

DEPRESSED AREAS AGAIN

BY AJIT ROY

The fear of unemployment is once again raising its ugly head. In many parts of the country, it is no longer a threat but the stark reality. According to the figures issued in March the total number of the unemployed to-day amounts to 370,000—an increase of 120,000 over the previous quarter.

The most sinister aspect about these figures however, is not the amount but their distribution. They are concentrated in a few areas, viz., South Wales, Scotland, Durham and the North-West coast. The old Depressed areas are coming back once again. In South Wales, according to a Labour M.P., "cold shivers are running down the spine of the people". In this area, including Monmouthshire, there are at present 70,000 unemployed, the majority of whom are from mining, munitions, building and engineering trades. In Scotland, during the last nine months the total of unemployed workers has jumped up from 25,000 to 70,000.

The Government claims that the real problem that faces the country is not shortage of work but shortage of men.

"There are queues of men in some districts looking for jobs but there are queues of employers in other districts looking for men," says Mr. Isaacs.

But if they are really so certain that the present unemployment is only a temporary thing, and will soon be wiped off, then they have even less excuse for not raising the existing scales of unemployment benefit. It is a disgrace and a national scandal that at a time when the coal-owners are being compensated to the extent of over a hundred million pounds for an industry they have ruined and destroyed, that the unemployed man and his family should be made to live on an allowance which is barely enough to keep body and soul together.

In the House of Commons, one of the Labour M.P.s produced a letter from one of his unemployed constituents which gives us a vivid idea of the sense of injustice and frustration which prevails in the ranks of the unemployed worker to-day. We quote the following:

From An Unemployed Worker

"If our Government leaders and Members of Parliament who for some reason call themselves Socialists could enjoy the benefit and happy position of being unemployed and try to balance a family budget on an income of £2 10s. with which to feed, clothe and provide shelter for a man, his wife and two children they would be wishing and working for a bloody revolution and not waiting comfortably for a gradual social change. Whilst waiting, they could deny themselves the luxury of a 'jug' or a half-a-pint of beer. . . . They

would have the opportunity of seeing themselves developing into bitter personalities and torturing themselves about the things the family needs—the absolute necessities of life—knowing that such needs cannot be satisfied because Society decrees otherwise."

Is it surprising that men and women living under these conditions are contrasting their miserable allowances with the £1,000 salaries which the M.P.s want for themselves? If the Government cannot provide work for the unemployed, temporarily or otherwise, then they must provide for a decent standard of life for all these victims of capitalist society. *Work or Full Maintenance*—that must be our slogan, and the whole Labour movement must fight for its accomplishment.

Even if it were true, as the Government claims, that there is a scarcity of labour on a national scale, it is hardly a consolation for the unemployed worker in South Wales or Scotland who finds it impossible to move out of his home. The workers in these areas are looking for something better than the Labour Government than stories of jobs in London and the Southern Counties.

Under the rule of the Tories, industries were transferred from one area into another to suit the interests of the capitalists, leaving behind them a trail of misery and suffering in the form of the Depressed Areas. It should be the job of a Government that really stood for the interests of the workers to see that production serves the interests of the people, and not otherwise.

So far as the Labour Government is concerned there have been no end of promises and assurances on this score. They have stated time and again that under no circumstances would they permit the resurrection of the Depressed Areas. What is lacking is not promises but a policy.

Take the case of South Wales. Here, the Government has a scheme for 122 new factories. But of these only 28 are actually in hand. If and when they are completed, they will provide work for only 7,700 out of the total unemployed of 70,000. It is the same thing in the other areas.

Much has been said of the delay, red-tape and inefficiency of the Departmental Bureaucracy. But the real reason why so much has been done in words and so little in practice lies deeper. It is the fact that 90% of the Government's planning for bringing new work in the once Depressed Areas depends on the good-will and co-operation of Big Business and City Finance.

SHINWELL ATTACKS MINERS

BY J. DEANE

The most disgusting and reactionary attack upon the miners has come not from some die-hard Tory, but from a 'Socialist' Minister of Fuel, E. Shinwell! With the full support of the Cabinet, Shinwell has threatened the miners, and in particular the Bevin boys, who were forced into the pits against their will, with ruthless action.

Pits where unofficial strikes take place are to be closed and the miners forced to work in other areas. No miner is allowed to leave the industry. Bevin boys are to be forced into the army. Such are Shinwell's threats to increase production! Already sections of the miners' unions have protested against this most disgraceful attack upon the men who sweat their guts out to win coal.

Production Has Increased

Despite the increase in production of 54,500 tons a week over March 1945, coal stocks have been reduced to a level which faces Britain with the prospects of a coal famine next winter. Production must be increased by a further 800,000 tons weekly, if the minimum domestic requirements are to be met. Like Major Lloyd George, Churchill's Minister of Fuel, Shinwell holds "absenteeism" and "unofficial strikes" responsible for the failure to measurably increase production. Facts would show that this is a most reactionary lie, which serves to obscure the real cause for the failure to solve or ameliorate the coal production problem.

Absenteeism Not The Cause

Official figures are not available but we have the right to suspect a dishonest sleight of hand by Shinwell, when he claims that absenteeism is 17.13 per cent. There is a difference between voluntary absenteeism and involuntary absenteeism (caused by illness and accidents, etc.). The news account for 6.1 per cent. in 1945; the latter for 9 per cent. in the same period. The loss of labour-time through accidents and illness is greater than that lost by "absenteeism". This means that if all voluntary absenteeism was stopped it would not produce

a third of the required increase in production!

Also, in 1943 strikes accounted for less than 10 per cent. of the total tonnage lost. This was during the period of the Greene Award strikes, the tonnage, therefore, lost today would only be a minute part of that lost in 1943! These figures themselves indicate what up-to-date figures would most certainly prove: that neither "absenteeism" or "unofficial strikes" can explain the failure to measurably increase production. In repeating these allegations Shinwell repeats the lies of the capitalists who attempt to shoulder the burdens of capitalism onto the backs of the workers.

Real Causes of Crisis

The cause for the failure to increase production lay in inefficiency, lack of modern machinery and the steadily worsening of underground conditions. The mines have been nationalised, but the control is still in the hands of the capitalists, and the payment of millions in compensation to the coal-owners places an intolerable burden upon the miners. Shinwell tries to hide these facts.

Figures Tell The Story

The man-power situation in the coal industry is part of the problem, because this astounding "wastage of labour", as it is cynically termed, is directly caused by the economic and technical chaos of this industry. During the recent coal debate in the House of Commons, J. DAGGAR, M.P., gave the following pregnant facts:

"In the 12 years, 1932-43, we lost in the mines no less than 10,306 workers, equal to the population of a decent sized town. In addition, more than a million and a half mine workers were injured and rendered incapable of working for three, six or more days. More than 261 boys

(Continued in next Column.)

WHY THE HUNGER STRIKES IN IRELAND?

BY ELSIE ARMSTRONG

BELFAST— IN CRUMLIN ROAD PRISON, BELFAST, DAVID FLEMING, A MEMBER OF THE REPUBLICAN ARMY, HAS BEEN ON HUNGER STRIKE FOR OVER 50 DAYS IN PROTEST AGAINST THE BRUTALITY OF THE PRISON WARDERS. HE IS REPORTED TO BE "SINKING FAST".

In Dublin 400 Turf workers struck work and demonstrated before the President for the release of Sean McCaughey, the 23-year-old Adjutant General of the I.R.A., imprisoned for "unlawfully impersonating and assaulting" Stephen Hayes, one time Chief of the I.R.A., who was condemned by the I.R.A. as an agent provocateur.

But Sean McCaughey died after 23 days hunger strike.

The case of David Fleming is a glaring exposure of the conditions under which political prisoners live in Crumlin Road Jail. We reproduce below a leaflet issued in the Northern Star Special Supplement:

THE CASE OF DAVID FLEMING

"In the autumn of 1942, David Fleming came up from Killarney, to Belfast; a tall splendid young man in the prime of health and strength. The very model and prototype of the Irish Volunteer, he was a dynamo of activity and he radiated courage and good humour to all who were privileged to know him.

In September 1942, he was arrested after a fierce gun battle on the Crumlin Road, in company with John Graham of Newcastle. A month later he was sentenced to 12 years penal servitude, with Graham and Hugh McAteer, on a charge of Treason-Felony, the 'crime' of David and John Mitchell.

After the escape of Steel and McAteer in 1943, Fleming was adjudged of political prisoners in 'A' Wing and about this time he was singled out for provocative treatment by warders Boyd and Kennedy. His first attempt to secure political treatment was made in the summer of that year and a prolonged and bitter fight ensued. He was beaten after this strike was broken and was subjected to continual personal searching and stripping, sometimes twice a day. Warders Foster and Jackson found fault with Fleming daily, and did all they could to make prison life intolerable to a man of his high spirit. Chief Warden Thompson was very prominent in all attempts to break and humiliate Fleming.

In 1944 Fleming received a very severe beating which injured his health permanently. Mr. H. Diamond, M.P., read a statement in the Stormont about this incident which is starkly illuminating:

"Warder Foster ordered me to face the wall. When I refused, Jackson said 'I'll soften you' Foster then hit me with his fist and Thompson with his keys. Then Foster kicked me. I was put on report and brought to see the Doctor. On my way to see him I was pushed downstairs by Warder Noble. Outside the doctor's room I was hit by Warders Moore and Boyd with batons. When standing in the line with my back to Boyd, he kicked me in the leg. After I saw the doctor, Noble, Boyd and Moore beat me with their fists and boots, from AI

Demand Release of Political Prisoners

50 Labour M.P.s Protest

Fifty British Labour M.P.s have already wired the Stormont Government demanding Fleming's release. That is a step in the right direction—but it is only a step.

Many others are either serving long sentences or interned; these men must be released. Scores of Irish Republicans are serving sentences in British prisons. True, these men took part in the futile bombing campaign of 1939, but the responsibility for that campaign lies with the Stormont Government, which deprives them of legal methods of struggle, and with the British Government, which subsidises Stormont. The ending of the repressive legislation in both Northern Ireland and Eire would pave the way for the growth of a mass socialist movement, thus eliminating the basis for the underground Republican form of struggle.

Our Attitude To The I.R.A.

Revolutionary socialists have nothing in common with the policy of individual terrorism pursued by the I.R.A. The armed robberies, the shooting of policemen and prison warders merely provide the Government with an excuse for repressive measures against all opposition. They hope to unite Ireland, but succeed merely in deepening the antagonism between "loyalist" and nationalist workers, thus furthering the interests of the capitalist class.

It must be realised, however, that the I.R.A. is the direct outcome of the sectarian policies pursued by the Tory-Unionist Govern-

Italian C.P. Attacks French C.P.

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no longer openly give its powerful support to the House of Savoy. If honestly conducted, the plebiscite on June 2nd will spell doom for the Italian Royal House, unless—unless—the reactionaries try to retain by armed force what they cannot hope to hold through the ballot box. In such an event civil war is inevitable.

The strength of the working-class parties however, makes it highly unlikely that the Monarchists will take the risk of a resort to arms. Reaction will have to bide its time.

S.P. and C.P. — Same Programme

Meanwhile, the various parties are preparing for the elections. There are no clear-cut issues which divide the major parties, and the masses are finding it difficult to distinguish between the programmes of the Communist and Socialist Parties and the Christian Democrats. To add to their confusion, TOGLIATTI, leader of the Communist Party, in a speech in Rome on May 5th, assures them that there are no differences.

"With the Christian Democrats", he said, "we have a common programme; that programme which was approved together with the Socialists at the Naples Congress of the General Confederation of Labour. We have declared that as we have a common programme we should work together . . . up to now they have said 'no' to this proposition."

Indeed, according to Togliatti, the only thing which distinguishes his party from the other two is that the Stalinists are for "unity" whilst the others are not.

Trieste

Nothing is stranger in this election than the efforts of the Stalinists to cover up their past. Formerly they supported the Monarchy. For more than a year they have hedged on the issue of Trieste. To openly support Stalin's foreign policy, which requires that Trieste goes to Yugoslavia, would have antagonised tens of thousands of potential communist voters. This was a question, said Togliatti, which had to be settled through peaceful negotiations between Italy and Yugoslavia. Today the Stalinists are succumbing to chauvinist sentiment and are chalking the walls with the slogan "Long Live Italian Trieste in the Italian Republic". This is nothing but an opportunistic vote-catching manoeuvre.

Togliatti Attacks French C.P. — Covers Stalin

Desperate for votes, Togliatti does not even hesitate to attack the Communist Parties of France and Yugoslavia. In the same Rome speech already quoted, he states:

"Nothing will prevent me from declaring that I am not in agreement with those com-

munist in other countries who . . . commit the error of not making any distinction between fascism and the Italian people."

There is not a word of criticism however to be found in Togliatti's speeches against his master in the Kremlin, who is behind Yugoslavia's demand for Trieste and who wants to impose on the Italian people a *reparation claim* for £75,000,000. Italy "has paid reparations in full", says Togliatti elsewhere in the speech, through the blood and sacrifices of her partisans and strikers). On the contrary, he lauds Soviet foreign policy for its great contribution to "peace and democracy".

For Private Initiative

To make quite sure that no-one misunderstands the policy on which the C.P. is facing the voters, Togliatti stressed:

"We do not advocate a Socialist economic system for Italy and believe that it is clear to all that there does not exist today the conditions for inaugurating such a system in Italy. We affirm that it is necessary to leave a large field of development to private initiative, which alone makes possible the rapid reconstruction of our national economy."

Speaking in the San Carlo Theatre, Naples, on May 8th, Togliatti once again called for the collaboration of the C.P., Socialists and Christian Democrats. He stressed that only the Communist Party had made possible a "stable government" since 1943.

The workers of Italy know very well the price they have had to pay for this "stability". Under the succession of coalition governments in which both the C.P. and S.P. functioned, their conditions have steadily deteriorated. On every important social issue the Right wing parties in the government forced a crisis. In the sacred name of "national unity", the Left-wing parties gave way and another slash had been taken at the workers' standard of living.

For a S.P.-C.P. Government

In the coming elections, the workers of Italy will vote Socialist and Communist, not because the programmes of these parties fulfill their aspirations, but because they are determined to prevent a victory of the reaction. They will vote Socialist and Communist as the only way of asserting their class independence. By giving the working-class parties a clear majority over all other parties, they will show their support for the line of action put forward by the Italian Trotskyists, the Partito Operaio Comunista (Workers' Communist Party), who are demanding that the Socialist and Communist leaders break with the capitalist parties and form a government of the working-class parties — a Socialist-Communist-General Confederation of Labour Government.

This is the road forward for the Italian workers. This is the first step towards that socialist economic system which Togliatti fears so much. *May, 1946.*

French Turn

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in a rise in the prices of stocks and shares.

However, it is significant to note that in spite of all the failures and shortcomings of the Stalinists and Socialists, in spite of the fact that the masses did not have an inspiring socialist lead, the number of votes for "Yes" was only a few hundred thousand less than the votes received by the Socialists and Communists in the General Election.

According to the press, sections of the socialist voters, some of the white collared and middle class element voted "No."

The overwhelming majority of the workers continued to vote for the workers' parties. It is still possible that the Stalinists will gain votes in the General Election at the expense of the Socialists, while the Socialists may recover many of the votes that they have lost. But the workers' parties, because of their policy, cannot hope to win the bulk of the middle class vote.

France is split into two camps, which, despite the perfidious leadership of the Socialists and Stalinists, are irreconcilable. The capitulation to monopoly capital has merely whetted the appetite of the reactionaries, who are preparing for an offensive against the working class.

Civil War Coming

General De Gaulle remains as a reserve weapon of the capitalist

class. However, there will be many fluctuations in the class struggles that lie ahead, with alternating waves of reaction and radicalisation. As the *Manchester Guardian* expressed it in an editorial:

"Without a vigorous reorganisation of a social and economic life, France is in danger of becoming a second Spain."

The fact is, because the Stalinists and Socialists did not shatter forever the hold of the combines and trusts of the 200 families who rule France; because they have been unable to recover and gain support amongst sections of the despairing middle class, civil war is virtually inevitable. The present position cannot continue indefinitely, though as in Spain the climax will be delayed. The ruling class will move in the direction of establishing a military police or Bonapartist dictatorship as the only means of stabilising their rule. The choice before France in the next period will be between the rule of the working class or the naked dictatorship of finance-capital.

Unless the French workers are mobilised for a determined struggle against capitalism, the reaction will gather its forces for an onslaught on the working class. The French section of the Fourth International, the International Communist Party fights for the only policy which offers a communist solution. They are demanding that the Socialist and Communist Parties break with the capitalists and struggle for power on a revolutionary programme. They are fighting in the defence of the workers standards, and to take action against the employers and reaction. Our French Party points to the road of Lenin; the establishment of a Soviet Socialist France and the complete overthrow of the power of the capitalist class.

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EGYPT

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complete break with Britain's imperialist past, by the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of troops from the whole of the Middle East, and the granting of complete independence to all the Arab masses. Along these lines the workers in Britain could lay the basis for a new association with the Arab countries, based upon friendship and trust between the toiling masses of these countries, and their mutual co-operation in the building of an independent Socialist Federation of the Arab workers and peasants, in alliance with a Socialist Britain.