

This undoubtedly gave great offense to the officeholders and to the real estate boards, and may largely or partly account for his defeat by 16,000 majority.

Cooper also said that a Youngstown steel plant had tax costs, (state and local), about double what they would be were the plant located just across the river in Pennsylvania, and he added significantly: "I am going to look into the matter closely as governor."

It is to be hoped that he will look into it anyway. As a private citizen he has more time to study the revenue problem.

## Will Labor Learn the Lesson

FROM OUR SPECIAL LONDON CORRESPONDENT

OVER three million organized workers in Great Britain folded arms at midnight on May 3, in response to the call of their Trade Union leaders, and in the belief that by so doing they would help their fellows in the Coal Industry then, and now 29 weeks later, fighting to resist a lowering of their wages, and making worse their conditions generally. It was a splendid act of unselfishness, and many of those who struck work have since lost their jobs in a fight in which they personally were seeking nothing for themselves. How these are now faring may be inferred from the statements of some of their leaders, made at the National Labor Party annual conference at Margate, in October, where a move was made to get the conference to sanction a compulsory levy upon all trade unionists to provide the miners with funds to carry on their struggle. Mr. J. H. Thomas, for the railway men, said it was impossible; his own union having 45,000 men, who have not been able to get reinstated since the General Strike and 200,000 who are working only three days a week. Mr. Ben Tillet, for the Transport Workers' Union, said the union had spent £1,000,000 on the mining struggle, that it was now £500,000 in debt, and that its sick, strike, political, super-annuation, and organization funds had vanished. Sixty per cent. of the dockers, he said, are now unemployed, and another 20 per cent. under-employed. In the case of the Boiler Makers' Union, over 45 per cent. of its members are out of work.

### CERTAIN TO BE THE LAST GENERAL STRIKE

It was the first attempt at a General Strike in Great Britain, and it will be the last. If it should bring home to the rank-and-file trade unionists the utter futility of the strike-weapon under existing economic conditions, it may yet prove to have been worth the cost, heavy as that will prove to be. But this remains to be seen.

In July 1925, Mr. Baldwin purchased a temporary respite at a cost to the British taxpayer of more than £23,000,000. Without any clear ideas of his own, he hoped to gain time on the off-chance that something might turn up before the expiration of the subsidy. In some way or other, he appeared to think, the crisis in the

mining industry would solve itself; as for the Government, all they desire was "tranquillity." With a show of firmness he declared that under no circumstances would he give a subsidy. A few hours later he announced his decision to provide one. This sudden change of front was attributed to weakness, and, by the more violent section of Labor, taken to indicate that he would capitulate at any time if threatened with a General Strike. Thus encouraged, the irresponsible hot-heads, who prattle about "revolution" with the simplicity of a child, became insistent in their call for the General Strike. Like militarists with a new gun, they could not rest until it had been tried. Power to call a General Strike had been given the Trades Union Council by the Congress of September 1925, and the occasion seemed to offer when the subsidy terminated on April 30, and notices were posted at the pits announcing the new, and reduced, terms upon which one million miners were to be allowed to follow their employment as from May 1. Unless the terms were accepted the mines would be closed down and a lock-out declared. The terms were not accepted. With over 250,000 miners in full work getting a wage so low that they were forced to apply to the Poor Law Guardians for relief with which to eke out their pay, this was not surprising—and so the lock-out began. Thereupon the Trade Union Council gave notice that the General Strike would begin at midnight on Monday, May 3. Meanwhile discussions were continued between the parties, and there was a general expectation that in some way the impending disaster would be averted. But there were certain factors to be reckoned with.

### FOLLY OF THE TORY MINISTERS

The "fight-to-a-finish" advocates were not confined to the Labor side. These were to be found in the Government itself. Lord Birkenhead, Winston Churchill, Joynson-Hicks, Amery, Cunliffe-Lister, and certain lesser lights of the Tory cabinet were thirsting for blood. To them the situation appeared to offer the long-wished-for chance to "smash the Trade Unions." Mr. Baldwin honestly sought for a formula upon which to base—not a settlement, but a temporary peace. It now seems he was near to finding one when the Tory ministers mentioned above presented an ultimatum. They told the Prime Minister to break off negotiations with the T. U. C. or they would resign from the cabinet. During the nine months of the subsidy they had been perfecting their plans for dealing with any strike, and they concluded it was now time to "have it out" with Labor. This action placed Mr. Baldwin in a difficulty; he had no real pretext for a break with the Council, but it was not long before some unwise trade unionists themselves provided him with a seeming good excuse.

The "overt act," as it was called, was committed by some members of the printing staff of the *Daily Mail*. These

took offence—not without good reason—at the leading article written for the Monday's issue, and refused to bring the paper out. Of course they were not entitled to this, and the futility of the act was manifest when both the Manchester and Paris editions of the paper appeared carrying the offending article. It was as Mr. Baldwin said: "A gross interference with the liberty of the Press," and of course, no Tory government could countenance such an act—unless they disapproved of the views expressed. The matter was reported to the Prime Minister on the Sunday, whereupon, without calling upon the T. U. C. for an explanation of what was clearly an isolated act committed under great provocation, Mr. Baldwin denounced the "act of war" and promptly notified the T. U. C. that the Government regarded all negotiations at an end. This staggered the T. U. leaders, who were not themselves wanting a strike, and they sought to keep alive the discussions but were met with a curt refusal, coupled with a demand for immediate and unconditional calling-off of the General Strike as a condition precedent to the resumption of the conversations between the Government and themselves.

#### PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY

The Government had taken full powers to commit any number of illegal acts. In the *London Gazette* of May 1 was published a proclamation by the King of a State of Emergency. Of course it really was a Proclamation by the Cabinet. All the King has to do is to approve; when a Cabinet is in office prepared to issue a Declaration of the Restoration of the Land, the precedent of this present Proclamation will serve; particularly those parts we have printed in italics. The Proclamation was read from the steps of Town Halls throughout the country, and printed copies were exhibited on public buildings so that all and sundry might see. The actual words of the Proclamation run: "Whereas by the Emergency Powers Act, 1920, it is enacted that if *it appears to us that any action has been taken, or is immediately threatened by any person or body of persons of such a nature and on so extensive a scale as to be calculated by interfering with the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel, or light, or with the means of locomotion, to deprive the community or any substantial portion of the community of the essentials of life, we may by proclamation declare that a state of emergency exists.*"

This Proclamation was *not* directed against the Land Lords, notwithstanding they are guilty of all the offences set out in italics. Under its provisions it is possible for an ordinary policeman to arrest any speaker *for what he thinks the speaker is about to say!* Another proclamation by the Government was addressed to all members of the armed forces of the Crown, and stated that the Government would uphold them *in any action they might take.* Armoured cars, with guns mounted in position and prominently displayed thereon, were employed to convoy long

processions of motor and other vehicles carrying food-stuffs. On each vehicle rode a soldier fully armed and wearing the tin hat of the trenches. Police and "specials," i.e., volunteers enlisted to supplement the regular force, were plentifully in evidence; the whole imposing demonstration of force serving to expose the imbecility of the notion that an unarmed and undisciplined mob of strikers ever could "seize power" in this country.

#### GOVERNMENT ADOPTS STRINGENT MEASURES

In addition to the physical force at command of the Government there were certain moral forces which were used very effectively. Sir John Simon, a prominent lawyer and Liberal M. P., gave it as his considered opinion that the strike, apart from the dispute in which the miners were involved, was illegal, and consequently the funds of the Trade Unions were not protected by the Trades Disputes Act, but were liable to distraint. Trade union leaders responsible for calling out any men, were warned that they were personally liable in damages "to the uttermost extent of their possessions." The Strike being declared illegal, the Government was able to place an embargo upon any funds coming to the strikers from abroad and so prevented their distribution. Again, Trade Unions found when seeking to liquidate their assets for ready money to meet strike-pay demands, they could neither sell their War stock, nor secure an overdraft against it. Consequently they were unable to pay full rates—12s or less, instead of 25s, being the best they could do. This had a demoralizing effect; men were beginning to go back, and the rot oncé having set in would have spread quickly, with the inevitable collapse of the strike. At this juncture the Government caused it to be known to the T. U. C. that it was their intention to arrest the whole of that body on the grounds of their being engaged in an illegal conspiracy. This had the desired effect; and on the morning of Wednesday, May 12, a deputation from the T. U. C., having asked for an appointment with Mr. Baldwin, called at Downing Street and informed him of their decision to call off the general strike unconditionally. A more abject failure could not be conceived. The speeches of the deputation were pitiful in their humility—Mr. A. J. Cook, Secretary of the Miners' Federation, not inaptly describes them as "grovelling."

#### THE STRIKE WEAKENS THE UNIONS

On the strikers going back to work they were met in many cases with altered conditions. Many employers have decided in future to disregard the trade unions, and to employ both union and non-union men. In other instances an entirely new agreement had to be entered into wiping out, in effect, seniority and past service. Attempts to reduce wages were made, but here the Government put pressure on large employers like the Railways to prevent any such action being taken at this moment. It has been deferred, that's all; for it is not in the power

of the Government to fix wages, as the workers should by this time have learned. Wide publicity was given to a Government pledge that workers who returned voluntarily would not be penalized after the strike, but the comment of an ex-service man, overheard as we were walking home one night, was eloquent on that point. His companion had reminded him of the promise, and he replied in tones of deepest scorn: "Yes, they promised us poor blighters lots of things if we'd go out and fight, but what have they done for me? I've been out of a job for three years now!"

The immediate effect of the strike was an increase of over 500,000 in the number of registered unemployed—the number having since grown by over one million—while in many industries there is not work enough for a full staff and those re-engaged are working on short time. Meanwhile the miners are still out, and the effect of their stoppage is being felt in increasing unemployment in all other industries owing to lack of fuel. Mr. Churchill stated the cost of the strike, to the nation, that is, to be only £750,000 (now, however, the cost is put at £500,000,000), and said it would not be necessary for him to impose fresh taxation to meet it. He is equal to saying anything! He told us when introducing his Budget last April that the silk tax had not raised the price of the articles to the consumer. There is a word of three letters which will occur immediately to the mind of any wearer of silk stockings, for example, on hearing such a statement. As Mr. Churchill is not going to provide the £750,000 from his own pocket it follows that he will have to take it from the taxpayers, and only the other day he intimated the certainty of increased taxation in his next Budget.

#### STILL TALKING NONSENSE.

The most important effect will be on the minds of the workers themselves. The General Strike is shown to be an impossibility. The hopes (and fears) aroused before it had been tried out are now seen to have been equally groundless. Labor must come to realize that the Rt. Hon. John Wheatley, M. P., Labor ex-Minister of Health, talked sheer nonsense when he said that the subsidy "was the only intelligent way out." By this time it is clear that that method was neither intelligent nor a way out, for, today, we are faced with the situation of July, 1925, over again, accentuated by the events of the past six months. The coal trouble still calls for settlement, and the taxpayers (and the whole community) are poorer by many millions more than the 23 millions to which the subsidy amounted, and these millions they have to find in increased taxation, leading inevitably to higher cost of living with a consequent reduction in the value of their real wages.

As we write, the returns of the vote upon the latest suggested terms of "settlement" are coming in from the various mine fields. They show a heavy majority against, and in favor of continuing the fight. At the same

time, however, the numbers of men returning to the pits show a steady increase, indicating a break-away that will quickly develop into a rout. Still the leaders talk in terms of "wages" and "hours;" never a suggestion that the real root cause of the trouble is known to them. But there is a ray of hope for the future of Labor in the fact and the writer knows it to be so—that millions of individual workers are now asking the old, old question: "What must I do to be saved?" To that question there is but one possible answer: "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God—and *His* righteousness."

#### THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND HAS PART IN THE PLUNDER.

It is the right of every worker to retain as his wage the *whole of his product*. The miners of Great Britain are robbed of an increasing portion of their product. The Church of England, for instance, is concerned in this plunder to the tune of 10s. per head of the million workers in the coal fields. This is the yearly royalty tax taken by the Church, but it does not include the sum taken by the same authority as rent for use of surface land. So long as the crime of private property in the raw material of man's life and labor is tolerated, so long will some men rob other men of part of their earnings. Governments cannot stop it; they cannot do more than change the form of the robbery. Strikes for more wages do not affect the position, for these are not directed at the robbers. Wages are paid out of the total wealth produced by Labor. To go on strike and cease producing wealth cannot possibly increase wages; that can only diminish the fund from which these are drawn. The solution lies, as ever, in Freedom. Men must be free to please themselves how and when and at what they will work. When this obtains, wages will adjust themselves naturally; each worker will determine for himself. The tragedy of Labor is that it will listen to leaders who have not the necessary knowledge. One member of the Trade Union Council declared to the writer in public debate that it was "not the function of the trade union to eliminate the unemployed man." Perhaps he now sees the futility of attempting a General Strike in face of a million registered unemployed! It is to be hoped so.

#### THE PARTY OF JUSTICE.

We of the Commonwealth Land Party are concerned to help Labor to get Justice. We seek to point the only way out. Just as the chattel-slaves of old were the "property" of their masters, so the wage-slaves of today are owned and controlled by the Land Lords. A General Strike over wages is a quarrel about the distribution of wealth and must always fail since it is not an attack upon the monopoly at the root of the trouble. A General Strike against the Land Lords would raise the fundamental issue and, for this reason, would succeed.

London, England.

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