

ONE BIG UNION

Pamphlet No. 2.

# Direct Action

By WM. GALLACHER and  
J. R. CAMPBELL



Published by  
SCOTTISH WORKERS' COMMITTEES, GLASGOW,  
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# DIRECT ACTION

## An Outline of Workshop and Social Organisation

Extracts from a Pamphlet by Wm. Gallacher and J. R. Campbell, published by the National Council of Scottish Workers' Committees.

The Capitalist ownership of industry is being challenged to-day. The intelligent worker to-day understands that the factory he works in, the marvellous machinery he operates, while it is the private property of a group of capitalists, is nevertheless the embodiment of the labour of workers in other industries. He has no respect for Capitalistic property, because he recognizes that that property is the fruit of the past robbery of the workers. He has still less respect for it when he discovers that it is a means for robbing him in the present; robbing him not merely of material wealth, but robbing him of manhood.

To-day the worker in industry is merely a living tool. He has no voice in the conduct of the industry his labor sustains. He has no voice in determining the purposes for which industry is carried on. He is on a level with the inanimate machine he works, or the raw material which he changes into the finished product.

It is against this industrial degradation that the workers are beginning to struggle. They are realizing that the right to vote for Parliament, once in five years, is of little value compared with the right to vote on the way industry should be carried on. Consequently, the demand is arising that the brain and manual workers in industry shall, by electing their own controlling bodies and their own officials, democratically manage the industry in which they work. This movement for industrial self-government has already gained sufficient power on the Continent of Europe to shake the Capitalist system to its foundations.

## THE ROAD TO INDUSTRIAL FREEDOM.

The problem of obtaining Self-Government in industry can only be solved by the development of the workers' power in industry. It cannot be solved by the workers remaining passive and expecting an assembly of political supermen to change the world for them. No great social change has ever been brought about by people, who desired to see that change, being content merely to express pious opinions on the matter. A drastic social change, such as the taking of industry from the control of the Capitalists and placing it in the control of the workers, demands that the workers shall exercise initiative, and assume responsibilities, in the every day struggle with the functionaries of the employing class in the workshop. The workers' power rests upon the circumstances that it is they who keep the wheels of industry turning round, without which an ordered social life is impossible, and it is they who are the most numerous class in the country. It is by organizing the workers' power of numbers, in the place where that power can be applied most successfully, namely, in industry, that we will be able to break the power of the employers and acquire the power to control the industrial forces of the country in the interests of the working class. To enable the workers to acquire the requisite power, a remodelling of the workers' industrial organizations is imperative. The bulk of the Trade Unions of the country have been built up to attain the ideal of a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, and in power and organization they are totally unfitted to bring about a change of social and industrial structure. Indeed, it may be questioned whether they would be able to defend the existing wage standard of the workers against a concerted attack from the employers!

## IMPOTENCE OF CRAFT UNIONISM.

In the last seventy years a great change has taken place in the Capitalist organization of industry. Seventy years ago the bulk of the industries of the country were owned by individual employers engaged in cut-throat competition with each other for trade. Under these circumstances it was possible for strongly organized bodies of skilled workers to win concessions from the employers and so improve their conditions of life. Those circumstances, which gave Craft Unionism a fighting chance against the employers, have practically passed away. Capital has been consolidating itself during the interval. The individual employer has long since given way to the joint stock corporation, which is rapidly merging into the trust, and against these latest products of Capitalist organization, Craft Unionism, i.e., the organization of workers according to trade, can make no headway. This fact has been hidden from some workers because of the war-time rises in wages. During the war the Craft Unions applied for and received advances in wages to meet the increased cost of living, and many workers have rushed to the conclusion that Craft Unionism is



still able to win considerable concessions from the employers. But the war-time conditions were exceptional. In the first place, there was an artificial scarcity of labor such as is never likely to recur in normal times. This, coupled with the pressing need of the Government to maintain industrial peace in war-time, made concessions inevitable. With the passing of these circumstances, the power of Craft Unionism to win better conditions for the workers has passed also. Even from the point of view of those who believe that the Capitalist system is everlasting, and that the utmost the worker can expect is slight adjustments in his working conditions, Craft Unionism is no longer useful.

From the point of view of those who desire a change in the system it is a barrier stretched across the path of the advancing workers.

### THE FUTURE OF THE STRIKE.

Strike pay, which is a feature peculiar to the sectional strike, must, like the sectional strike, be discarded as a weapon for modern industrial warfare. In the earlier struggles of the workers, when a small group was out on strike against an individual employer, strike pay was a handy enough makeshift. Sufficient money could be raised through levies on other workers to keep things going. But nowadays strikes are assuming such magnitude that very few unions could stand the strain of paying out strike benefit if it lasted for any length of time.

Another thing that may be worth while remembering is, that men don't strike for the sake of getting strike benefit. They never go on strike until conditions actually force them to do so, and the strike of the future will be of such a revolutionary character that even if officials were courageous enough to endorse it, the Government would in all probability step in and prohibit the use of the funds for strike purposes. Let us waste no time worrying over this. The weekly dole, even if forthcoming, is totally insufficient to feed the family of a man who is on strike. Something better than standing passively by until we are starved must be devised. The passive strike must give way to the active strike.

✓ Even if the workers were prepared to play their old role of passivity during a strike, it is questionable if they would be allowed to do so, because for the master class equally with the working class, the day of the passive strike has passed. The most disquieting feature of recent strikes from the point of view of the trade unionist who prostrates himself before the mumbo jumbo of constitutionalism is the appearance of the Government openly on the side of the employers. Governmental interference in recent mass strikes in Britain, Germany, the United States and Canada, shows us that for the master class and the subsidized politicians, the day for offering merely passive

resistance to working class efforts has gone by. As the social struggle grows keener the Capitalist State is compelled to drop its mask of impartiality, and appear in its true character as an instrument of class domination. When strikes were small affairs, the State would hide its true character and assume the pose of a neutral body, leaving the organization of the employers to cope with the workers. But as working class organization becomes more powerful, the master class will be forced to supplement their organization by calling for State aid. The State will then be dragged into the open and forced to reveal itself in its true colors.

Any State attempt to smash a large-scale strike of the workers will, of course, be preceded by the usual outburst of detestable hypocrisy by which the ruling class hope to excuse any resort to brute force. A pose of moral indignation will be adopted. The politicians will denounce the unrighteous attack of the workers on the poor long-suffering community. The liars of the Press will work overtime blackening the cause of the workers by lies as black as the ink they are written in, and after an appropriate atmosphere has been created the repression will commence.

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(Note:—The workers in Great Britain are perfecting an organization known as the "Shop Stewards' Movement" that practically eliminates the trade union official and gives the workers greater control of their job. A synopsis of the proposed form of organization follows, but it must be remembered that while the O. B. U. is in agreement with the principles of the "Shop Stewards' Movement," that the exact form of organization that is suitable to Great Britain with its large and numerous industrial centres is not applicable to an agricultural country like Canada with small and widely scattered industrial communities.)

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#### WORKSHOP ORGANIZATION.

Whether it be in the mines, on the railways, or in the engineering shop, the workers must assume full power to decide on action, without having to wait on the slow, cumbrous movement of the present Trade Union machinery. To do this we must have organization.

No better model of organization could be offered than that provided by the Capitalists themselves. This is the lesson all workers must learn: As the employers organize, so must they as workers organize. That there should be one central office controlling thousands of workers in one particular plant, in the interests of the employer, and a dozen or twenty offices outside (and probably miles away from the plant) representing the same workers, is surely sufficient in itself to show the need for a complete change in the method of organization.



The central office governs clerks, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled alike. Manager, sub-managers and foremen, are all responsible to it, and though they are but a small, a very small, minority in the industry, prove themselves capable, as a result of being so well organized, of dominating and keeping in subjection the more numerous but disorganized workers they rule over. What has proved so effective with the employers will most assuredly prove a valuable weapon for the workers. Instead of having a variety of Trade Union Committees outside the plant, each working independently of the other, and very often fighting with one another, a committee should be formed inside representing all classes of workers, irrespective of their trade or sex.

**Departmental Committee.**—Composed of one representative from every fifty workers, or part of fifty.

**Workshop Committee.**—Composed of representatives from each Departmental Committee.

**Plant Committee.**—Composed of representatives of every workshop in the plant. Would co-ordinate the work of the Workshop Committees.

**District Committee of a Particular Industry.**—Would link up all the plants of a particular industry together throughout the district, and would thereby make action to remedy a grievance at once swift and solid.

**District Council of All Industries.**—Would link the different industries together, and make class action over a given area effective. Would undertake the organization of unorganized industries, and would act as the Workers' Intelligence Department of the area.

**National Committee of Particular Industries.**—Would link up the districts and ensure aggressive action on a national scale.

**National Council of All Industries.**—Would link up the different National Committees for class action on a national scale. Would also act as the General Staff of Labor.



For Literature and Information concerning the One Big Union Movement, apply to the Secretary, General Executive Board, P. O. Box 1566, Winnipeg, Man.







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