

OLD AGE PENSIONS

The shameful and almost incredible conditions under which the Old Age Pensioners are existing today, forced to live on pittances which compel them to beg and borrow from their friends and relatives; examined, searched and questioned by the Means Test inspectors; and subject to an almost unbearable mode of living, all this constitutes what is probably one of the greatest exposures of the class attitude which is adopted by the ruling class towards these workers.

The Government separates these workers into various grades. The widows are separated into those who have lost their husbands through war service or in civil life, into those who are capable or incapable of self-support; the children are placed into age groups, (under 5, 5-8 years, 8-11 years, 11-14 years). Old Age pensioners are subjected to a Means Test before they can receive any additional allowances, and the soldiers too, are subjected to a test which determines his pension, all this affecting the amounts allowed. It is in this cold and calculating fashion that the Government divides, separates, grades, and cheats—these workers who are no longer able in peace time to successfully compete with the queues of workless at the Labour Exchange.

The basic pension for those who have reached the age of 65 remains at 10s. per week, and assuming that the Means Test has been successfully survived, an old couple would receive the following:—

Pension	20s.
Addition	5s.
Cost-of-living addition	8s.
Supplementary	4s.

This equals 37s. from which must be deducted a rent of 6s. and which leaves 31s. per week to live on. This means that an old couple placed under these favourable circumstances would have 4s. 5d. per day between them; or 2s. 2½d. each, out of which they have to pay for food, clothes, coal and light, soaps, etc. and all the other necessities of life!

This sum however, which doesn't even equal the tips which are handed out by the rich during the course of their daily travels, is beaten in sheer meanness by the allowances granted to the widow of 60 who receives 21s. per week, from which is deducted 6s. rent. This leaves a little over 2s. 1½d. per day from which she is expected to

4 YEARS OF WAR!

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After Quebec, Churchill spoke and gave a clear picture of the policy and future military strategy of the Allies and their essential economic and political aims for the future. No military aid to Russia until the policy of Britain and America with their precise definitions of a carved up Europe has been accepted by Stalin and military intervention suits their imperialist aims.

Behind Churchill's statement: that a military front such as Stalin demands will not be dictated by political considerations but by military strategy, lies a great and definite lie. For the refusal to open such a front is dictated precisely by the class, political antagonism between Soviet Russia, a degenerated workers' state, and her allies, countries controlled by the capitalist class.

They lie who say that there is no conflict. They do a dis-service to the toiling masses and to the Soviet Union who cover up this conflict. For behind the half concealed discussions and debates and open propaganda, secret diplomatic discussions to decide the carve up and dictate the economic and political future of Europe and the world are taking place.

Out with it! The masses must demand an end to the secret diplomatic talks. Expose it, for it is reaction's tool. Labour must demand a clear and open statement of the basis of this conflict and take a hand in deciding what has to be done.

The turning of the energy of the Allies against Japan, is a sign that they are waiting for a further weakening of Soviet Russia. The campaign against Japan underlines the fact that the only genuine allies of the workers state are the working class.

For four years, the destiny of millions has been in the hands of capitalist governments, apart from the Soviet Union. Stalin's bureaucratic policy, in spite of the fact that Soviet Russia is a workers' state, has helped the capitalists to control and mislead the people. But the fifth year will usher in a new period of social alignments and political struggles. For reaction is giving place to revolution. The masses will have the last word!

In this period the working class need clear ideas and a revolutionary programme. Above all they need an international socialist party to carry that programme into effect.

To defend the Soviet Union not only from her enemies and "allies" but from the false bureaucratic policies of Stalinism is a first duty of the working class. To do so the workers must find their independence as a class.

Only the Fourth International—the World Party of Socialist Revolution—has the policy which faces up to all the demands of our epoch.

BY JIM HINCHCLIFFE

feed and clothe herself. It is of little use following the advice of those gentlemen who urge the eating of more vegetables when, if the widow bought a pound of tomatoes (1s. 6d.) and a cabbage (3d.) it would only leave her with 4½d.!

It is impossible to adequately describe the conditions under which these workers are compelled to exist as a result of these allowances. Incredible though it may seem, in London, where a club for elderly people has opened, providing a two-course lunch for 8d., tea at 1d. per cup, and a High tea for 6d., many of the members have been unable to have any of the meals because they just did not have the money to pay for it. The question as to whether or not it is possible to buy a 2½d. stamp in order to write a letter, becomes one of the greatest importance to these workers, who have only 2s. 2d. a day to exist upon.

In 1942, the Government calculating that the average pensioner smoked 4 ozs. of tobacco a week, and drank 6 pints of beer, in an apparent fit of generosity, granted an additional 5s. per week. Let us see what actually happened to this amount, assuming that the 5s. was actually spent in this way. The amount granted was 5s. In the same year, a tax was imposed which on these amounts of tobacco and beer amounted to 3s. 6d., thus leaving the pensioner exactly 1s. 6d. better off. The last budget placed a further 2s. tax on these items, which consequently left the pensioner 6d. WORSE off than he was before 1940, when the Act providing for supplementary allowances was first passed. Such is the "generosity" of a capitalist Government, which gives you 5s. with one hand and takes 5s. 6d. with the other!

Another "concession" has been the free provision of blankets and bed linen in case of need, for these pensioners. And once again, it is the Means Test inspectors which determines the need. Mr. Walkden, M.P., who visited many old age pensioners in Doncaster, said in the House of Commons recently that:

"Many of the old people were ragged, tattered and torn, or their clothes were patched. I went into some of their bedrooms to see the conditions in which they are living now owing to deterioration and general usage of their goods and chattels. These people indicated that the supplementary pension was insufficient to provide all the things they would like to buy. I said to some of them, 'But you can obtain bed linen,' and I was asked, 'Have you met some of the inspectors who conduct the enquiries?'"

Other M.P.s also told of these investigators who pay monthly or fort-

nightly visits to see that the old folk are not "living too well" on the extra sums they receive, who ask all kinds of questions as to exactly how the money is spent, and one M.P. even told of—

"... investigators going to some of these elderly women and lifting up their skirts to see what they were wearing underneath."

It is no wonder that many people are afraid to make application for a supplementary pension! The whole cost of the recent concessions in fact, is estimated at only £850,000, or the cost of 1½ hours of war. The extra costs of administration is estimated at nearly as much, at least £500,000!

What a vivid contrast this represents to the pensions granted to the members of the ruling class. The Lord Chancellor who, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, defended the Means Test so ably, will receive a pension of £5,000 a year, without a Means Test, which will equal over £13 10s. per day compared with the pensioners 2s. 2½d. And if further evidence is needed of the class approach towards this question, let us examine the recent concessions granted to the Foreign and Consular Service, where a man who is receiving a salary of £1,200 a year, will, instead of receiving £900 a year pension (just under £6 per week) and a £900 lump sum, now receives £400 a year pension (just under £8 per week) and a £1,200 lump sum.

There is no talk here of odd pennies, of Means Test inspectors, of haggling over "rent adjustments". Here is the class outlook revealed in its most naked, despicable and inhuman form. In the barbarous and primitive Neolithic period of man's history and even later, the young men lined up their aged parents and stoned them to death, thus thinking that they were sending them to a better world. Capitalism is, admittedly, more advanced, its tortures are more refined—it merely starves the old people to death!

Whilst these conditions are the direct result of the capitalist system which breeds and aggravates them, and can only be solved by the overthrow of capitalism, the workers, through their Labour and Trade Union organisations, must demand a real "Square Deal" for these pensioners. They must demand an adequate maintenance allowance arranged to meet the ever rising cost-of-living and the abolishing of the notorious and disgusting Means Test with all its accompanying degrading features. The workers have the right to the same reward which the capitalists make so certain of claiming, a decent and adequate pension sufficient to ensure a comfortable existence for the remainder of their life.

SAM GOLD

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as it is, in favour of the Government. These and a great many other cases still to be listed went unpunished. Not that we want to see the regulations rigidly enforced, quite the contrary, we want to see them promptly and completely abolished.

Being very conscious that this is political victimisation against the Left, the War Office made indecent haste to deny this accusation before it was made. In criminal practice such denials are accepted as indicative of guilt. So is it in this case. The Deputy Judge Advocate-General (Northern-Command) when he declared that the case did not mean that there was discrimination against any political organisation, in effect, declared only further the utter hypocrisy of his own class.

The ruling class, feeling its position becoming more precarious almost day by day, is afraid above all of socialist ideas sweeping the rank and file of the Armed Forces. The military caste by

restrictions and savage penalties vainly hope to keep the worker in uniform more politically backward than his brother in the factories. Then, by setting one against the other, maintain their rule. However, political life in the forces is steadily growing despite the restrictions. They are not too clear yet but ask any soldiers, and you will be told they are rarer than the Dodo bird. Not for long will they tamely accept the restrictions.

Here then is the chance for the Labour leaders if they are really concerned with the well being of the soldiers, as they on occasions noisily proclaim. It was the Tory majority in the House of Commons, with the aid of not a few renegade Labour M.P.'s who by 195 votes to 33 steamrollered the opposition who offered just a mild amendment to the Army Act to allow a degree of political activity.

Full and Legally Established Political Rights for the Forces. Demand the Release of Private Sam Gold.

COAL OWNERS SABOTAGE PRODUCTION

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became more obvious that the bosses were determined at any cost to maintain their prestige and slash at the workers' conditions.

The fillers remained firm in their decision and refused to do the scuffling; as a result the management stopped a portion of the Green Ayard and the Attendance Bonus to which the men were entitled as they had been available for work for the entire shift.

On Friday, 20th August, representatives of the N.M.A., Bros. Bowman and Besford took the matter up with Major Thornton. Thornton's attitude was directly provocative. He laughed derisively at the workers' representatives attempts to discuss the issues.

When Bros. Bowman and Besford reported back to the miners at Nelson a lightning strike followed and the pit was closed on the Friday night and Saturday morning.

At a meeting held on Sunday, the agents of the N.M.A. pledged moral support but said they were powerless to give financial support unless the miners returned to work and proceeded along the constitutional

channels by giving 14 days' notice to terminate their employment. This advice was taken by the miners who returned to work. A ballot vote was taken to determine the action to be taken and a 96% majority voted in favour of giving 14 days' notice to the bosses. On Saturday morning notices were handed in.

On Tuesday, 31st August, the E.C. of the N.M.A. meet the coal owners. If they fail to reach an agreement a stoppage of work is inevitable. Meanwhile, delegates from the Hartley Main's group of the N.M.A. have pledged support to the Nelson miners.

The Northumberland coal owners have shown by their actions how little they care about production. Hundreds of tons have been lost and hundreds more will be lost in the coming weeks. They are prosecuting 12 of the fillers for refusing to work.

Forms have been filled in by the management for the prosecution of the fillers, but the boot is on the other foot. It is the workers who should be filling in the forms for the prosecution of the bosses, but, as the workers' representatives say, "there are no forms for prosecuting the boss."

On Sunday morning the workers' representatives on the Production Committee moved a resolution accusing the management of refusal to cooperate, thus making any effort of the Production Committee to increase production mere farces. At the Lodge meeting in the afternoon the miners supported the action of their representatives and the resolution is being forwarded to the Regional Fuel Controller and to the coal owners.

JOE MILLER VICTIMISED

The victimisation of Joe Miller, a trade union militant has been reported to the "Socialist Appeal" by the Shop Stewards at the factory.

Bro. Miller, the ex-convenor of a large Clyde-side factory, from which he was also victimised, had been in the Ealing plant only a few weeks. He had been largely responsible for organising the plant in which the trade union had previously not been recognised, and linking up several widely separated factories belonging to the same employer. They went forward to the election of a shop stewards executive committee covering several plants.

Following the setting up of the E.C. to cover all the factories by the meetings of the 14th and 21st August, Bro. Miller who was appointed Chairman of the new Committee and was shop-steward at Dane Road, was on Monday 23rd August, officially informed by the Superintendent that the firm were applying for Miller's release on the grounds that—

"As there is now insufficient benchwork to keep this employee fully occupied we request that we may be allowed to dispose with his services in order that same can be used to better advantage in some other plant where his services can be fully utilized."

Bro. Miller declined to make any observations on the form immediately as he required time to think over the questions and discuss it with the Works Committee.

A general meeting of both shifts was held on Tuesday, which declared that it considered that Miller had been victimised, and elected a deputation to interview the National Service Officer, in order to place before him the views of the shop.

This was done. The National Service Officer would not commit himself in any way stating that he had to look at both sides, and that as soon as he received Miller's counter statement he would give all points mentioned his serious consideration. He would also send a Labour Supply Inspector to the firm to investigate the position of redundancy.

The Committee had previously interviewed Mr. Milton, who naturally denied any attempt at victimisation, outlining the position that work on the bench had dried up and that it was uneconomical to keep Miller on because of this. The Committee, however, definitely gathered the impression that Milton realised Miller had been victimised and merely would not lay himself open by admitting it.

Their case is simply that—

1. Miller was shop-steward and had been very active in the factory from the T.U. angle.
2. He had taken a leading part in the setting up of the Executive committee covering all the factories.
3. Another skilled man was started only three days before Miller's release was applied for. This man was started as a grinder but Miller or some other man from the bench could have been utilised for grinding if there was redundancy on the bench.

4. If the bench hands were redundant a wonderful opportunity was offered the firm a few days before to dismiss three men (one of them a bench-fitter) who were suspended for misconduct—off the premises during working hours.

5. Miller is not the most recent addition to the bench.

6. No fault has been found with Miller's work—this cannot be said of everyone on the bench.

7. Miller was debarred from entering the factory pending the N.S.O.'s decision, but another man—an inspector—whose release was applied for at the same time as Miller's was not barred from working on. After this anomalous position had been pointed out during the discussion with the management the unfortunate inspector was also told not to report for work.

The Committee is of the opinion that this is the reply of the management to the commencement of real organisation on an all factory basis; that the management by their action in applying for Miller's release have thrown down the gauntlet to the workers, hoping that they will in this way nip the organisation "in the bud" before it can get a real hold. At a period when the workers' organisations have accepted so many restrictions feeling that by doing so they were assisting the fight for liberty and against tyrannies both big and small, we cannot allow an action of this sort to pass unanswered.

The action of the management must be fought. But to do so requires funds. The Dane Road Committee are collecting a levy of 2s. 6d. per man in the tool-room. We appeal to the other factories to follow our example, sending funds to the Secretary.

Svyazhsk HOW TROTSKY DEFEATED THE WHITES

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which seemed so hopeless at the outset.

Human beings sleeping on the floors of the station house, in dirty huts filled with straw and broken glass—they hardly hoped for success and consequently feared nothing. The speculation on when and how all this "would end" interested none. "Tomorrow"—simply did not exist; there was only a brief, hot, smoky piece of time: Today. And one lived on that, as one lives in harvest time.

Morning, noon, evening, night—each single hour was prolonged to the utmost count; every single hour had to be lived through and used up to the last second. It was necessary to reap each hour carefully, finely like ripe wheat in the field is cut to the very root. Each hour seemed so rich, so utterly unlike all of previous life. No sooner did it vanish than in recollection it seemed a miracle. And it was a miracle.

Planes came and went, dropping their bombs on the station and the railway cars; machine guns with their repulsive barking and the calm syllables of artillery, drew night and then withdrew again, whilst a human being in a torn military coat, civilian hat, and boots with toes protruding—in short, one of the defenders of Svyazhsk—would smilingly produce a watch from his pocket and bethink himself:

"So that's what it is now—1.30 or 4.30 o'clock. Or, it is 6.20. Therefore I am still alive. Svyazhsk holds. Trotsky's train stands on the rails. A lamp now flickers through the window of the Political Department. Good. The day is ended."

Medical supplies were almost completely absent at Svyazhsk. God knows what the doctors used for bandages. This poverty shamed no one; nor did anyone stand in fear of it. The soldiers on their way with soup kettles to the field kitchen passed by stretchers with the wounded and the dying. Death held no terrors. It was expected daily, always. To lie prone in a wet army coat, with a red splotch on a shirt, with an expressionless face, a nuttiness that was no longer human—this was something taken for granted.

Brotherhood! Few words have been so abused and rendered pitiful. But brotherhood does come sometimes, in moments of direst need and peril, selfless, so sacred, so unrepresentable in a single lifetime. And they have not lived and know nothing of life who have never laid at night on a floor in tattered and lice-ridden clothes, thinking all the while how wonderful is the world, infinitely wonderful! That here the old has been overthrown and that life is fighting with bare hands for her irrefutable truth, for the white swans of her resurrection, for something far bigger and better than this patch of star-lit sky showing through the velvet blackness of a window with shattered panes—for the future of all mankind.

Once in a century contact is made and new blood is transfused. These beautiful words, these words, almost inhuman in their beauty, and the smell of living sweat, the living breath of others sleeping beside you on the floor. No nightmares, no sentimentalities but tomorrow the dawn will come and Comrade G., a Czech Bolshevik, will prepare an omelet for the whole "gang"; and the Chief of Staff will pull on a shaggy stiffly frozen shirt washed out last night. A day will dawn in which someone will die, knowing in his last second that death is only something among many other things, and not the main thing at all; that once again Svyazhsk has not been taken and that the dirty wall is still inscribed with a piece of chalk: "Workers of the World Unite!"

AGAINST THE STREAM

The rainy August days thus passed one by one. The thin, poorly equipped lines did not fall back; the bridge remained in our hands and from the rear, from somewhere far away, reinforcements began to arrive.

Real telephone and telegraph wires began to attach themselves to autumn spider-webs flying in the winds and some kind of enormous, cumbersome, lame apparatus began to operate on the God-forsaken railway station—Svyazhsk, this tiny, hardly discernible black dot on the map of Russia, at which in a moment of flight and despair, the revolution had clutched. Here all of Trotsky's organisational genius was revealed. He managed to restore the supply lines, got new artillery and a few regiments through to Svyazhsk on railways that were being openly sabotaged; everything needed for the coming offensive was obtained. In addition, it ought to be borne in mind that this work had to be done in the year 1918, when demobilisation was still raging, when the appearance on the Moscow streets of a single well dressed detachment of the Red Army would create a real sensation. After all, it meant to swim against the stream, against the exhaustion of four years of war, against the spring floods of the revolution which swept through the whole country the debris of Czarist discipline and wild hatred of anything resembling the bark of old officers' commands, the barracks, or old army life.

Despite, all this, supplies appeared before our very eyes. Newspapers arrived, boots and overcoats came. And wherever they actually hand out boots, and for keeps, there you will find a really solid army staff; there things are stable; there the army stands firmly entrenched and has no thought of fleeing. That's no joking matter, boots!

The Order of the Red Flag was not yet in existence in the era of Svyazhsk.

else it would have been issued to hundreds. Everybody, including the cowardly and the nervous and the simply mediocre workers and Red Army men—everybody, without a single exception, performed unbelievable, heroic deeds; they outdid themselves, like spring streams overflowing their banks they joyfully flooded their own normal levels.

Such was the atmosphere. I remember receiving at that time by extraordinary chance a few letters from Moscow. In them was some talk about the exultation of the petty bourgeoisie preparing to repeat the memorable days of the Paris Commune.

And in the meantime the foremost and most dangerous front of the Republic hung by a thin railway thread and flamed, setting up an unprecedented heroic conflagration which sufficed for three more years of hungry, typhus-ridden, homeless war.

* THE MEN WHO DID IT

In Svyazhsk Trotsky, who was able to give the newborn Army a backbone of steel, who himself sank roots into the soil refusing to yield an inch of ground no matter what happened, who was able to show this handful of defenders a calmness icier than theirs—in Svyazhsk, Trotsky was not alone. Gathered there were old party workers, future members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, and of the Military Councils of the several Armies to whom the future historian of the Civil War will refer as the Marshals of the Great Revolution. Rosengoltz and Gussev, Ivan Nikitich Smirnov, Kobozov, Mezhlauk, the other Smirnov, and many other comrades whose names I no longer recall. From among the sailors, I remember Raskolnikov and the late Markin.

Rosengoltz in his railway car almost from the very first day sprouted the office of the Revolutionary Military Council; extruded maps and rattled typewriters—obtained God knows where—in short, he began building up a strong, geometrically perfect organisational apparatus, with precise connections, indefatigable working capacity and simple in scheme.

In the days to come, whatever the Army or the front, wherever the work began to sputter, Rosengoltz was immediately brought in like a queen-bee in a sack, placed into the disturbed bee hive and would immediately proceed to build, organise, forming cells, buzzing over the telegraph wires. Despite the military overcoat and enormous pistol in his belt, nothing martial could be discerned in his figure, nor in his pale, slightly soft face. His tremendous force did not lie in this field at all, but rather in his natural ability to renew, establish connections, raise the tempo of a halting, infected bloodstream to an explosive speed. At the side of Trotsky he was like a dynamo, regular, well-oiled, noiseless, with powerful levers moving day after day, spinning the untearable web of organisation.

I do not recall just what kind of work I. N. Smirnov officially performed in the staff of the Fifth Army. Whether he was a member of the Revolutionary Military Council or at the same time also head of the Political Department; but apart from all titles and frameworks he embodied the ethics of the revolution. He was the highest moral criterion; the communist conscience of Svyazhsk.

Even among the non-party soldier masses and those communists who had not known him previously, his amazing purity and integrity were immediately recognised. It is hardly likely that he himself was aware how much he was feared; how everyone feared nothing so much as to reveal cowardice and weakness before the eyes of this man, who never yelled at anyone, who simply remained himself, calm, courageous. No one commanded as much respect as Ivan Nikitich. Everyone felt that in the worst moment he would be the strongest and most fearless.

With Trotsky—it was to die in battle after the last bullet had been fired; to die enthusiastically, oblivious of wounds. With Trotsky—it was the sacred pathos of struggle; words and gestures recalling the best pages of the Great French Revolution.

But, with Comrade Smirnov (so it seemed to us at the time and so we spoke in whispers to each other as we huddled close together on the floor during those already cold autumnal nights)—Comrade Smirnov; this was pure calm when "up against the wall"; or when being grilled by the Whites; or in a filthy prison hole. Yes, that is how one talked about him at Svyazhsk.

Boris Danilovich Mikhailov came a little later, directly from Moscow, I believe, or generally from the centre. He arrived in a civilian coat, with that bright, rapidly changing expression on his face that people have on being freed from prison or big cities.

Within a few hours he was completely overcome by the wild intoxication of Svyazhsk. Changing clothes, he went out on reconnaissance patrol in the vicinity of White Kazan, and returned three days later, tired, his face wind-tanned, his body crawling with the ubiquitous lice. By way of compensation, he was all in one piece.

It is a fascinating spectacle to observe the profound inner process taking place in people who arrive at a revolutionary front; they catch fire like a straw roof lit on all four sides, and then on cooling off become transformed into a fire-proof, perfectly clear and uniform piece of cast iron.