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What is The Economic League?

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What is the Economic League?

DURING the course of the coal lock-out the workers, especially in mining areas, have heard and seen a good deal of the Economic League. Innumerable speakers have been touring the country on behalf of this League, and there are many districts which have been flooded with its literature. The Economic League advertises itself as an impartial body, "non-party and non-sectarian," spreading education and enlightenment just because it is so kind. And the bright young lads whom it employs to carry its message to the workers are carefully stuffed with so-called "economic facts" showing the necessity for an eight-hours' day and lower wages, purely, of course, "in the interests of the workers."

What is this organisation which spends such vast sums in "economic" propaganda? For an answer we have to go back to the years immediately after the war. At that period a whole series of blackleg organisations and propaganda agencies were set up by the capitalist class. In *Strike-Breaking Organisations* (Labour White Paper No. 13) we have traced the development of the more important blackleg organisations since 1919; in addition, there were the capitalist propaganda agencies, among which was an organisation styling itself "National Propaganda."

National Propaganda numbered among its patrons coal, railway, finance and other magnates;

and its objects were "to diminish industrial unrest," to prove by economic propaganda "the vital necessity of increased production," and "to combat all activities directed against constitutional government." It produced the "National Propaganda Bulletin," and issued leaflets and other literature, but apparently did not meet with much success, as it was too easily recognised for what it was.

Therefore it decided to set up Economic Study Clubs, and announced in 1920 that in future its leaflets would be "based on economic statements emanating from Oxford, but written in simple language, easily understood!" In other words, it decided to drop the open form of capitalist propaganda, and to develop a more insidious form. Thus National Propaganda died, and the Council of Economic Leagues rose from its ashes. With such antecedents, the appearance of the Economic League in the campaign against the miners can be readily understood.

The published objects of the Economic League are:—

To disseminate Economic Knowledge, particularly:—

- (a) To combat the fallacious economic doctrines of Collectivism, Socialism, and Communism;
- (b) To uphold individual freedom, enterprise, and initiative.

Its real objects come out clearly in the following quotation from Speakers' Notes, No. 56 (July 16, 1926) issued by them:—

What is required is some years of propaganda for Capitalism as the finest system that human ingenuity can devise, to counteract the forty years of propaganda for Socialism.

Who is the Economic League?

By this we do not mean who are the bright speakers who come and reel off the "economic statements emanating from Oxford" with which they have been stuffed, but who are the men who send out the speakers and the literature? Who pay the salaries and the printing bills and the other expenses? The present list of members of its Central Council and of its District Councils is a good enough indication of where the money comes from, and of whose interests are served by the League's propaganda. We have not space enough for the whole list, but give below some of the more interesting examples of how "non-party and non-sectarian" the Economic League really is.

Coalowners who run the League.

The following powerful coalowners are on the Central Council of the Economic League:—

LORD INVERNAIN, of The Fenton Collieries Ltd.; Warwickshire Coal Co., Ltd.; United Collieries Co., Ltd.; Vickers' Ltd.; Coltness Iron Co.; British Empire Steel Products Ltd.; Beardmore Motors Ltd.; Brunton Bros., Ltd.; Atholl Steel Houses, Ltd.; Jamaica Sugar Estates, Ltd.; Dawson & Mason Gas Plant Ltd.; Duncan & Stewart, Ltd.; Eagle Star & British Dominions Insurance Ltd.; Glasgow Iron and Steel Co., Ltd.; Joseph Westwood Ltd.; Newton Mines Ltd.; West Midland Sugar Co., Ltd.

SIR ADAM NIMMO, of Fife Coal Co.; Portland Colliery Co.; Shotts Iron Co., Ltd.; Scottish Boiler and General Insurance Co., Ltd.; Yorkshire Insurance Co., Ltd.

SIR CLIFFORD CORY, M.P., of Cardiff Coaling Co.; Cory Bros., Ltd.; Eagle Coal Co.; Penrikyber Navigation Colliery Co., Ltd.; Aden Coal Co.; Brazilian Coal Co.;

Charing Cross Steamship Co.; Dillington Cottage Co., Ltd.; Miller's & Cory's Cape Verde Islands Ltd.

LORD GAINFORD, Chairman of the National Association of Coke and Bye-Product Plant Owners, and Director of North Bitchburn Coal Co.; Broomhill Colliery Co.; Pease & Partners Ltd.; South London Electric Supply Corporation; Henry Stobart & Co., Ltd.; Royal Insurance Co., Ltd.; and the B.B.C. (the "impartial" distributor of strike news).

JAMES MILES, Esq., J.P., of United National Collieries; Burnyeat Brown & Co., Ltd.; Cardiff Gas Light & Coke Co.

PHILLIP GEE, Mineowners' Propagandist; the following items appeared in the Mining Associations accounts of "Expenditure of the Propaganda Dept." for 1924:— "Mr. Gee, in respect of Ordinary Propaganda, £7000; Special Allowance to Mr. Gee, £690."

W. A. LEE, Secretary of the Mining Association of Great Britain; Secretary of Coal Mines Department, 1918-1919;

Other Big Business Leaguers.

In addition to those with direct coal interests, the Central Council of the Economic League has among its members a large number of representatives of big business and finance, many of whom, of course, have indirect connections with the coal industry. Here are some of the more interesting individuals:—

SIR MAX MUSPRATT, President of the Federation of British Industries, and connected with Automatic Telephone Manufacturing Co.; Liverpool 'Daily Post and Echo' Ltd.; United Alkali Co., Ltd., and many others.

LIEUT.-COL. SIR JAMES REYNOLDS, Bart., D.S.O., of Reynolds & Gibson (Cotton Brokers); Bank of Liverpool and Martins; Liverpool Nitrate Co.; Royal Insurance Co.; Thames & Mersey Marine Insurance Co., Ltd.

SIR HALLEWELL ROGERS, J.P., of Barclays Bank; B.S.A. Ltd.; Burton Griffiths & Co.; Daimler Co., Ltd.; Wm. Jessop & Sons; Lee & James Ltd.; J. B. Brooks & Co.

FRANK SHEARMAN, Mountstuart Dry Docks & Shearman's Ltd.; British Arc Welding Co., Ltd.; Goulds Foundries Ltd., etc.

COL. O. C. ARMSTRONG, D.S.O., Director of Greenwood & Batley Ltd.; Pekin Syndicate Ltd.; Anglo-Chinese Finance & Trade Corporation; Manganese Bronze and Brass Co.; Monomarks Ltd.; Member of the F.B.I.

SIR ROBERT HADFIELD is the Vice-Chairman of the F.B.I. and of Hadfields Ltd.; Mond Nickel Co., Ltd.; Sheffield's Gas Co.

LAUNCELOT E. SMITH, C.B.E., is Director of Smith's Dock Co.; R. & W. Hawthorn, Leslie & Co.; Scottish Widows' Fund Life Assurance Society.

LIEUT.-COL. SIR ALAN J. SYKES, Bart., D.L., is a Director of the Bleachers' Association Ltd.; Williams Deacon's Bank, etc.

LIEUT.-COL. THE HON. F. V. WILLEY, C.B.E., President of the F.B.I. last year, is on Francis Willey & Co.; Lloyds Bank; Mid-European Corporation Ltd.

SIR HARRY MCGOWAN, K.B.E., Nobel Industries Ltd.; African Explosives and Industries Ltd.; British Overseas Bank; Canadian Explosives Ltd.; Charles Tennant Sons & Co. (New York); General Motors Corporation, owned by an American firm; Kynoch Ltd.; Portland Glass Co., Ltd.; Tyre Investment Trust, Ltd.

SIR EDWARD MANVILLE, Director of B.S.A. Co., Ltd.; British Dominions Land Settlement Corporation Ltd.; Car and General Insurance Ltd.; Chiciura Oilfields of Roumania; Comodoro Oil and Transport Co., Ltd.; Daimler Hire Ltd.; Diala Cotton Plantations Ltd.; Lake Copper Proprietary Co., Ltd.; Phoenix Oil and Transport Co., Ltd.; Porcupine Goldfield Ltd.; State Assurance Co., Ltd.; Wm. Jessop & Sons, Ltd.

SIR VINCENT CAILLARD, D.L., is on the Council of the F.B.I. and Director of the British Lighting and Ignition Co.; Canada Steamship Lines Ltd.; People's Refreshment House Association Ltd.; Southern Railway Ltd.; Trust and Loan Co. of Canada; Vickers Ltd.; National Employers' Mutual General Insurance Association, Ltd.; World Auxiliary Insurance Corporation, Ltd.

Leaguers in the Districts.

In addition to the Central Council there are a number of District Organisations. On these, too, we find the local capitalists well represented.

HULL AND EAST RIDING.

This District Council contains:

W. S. HYDE, who is Managing Director of Earle's Shipbuilding and Engineering Co., Ltd.

COLONEL OSWALD SANDERSON, who is, among other things, Managing Director of Ellerman's Wilson Line Ltd.; a Director of Lloyds Bank Ltd.; of the L.N.E.R.; United Shipping Co., Ltd., and a member of the National Maritime Board, and of the Shipping Federation.

LEEDS.

The Leeds Council again has:

HON. RUPERT BECKET, who is Director of seven companies including the L.N.E.R.; Westminster Bank Ltd. and the Yorkshire Conservative Newspaper Co., Ltd.

A. W. ARCHER, of the South Kirby Featherstone and Hemsworth Collieries Ltd.

F. T. CHADWICK, who graces the Council of the F.B.I.; the Leeds and District Manufacturers' Association, etc.

LIVERPOOL.

This District Council includes:

F. W. BAIN, a Director of the United Alkali Co., Ltd.

SIR JAMES P. REYNOLDS, of the Bank of Liverpool and Martins' Ltd.; the Howe Bridge Cotton Spinning Co. (1920) Ltd., etc.

LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES.

This Council's Directors include:

STANLEY MACHIN, President of the British Chamber of Commerce, 1926, and of the Corporation of Foreign Bondholders; Crosse & Blackwell, Ltd.; etc.

SIR E. FITZJOHN OLDHAM, who is Director of no less than 17 companies and a Vice-President of the F.B.I.

NORTH EAST COAST AREA.

This Area Council has a large number of Directors, including three high up in the F.B.I.; and several coal-owners:

CLIVE COOKSON, director of the Consett Iron Co., Ltd.; Mickley Coal Co., Ltd.; Cowpen Coal Co.; as well as the Associated Lead Manufacturers Ltd., etc.

ARTHUR DORMAN, is on Dorman Long & Co., Ltd.; Pearson & Dorman Long Ltd.; and British Magnesite Calcining Co., Ltd.

J. H. B. FORSTER, is on the Chislet Colliery Co.; Easington Coal Co., Ltd.; South Hetton Coal Co., Ltd.; Weardale Steel Coal and Coke Co., Ltd. He is also on the Bank of Liverpool and Martins Ltd., etc.

FRANCIS PRIESTMAN, is of Priestman Collieries Ltd.; Ashington Colliery Co., Ltd.; in addition to the Bank of Liverpool and Martins Ltd.; Newcastle-on-Tyne and Gateshead Gas Co., Ltd.; the Tyneside Electrical Development Co., Ltd., etc.

REGINALD PEASE is on Bearpark Coal and Coke Ltd.; Darlington Forge Ltd.; Carnforth Hematite Iron (1915) Ltd.; Royal Insurance Co., Ltd., etc.

CLARENCE D. SMITH, O.B.E., is on the Consett Iron Co., Ltd.; British Ropes Ltd.; and nine other companies.

SIR ARTHUR N. L. WOOD is a Director of the New Ingleton Collieries Ltd.; Harton Coal Co., and three other companies.

SUMMERS HUNTER, C.B.E., is a Director of the North Eastern Marine Engineering Co., Ltd.

LIEUT.-COL. W. H. RITSON, C.M.G., is on the Newcastle-on-Tyne and Gateshead Gas Co., Ltd.; Shotley Bridge and Consett District Gas Co., Ltd., and W. H. Ritson & Sons, Ltd.

SIR THOMAS PUTNAM is on the Darlington Forge Ltd., and the Carnforth Hematite Iron (1915) Ltd.

STANLEY SADLER, J.P., is on the National Benzol Co., Ltd., and four other companies.

SHEFFIELD.

In this contingent march:

SIR ARTHUR BALFOUR, K.B.E., of Arthur Balfour & Co., Ltd. (the steel firm); the National Provincial Bank Ltd.

J. B. BARDSLEY, also of the F.B.I. Council and Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, and

A. BLENKINSOP, of Dalton Main Collieries Ltd. This well-known coal concern has another director of the Council, namely,

SIR WILLIAM ELLIS, G.B.E., also of Davy Bros., Ltd., and four other companies.

W. CLARK, J.P., is on High Speed Steel Alloys, Ltd.

W. NEWTON DREW, J.P., is on Hoyland Silkstone Coal and Coke Co., Ltd.; National Benzole Co., Ltd.; Thorncliffe Coal Distillation Ltd. and Newton Chambers & Co., Ltd., the well-known coal company. Newton Chambers has another director on the Council in the person of

A. J. CAPRON, O.B.E.

Ten other Directors on the Sheffield Council account for 26 directorates between them.

SOUTH WALES AND MONMOUTHSHIRE.

This Council rallies well to the "sterling" flag. Coal interests are to the fore:

TREVOR S. JONES is on the Lewis Merthyr Consolidated Collieries Ltd.; Tirdonkin Merthyr Collieries Ltd., and eight other companies.

W. H. NEWTON is on Locket Merthyr Collieries (1894) Ltd.; and Glyncoerwg Collieries Co., Ltd.

E. L. HANN is a Director of Minerals Separation and Powell Duffryn Coal Treatment and Briquetting Co., Ltd.

ROBERT J. WEBBER, J.P. is a Director of that anti-miners' paper, *The Western Mail*; presumably he looks after publicity.

FINLAY GIBSON, well known to every worker in South Wales as the coalowners' secretary, is on the Council.

JAMES MILES, of Burneat Brown & Co., Ltd., and United National Collieries is the South Wales representative on the Central Council.

Three other members of the South Wales Council muster ten directorates.

There are four South Wales J.P.'s on the list, namely: Sir William Gunham, James Miles, D. Morgan Rees, R. J. Webber.

Another "councillor,"

LORD COLUM CRICHTON STUART, M.P., is the son of the Marquis of Bute, the royalty owner, who owns about 117,000 acres, and draws about £115,000 a year in royalties.

The foregoing examples are enough to show that the Economic League is simply an employers' propaganda agency, the sole purpose of which is to create doubt and division among the workers, so that they will be more easily beaten down.

Activities of the League.

The League has also connections with the Children's Faith Crusade "to combat the Communist Sunday School menace" in the Hull area, with the United Empire League in the Liverpool area, which also maintains "close co-operation with other local organisations having similar objects," and with the Birmingham Speakers' Club in the Midland area.

A Report of the League's activities is published and in their report they state that "we have to make clear to the workers who have been infected with 'Red' doctrines that their standard of living and of comfort can be raised only by constructive social reforms and not by mere destruction of existing institutions. By the co-operation of labour and capital, social reform," urges this bright economist, "will soon be possible."

They exist, they inform us, to combat international organisations, especially the Communist

International, which, in their own inimitable style, is a "menace to the political and industrial peace and security of every civilised country." To counteract the influence of this "International," an organisation was formed last year with headquarters at Geneva, known as "The International Entente against the Third International," with this Council as Great Britain's representative.

The Economic Council has "tasks" before them. Not only to combat Socialism and Communism, but to formulate and popularise proposals to improve the social and industrial conditions of the workers and to promote industrial efficiency.

Their faith in humanity is so far unshaken that they do not believe the rank and file of the unions have any interest in "class warfare" and that we (Great Britain) should follow America's lead, where "thousands of wage-earners are also capitalists," and they further suggest that the "Unions should give a lead in this direction by investing funds in British industries."

It will be seen then that this organisation, in common with many others of a similar character, is chiefly supported by members of the F.B.I., mineowners and their paid publicists, and individuals with the anti-Socialist and anti-nationalisation complex, and that from the nature of the leaders of this League its work can only be in direct opposition to the working class.

The Need for Research.

The Economic League realises the value of Research work. The report states that the League is giving serious consideration to the need for a

Research Department "to collect facts and figures, and to prepare reports, pamphlets, etc., on social and industrial problems." This evidently foreshadows a new torrent of capitalist propaganda, in which "economic facts" will be served up in the most useful way to serve the interests of the employers. Against this insidious propaganda the only effective defence is the use of economic facts *from the working-class standpoint*. This is the work of the Labour Research Department, and we ask readers to realise that in helping to spread the literature issued by the Labour Research Department they are taking the best possible means of counteracting the poison which is being spread by the Economic League and other employers' agencies.

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