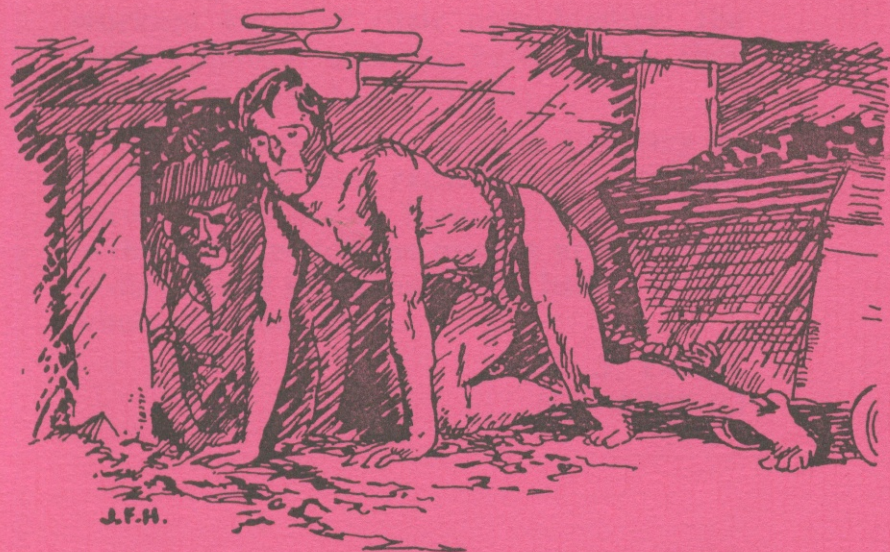


A HISTORY OF

THE MINERS'

STRUGGLE

Foreword by **A.J. COOK**



CHEAPER THAN HORSEFLESH !

A "Tugger" dragging coal in a Somersetshire mine.

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FOREWORD

SPREAD the facts this pamphlet contains among your fellows. The more the workers know of their own history, the more resolute, and the better able, they will be to *make history* to-day.

The history of the mining industry in Britain is one long record of the struggle between Profits and Human Lives. That is the battle which the miners are fighting to-day ; and it is a battle on behalf of the whole working class.

A. J. COOK
(*Sec., M.F.G.B.*)

A HISTORY OF THE MINERS' STRUGGLE

THE history of the mining industry is one of repeated epic struggles between colliers and mine-owners. Every tiny reform, advance in wages, or improved working conditions, have had to be forced by prolonged agitation and strikes. Repeated lock-outs by the owners to enforce worsened conditions have been a commonplace. The recent proposals of the Mining Association to the Royal Commission are characteristic of this historical attitude.

The colliers have emerged from a condition close to slavery much more recently than other workers. Indeed, in Scotland, they only escaped from actual serfdom by an Act of 1799; but this same Act prohibited combination amongst them. In 1609 an Act in Scotland declared that "no person within the realm hereafter shall fee, hire, or conduce any saltrais, coalcaris, or coalbeararis without a sufficient testimonial" (from previous employers). Employers had power to apprehend "all sturdy vagabonds" and "sturdy beggars to be put to labour." There was a penalty of £1,000 Scots on employers taking a collier without a testimonial, while the collier is to be considered a thief and punished in his body if he has taken "forewages and fees" from his new employer. A 1641 Act was secured by the employers to force colliers to work six days per week under a penalty.

Profits Before Life

With the demand for coal for smelting purposes during the seventeenth century, it began to be dug on a larger scale generally. But there were very few deep mines, practically no winding machinery, and primitive implements were used. Newcomen's pumping engine was installed in a pit in Staffordshire in 1712, and other inventions made it easier to sink deeper mines and bring the coal to bank. The demand for coal steadily increased during the eighteenth century with the expansion of industry, and coal mining rapidly became one of our most important industries.

The last quarter of the eighteenth century was a period of immense industrial activity. 1776 saw the perfection of the steam engine ; there was a rapid change in the cotton industry from mainly domestic to complete factory production. New industrial towns sprang up in the coal-fields, and the enclosure movement was intensified when the world was being made safe from the menace of Napoleonism. Into the new industrial areas and coal-fields flocked the dispossessed peasantry and unfortunate domestic workers. Social problems were created, and these, with the bogey of Jacobinism, caused shivers of apprehension among the ruling classes. The typical attitude of the latter to the workers is seen by the fact that a hundred men could be killed in an accident in a Northumberland pit and no inquest held. "The Davy lamp, for which the inventor refused to take out a patent, renouncing an income of £5,000 to £10,000 a year, 'his sole object to serve the cause of humanity,' was used in many cases to serve the cause of profits. Deeper and more dangerous seams were worked, and accidents actually increased in number." Explosives and naked lights continued to be used in fiery mines, and as late as 1835, when a committee was appointed to enquire into the causes of explosions, a Mr. Buddle, a wealthy North of England colliery owner, in his evidence said : "Without its use (gunpowder) it is not practicable to work the coals out of the mine at a price that would pay for working."

The collier as a "free" man under capitalism sold his labour-power annually for money wages or goods. He was compelled to produce a fixed quantity weekly for a fixed wage. If the selling price of coal was lowered, then wages were proportionately reduced. Fines were general, and he had to provide his own "bearer," usually his wife or daughter. Bitter strikes were inevitable against these conditions when Trade Unions were formed.

Custom varied considerably in the colliery districts. In Stafford, Salop, Warwick, and Derby the "butty system" prevailed, a system of medieval sub-contracting still prevailing in the Notts coalfield. The gang system prevailed in Leicester, parts of the West Riding, the Lothians district and North Wales. In Lanark, Northumberland and Durham, Lancashire, South Wales and Monmouth the

mines were controlled by large owners. In the gang system the miners contracted with the owners of the minerals, to procure the coal at specified prices. The owner sank the shaft and provided the machinery. The butty system was similar, except that the contract was obtained by one or two small bosses who owned the tools and hired the miners. Under the proprietor system, of course, the whole machinery, tools, and personnel were controlled by the owners.

The Beginnings of Organised Struggle

In 1810 the Northumberland and Durham miners struck against the conditions of the "yearly bond." There does not appear to have been a definite union, but delegates were chosen to conduct the strike and negotiate. Military force and persecution were used against them, leaders were imprisoned, at one time 300 men were confined in the episcopal stables at Bishop Auckland, the jails being full, and they were compelled to return to work on the employers' terms. Fallhouse Wilson, a weaver, organised the Ayrshire miners in 1817. The Union was smashed in a fortnight. During a six months' strike in the Edinburgh district (1824) there were savage reprisals, and some blacklegs had their ears cut off. The miners in Dumbarton, Renfrew, and Lanark, were successful in raising wages from 3s. 6d. to 5s. per day. During the strike "strangers from Ireland" were imported, resulting in a bitter anti-Irish feeling.

A Govan colliery manager founded in 1826 a "Friendly and Free Labour Society" which, as he said, "relieved the workmen from the pernicious effects of strikes."

John Doherty founded the National Association for the Protection of Labour in 1830. The miners of Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Lancashire and Cheshire affiliated by decision of a delegate conference; the Derbyshire miners also joined. A Friendly Society of Coal Mining was formed in 1831 in South Wales and connected itself with Doherty's organisation, which, however, broke up in the same year.

The Manchester stipendiary wrote in 1830 that the power of this Union was a public danger, and that picketing should be made illegal. A strike took place in Mon-

mouth in the same year, partly against the illegal "truck" system. An 1817 Act prohibited Truck, and a coalowner who was a magistrate wrote to the Home Office that "the steps I shall propose to take will be to have the men apprehended who have left their employ and to have them sent to the treadmill."

"Tommy" Hepburn—Outlaw

The system of the "yearly bond" in Northumberland and Durham, under which the miners were bound to work for the same master for a year, and for conditions arbitrarily decided by him, resulted in frequent disputes. Fines could be, and were, levied. Dismissals and imprisonment if they refused to work made the lot of the miner one of practical slavery. A Union was formed in 1825, and a big extension took place in 1830 under "Tommy" Hepburn's influence. The colliers drew up a schedule of grievances and refused to enter into any "bond" unless these were remedied. A few concessions, as the twelve hours' day for boys instead of one without limit, were obtained by strike action in 1831. The mine-owners organised their forces and in the following year determined to smash the Union. After a prolonged and bitter resistance they were successful. Evictions took place on a wholesale scale, personally superintended by Lord Londonderry, Lord Lieutenant of the County a big landowner and coal-owner. Hepburn was practically made an outlaw, and only eventually obtained employment on the promise to renounce Unionism. A big strike in the West of Scotland was broken up in 1837 by importation of thousands of hungry weavers to act as blacklegs under military protection. The nominal wages at the loom were then 7s. 6d. and 8s. per week.

"Physical Oppression and Systematic Slavery"

Shocking revelations as to the conditions of child and women labour in the mines were revealed by the Children's Employment Commission Report, 1842. Mr. Franks, one of the investigators, reported "... deadly physical oppression and systematic slavery of which I conscientiously believe no one unacquainted with such facts would credit the existence in the British Dominions." Children

of eleven years work from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. The pit bottoms, says Mr. Franks, are like "common sewers," with an inclination of one in three, and the women, half naked, crawl on hands and knees, harnessed "like horses" to their bogies of coal. Little boys, four or five years, sat all day, cold and shivering, in the darkness. In Lord Balcarres' pits at Aspull Moor the children worked from 5 a.m. to 6 p.m., and some were workhouse apprentices. Lord Ashley's Bill (1843) entirely prohibited female labour underground, and was passed although coal-owners sought an amended measure. The House of Commons carried a second reading limiting the starting age of collier boys to thirteen. Coal-owners, however, succeeded in getting the starting age reduced to ten, and for boys between ten and thirteen three days' work, of twelve hours per day, per week.

In 1843 a general union of coal-miners spread throughout the kingdom, headed by the Northumberland and Durham men. They appointed a chartist solicitor, W. P. Roberts, as their "attorney general." On the expiry of the contracts March 31, 1844, Roberts was empowered to draft a new agreement, demanding

- (a) Payment by weight instead of measure.
- (b) Determination of weight by means of ordinary scales subject to the public inspectors.
- (c) Half yearly renewal of contracts.
- (d) Abolition of fines system and payment according to work actually done.
- (e) Employers to guarantee to miners in their exclusive service at least four days' work per week or wages for same.

The "coal barons" ignored the demands, war was declared, and 40,000 men downed tools. Roberts was extremely successful in defending miners gaoled by despotic justices on trumped-up charges of intimidation, etc. Lord Londonderry practised intimidation, however, in a perfectly "legal" fashion on the shopkeepers in "his" town of Seaham for giving "his" rebellious workers credit. And the capitalists' last, but infallible resource, the eviction of miners from their dwellings, owned by the companies, was exercised to the accompaniment of the usual

scenes of brutality. After five months' struggle the resistance of the men was at an end, and the Union had completely disappeared by 1848. Soon after, the Lancashire miners formed a union of some 10,000 members. Round the "hungry forties" strikes were numerous amongst the Scots miners. During a dispute in Ayrshire three strikers received sentences of ten years' transportation for rioting. The importation of destitute crofters and Irish were numerous, so much so that three-fourths of the miners in the Lanarkshire coal-field were Irish, an average wage of 2s. 6d. per day prevailing. The Mining Inspector reported in Scotland that eight colliers were killed monthly on an average. This was in 1850-1, and he further stated many mines were worked "without any ventilating process whatever."

"Truck" and Trouble

During the fifties trade unionism among the miners was practically non-existent, although Martin Jude made an energetic attempt to re-establish a National Association in 1850. About 1855 Alexander Macdonald became prominent, associating himself in all reform movements, and especially against the practice of Truck. "The collier had everything trucked to him—except his coffin; if he went on strike his children ceased to be educated, for the schoolmaster was trucked, supplied by the employer but paid by the worker out of levies on their wages. Similarly the doctor was trucked." At Chapehall a truck store manager died worth £10,000. There is an illuminating extract from the 1841 Commission evidence:—John Evans, schoolmaster: ". . . . Nothing can exceed the mischief of the shops; men will go to the shops and get a pound of sugar, or what not, and take it to the nearest public-house for drink. I frequently myself take goods from the colliers instead of money; the colliers have no money. I can't do anything else. . . . There is very seldom any balance for the working-men to receive; they are screwed down to the lowest possible pitch."

A strike took place in the West of Scotland in 1856 against new rules which were framed to make the men themselves responsible for accidents. Despite appeals for Government arbitration, the 40,000 strikers were

compelled to return to work after extraordinary privations endured for the three months. The attitude of the coal-owners to accidents was expressed by Wemyss, a coal-owning M.P., in the *Glasgow Herald* (8-2-1859):—"He had a perfect right to keep his coal pits filled with black damp if he chose; he forced nobody to go into his pits, and nobody was at liberty to constrain him to act otherwise than as he thought proper."

The Opposition to Checkweighing

Nothing better illustrates the typical attitude of the coal-owners to reform than their determined resistance to the demand of the men to have their own representative at the pit bank who should check the weight paid for. The miners in South Yorkshire, after embittered resistance, obtained this boon from several coal-owners. In January, 1861, the new Act for the Regulation and Inspection of Mines came into force. Boys between ten and twelve years could only be employed if in possession of education certificates; notice of accidents to be sent within twenty-four hours to the authorities; wages not to be paid in "pubs"; coals in future to be well and truly weighed. It empowered the miners of each pit to appoint a checkweigher, but confined their choice to persons actually in employment at the particular pit. In the Barnsley district Normansell, when appointed checkweigher, was immediately dismissed from his employment on this ground, and the Union had to indulge in two years' costly litigation before he was reinstated. John Normansell was, incidentally, the first working-man Town Councillor. Coal-owners had recourse to the law courts in Scotland, "where the Sheriffs obligingly rendered the Act null and void." One sheriff giving judgment, said "the Statute, while it provided that the material should be truly weighed, did not enact that the men should be paid for what was so weighed." For the next twenty years the coal-owners adopted every device to avoid compliance with the law. The Mines Regulation Act, 1872, slightly strengthened the position, but it was not till 1887 that the right was made perfectly clear for the men, at the expense of the whole pit, to appoint a checkweigher with power to keep an accurate record of each man's work. Legislation which

made the provision of two shafts compulsory in mines followed a frightful catastrophe at the Hartley Colliery, Northumberland, 1862.

During the sixties, there was a campaign for many reforms, including the eight hours' day. One newspaper described it as an "absurd project" of "interested professional agitators." Victimisation of many supporters followed. A House of Lords' decision was obtained by a Scots firm of coal-owners, in 1868, abolishing accident compensation on the ground that "the miner received his wages not only for his work but also to compensate him for any risk he ran. . . or any accident that might befall him." Wages were then 2s. 6d. per day. A Miners' Act of 1872 caused widespread disaffection. It reduced from twelve to ten daily the working hours for colliery boys, but increased truck facilities. Among the new special rules was one making the miners themselves responsible for the safety of their working places. Macdonald urged a national strike against these rules, and in fact many sectional strikes in protest occurred.

Revival of National Organisation

The National Union of Miners was established in 1862—3, but an almost uninterrupted series of strikes and lockouts in many districts prevented it from taking a firm hold, and it survived after 1879 only in Northumberland, Durham, and Yorkshire. A younger rival, the Amalgamated Association of Miners, dominated South Wales and the Midlands, but broke up and vanished in 1875. In that year there was a furious conflict in South Wales owing to the men's refusal to submit to a ten per cent. reduction. Work was, however, resumed at a reduction of twelve and a half per cent. During the period when the "Junta" were leading the agitation for legal protection of T.U. funds, repeal of the Master and Servant Act, etc., Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt, both miners, were returned to Parliament at the 1874 General Election. The Larkhall miners voted £100 for Macdonald's election expenses, Annbank £10, and the Maryhill miners levied themselves 1s. per head. The sliding scale was introduced as a method of wage payments in 1874 and its adoption had become common by 1879.

Organisation almost disappeared during the bad years of 1877—79. Miners took a prominent part in the agitation to make employers responsible for compensation in accident cases. There was a partial reform in 1880. The South and West Yorks Miners' Association formally terminated the then existing sliding scale in 1881. There was a reorganisation in local unions, and Lancashire followed the Yorkshire lead. The Lancashire Miners' Federation was successfully established in 1882. Their 1883 Conference resolved that "the time has come when the working miners' shall regulate the production of coal; that no collier or other underground worker shall work more than five days or shifts per week; and that the hours from bank to bank be eight per shift." Strikes were futile in the endeavour to give effect to this programme and resort was again taken to the policy of legislative regulation. Parliament in 1887, the result of Keir Hardie's successful lobbying, stopped the employment of boys under twelve years in the mines.

An endeavour was made to insert a clause in the Mines Regulation Act, 1887, limiting the day's work to eight hours, but it was rejected by the House of Commons by 159 votes to 104. During these years there were renewed efforts at organisation in Scotland. Michael Davitt, in a fiery crusade, had advocated nationalisation of the mines in 1884, and at a meeting in Lanark his chairman estimated that the Duke of Hamilton took in 1883 no less than £114,486 in royalties, or £9 10s. 9d. for every working miner in the Hamilton coal-fields. The Scottish Miners' Federation was formed in 1886, with Keir Hardie as secretary. It is interesting to recall the following paragraph from the first annual report:—"May the experience of the past not be lost on us in the future. Ours is no old-fashioned sixpence-a-day agitation. We aim at the complete emancipation of the worker from the thralldom of wagedom. Co-operative production under State management should be our goal, as never till this has been obtained can we hope for better times for working people."

The M.F.G.B.

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain was formed in 1888, and in the words of Sidney and Beatrice Webb

[*History of Trade Unionism* (1920 Edn.)] :—“The outstanding feature of the trade union world between 1890 and 1920 has been the growing predominance. . . . of the organised forces of the coal-miners.” The policy of the Federation was directed against the sliding scale, and at the establishment of an eight hours’ day. The Northumberland and Durham miners strongly adhered to the sliding scale principle, and were hostile to the eight hours’ day, and actually held aloof until 1908, after the Eight Hours Act had been passed. The sliding scale was retained in South Wales until 1902, but they joined the Federation in 1899, shortly after the formation of the South Wales Miners’ Federation. The first of the large scale miners’ strikes took place in 1893 against a proposed 25 per cent. reduction in wages. 400,000 were at one time involved, the dispute lasting seventeen weeks. It was during this dispute that the troops fired on the crowd at Featherstone. The miners had to submit to a reduction, but a point gained was the recognition of a minimum rate. Strikes followed in Scotland and South Wales, the latter being of twenty-five weeks’ duration, in an endeavour to abolish the sliding scale. The Federation made rapid strides in membership, and by 1900 it was the strongest Union numerically.

The Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1908 established the eight hours’ day, the Act becoming applicable to South Wales the following year. Thus legislation for the first time directly interfered with the working hours of adult labour.

Efforts were renewed for a minimum wage owing to loss of wages due to men working in abnormal places and other reduction of allowances. This led to strikes in South Wales, involving 30,000 men, in 1910. Troops and police were poured into the Rhondda Valley, resulting in riots at Tonypany. The miners were forced to return to work, but the South Wales coalfield took the lead in a national demand for the minimum and the national strike of 1912 ensued, when for the first time owners and men met in national conference. A Minimum Wage Act was hastily passed, accepting the principle but omitting definite figures, and work was resumed after a six weeks’ stoppage.

War and Its Effects

The wave of patriotism in 1914 affected the miners in common with all sections of workers, and they agreed in February, 1915, to appoint representatives on the Coal Organisation Committee. However, "business as usual" being the slogan of the coal-owners, difficulties developed. The most serious dispute occurred in South Wales owing to the owners refusing consideration of a revision of a Conciliation Board agreement which had been in force for five years. Eventually the men came out on strike in July, 1915, and the Government proclaimed S. Wales under the Munitions of War Act. Threats of fine and imprisonment were of no avail against the solidarity of 200,000 determined strikers, and after a week's hold out they obtained most points demanded, with an increase of wages nearly thirty per cent. on the old minimum.

Another dispute seemed likely in 1916 with the result that the Government decided to take over the control of the S. Wales coalfield, which was of paramount importance in supply coal for the Navy. This paved the way for Government control of the whole of the mining industry, February, 1917, the coal-owners being guaranteed substantial profits, the duties of the Coal Controller being to secure the greatest possible output and to prevent unrest among the miners.

The increase known as the war wage was secured in September, 1917, and in 1918 the M.F.G.B. Conference agreed upon a programme demanding a National Wages Board, a five days' working week, and a six hour working day. The signing of the Armistice, November, 1918, freed the miners to make further demands. They demonstrated that while wages had only increased seventy-eight per cent., the cost of living had increased 120 per cent. since 1913, therefore they demanded an increase of thirty per cent. in wages, together with a six-hour working day. Later came the demand for the nationalisation of the mining industry.

The Sankey Commission

The Coal Mines (Emergency) Act, 1919, made provisions as to profits, under Government control. The Coal Industry Commission was appointed in this year.

under the presidency of Justice Sankey. An interim report was signed recommending :—

Reduction of hours from eight to seven per day, and subject to position of industry at end of 1920, a further reduction to six.

Reduction of surface workers' hours to 46 per week. Increase in wages, 2s. per shift to adults, 1s. to boys.

Presaged either nationalisation or a method of unification by national purchase and/or joint control.

The Government accepted the recommendation as to hours in the Coal Mines Act (1920). Wages recommendations were rejected. The Commission in the final report recommended :—(a) Immediate purchase of royalties by the State ; (b) The mines to be controlled by the State and to be purchased outright after three years' working. The six Labour representatives on the Commission generally agreed to these suggestions, but wished to include coke and by-product plants. The three miners' spokesmen did not agree to compensation to mineral owners, except where compassionate allowance might be necessary. The three mine-owners' representatives, together with Sir Allen Smith and Mr. Balfour, denied that nationalisation would be the salvation of the industry. They advocated the purchase of royalties (in 1924 the estimated amount payable in royalties was £6,430,000, Mr. Herbert Smith stating recently that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners receive £370,000 of this amount), and that State ownership of coal should be conducted through a Mines Department, assisted by a National Advisory Council, representative of the owners and miners. Sir Arthur Duckham believed private enterprise was still the best means of working the industry, but favoured the acquisition of royalties. The Sankey Commission proved the inefficiency of capitalism and encouraged the miners to expect a share of control. This passage from the report is worth quoting :—“We are prepared to report now that it is in the interests of the country that the colliery worker shall in the future have an effective voice in the direction of the mine. For a generation the colliery worker has been educated socially and technically. The result is a great national asset. Why not use it?”

“Black Friday”

Owing to non-acceptance of demand for reduction in price of coal and increase of wages, the miners struck in

October. The strike was settled by making the increased wage dependent on the value of export sales. In 1921 the mines were decontrolled. The Miners' lock-out took place in April on the questions of a national settlement of wages and a national pool of profits. The "pool" was the miners' compromise when it was realised the Sankey Commission's findings would not be enforced. They suffered a crushing defeat owing to the "Black Friday" collapse. After a stoppage of thirteen weeks a settlement was agreed upon whereby the proceeds of the industry (excluding by-products plants) after deducting costs of production, should be distributed in agreed proportions between wages and profits, this distribution to be on a *district*, as distinct from a national, basis.

This settlement placed wages on a starvation basis. Victimisation was rampant, and the Federation membership suffered a big decrease. Notwithstanding complaints by the owners that they were compelled to subsidise wages, it is calculated that their profits amounted to £16,000,000 in the first eighteen months of the agreement. The French occupation of the Ruhr provided a temporary stimulant to the export trade, so that in the beginning of 1923 coal-owners' profits were equal to the pre-war rate. No wonder dissatisfaction was prevalent in the coalfields and the demand steadily grew to terminate the agreement. A Bill to increase the minimum wage was defeated on the Second Reading in the House of Commons in June, 1923. Its rejection was moved by Mr. Gould, the Cardiff ship-owner, supported by Mr. Stanley Baldwin, the Premier.

In 1924 the Buckmaster Court of Inquiry reported that the provision of a minimum wage should have precedence over profits, a new wages agreement, extending to June 30th, 1925, being signed in June. The mine-owners gave notice of the termination of the wages agreement from July 31st, 1925. The Macmillan Court of Inquiry endorsed the owners' account of their economic embarrassment, but rejected the proposals for a new wage agreement.

The Samuel Commission

The Mining Association attacked the Macmillan report, and it appeared the coal-owners were prepared to enforce

their demands. The Government was informed by the General Council of the T.U.C. that the miners would have the full backing of the T.U. movement in resisting the owners' demands. On July 30th, Mr. Baldwin made his famous declaration, "Not only must the miners accept a reduction in wages, but all the workers in this country must take a reduction in wages to help to put industry on its feet." The T.U.C. General Council thereupon issued instructions placing an embargo on the removal of coal after July 31st, and the Government immediately capitulated, inducing the mine-owners under Government guarantee of profits (the "subsidy") to continue present wage rates for eight months; a Royal Commission in the meantime to "inquire into and report on the economic position of the coal industry and the conditions affecting it, and to make any recommendations for the improvement thereof."

The owners' proposals before the Commission will abolish the last traces of national regulation of wages. The weekly wages vary widely now, for instance £2 12s. 1d. in Scotland and £2 4s. 4d. in Lancashire. The owners' proposals would reduce Scotland to £2 5s. 10d. and Lancashire to £1 8s. 7d., hence increasing the disparities. Hours are to be increased, and a drastic cutting down of the numbers of miners employed is to follow. The Labour scheme proposed "That the coal industry should become an organisation for the production of coal, manufacturing electrical power on a very large scale, making both coke and smokeless fuel, and producing in addition gas, fuel oils, ammonium compounds, chemical base materials for tars and other by-products; and *that this transformed industry must be publicly owned.*"

Lord Londonderry has suggested the ignoring of the Commission, and proposed direct negotiations between the owners and miners (in effect, separate bargaining for each pit); also the dissolution of the Mining Association. This, if accepted, would of course pave the way for a demand for the dissolution of the M.F.G.B. As a result of the bitter experiences of the past, the workers are not disposed to take a dispassionate and philosophical view of the relation between capital and labour, and Lord Londonderry's "olive branch" is not likely to be accepted.

The "Indefensible" Subsidy

The eagerly awaited report of the Coal Commission was published on March 10th, 1926. Nationalisation is rejected, but State ownership of minerals advised; co-operative selling for export is urged, and local authorities should be given power to retail coal; collieries must be amalgamated, profit sharing should be compulsory—to name a few of the many proposals. In dismissing the owners' proposal of longer hours, the Report declares "reluctantly, but unhesitatingly" for a revision downwards of wages rates.

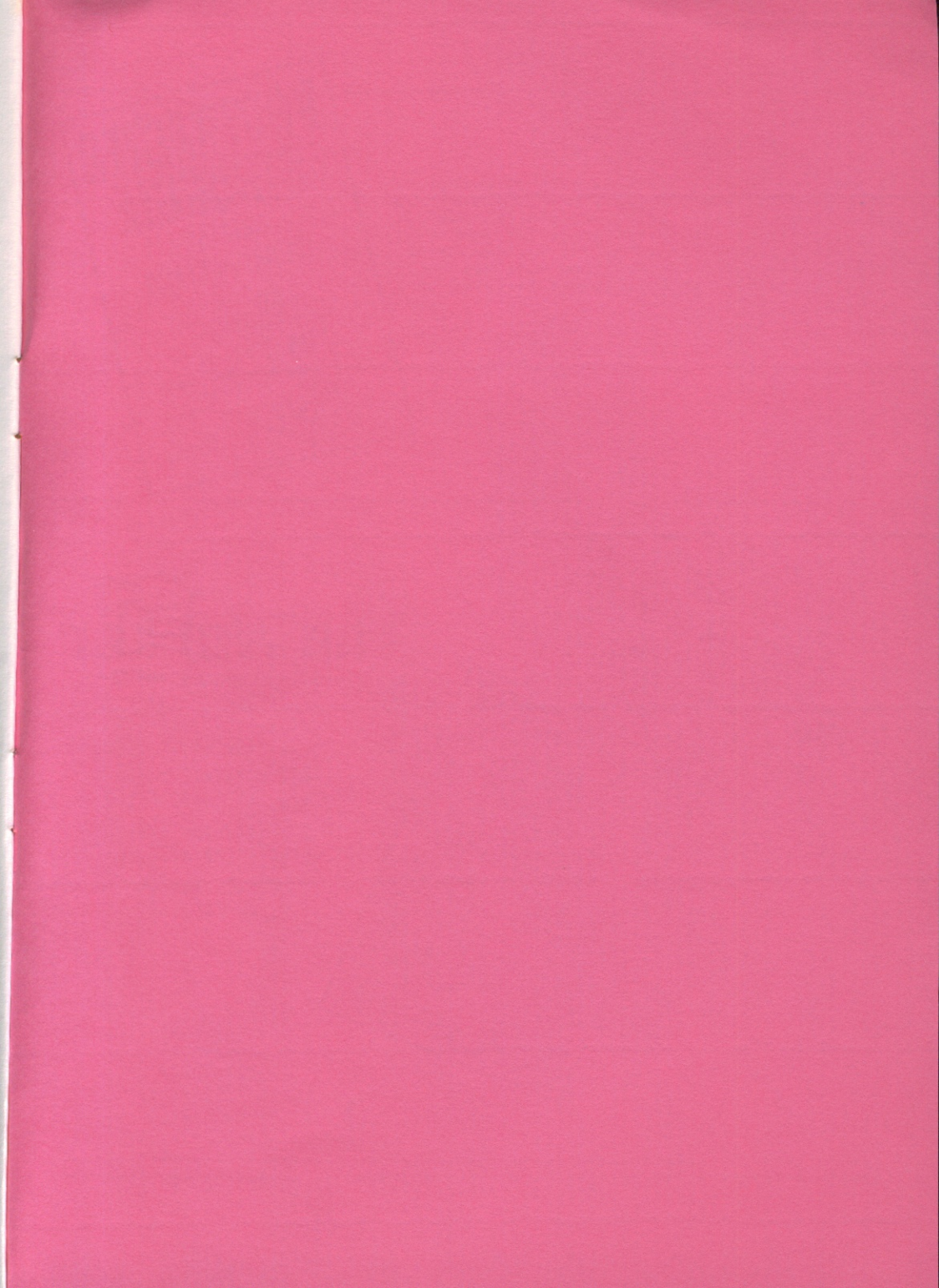
The report declares firmly against any continuance of the subsidy after May 1st. "We express no opinion whether the grant of a subsidy last July was unavoidable or not, but we think its continuance indefensible. The subsidy should stop at the end of its authorised term, and should never be repeated."

The *New Leader*, commenting on the Report, points out that the Commission was carefully "packed" against nationalisation as "a Commission, which consisted of a Liberal ex-Minister, a former leader writer of the 'Morning Post,' a prominent banker and a Liberal textile employer, could have come to no other conclusion. Mr. Baldwin took his precautions against the open mind."

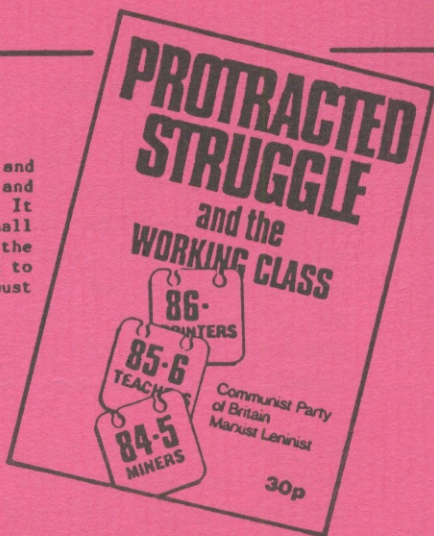
Mr. Justice Sankey sums up the Report in the pungent comment, "I think that it is an effort to postpone the inevitable."

The miners have learnt the lesson of solidarity; the smashing of that solidarity is the owners' aim, pursued with relentless persistency. Let the workers be equally determined to put their plan into operation, by strengthening their organisation, and keeping steadily in view the objective as expressed by Keir Hardie, which we again repeat only, however, substituting "communal ownership with workers' control" for "State management": "*We aim at the complete emancipation of the worker from the thralldom of wagedom. Co-operative production under State management should be our goal, as never till this has been obtained can we hope for better times for working people.*"

JOHN HAMILTON.



Protracted struggle is necessary for the survival and recovery of a working class. It is serious, sober and long-term. There can be no theory of a "big bang". It must be class action, united action. No more shall others sit back and watch as they have done with the miners and the teachers. Still less shall they seek to exploit the valour of fellow workers. Every front must fight.



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