developed into a general substitution of committee for municipal power. In Florence apparently the council of workers organised their own police. In this city the more powerful interests appear to have diverted popular passion against the retailers, and then against the Trade Councils (*Camera di Lavoro*), so that the latter became champions of order against disturbances thrown up as a screen by powerful speculative interests. The chief comment upon the Italian movement is that popular indignation against profiteering may lead to similar political results as a general sympathetic industrial strike. Should both combine, each reinforces the tendency towards the other.

### (3) "Collective Bargaining."

Finally the issue of collective bargaining raised in the Winnipeg strike calls for a short comment. In Great Britain this term refers mainly to the making of collective agreements between associations of employers and workpeople. In America, however, much more stress is laid upon bargaining between an employer and the shop committee, and in consequence a number of types of collective bargaining of this kind have been isolated and standardised in a manner not paralleled in this country, *e.g.*, bargaining with a shop committee representing union and non-union labour; with a committee representing union labour alone; with employees in the shop who are officials of outside unions; with officials of unions not employees in the shops; with representatives of federations including crafts not represented in the shop; and so on. As a result, the issues involved in these various stages of recognition are live issues in American and Canadian industrial politics. Here we have the explanation of what appeared peculiar to many people in the Winnipeg strike, namely that much emphasis was laid on the question of the "definition" of collective bargaining. An examination of the awards of the American War Labour Board will illustrate the same point. This Board refers in certain of its awards to the distinctions noted above, or even to finer distinctions—as where a shop committee was recognised in every way, but a deadlock occurred because the members of the committee would not make the purely formal declaration that they did not represent their union as such. Now difficulties of this nature are of interest in this country, since "the shop as the unit" is a principle much in vogue at the present time, and the issue in the metal trades strike in Winnipeg was in fact raised in the shop steward movement during the war.

The shop committee here, it is worth noting, is the focussing point of two diametrically opposed policies, viz., the One Big Union policy and the Joint Industrial Council policy. It was through the capture of the works committee movement that revolutionaries like W. F. Watson aimed at ultimate revolutionary power during the war, and others, Murphy for instance, only differed from him in substituting organisation for hasty action. On the other hand the shop committee may prove the foundation for amicable working between management and labour. It is a unit with a consciousness of its own, and the attitude it develops may depend upon the handling of larger issues such as profiteering, which are potent causes of unrest. But whichever tendency gets the upper hand the issues prominent in the Winnipeg case illustrate the difficulties which the adoption of the shop as the unit may produce in an industrial society not planned from the beginning along these lines.

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## PART II.—DEMobilISATION AND RESETTLEMENT.

### *The Progress of Resettlement.*

A brief survey of the field of unemployment may serve to indicate the success which has hitherto attended the Government's policy as regards the stimulation of normal industry. During the last two months of 1918, and the earlier months of 1919, under the influence of large discharges of munition and other war workers, and the return of even larger numbers from the Forces, unemployment showed a steady and heavy increase. The turning point came early in May, and since that date the ebb of unemployment has been continuous. Some measure of this ebb is given by the number of recipients of out-of-work donation. On the 2nd May the figure stood very nearly at 1,100,000, including workers on part time. On the 11th July the number of policies lodged for whole-time workers was 565,000, and for part-time workers about 45,000, making a total of 610,000. The fall in the number of recipients during this period amounted therefore to nearly 44 per cent. Safeguards which were not practicable when the scheme was instituted were subsequently established, and these might be considered to detract somewhat from the value of a comparison between the earlier and later figures. But the live registers of the Exchanges, while showing slightly higher figures than those just given, have followed a fairly parallel path of decline. On the 2nd May the total on the live register was a little over 1,178,000. On the 11th July it had fallen to a little over 710,000, a decline of nearly 40 per cent.

There are, however, some indications that the rate of decline in unemployment is now slackening. Throughout the month of May the weekly reduction in the number of out-of-work donation policies lodged at the exchanges was about 8 per cent. Throughout June the weekly figure was more in the neighbourhood of 6·5 per cent., while for the weeks ending the 4th July, the 11th July, and the 18th July the reduction has been 4·5 per cent., 2·3 per cent. and 2·6 per cent. respectively. Recent reports from almost all centres lay stress upon the apprehensions of manufacturers and commercial men as to the effect on industry of the recent rise in the price of coal, and it is possible that the statistics of unemployment may in the future reflect the realisation of these fears.

The decline in unemployment among former members of the Forces has not been so marked as among civilian workers; and it may be noted in passing that this is especially the case among those released since the alteration in the system of demobilisation whereby consideration was given rather to length of service and age than to purely industrial claims. On the 11th July there were in receipt of out-of-work donation, roughly speaking, two former members of the Forces for every civilian worker. While the number of civilian men in receipt of the donation declined from 190,000 on the 9th May to about 96,500 on the 11th July—a decrease of 49 per cent.—the number of men from His Majesty's Forces receiving the donation declined only from 408,000 to 363,000, a decrease of only 11 per cent. The number of women civilian workers in receipt of donation diminished between the same dates from over 366,000 to a little over 91,000, but the number of women from the Forces receiving the donation increased from about 1,450 to 2,200. An examination of the number of policies lodged by workers in the insured industries on the 20th June showed that over 53 per cent. were lodged by members of H.M. Forces, the highest proportion being 59 per cent. in shipbuilding. In the uninsured industries the proportion was even higher, over 61 per cent. of the out-of-work donation policies

lodged being from members of H.M. Forces. In agricultural occupations the proportion stood at nearly 89 per cent., and in the conveyance of men, goods and messages at nearly 83 per cent.

The total amount of unemployment among members of the Forces cannot be considered high when it is remembered that very nearly three million, exclusive of commissioned officers, have been demobilised since the Armistice. The reabsorption of these workers since May has shown a steady though small improvement, the proportion reabsorbed being given at 87 per cent. on the 4th. July, which figure is considered to be almost certainly an understatement. The details just given of unemployment among ex-Service men are, however, sufficient to show that the problem still remains serious.

As regards officers, the position is not very different. Approximately 140,000 have been demobilised. The only official test as to unemployment, or the need of help in re-settlement, which can be recognised is provided by the record of applications made for appointments to the Appointments Department, or for grants under the Maintenance and Training Grants Scheme to the several departments co-operating in its application. Approximately 15,000 ex-Service candidates, of whom a substantial proportion were not commissioned officers, are registered on the books of the Appointments Department seeking situations. The number of applications under the Maintenance and Training Grants Scheme is about 50,000. While a number of the applicants for training would no doubt find it possible to reinstate themselves in civil life without assistance (and many will no doubt be called upon to do so as being unsuitable for the training which the Government offers), they can hardly at this stage be excluded from the estimate of those whose resettlement has not been completed.

The problem, therefore, even as regards the able-bodied, is tending to become concerned rather more with the ex-Service men than with the civilian worker. The question of the disabled men now under consideration obviously emphasises this prominence of the ex-Service man in the general question of employment.

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### PART III.—PRESS COMMENTS.

#### (1) *Labour and Socialist Press.*

##### (A) *Imperial and Foreign Affairs.*

#### *Treaty of Peace Bill.*

The debates on this Bill in the House of Commons on Monday, the 21st July, are dealt with by the "Labour Leader" in a leading article. This paper is keenly disappointed with the conduct of the Parliamentary Labour Party. It had expected some effective protest by the Labour members which would have expressed the disappointment which, in the opinion of the "Labour Leader," is felt by the people because of the way in which the aims for which they have given their lives and efforts have been betrayed. The protest of the Southport Conference against the terms of the Treaty is contrasted with Mr. Clynes' "eulogy of the framers of the Treaty," and it is argued that it will be in vain for the Labour Party ever again to protest against Conscription, "because it has given its support to a Treaty which will need permanent Conscription to enforce it." The article continues: "The British Labour Party by its support of the Government during the war was more responsible for the sacrifice of life and wealth than any other party in the State. By its support of the Treaty it has made itself mainly responsible for the next and many succeeding wars." The "Labour Leader" wonders whether to attribute this action of the Parliamentary Labour Party to cowardice, weakness, ignorance or deliberate desire; but, whatever the explanation may be, it thinks it obvious that the Party is a positive mischief as an instrument of either national or international reconstruction. The article concludes that, as at present constituted, the Party is unworthy of democratic support and that the Labour movement must repudiate its Parliamentary representatives, or else it will share their annihilation. Mr. Philip Snowden, in the same paper, complains that the few hours allotted by the Government to the discussion of the Treaty, which he contrasts with the detailed consideration of it in France and America, more than satisfied the House of Commons. With reference to the conduct of the Parliamentary Labour Party, he agrees with the verdict of the leading article on the matter: "the Parliamentary Labour Party has sealed its doom, and has fittingly closed its career of five years' support of militarism, imperialism and capitalism." The disappointment of the "Labour Leader"

is shared by the "Nation," which describes Mr. Clynes' reservations as "perfunctory." The "Leeds Weekly Citizen," speaking in the name of local Labour parties, is equally despondent. This paper is under the impression that only four votes were recorded against this Bill on its third reading in the House of Commons, whereas, in fact, seven votes were so recorded; but it balances this error by appearing to assume that these votes were those of Labour members, whereas this is true of only two of them. Both Mr. Snowden and the "Nation" refer favourably to Lord Robert Cecil's speech.

### *General Smuts.*

The farewell statement which General Smuts has issued on leaving England for South Africa, receives more notice than did his first statement issued on the day of the signature of the Treaty of Peace. "Rob Roy," in "Forward," records his opinion that "General Smuts is one of the few statesmen of first rank who have come out of the five year's test (of the war) with an enhanced reputation." He agrees with General Smuts' view of the meaning and significance of the war and his confidence that the verdict of the war has been on the right side and, indeed, summarizes and approves of the whole statement. Mr. Philip Snowden, in the "Labour Leader," deals with this statement more fairly than he did with the former one.\* He disagrees, however, with General Smuts' belief that "the fundamental significance of the war has been the victory of the spirit, of the moral over the material factors of life," and maintains that it is because these great ideals and principles have not triumphed that the appeal of General Smuts is necessary. The "New Statesman" quotes the passage on Russia from the statement and expresses the opinion that they are the wisest words that any public man of standing in the Allied Countries has yet uttered concerning the problem of Russia. The "British Citizen" pays a tribute both to General Smuts and to General Botha, and thinks that the former "has surpassed himself in the lofty note of his farewell message." The passage from the statement which the "British Citizen" quotes in support of its opinion is that about the "fundamental significance of the war" with which "Rob Roy" agrees, but not Mr. Philip Snowden. The judgment of the "Nation" is: "it is about the only appeal to the spirituality of our people that has been made by any of their leaders since the materialism of the war got hold of them."

### *Russia.*

The discussion of the Russian problem continues. "A military correspondent" deals, in "The Call," with the history of the anti-Bolshevist campaigns this year and asks, "Is it too early to speak of the victory of Soviet Russia over its external and internal foes?" He compares them, refraining however from detail, with the early campaigns of revolutionary France and describes Trotsky as the Carnot of the Bolshevist revolution. Provided that "the workers in the Allied countries do but their duty and prevent their rulers from giving further help to the Russian counter-revolutionaries," he prophesies that Soviet Russia will have made itself so strong by next spring that no army in the world will be able to cope with it. Mr. M. Philips Price continues his historical sketch of the Russian Revolution. This week he deals with the Brest-Litovsk negotiations and claims for the Bolsheviks that, by giving the German people a taste of peace on the Russian front, they materially helped the Allied cause. He asserts that in early 1918 Allied Governments had nothing to fear from working with Bolshevik Russia, had their hands only been clean, and then proceeds to make many allegations in order to prove that the hands of the Allies were not clean. Mr. Price justifies the "Red Terror" as being an answer "to the White Terror of the Allied agents" and brings his narrative down to the spring of this year. The "Nation" discusses Koltchak's defeat and attributes it to political causes, basing its opinion upon an article by Dr. J. Rosett which was published in the "New Republic" (July 3rd). Extracts from the same article appear also in the "Labour Leader." The "Democrat" contains the first instalment of an account of a "Journey in Bolshevik Russia" from the pen of a "Russian engineer." The "Labour Leader" reprints from the June "Liberator," an article by Maxim Gorky in which he expresses an opinion similar to the I.L.P. opinion that the Russian Revolution is being attacked, not because of its minor transgressions against humanity, but because it is a menace to capitalism. He differs from the I.L.P. journals only in ascribing to President Wilson the leadership of the capitalists. This article also appears in the "Workers' Dreadnought" but without any acknowledgment of its source. The "New Statesman" outlines the policy it would adopt towards the Moscow Government. It calls upon the Allied Governments to accept the fact that Lenin and Trotsky are the actual rulers of

\* Cf. Report, 9th July, p. 24.

Russia, but expresses the opinion that full diplomatic recognition, in the sense of an exchange of ambassadors, ought not, in the present circumstances, to be accorded to Lenin's government any more than to Koltchak's. It does not think that the Soviet Government has any title to govern or represent Russia, which the Western democracies can admit, but asks for the maintenance of a friendly neutrality towards Russia. The "New Statesman" believes that as soon as our support is withdrawn from the anti-Bolshevist forces, fighting in Russia will cease, and the Russian people will be free to work out undisturbed their own political salvation, which this paper does not think they will then find in Bolshevism.

### *India.*

Mr. Shapurji Saklatvala puts forward, in the "Labour Leader," the thesis that in economic life the direct opponent of Socialism is modern Imperialism, which stands now, he says, for the "commercial needs" of the imperial nation. Powerful nations, he says, endeavour to monopolise to themselves sufficiently large slices of the world in order to run their industrial concerns independently of, and even in opposition to, other nations. He suggests that this policy is due to a desire, not only for control of raw materials and markets, but also to possess abundant cheap labour with which to fight the more advanced labour at home. "This battle (with domestic labour) is not conducted by importing foreign labour, but is carried on and is being continually won by starting rival works in the lands of raw materials and by employing labour there on iniquitous terms." For this reason he insists that it is an urgent necessity for trade unionists to take within their purview the whole Empire. As an example to show the need of this, he gives details of the rates of wages and of the hours of labour of the Indian workers who are employed in making tent cloth, clothing material, paper, boots, and other articles for the Indian Government. He describes this action of the Indian Government in buying goods made by cheap Indian labour as an evasion of the principle of the "Fair Wage" Clause agreement. He deals also with Bengal coal, and maintains that while Indian coal may be apparently in competition with British capitalism, it is really in competition with British labour. Similarly he deals with zinc smelting. A further argument of his is that these millions of Indian workers may be increasing output, but—in view of their life of penury and misery—they can make no demand of their own to increase, in compensation, the demand for the products of the workers they are displacing. Mr. Shapurji Saklatvala's main appeal is to Trade Unionists, but he also asks Socialists to realise that Internationalism within the Empire is the primary and unneglectable condition of achieving the first stage of success.

### *Canada.*

The "Labour Leader" contains an article by Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, written some time ago, in which he discusses the position of the Canadian Pacific Railway and criticises the policy of making free gifts of land to immigrants and the machinery by which the wheat crop is sold. He prophesies that the Canadian people will surely realise that they are being enslaved to trusts, and believes that the only thing which can save them is Socialism, and hopes that "the new Dominion Labour Party may lead them into the promised land." An editorial note to this article says: "The present state of practically civil war in Canada fully bears out the prophetic note in this concluding paragraph." The "New Statesman" publishes an account of the causes of the Winnipeg strike from the pen of a member of the Canadian Bar, resident in Winnipeg. This writer regards the whole demonstration as a revolt of the workers against the existing social and industrial system and their status in that system, and bears witness that at the mass meetings the most popular speakers were those who advocated "straight Socialism" and that the strike has developed in a remarkable degree the spirit of class consciousness among the workers. He describes the theory that the strike leaders contemplated a revolution as "too grotesque for utterance," and considers the interference of Senator Robertson, the Canadian Minister of Labour, as unfortunate because, "though ostensibly the representative of the Dominion Government, actually he was a partisan of the Eastern wing of Labour, between whom and Western Labour men a war has been waging for a year or two." He regards as one of the motives behind the strike the belief of some of the leaders that it would afford a demonstration of the effectiveness of mass action in a limited field, and would thereby give an immense impetus to the idea of the "One Big Union," and attributes the bitter opposition which showed itself towards the strike to the desire of the financial interests to prevent the formation of the "One Big Union." He alleges that the foreigners who were arrested at the same time as the English-speaking strike leaders had nothing to do



with the strike, but were arrested merely in order to give the outside world an impression that the strike was associated with Bolshevism. He concludes by saying that the strike will have taught the workers the limitations and dangers of "direct action" and the value of political action.

#### *Other.*

"The Call" expresses the opinion that "the contemplated unwarrantable military measures against Hungary are inspired by class fear, class hatred, and class stupidity," and calls upon the workers everywhere to rally to Hungary's aid and save her because she is Socialist. The "Nation" and Mr. Philip Snowden deal with the Austrian Settlement. The "Nation" regards it as a "monument of meanness," and Mr. Snowden thinks it is worse even than the German Treaty. The "Yorkshire Factory Times" contains a communication on the League of Nations in which the President of the Board of Education emphasises the importance, for the success of the League, of this country energetically conceiving and spreading the idea. In the "Bradford Pioneer" Mr. Joseph King ironically discusses the proposal to try the Kaiser. He does not think the trial will take place, and advances as the reason for this that a trial of the Kaiser "would show up too many big men all round." In the same paper Dr. F. C. Conybeare concludes his analysis of the causes of the war. He suggests that the Serbian Government has constituted itself an accomplice after the fact in the Serajevo assassinations. He quotes from an article published in 1908 in the "Quarterly Review," which, he thinks, shows that Austria was then regarded as our best friend, and avers that "Austria's fate was coldly planned by our diplomats when King Edward's invitation to the aged Austrian emperor to desert his German friend and ally was refused." In conclusion he expresses a doubt whether "our great act of vengeance" (against Germany and Austria) will profit us, and delivers himself of an unpleasing prophecy. In fifty years time, Dr. Conybeare thinks, the Japanese will have driven us out of China and probably out of India, and may have colonised Australia. In Canada and the West Indies the American flag will have replaced the British. In Europe our position will be little better, and "internally we have set our house on fire in our excess of zeal to roast the German pig, and we are likely to be burned out in a conflagration of our own making."

#### (B)—*Home Affairs.*

##### *The Industrial Outlook.*

The "Labour Leader" contains a leading article under the title of "The Industrial Crisis." In the view of this paper the industrial situation is full of menace and "the long expected conflict between the Government and Labour seems imminent. This is the moment of the greatest crisis in the history of organised Labour." It is urged that Labour will not succeed unless it can convince the public that it has justice and right on its side. Therefore the "Labour Leader" appeals to Labour to act in unison and with deliberation, judgment and caution. Sympathy is extended towards, and confidence expressed in, the three leaders of the Triple Alliance, who are, in the opinion of this paper, Messrs. Smillie, Williams and Cramp. This is a colourless and vague blessing of the Triple Alliance on the part of the official organ of the I.L.P., but it is in accord with the carefully guarded and somewhat hesitating approval the I.L.P. leaders have given to "direct action." The Merthyr "Pioneer" takes into consideration the "comedy disturbances of Merthyr and Aberdare" (where meetings have been broken up), and the more serious outbreaks in Luton and Wolverhampton, and concludes that there is "a universality of discontent ominous in its augury for the future." This paper repudiates the suggestion that Bolshevism or other incendiarism explain the outbreaks. The causes of the unrest are, in the opinion of the "Pioneer," briefly these:—"The display of politics as the handmaiden of Capital, which is marking our public life as the most corrupt in history," the growth of the knowledge of the importance and dignity of work among the workers and the misery which arises out of the chaos and anarchy of capitalism. The "Pioneer" concludes by appealing to men not to hide these things away, but to spread them abroad so that out of the resulting discussion a new collective conscience may be born and the future secured for unity of effort in the application of agreed remedies, collectively subscribed to from a complete knowledge of the facts. The editor of the "Leeds Weekly Citizen" deals with the whole Labour situation in a breathless and incoherent article which ranges in the topics discussed from the Peace itself, with the celebrations and firework displays incidental thereto, to the North Eastern Railway strike, the Yorkshire Miners' strike and "direct action." It

is difficult to discover just what his exact position may be, but from the fact that his rhetoric is most breathless in describing the disappointment of Labour with the Peace, it may be judged that it is a disillusionment resulting from the Peace that is the main disturbing factor in his mind. But it is not the only disturbing factor. He regards the increased price of coal as a challenge to democracy and the raising of the Funding Loans as a death blow to English credit, and he does not omit to refer to intervention in Russia, conscription and profiteering. The symptoms he mentions as indicative of the trend of events are the two strikes in the North, which he describes as the preliminary skirmishes of a stupendous struggle, and what he regards as the poor result of the Funding Loans, which shows to him that the capitalists are nervous. But his discussion of "direct action" is the most significant part of his statement. After making the cryptic announcement that the spirit which sank the German fleet at Scapa Flow may sink capitalism too, which goes to show that he regards "direct action" as a form of "passive resistance," he puts forward an argument that "direct action" is a useful method of determining straight political issues—such as the "termination of royalties"—whereas a general election in his opinion by confounding one issue with another results only in confusion. He thus would appear to regard "direct action"—and the ballot votes which precede it—as a kind of referendum, and to hope that the action of the Triple Alliance may force a general election. The purpose of his article is to state the issues which, in his opinion, have been raised by the Triple Alliance and "upon which the next general election, or a social revolution in the meantime, will be fought." They are nationalisation of land, mines and railways, conscription, the League of Nations and the Peace Treaty. The Woolwich "Pioneer" thinks we have arrived at a crisis which promises to develop into the real fight between "Monopoly" and the "People," and emphasises its opinion that the usual channel for the people to exercise their constitutional rights has been closed to them "by political trickery and knavery." The project of a "Centre Party" arouses the interest of Mr. Philip Snowden and Mr. Ramsay Macdonald (in "Forward"); neither of them think that the project will materialise, but both of them point out to the Labour Party the need for it to stand fast against any consolidation of the Coalition. While the I.L.P. journals are so absorbed in the effect "direct action" will have upon the political and parliamentary situation, the organs of the B.S.P. and W.S.F. show their impatience with mere propaganda, public discussions and political machinery. Mrs. Montefiore in the "Call" joins in the discussion which Mr. Bryan started in this paper on the 5th June,\* and insists that the policy of the B.S.P. must be so to transform the thought of the masses from their belief in the efficacy of bourgeois democracy, that the impending class struggle may reach a sufficient degree of intensity to burst the formal framework of democracy. The "Workers' Dreadnought" attacks the Parliamentary Labour Party, and looks forward to the time when the workers must fight, "perhaps at a terrible cost," the leaders of this party. The time is ripe, says this paper, for the establishment of a "Unified Revolutionary Party" and an appeal is made to the rank and file of the I.L.P. and B.S.P. to cease giving their support to the Parliamentary leaders of Labour. The "Nation" shares the apprehensions which the Luton disturbance has induced in the Merthyr "Pioneer" and the Yorkshire Miners' strike in the "Leeds Weekly Citizen." The remedy this paper suggests is to put in full working order the machinery of the National Industrial Conference in order to democratise industry. The "Clarion" thinks that the key of the situation is the question of nationalisation and attacks the Government for having no policy in the matter, and allowing themselves to drift. Mr. A. Thompson, in this paper, calls therefore for a general election in order that we may have a new Government which will settle the question one way or the other. "Justice," the "Democrat" and the "British Citizen" all join in condemning the principles and methods of "direct action." "Justice" expresses its opinion in this fashion:—"We want the Labour Samson to see clearly and to sweep the Capitalist Philistines out of the temple of industry that he may possess and enjoy the building and all that is in it. A blind Labour Samson can only pull down the industrial temple, and in the process of killing his enemies bury himself." The "Democrat" condemns "direct action" as the antithesis of democracy and reiterates its appeal for increased output in order to save our export trade. Mr. H. J. Hoxby dwells in this paper on the need for stabilising employment and creating a spirit of industrial loyalty in the various industrial units. The "British Citizen" adopts a patriotic note, and sees the painful moment coming when Labour will have to choose between loyalty to country and loyalty to "those leaders who are advocating anarchical revolution."

\* Cf. Report, 11th June, p. 6.

*Coal Industry.*

The belief that the increase in price of coal is unjustifiable, and is in reality a "political dodge," continues to develop in the I.L.P. journals which adopt this week the opinion "The Call" expressed last week, and appear to have forgotten the sombre and despondent leading article of the "Labour Leader"\* in their anxiety to attack the Government. "Rob Roy," in "Forward," expresses his conviction that if the Government do their duty to the country and the coal industry in restoring the industry to its pre-war standard of efficiency, the coal output problem will be to a great extent solved. His view is that the Government and the miners distrust each other; he deplores this, and asks them each to do their duty without waiting for the other. Mr. H. M. Hyndman, in "Justice," reaffirms his belief that the nation can only be saved by nationalisation and socialisation of the coal mines and of many other industries. The "Yorkshire Factory Times" expresses the opinion that there is nothing to justify the increased price of coal, and that the existence of a combination which has for its object to defeat the Sankey report is at the back of the assistance which the Coal Controller is alleged to have given the West Yorkshire owners in their resistance to the miners' demands. The "Cotton Factory Times" adopts similar views, though with some hesitation, and states that "it is impossible for the workers as a class to place implicit trust in the Government after all that has passed." On the other hand, this paper regrets the withdrawal of those responsible for pumping operations and is disquieted by the tendency on the part of the rank and file of the miners to outrun their leaders. The comment of the "New Statesman" takes the form of a question, "Is the Government deliberately provoking a general miners' strike?" Similarly the attitude of Mr. David Gilmour, in the "British Citizen," may be expressed by another question, "What has the Government or the country done to warrant the punishment which is being inflicted on the nation?" The "New Age" holds to its opinion that nationalisation as proposed in the Sankey report is wrong, and does not think that it will be put into operation. The "Workers' Dreadnought" expresses surprise that Mr. Brace and Mr. Hartshorn should have been re-elected to the Executive of the M.F.G.B. in spite of the fact that they formed part of the minority of the Miners' Conference which voted in favour of accepting the Government's offer.

*Other.*

Sir Leo Chiozza Money, in the "Labour Leader," complains that the Government is selling Government-built merchant ships to private firms, and this paper also gives details of the action of the Australian Government in forming a State-owned mercantile fleet. Mr. Philip Snowden, in this paper, deals with the income tax question.† He thinks that the concessions the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made proceed on the right lines, and expresses the opinion that the present demand of trade unionists for a complete exemption of all incomes under £250 is too bald a demand to deserve serious consideration. The "Democrat" attacks Mr. Sidney Webb's evidence before the Royal Commission on Income Tax. Mr. J. K. Murray, in "Forward," deals with the Common Lands in the second of his articles to support on antiquarian grounds the nationalisation of land in Scotland. The provisions of the Police Bill are attacked in "The Call," the "Workers' Dreadnought" and the "Yorkshire Factory Times."

(2) *The Press on Demobilisation and Resettlement.**Unemployment Among Ex-Soldiers.*

Mr. Edgar Allen discussed in the "Yorkshire Observer" and the "Star" (28th inst.) the reasons for the continued unemployment of a certain proportion of unemployed men and ex-officers. He thinks that in many cases a personal reason may explain unemployment—the man or ex-officer may be expecting more than he has any right to expect—but he attributes the main part of the unemployment to the fact that "industry is still at a low ebb." He writes ironically of the efforts of the Government "in multiplying organisations for dealing with vacancies that do not exist," and calls for action. By this he means that the Government must declare its economic and commercial programme and thus restore confidence and ward off discontent.

\* Cf. Report, 23rd July, p. 70.

† Cf. Report, 2nd July, p. 9.

## PART IV.—GENERAL TOPICS AND DISTRICT REPORTS.

(1) *General Topics.**National Industrial Conference.*

The Joint Sub-Committee of the Provisional Joint Committee of the National Industrial Conference has suggested various amendments to the draft Minimum Wage and Hours Bills. With regard to the Hours Bill, in some cases the Sub-Committee prefers the form in which its own draft was drawn up, and a large number of alterations in the Government draft are recommended, but the most serious difference of opinion concerns the question of the exclusion of agricultural workers from the scope of the Act. At the recent meetings of the Sub-Committee the chairman announced that the Cabinet had decided to exclude agricultural workers from the Act. The trade union members of the Sub-Committee were unable to agree to this exclusion. The employers' members, while prepared to adhere to their agreement to include agricultural workers, felt themselves unable to express any opinion on the Government's decision, and were content that the unions should deal with the Government on the matter. The trade union members were also unable to agree to the exclusion from the Act of members of the police forces. The draft Wages Bill has been accepted by the Sub-Committee, subject to a few slight amendments.

*Nationalisation and Coal Situation.*

Though the coal situation was relieved for the moment by the settlement on piece-rates between the Government and the Miners' Federation, which was reached on the 25th inst., it is clear that the situation as a whole is as serious as ever. The settlement was not accepted by the Yorkshire Miners' Association at its conference with the coal owners on the 30th July, and though the Miners' Associations in other districts have accepted it and recommended their members to return to work, it is apparent that this must not be taken to signify more than an acceptance of the settlement regarding piece-rates alone, which is far from being the only cause of discontent. For instance, the Nottinghamshire Miners' Council, while recommending a resumption of work, decided to withdraw its funds from War Loan as a protest against intervention in Russia. The question of piece-rates is indeed merely a point of detail arising incidentally from the first Sankey report, and the grand problem of nationalisation seems bound, whichever way it is decided, to give rise to grave trouble. But the recent crop of strikes pointed to the existence of minor causes of discontent and unrest among the rank and file of miners, such as the 6s. increase on the price of coal, the high cost of living, intervention in Russia and the extension of the Military Service Act. During the past week a number of further resolutions have been reported from all parts of the country protesting against the 6s. increase in the price of coal, and there are indications of a tendency to include nationalisation as one of the issues on which "direct action" is sought. The actual situation in the coalfields is dealt with in Part V.

*"Direct Action."*

In accordance with the decision of the conference of the Triple Alliance on the 23rd July, ballot papers will be distributed during the week. They will be sent, as a matter of course, to all members of the Miners' Federation and the Transport Workers' Federation, as these organisations by their constitutions require a ballot of their members before a national strike can be declared. The National Union of Railwaymen has power to call a national strike without recourse to a ballot, but the executive may take a ballot if it desires to do so. In consequence of the moderating influence of Mr. J. H. Thomas, it is possible that the executive may hesitate to declare in favour of a strike without consulting its members.

*Building Trade.*

At the instance of the Royal Institute of British Architects (acting in conjunction with the National Federations of Building Trades Employers and Operatives, the Society of Architects, and the Surveyors' Institution), a Building Industries Consultative Board has recently been formed, in order to investigate the causes of the present stagnation in the trade and to organise its activities.

The national claim of the Building Trade Operatives for a 44-hour week without reduction in wages has been refused by the Employers' Federation. It has now been referred by the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives to the National Conciliation Board.

*Railwaymen.*

A further conference between the Railway Executive Committee and the Railwaymen's Unions was held at the Board of Trade on the 25th instant, with regard to wages and conditions of work. Negotiations have not yet reached a stage at which a statement can be agreed upon between the Executive and the representatives of the Unions.

*Engineering.*

The delegate meeting of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, which met in Manchester, considered fully the question of payment by results. Four proposals were submitted :—(1) That no system of payment by results be allowed ; (2) that, provided two-thirds of the members were in favour, the system of payment by results be allowed ; (3) that a ballot be taken on the subject, and if a majority are in favour of abolition the decision to be put into force at once ; (4) that no ballot be taken. The third proposal was carried, after the second had been defeated by the casting vote of the chairman. It is considered probable that on a ballot taken in the usual way the proposal to abolish all kinds of payment by results would be carried. But it should be noted that this delegate meeting has made a new rule empowering the Executive Council to take a postal ballot in vital matters affecting the interests of the Society, and if this method were to be adopted in this case, it is suggested that owing to the larger proportion of members who would vote a majority is not so probable.

The meeting also passed a special resolution, which was sent to the Prime Minister, protesting against the imposition of the additional 6s. on the price of coal.

*Engineering and Shipbuilding.*

A further conference between Engineering and Shipbuilding Employers and representatives of the Trade Unions concerned\* was held in London on the 24th instant to consider the application for a further reduction in hours to 44 per week. The gathering of employers was more representative than it had previously been. Sir Allan M. Smith stated the views of the employers, which were to the effect that it was necessary in the national interest that output should, if possible, be increased. Output was not being maintained under the 47-hour week and it was now much less than in 1913. They did not see how an increase in output could be accomplished if there was to be a further shortening of hours. They therefore suggested that the application for a 44-hour week should be either withdrawn or suspended for two years in order to permit of a thorough investigation of the matter. The Trade Union representatives, after considering the employers' statement, intimated, through Mr. Brownlie, Chairman of the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, that they had not the power to suspend or withdraw the application, and that this matter would have to be determined by the conference which appointed the committee.

*Baking.*

Recent negotiations in the Baking Trade are of interest. The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into night baking was issued on the 12th July. The report was reviewed by a delegate meeting of the Amalgamated Union of Operative Bakers on the 14th July, which considered that the report did not deal sufficiently with the present situation, as the operatives in nearly all districts were determined not to go back to night work. The following resolution was passed :—“ This conference resolves that in the event of no satisfactory settlement of the night work question, together with a national settlement on the wages, hours, overtime and holiday question for all grades being obtained, that all employers and members of the Union be informed that a national stoppage be called for the 2nd August.” The National programme adopted was on the following general lines :—(1) No night work. (2) 44-hour week with a minimum wage of £4 for table hands and a corresponding increase for the various higher grades. (3) All recognised public holidays to be paid for, and a week's holiday with pay for all employees of over six months' standing. (4) Overtime rate of time and half with limitation of same. (5) All Sunday work to be abolished, but where necessary through unforeseen circumstances to be paid for at double rates.

On the 18th July a Conference took place between representatives of the Ministry of Labour, the Home Office and the Ministry of Food. Sir David Shackleton presided, the Home Office was represented by Sir Malcolm Delevingne and Mr. R. E. Graves, and the Ministry of Food by Mr. Hugh Paul. It was the general opinion that legislation on the lines of the Report should be introduced as soon as possible, and also that in view of the

\* *I.e.* the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades Federation, the A.S.E., and the Workers' Union.

time that this must take the "two years period" which is to lapse before it comes into operation might be shortened as follows:—(1) If the Bill is introduced and passed in the autumn session to 18 months; (2) if it has to be re-introduced in the spring session 1920 to 12 months.

On the 26th inst. there were special meetings of 50 different branches of the Amalgamated Unions of Operative Bakers, Confectioners and Allied Workers in the London district, at which strike committees were duly appointed for the carrying on of the strike if the Master Bakers refuse to concede the terms proposed. Meetings have also taken place at Birmingham and elsewhere.

On the masters' side, a meeting was held on the 30th July of the National Association of Master Bakers, Confectioners and Caterers, representing more than 200 affiliated local associations, and it was resolved not to hold any conference with Government departments, or to continue representation of English and Welsh employers on the Joint Industrial Council until the price of bread or flour has been revised. It also urged the National Association to oppose any Bill framed on the lines of the recommendations of the Committee on Night Baking.

The Ministry of Labour has repeatedly attempted to secure a settlement of the dispute, but on every occasion the employers have declined to attend a conference.\*

#### *Agriculture.*

A serious difficulty arose with regard to the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on Agriculture. The various Trade Unions concerned have from the beginning protested that the terms of reference, which do not include nationalisation, are too narrow, but at the first meeting of the Commission, held on the 23rd instant, Mr. W. R. Smith, M.P., threatened that all the nine Labour Members of the Commission would resign on the ground that the words "hours of employment" had been added to the terms of reference after they had been invited and had consented to serve on the Commission. (The point of this objection is that Labour is advocating the inclusion of agricultural labourers in the provisions of the 48-hours Bill which the Government have in preparation.) The Chairman of the Commission undertook to bring the matter to the notice of the Government, and hoped to be able to make a statement at the next meeting of the Commission on the 30th instant. At this Meeting the Chairman read a letter from the Board of Agriculture indicating generally that it was not the intention of the Government to extend the inquiry to cover hours of employment except so far as they exercise an economic effect on the cost of production. After some discussion on the Commission, this was apparently agreed to. The Executive Committee of the Agricultural Labourers and Rural Workers' Union has supported the action of its representatives on the Commission. On the other hand, a deputation from the National Farmers' Union waited upon the President of the Board of Agriculture on the 26th instant, and stated that the Union had adopted a resolution noting with great concern the serious misunderstanding which had arisen in connection with the terms of reference to the Royal Commission on Agriculture. The Union felt that it would be useless for farmers to submit evidence to the Commission unless they were permitted to refer to the effect that the curtailment of the hours of labour would have on the industry.

#### *Police.*

It is reported that the Police generally are satisfied with the new rates of pay, but disposed to view with suspicion the Police Federation, on the ground that undue influence may be brought to bear by the higher ranks in connection with questions raised by the lower ranks. On the other hand, the steadier men are said to welcome the penal clauses in the Bill, because they will give them a good excuse for refusing to obey a call to strike. As was to be expected, Mr. J. H. Hayes, the General Secretary of the Police and Prison Officers' Union, has been indefatigable in his efforts to stir up opposition to the Bill, on the ground that it strikes at the very foundation of Trade Unionism. The "Daily Herald" is vigorously opposing the Bill, in the interests of the Police Union, but Labour generally is showing practically no sympathy with the agitation of the Union.

#### *Ex-Service Men.*

During the past few weeks there have been signs of a growing spirit of discontent and unrest among ex-Service men, which has manifested itself in processions, indignation-meetings and resolutions; and the recent riots at Luton, Coventry, Bilston, Swindon,

\* On the initiative of the Ministry of Labour, negotiations have however taken place on the 31st July and 1st August.

and Fareham, though not instigated by the local branches of discharged soldiers, were participated in by them, and serve as an indication of the inflammable temper of the men. Several demonstrations of discharged soldiers have been reported during the past week. At Manchester demonstrations took place on the 24th and 26th inst., and the men complained that in future an unemployed man in receipt of the out-of-work donation must sign on four days a week instead of three days a week as has hitherto been the custom. At a demonstration of 20,000 demobilised soldiers and sailors at Sheffield on the 26th, resolutions were passed strongly protesting against the delay in increasing pension allowances and gratuities. Salford unemployed ex-Service men passed a resolution at a demonstration on the 26th inst. asking for back pay for all ex-soldiers on the basis of the difference between their 1s. or 1s. 6d. per day and "the Colonial soldier's 6s." A similar resolution was passed at Birmingham. This claim was first advanced by R. L. Outhwaite in the "Daily Herald" of the 9th June, and is part of the programme of the Commonwealth League. The "Daily Herald" has had the article reprinted in pamphlet form. In Manchester and Liverpool discharged men have threatened to march to London to enforce their demands, billeting themselves on the towns they pass. The grievances of ex-Service men are mainly due to unemployment, the alleged inadequacy of pensions, the apparently slow progress of housing and the high prices of food and clothing. In this connection the considerations mentioned in Part II of this Report are of interest.

At a mass meeting of ex-Service men held at Woolwich Town Hall, a resolution was passed that, in the event of the amalgamation of the various ex-Service organisations, Sir Douglas Haig should be asked to become first President. Sir Douglas Haig is willing to accept the position, provided that the amalgamation is on a basis that could be accepted by him as a soldier on the active list.

#### *Disabled Men.*

The Executive of the National Federation of General Workers met Mr. Wolfe at the Ministry of Labour on the 23rd inst. to discuss the arrangements for absorbing in industry disabled sailors and soldiers. Four members of the executive of the Federation expressed the opinion that providing there was no underselling of labour, there was no objection on the part of their unions to absorbing the remaining 40,000 unemployed disabled ex-Service men, and that the semi-skilled and unskilled trade unions would do all they possibly could to help the Government in the matter.

#### *Printing Trade Conference.*

At the annual conference of the Midland Group Branches of the Typographical Association held at Worcester, a resolution was carried in favour of an immediate vote being taken throughout the Association's area on the question of a 44-hour week. A resolution was also carried in favour of amalgamation of all printing and kindred trades, and the Executive Council was instructed to convene a conference to deal with the matter. The conference also declared for the abolition of systematic overtime, and called upon the Executive to initiate another national wages movement as early as possible.

#### *The Peace Treaty.*

At a meeting on the 23rd inst. of the Joint Committee representing the Parliamentary Labour Party and the National Executive of the Labour Party, it was decided to embark upon a national campaign during the autumn recess in favour of a revision of the Peace Treaty on the lines of the Southport resolution, which called for the speedy admission of Germany to the League of Nations, and the immediate revision by the League of the harsh provisions of the Treaty.

#### *Income Tax.*

A mass meeting of Trade Unionists in the engineering, shipbuilding and ship-repairing industries held at Liverpool on the 27th inst. passed resolutions demanding that the income tax abatement should be increased to £250 and that the additional abatement for a wife should be £100, and for each child £50. The Guildford Branch of the A.S.E. considers the income tax concessions inadequate and calls upon labour to continue to press for £250 abatement. Selly Oak branch of the United Machine Workers has passed a resolution advising its members to forward to the general office of the Union any Income Tax demand notes they may receive, in order to force the Executive to join the movement against Income Tax on incomes below £250. The general Council of the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners has decided to join the same movement.

At Coalville (Leicestershire) Petty Sessions on the 25th inst. 10 colliers were summoned for the non-payment of income tax. Seven of the defendants paid the collector before the Court opened.

### *Housing.*

The Parliamentary Committee of the Scottish Trade Union Congress has invited the trade unions in Scotland to send delegates to a conference to be held in Glasgow on the 23rd August. A resolution will be submitted to the conference asking the unions to take a ballot vote of their members before the 30th September on the question of a stoppage of work with a view to forcing the Government to deal effectively with the housing problem. The Durham Miners' Association have sent a strongly-worded protest to the Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Adamson against "the reactionary step taken by the House of Lords on the English Housing Bill by the destruction of the clause making the preparation of town planning schemes obligatory on large urban authorities after 1923." A campaign is being opened in Manchester to demand from the Government a Commission of enquiry into the charges of idleness and selfishness "which are nowadays so frequently made against operative builders."

### *Amalgamation, &c.*

The report of the Committee on Amalgamation, appointed by the Conference at York in September, 1918, of representatives of the A.S.E., the United Machine Workers' Association and several other Unions, has just been issued. The report states that the Committee after having given careful thought to the question of drafting a scheme of amalgamation on industrial lines, apart from "friendly benefits" have decided against a scheme of amalgamation on industrial lines only.

The General Council of the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners has decided to take a vote of its members as to whether they are willing that negotiations shall take place with a view to fusion with the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, Cabinet-makers and Joiners.

The Amalgamation between the Licensed Vehicle Trade Union and the Amalgamated Association of Tramway and Vehicle Workers is now reported to be complete under the title of the United Vehicle Workers, which thus contains close on 100,000 members.

The Stratford and Edmonton Co-operative Societies have proposed to amalgamate so as to form a new society, with membership 76,972 and turnover £2,354,026, to be called the London Co-operative Society, Ltd.

### *Trade Union Topics.*

The Chairman of the Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron and Coal Company announced at the fifty-second general meeting of the company on the 24th inst. that the directors had extended an invitation to one of the great Trade Unions to nominate one of their number to occupy a seat on the Board, but that the invitation had been refused.

The Port of London Docks and Wharves Staff Association has changed its name to National Union of Docks, Wharves and Shipping Staffs.

It is stated that the Clyde members of the United Patternmakers' Association decided to stop all overtime in September, 1918, and that as a result all members of the Association in the district are fully employed.

### *Withdrawals from War Loan.*

The Nottinghamshire Miners' Council decided on the 28th inst. to withdraw all funds invested in Government War Loans as a protest against continued intervention in Russia. The Cresswell miners are urging the Derbyshire Miners' Association to come to a similar decision, but as a protest against the increased price of coal. Further demands for the withdrawal of money already invested have been made at Leeds, Batley and Dewsbury, as well as by various branches of the A.S.E.

### *Court of Arbitration.*

During the week ending the 26th July, 1919, the Court heard 18 cases, 15 in London and three in Cardiff.

The Court has issued its findings in accordance with the procedure where by the wages on a national basis in a number of industries are periodically reviewed at intervals of four months. Features of the present applications were the claim advanced by workers for



consolidation of rates, and by a number of Employers' Federations for a reduction in wages. As upon the last occasion, wages are to remain unaltered. The reasons for the awards are as follows:—

The Wages (Temporary Regulation) Acts, 1918 and 1919, fix or stabilise until the 22nd November, 1919, the rates prevailing on that date including and, for this purpose, consolidating all advances made since the beginning of the war, become what are termed the "prescribed rates." In the opinion of the Court a prescribed rate is not divisible into its component parts, and is payable as one sum. The Court can hear applications to vary prescribed rates, and have power to substitute a rate, also inclusive and consolidated, for a prescribed rate, but they have no power to interfere with such consolidation as is provided by the statute.

The claim for consolidation as put forward by the Trade Unions is for a consolidation of a kind differing from that provided by the statute, that is to say, it is a claim that the war advances shall be consolidated into permanent base rates. After careful consideration the Court find on the evidence submitted in the present case that the claim is not established.

The outlook at present appears to the Court to be one of much uncertainty, and although there may be differences of opinion the Court note that some official authorities have publicly expressed the expectation that the prospect is one of dearer food and more difficult conditions.

The Industries concerned are:—Engineering and Foundry Trades, Shipbuilding Trade, Railway Shopmen, Heating and Domestic Engineers, Explosives Trade, Chemical Trade, Soap and Candle Trade, Building Trade (Scotland).

#### *Joint Industrial Councils.*

*Electricity Supply.*—A meeting of the Sub-Committee on District Councils was held on the 16th July. The distribution of Electricity Supply Undertakings in England and Wales was carefully considered, and agreement was reached on a scheme providing for 12 District Councils. The area of each District Council was provisionally defined. It was further agreed that a Conference of representatives of Undertakings and of the Trade Unions concerned be held. It was also decided to request the Ministry of Labour to send a representative to address each conference, and that arrangements be also made for an Employers' representative and a Trade Union representative on the Joint Industrial Council to address each conference. A full meeting of the Joint Industrial Council was held on the 18th July. The report of the Sub-Committee on District Councils was adopted.

*Musical Instrument Trade.*—The second meeting of the Council took place on the 16th July. Mr. St. John E. Scheffler was appointed as employers' Secretary. A premium bonus scheme advocated by the employers in order to increase output to cope with foreign competition was discussed. The workpeople opposed the principle of such a scheme, but consented to consider further evidence at the next meeting. A resolution was passed to be forwarded to the Controller of the Import Restriction Department, Board of Trade, urging that no action be taken with reference to the proposed revision of import restrictions without first consulting the Joint Industrial Council. A Commercial Sub-Committee was formed to work in conjunction with the Board of Trade.

*Silk.*—The fourth quarterly meeting of the Council will be held in Manchester on the 24th July. The Council is to consider a request for an annual holiday of 14 days with full pay for all workers; a request for the adoption of a working week of 48 hours, excluding mealtimes; and a request from the silk dressers for an advance of 30 per cent. on current rates, together with payment for all recognised holidays.

*Wrought Hollow-ware.*—The first meeting of the Council was held in Birmingham on the 21st July. This Council is to exist side by side with the Trade Board for the same industry.

The operatives, represented by Mr. Simeon Webb, who are in the main the highly skilled and better paid men, are strongly in favour of the Council, but Mr. C. Sitch, M.P., who represents the unskilled and the women workers in the industry generally, has expressed himself as being unfavourable to the formation of a Council. He evidently feels that those whom he represents have most to gain from the action of the Trade Board.

#### *Trade Boards.*

*Tobacco Trade Board (Great Britain).*—The Board have agreed to fix the minimum rates of wages set out in their Notice of Proposal, dated the 12th May, 1919, and have asked the Minister of Labour to make an order confirming these rates, and have suggested the 5th August, 1919, as the date from which such rates should become effective.

*Tailoring Trade Board (Great Britain).*—The Board have agreed to issue a Notice of Proposal to vary the general minimum time-rate for female workers other than cutters trimmers, and fitters-up from 5*d.* to 8½*d.* an hour, and for female cutters, trimmers and fitters-up from 6*d.* to 9½*d.* an hour. They propose also to vary the general minimum time-rates for male workers other than learners from 8*d.* to 1*s.* 1*d.* an hour, for under pressers and plain machinists from 8*d.* to 1*s.* 3*d.* an hour, and for male cutters, knifemen, tailors, fitters, passers, pressers and machinists from 8*d.* to 1*s.* 5*d.* an hour. The Board propose also to fix a piece-work basis time-rate for female workers of 9½*d.* an hour, and of 1*s.* 2½*d.*, 1*s.* 4½*d.*, and 1*s.* 6½*d.* an hour respectively for the three classes of male workers described above.

*Paper Box Trade Board (Great Britain).*—The Board have agreed to issue a Notice of Proposal to vary the general minimum time-rates for female workers from 5¾*d.* to 8*d.*, and for male workers from 9*d.* to 1*s.* 1¾*d.* an hour, with corresponding increases in the rates for learners. They also propose to fix a piece-work basis time-rate of 8½*d.* an hour for all female persons employed on piece-work.

*Tin Box Trade Board (Great Britain).*—The Tin Box Trade Board (Great Britain) have issued a Notice of Proposal to vary the general minimum time-rate for female workers of 18 years of age and over from 5½*d.* to 7½*d.* an hour, for male workers (not employed as knife hands or press hands) of 21 years of age and over from 9*d.* to 1*s.* an hour, and for male workers of 22 years of age and over employed as knife hands and press hands from 9*d.* to 1*s.* 2*d.* an hour, with corresponding increases in the rates for younger female and male workers. They also propose to fix overtime rates for male and female workers (all ages), and to declare the normal number of hours of work to be 48 per week. They also propose to fix piece-work basis time-rates of 37*s.* 6*d.* per week of 48 hours for female workers of 18 years of age and over, of 60*s.* for male workers of 21 years of age and over, and of 70*s.* for male workers employed as knife hands or press hands of 21 years of age and over.

*Special Order.*—The Minister has made a Special Order applying the Trade Boards Acts to the Fur Trade.

## (2) District Reports.

### *London and South-Eastern.*

*Unemployment.*—The general decrease in unemployment continues, but to a less marked degree. Local increases have occurred in 17 areas, but with few exceptions the figures are insignificant.

*Resettlement.*—Urgent complaints continue to be received of transport delays. Investigations by the staff of the Employment Council confirm the statement that the main cause is shortage of railway wagons, which is given at 4 per cent. to 14 per cent. of the various railway companies' stock. The Great Eastern Railway have 5,500 wagons awaiting repairs. The companies' wagon works are fully employed on the work, and in some cases the help of outside firms is being called in. The non-delivery of material is retarding the work of local authorities, and the building industry in general is badly hampered. Shortage of material in the clothing industry may also be due in part to the non-delivery of wool, which cannot be cleared from ships and barges. In Camberwell, shortage of castings, apparently due to the lack of moulders in other districts, is impeding the engineering industry. A number of developments of private enterprise are reported. At Ramsgate a new engineering and coach-building works is to be erected, which will employ from 500 to 1,000 workers. Little constructional work has yet been done in connection with public housing schemes.

*General.*—Industrial disputes have diminished this week, but the feeling of unrest is kept alive by the news of the coal strike, and the meeting of the Triple Alliance.

### *South Midlands and Eastern.*

*Unemployment.*—The decline in unemployment during the week is under 250. Increases of some importance are recorded at Northampton, at Cambridge where a strike in the building trade is mainly responsible, and at Ipswich where the increase is largely among discharged soldiers. Unemployment in the division is not regarded as serious.

*Resettlement.*—The employment of further female labour in the Woodstock glove trade has been discussed with the employers of the Women's Sub-Committee of the Local Employment Committee. A divergence of opinion was disclosed as to the continuance

of the present boom, and as to the need for further housing accommodation by the establishment of hutments. There is some fear on the part of the workers as to the possible exploitation of young girls in the trade.

Difficulties of transport and housing still continue.

#### *South-Western.*

*Unemployment.*—The decrease in unemployment during the week was under 350. The cancellation or completion of Government contracts has seriously affected the aircraft industry in the Portsmouth district and at Farnborough.

*Resettlement.*—Few fresh developments are reported. The delivery of stone required for road repairs in Devon is retarded by lack of transport facilities.

*General.*—There is a state of general quiet in the labour situation, with exceptions in one or two cases. Agitation continues for higher wages in agricultural work. Rates are climbing to a £3 minimum, with extras for overtime and Sunday work, and the increased wages and shorter hours of work may cause land which has been tilled to be allowed to return to pasture.

#### *West Midlands.*

*Unemployment.*—A decline of over 4,000 in the number of unemployed workers occurred during the week ending the 18th July. Small local increases are reported, but in six centres only.

*Resettlement.*—Progress continues to be impeded by the unsettled condition of labour, the shortage of coal and anticipation of its increased price, the shortage of housing, and transport difficulties. The rates for canal transport are high, and it is stated that the cost of barge construction is four times greater than during the war. Members of the Engineering and National Employers' Federation report that under the 47-hour week output has fallen off disproportionately to the reduction in hours, and they regard the agitation for a 44-hour week with considerable uneasiness. Employers complain also of American and Japanese competition, and allege that heavy excess profits taxation retards extensive and necessary changes in plant.

*General.*—A great deal of industrial unrest exists, but it is not entirely due to industrial grievances. High prices of food and clothing, profiteering and reduced earnings on changing over to peace production, as well as the effect of the coal strike, are factors in the present unrest.

#### *Yorkshire and East Midlands.*

*Unemployment.*—An increase of about 2,000 on the live register for the week ending the 11th July is accounted for by a considerable local increase at Todmorden owing to the strike in the cotton industry. In nearly all other areas unemployment showed a slight decline.

*Resettlement.*—The strike in the South Yorkshire coalfields is seriously affecting other industries. Examples of the handicap on industry imposed by inadequate transport continue to accumulate.

Arrangements which have been made for the release of additional men from the army will provide employment for other workers. A training scheme for women in the clothing industry in Rotherham submitted by the Huddersfield Manufacturers Association has been accepted provisionally. From 400 to 500 girls will be trained, and accommodation will be available if necessary for 150 to 200 more. Building operations are reported to be now in progress in a number of centres.

*General.*—The situation due to the miners' strike, though extremely serious, seems to be accepted very quietly by all parties concerned. It has disorganised the industries in the Leeds area. Ten thousand people are stated to be out of work in Leeds, and 30,000 at Bradford with the position becoming worse daily. Intervention by the Government in the miners' dispute raised hopes in Sheffield of speedy settlement, and gave great relief from the fears as to what would have happened if a further week of stoppage had occurred. It is estimated that nearly 20,000 workers in Sheffield have been thrown out of employment, but it is hoped that these numbers will not be greatly increased. Steel supplies have not stopped and local manufacturers in the Sheffield light trades are inclining to continue work wherever possible in the hopes of normal supplies being available again within a fortnight.

*North-Western.*

*Unemployment.*—The live register for the division showed a reduction of over 7,000 during the week. The greatest volume of unemployment is in engineering occupations, in conveyance by road, and in cotton.

*Resettlement.*—The shortage of loose pattern and general moulders is still pressing in the engineering industry. Building operations have commenced in connection with the garden city scheme of Messrs. Pilkington Bros., Ltd., St. Helens, and skilled labour will be required from other districts. A shortage of certain types of building operatives is also reported from Rossendale Valley. Transport difficulties continue to affect the supply of stone, cement and timber.

*Northern.*

*Unemployment.*—The decline in unemployment during the week has been small. There is evidence of a shortage, actual or prospective, of wagon and vehicle builders, bricklayers, bricklayers' labourers, plasterers, quarrymen and agricultural labourers.

*Resettlement.*—The packing-case industry in Newcastle is said to be impeded by the inability of English firms to deliver machinery and by the restrictions on import of timber from Sweden. The shortage of wagons still hampers the iron and steel industries, and lack of housing accommodation continues to prevent the importation of female workers for the biscuit industry in Carlisle. Iron workers in the Middlesbrough area cannot secure the regular supply of ore from Northamptonshire.

The Blyth Harbour Commissioners are developing schemes of considerable magnitude, involving the deepening of the whole harbour to 30 feet below low water. The Blyth Shipbuilding Co. are carrying out large extensions to their shipbuilding premises.

*General.*—In connection with the general state of unrest it is being publicly suggested that German money is supporting it. The public feeling against the miners has increased. There seems to be a general opinion that the Government have only to step in and assume a firm attitude to put an end to all strikes. Some go the length of preferring a general upheaval rather than a succession of strikes. Fears are expressed that the domination of America in the commercial world will lead to England becoming a third-class power.

*Wales.*

*Unemployment.*—The situation remains practically unchanged, the decline in the live register being small. Unemployment in Merthyr has again increased, owing to the strike at the works of Messrs. Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds; the firm are reported to have closed down their furnaces and it is feared that the stoppage may last for two or three months.

*Resettlement.*—The factors mentioned in previous weeks—sectional strikes, general trade depression, shortage of railway wagons, workmen's trains and housing—continue to militate against the resumption of normal activities.

*General.*—The position in South Wales has been quiet compared with the unrest shown in many coalfields. There is a strongly expressed adverse opinion on the attitude of miners generally, and among moderate elements there is organisation beginning against the extremists who have brought disrepute upon the industry.

A feeling of consternation was created by the announcement that the export of coal was forbidden, but the feeling has been allayed by the realisation that the measure was a temporary one.

*Scotland.*

*Unemployment.*—The decrease in unemployment during the week was smaller than in previous weeks. It is difficult, however, to gauge the actual position, owing to the beginning of the holiday period and the consequent decrease in vacancies notified to the Exchanges. Local increases at Edinburgh, Paisley and Wick, are regarded as temporary, being attributed in the first-named centre to the demobilisation of certain units of women war workers. At Clydebank, riveters, platers, drillers and caulkers in the shipbuilding industry are temporarily unemployed. The outlook at Inverness is still gloomy as trade disputes remain unsettled, and the crofter fishermen returning from the Forces are difficult to place. Complaints from Greenock allege that Irishmen in large numbers are taking employment at low rates to the detriment of local workers.

*Resettlement.*—The Glasgow Employment Committee have been informed by the North British Railway Co. that shortage of raw materials is impeding locomotive work, and steps are being taken to accelerate deliveries if possible. The company pointed out, however, that no great improvement could be looked for, as the rails would not stand additional traffic. In the case of the Caledonian Railway, it was stated that the supply of material was sufficient for some time to come.

At Kirkcaldy, where there is a demand for textile workers, the shortage of houses is stated to prevent the importation of labour. At Dumbarton the extension of a ship-building yard will, on completion, provide employment for a considerable number of workers.

Shortage of iron moulders is recorded at Johnstone.

*General.*—Owing mainly to the holidays the industrial situation is placid. The crisis in the English coalfields has not seriously affected Scottish railways or industries as they derive their fuel supplies chiefly from Lanarkshire, the Lothians and Fifeshire. Similarly, only a very small percentage of steel used in Scotland is obtained from sources affected by the strike.

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## PART V.—DISPUTES.

### (a) *Involving a Stoppage of Work.*

#### *Coal Miners.*

*Yorkshire.*—The Yorkshire mine-owners on the 29th July wired to Mr. Herbert Smith President of the Yorkshire Miners' Association, asking for a conference in Leeds on the 30th and the miners' representatives have accepted the invitation.

*Northumberland and Durham.*—The miners' leaders state that the men will probably resume work at an early date.

*Nottingham and Derbyshire.*—On the 26th July the Derbyshire Miners' Council accepted the Government's agreement and urged the men to return to work. Work is being resumed in the Nottingham coalfield with the exception of a few pits which are under the control of the Yorkshire Miners' Council.

*Staffordshire.*—A strike in this district began on the 23rd July; the men in North Staffordshire returned to work the next day, on the appeal of the local officials. Work was resumed at Cannock Chase on the 28th July, except at the Conduit Collieries, where a longstanding dispute exists concerning the payment of drivers.

*Lancashire and Cheshire.*—The local Miners' Federation recommended its members to return to work on the 28th July.

*Kent.*—The Kent miners decided to resume work on the 30th July. It is reported that terms were accepted granting a 7-hour day with 20 minutes for lunch, and a 6-hour day on Saturdays.

#### *Building and Allied Trades.*

Work was resumed in the Leicestershire Colliery district on the 23rd July. A settlement was reached at Coalville; skilled men are to receive 1s. 8d., and labourers 1s. 5d. per hour.

The *Asphalters* in the Birmingham district, after being on strike since the 11th June against the Interim Court of Arbitration award, have gained an increase of 3d. an hour.

#### *Woodworkers.*

A serious lock-out occurred in the *Furnishing Trade* on the 26th July, owing to a longstanding dispute over wages and working hours. The districts affected include East Lancashire, Nottingham, Birmingham, High Wycombe, Bath and Bristol.

#### *Dock and Harbour Workers.*

The strike of the floating plantmen employed at the Mersey docks was settled on the 28th July. The concessions include the recognition of floating plantmen as seamen, negotiations in future to be carried on directly between the Dock Board and the men's representatives.

A settlement is reported of the strike of coal porters at Southend-on-Sea. The majority of the men's demands have been conceded by the merchants.

*Shop Assistants.*

As the result of a strike in two Dublin Drapery Establishments, Master Drapers decided to declare a general lock-out on the 28th July.

*Hosiery Trade.*

The strike in the hosiery finishing trade in Nottingham and Leicester ended on the 25th July. The chief subject in dispute was the shift system; the employers maintaining that rejection of the system would be tantamount to a limitation of output. The men have now agreed to work in shifts if the employers can prove their contention.

*Municipal Employees.*

The strike of employees at Ilford was settled on the 28th July, the Council granting the 47-hour week demanded by the men. The dispute at Paddington is still in progress. The employees of the Kensington Borough Council came out on the 24th July on the question of the 47-hour week. The Southampton Corporation employees, who have also been on strike, have secured the 5s. increase demanded and other concessions.

*Coal Tippers.*

The tippers at Cardiff, who have been on strike for a fortnight as a protest against the dismissal of certain workmen, returned to work on the 28th July, the points in dispute to be submitted to the Railway Executive Committee and representatives of the N.U.R. and Transport Workers' Federation.

*(b) Not Involving a Stoppage of Work.**Soap Trade.*

Considerable dissatisfaction is reported to exist among soap workers in various parts of the country. The refusal of the Court of Arbitration to concede certain wage advances and a 44-hour week is the cause of unrest in the Port Sunlight and Bromborough districts. The Executive of the Union catering for these workers has asked for an early meeting of the Industrial Council to discuss the subjects in dispute.

*Municipal Employees.*

At a meeting of the West Ham Corporation employees on the 27th July, it was decided to take a ballot on the question of striking for an all-round increase of 10s. a week.

*Metal Workers.*

The *Tube* workers in the Wednesbury district are to ballot during the week on the question of accepting the final offer of wage increases made by the employers. The offer is said to be about half the amount demanded by the men.

The unofficial conference of South Wales *tinplate* workers has refused to make public the result of the ballot on the question of accepting the decisions of the Industrial Council; \* this points to the fact that only a very small proportion of the workers can have taken part in the ballot, the majority choosing to remain loyal to their union representatives.

*Coal Porters.*

The London Coal Porters' Union has resolved to demand increased pay in view of the 6s. increase in coal.

R. S. HORNE.

\* The figures have since been published and are as follows:—For a strike 2,898, against 2,636; majority for 262. These show that only one quarter of the total number employed in the trade voted.

All inquiries relating to this report should be addressed to:—

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