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PRICE TWOPENCE.

SHIPBUILDING AND INCREASED OUTPUT.

By HARRY POLLITT.

TON FOR TON.

During the war, when passions were roused to ever heat, and the workers were promised all sorts of prizes to keep them contentedly going on with the war, it was a simple matter to launch the policy of "Ton for Ton" for all shipping sunk by the Germans, and one remembers how very enthusiastic the Press that represents the shipping interests became over this policy. The more ships sunk by German submarines, the more pronounced became the ton for ton cry, until finally it was understood that as a result of the Armistice agreement, the shipping companies were to be compensated for their lost ships by the confiscation of the German merchant vessels.

It may appear that this was a perfectly fair arrangement; but when one remembers that every shipping company in England made larger profits during the war (despite the loss of their ships) than were ever known before, it is perfectly clear that, owing to the influence they command, the shipping combine was able to obtain both the toffee and the halfpenny.

However, the policy has its good points, for as a result of the German ships being taken over by the English shipping combine, the necessity for building more ships in this country has been removed. This fact has driven home to thousands of workers in the shipyard area, more clearly than all the lectures will ever do, the fallacy of "Making the Germans Pay."

He will be a brave man who goes to the shipbuilding centres of the North East Coast and the Clyde to talk about "pinching" any more German ships.

The truth is, that nearly all the workers engaged in shipbuilding had been expecting a long run of work, as a result of so many ships being torpedoed; now they see that it is the German shipbuilder who is going to have the long run of work. Human nature being the nature it is, this is making the shipyard worker of England sorry that the German ships were ever taken. Now, on the top of all this, the Admiralty has stopped most of its shipyard work, and so has intensified the ever growing unemployed problem. This is exactly what the Shipbuilding Combine and the Shipbuilding Federation has been playing for, and so successful has been their policy that by the end of September, a terrible unemployed problem will be confronting the shipyard workers of Britain. Every day the two federations of employers are coming closer together, and only this week the firm of Harland and Woolf, at whose head stands Lord Pirrie, has bought two of the biggest shipyards on the Clyde. This firm now practically dominates the shipbuilding industry, having its yards at Govan and other places on the Clyde, Southampton, Liverpool and Belfast.

Lord Pirrie is also one of the foremost figures in the Shipping Combine, which made over £200,000,000 profits during two years of the war, and is now in a sound financial position to contest the growing demands of the workers. If there is one class of workers who ought not to be misled by the bogey of "Increased Production," it is the shipyard workers of Britain, for there is not a shipyard in Britain where the workers are not already keyed up to the last second. The pressure is especially great in

those yards where piece work and the premium bonus system are being worked.

The increased production cry is not worthy of the men's consideration, coming, as it does, at a time when men are being dismissed every week and when in every ship-building and ship-repairing centre there is unemployment. Anyone who has seen the rivetters at work on the hull of a new ship, and has carefully noted the speed at which they work, knows it is impossible for these men to work any harder. They are paid at so much per hundred and the price is fixed so that none but the hardest and strongest can make a decent living. The constant introduction of labour-saving machinery, such as the oxy-acetylene burner and the pneumatic rivetter, all tend to do away with labour, and to increase production at the mechanics' expense.

What increased production means is *more work for less pay, and more work per man means, in hard facts, doing away with a lot of other men*, a larger margin of unemployed, and that is the employers' best weapon for reducing wages. Increased production means increased profits for the capitalists and increased misery and poverty for the surplus workers.

All this talk of workers working harder, when there is a growing army of workers willing to work, but finding no work to do, is not a mere coincidence; it is just part of the policy by which engineering and shipbuilding capitalists intend to defeat the workers during the coming winter, and so temporarily crush the rising tide of the revolution.

For what are the facts? In November a conference is to take place at which will be discussed the advisability of continuing or otherwise the 12½ per cent. and the war awards. Let there be no mistake, the capitalists are determined that something has to come off the workers' present wages. The employers have already beaten the Trade Unions on the 44-hour question; they are now ready for the next round. Unless some new development takes place, it is safe to say that the workers are not ready and are going to suffer another defeat.

If the organised workers are beaten in these two highly-organised industries, then every other class of worker will automatically suffer also. The workers will be well advised to put their own house in order, and let the people who are crying for increased production do a little themselves. Men like Brownlie, who are calling for more work to be done, should also come back into the shops and do some work, instead of always prancing round the employers.

SHIPYARD CONDITIONS.

A liner leaving the landing stage is always a wonderful sight. Those who have seen the Cunard crack liners slowly moving off down the Mersey at the close of a summer's day, know what a picture of finished workmanship such a ship presents. But how many of those who see it think of the conditions under which the men have worked in the shipyards before the liner was ready for launching.

It is everywhere admitted that a British-built ship is the last word in workmanship and finish, yet the conditions under which they are



"Thank God, Evolution missed me!"

A POET OF THE STRUGGLE

John S. Clarke, whose writings are a constant feature of the S.L.P. organ, *The Socialist*, and well known in the movement, has just published a collection* of his later writings. Clarke certainly has what sceptics may call the disease of writing: his flow is prolific and if the lines do not always scan his justification is:—

And if brutality stains my page,
Bear well with me to-night,
For I dreed my weird in brutal age,
When earth was ruled by the hate and rage
Of kid-gloved Troglodyte.
Like all writers who are agitators, what he loses in polish he gains in point and topical interest. We all perceive his meaning. Take this:—

ON THE OCCASION OF A PICTURESQUE PRESENTATION.

Said Mr. — to Mr. —,
"I like your coat of fur."
Said Mr. — to Mr. —,
"You're welcome to it, sir!"
From back to back the coat was passed
With mutual satisfaction:
While people wondered why the air
Was charged with putrefaction.

Out in the wilds of Ohio
A stinking skunk lay dead:
And from the paradise of skunks
It watched the scene and said—
"Although bereft of skin and fur,
And left so cold and clammy,
May God be praised! my lovely coat
Is still kept in the family."

Or this:—
WHEN THE EYE WAS OPENED!
Sing a song of Government
Pockets full of rules;
Five-and-twenty tricksters,
And forty million fools:
"Combed out" like — vermin,
"Rounded up" like — cattle,
Isn't it a dainty thought
To carry into battle?

Of James Connolly he sings:—
For thou wert jealous in thine hour,
The work of tyrants to withstand,
And sang defiance to their power
In accents of thy land.

And in the days that are to be,
The golden days of sweet content,
Humanity shall honour thee
Who strove for their advent.

For when the earth is purged of strife,
And love of fellowship is strong,
'Twill learn the glory of thy life,
And triumph of thy song.

One of the best things in the book is the splendid satire in the excellent drawing at the head of this column.

*Satyres, Lyrics and Poems, by John S. Clarke, S.L.P. Press, Glasgow.

Continued on page 1462.

SHIPBUILDING AND INCREASED OUTPUT.

Continued from front page.

made while on the stocks are positively disgraceful.

In the summer it is not so bad, but in the autumn and winter the majority of yards are flooded with mud and rainwater. The lighting is bad, there are no washing arrangements, and the sanitary conveniences are worse than those provided for the Lascars in the docks. There is no protection from rain for the men working on the hull of the ship, they are sent home in wet weather; all shipyard workers therefore experience much broken time. Moreover, the work is heavy and skilled. Yet these are the men who are being appealed to to work harder.

Shipbuilding and ship repairing are dangerous trades; amongst the boiler makers there are hundreds who have lost one eye through hot scales from the rivets, or pieces flying off their drifts. The other trades have their own peculiar dangers.

The Blackwall shipyard of R. H. Green and Silley Weir at Poplar is a typical shipyard; during the winter it is like a mud pond, and there is no decent ambulance accommodation in the yard. On one occasion a Lascar was knocked down the dry dock. When he was brought to the dock side he lay for twenty minutes, and no ambulance came; finally he was taken to hospital on a motor lorry. A month ago, a man received an injury to his eye; he was rendered unconscious, and taken to Poplar Hospital on a horse lorry. Yet this firm has made more money out of the war than was ever thought possible.

In 1918, of the firm's employees eight men were killed and over 2,000 received injuries of a more or less serious character in this yard; from January, 1919, up to the present, seven men have been killed and over 1,000 injured. Amongst the workers of the dock area the yard is known as "Heaven's Friend." The fact that the firm has now appointed special safety officers speaks for itself. If figures could be got from other yards a similar state of things would be disclosed.

I would suggest to the workers that a campaign in favour of *Increased Comfort and Safety* would be more sensible than *Increased Production*.

WHAT IS THE REMEDY.

The obvious remedy is for the workers in all industries to organise for the purpose of taking over the ownership of all the means of production, but one has to face facts and recognise that the workers are not yet showing any great desire for anything of this character. At the same time the feeling is undoubtedly growing that the Trade Unions have failed, before the superior organisation of the Capitalists.

The first essential is unity and a common programme of action for all the shipyard areas. If we had these we should not again see the spectacle presented in January, 1918, where the shipyard workers in Belfast, the North-East Coast, the Clyde, Liverpool, the Bristol Channel, Southampton and London, were all out on strike, and all striking for different demands.

Such a remarkable wave of revolt has not been seen in any industry before. Had all these areas been linked up with each other; had they combined for the realisation of a common programme, it would have been impossible for the employers to resist their demands, and we should have had a demonstration of solidarity that could have been the beginning for more ambitious and lofty objects. As it was, every area was beaten; the men returned down-hearted and disgruntled. We ought now to profit by our mistakes and set about the task of re-organisation.

The shipbuilding and repairing industry is a compact one, and has no great difficulties of organisation, except the apathy of the workers. The capitalists in their industry are organised to perfection. At the head of the Employers'

Federation are some of the smartest and cleverest lawyers in the country; men like Sir Alan Smith, who knows every move on the board. By organising the employers on the basis of class, irrespective of whether they are large employers or small, they have built up a machine that is now straining every nerve to edge the workers into a fight, because they know the present weakness of the Trade Union Movement.

Workers' Committees should at once be elected in every yard. The country should be mapped out in well-defined areas, local councils should be appointed, and from these the smartest men we have should be chosen, irrespective of their craft, to form one National Shipbuilding Workers' Council. This Council, consisting of men coming direct from the shipyards, would know exactly the feeling of the workers on any important question. If any action were necessary, the Council would be in a position to call for united action and able to meet organisation by organisation. The present barrier to progress is the principle of craft unionism; it may have been necessary years ago, but to-day it is ineffective and obsolete.

Whether you are mechanics or labourers, your wives all pay the same price for food; you all work the same long hours, you all fear the spectre of unemployment, you all run the same risk of accidents, and work under the same dirty and bad conditions. Therefore your aims and interests are alike; and, organising as workers on the basis of Class and not Craft, you breed the spirit of Class Consciousness and Class Solidarity. Mere aims of higher wages and so on, lose their interest, as larger issues come into view by means of your new organisation. So you gradually build up the structures whereby you will one day take your stand with workers similarly organised in other industries. Thus you will finally be able to take over the ownership and control of all the productive forces.

Then "Increased Production" will mean increased wealth and leisure for the working class and everything for the worker that it now means for the capitalist. Until that time arrives, Increased Production under Capitalism means increased unemployment and increased misery.

Workers! which will you choose?

W. F. WATSON.

The Committee appointed by a conference of the London Workers' Committee (with delegates from the West and East London Committees) to investigate the charges made against W. F. Watson, examined fourteen witnesses, from whom they got signed statements. The evidence clearly shows that Watson was in communication with the police, and that he received money from them. It also shows that Watson was endeavouring to mislead Scotland Yard.

Watson told the witnesses that he had been threatened by a detective for giving the police false information.

One witness said he advised Watson to place himself in the hands of a Committee. This Watson apparently did not do, with the result that now that charges have been made against his integrity the responsibility falls upon him alone.

The investigation Committee desires to make it perfectly clear that the above is a summary of the evidence given them. Watson may be able to clear up the charges made against him by the Home Secretary of having given information "found to be of value to the police."

(Signed) T. F. KNIGHT.
J. HUNT.
W. FORDYCE.
T. KIME.
DAVID RAMSAY.
Jack TANNER.