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WHO IS BEHIND THEM?

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TWO employers' organisations are spending around a quarter of a million a year in propaganda to the workers. They are the *Economic League* and *Aims of Industry, Ltd.*

Both these organisations derive support from the Federation of British Industries, which, as a federation of big firms and employers' associations, acts as the spokesman of industrial capitalism in this country. The support given is not only spiritual. In January 1948, the F.B.I. addressed a letter to its members asking that funds be found to finance the Economic League and Aims of Industry Ltd.:

"If private enterprise wishes to see these organisations conduct a thorough, nation-wide educational campaign, they will have to be very liberally financed. The Federation invites its members to make their own approach with a view to giving them the strongest possible support."

Funds were found. In 1951 the Economic League collected £142,215 and spent £132,265; Aims of Industry collected £120,444 (apart from £8,000 from advertisements and sales of publications) and spent £111,114.

The result? The two organisations covered acres of newsprint in their "ghosted" articles, showed many feet of film, distributed thousands of leaflets and wearied the air with a volume of noise through loud speakers.

THE ECONOMIC LEAGUE

"The Economic League" we read in one of the League's innumerable leaflets "gives this advice to all who are asking for higher wages. Show restraint . . ." (1952 series, No. 20).

It is open to anyone to give advice to the workers. It is open to anyone to "call spirits from the vasty deep." "But will they come when you do call for them?"

Who is it who is giving this advice?

Before answering this question, we may mention that the Economic League does not like it to be asked. A few simple facts about the men on the Economic League Council published by the L.R.D. among others last summer; provoked a couple of indignant leaflets; for example:

"It would be more *sincere*, more *sensible*, and more *fair* to judge the people who run the League by their work."—(1952 Series No. 21).

The League, which is so fond of suggesting that activities of which it disapproves are directed from "the Kremlin," finds it awkward when the source of its own inspiration is revealed. And no wonder!

There are 40 men who run the Economic League of whom 30 are company directors. Among the remaining 10 are one representative of an employers' association, two

Tory M.P.s (though the Economic League claims to be "non-political"), one stock-broker, one retired army captain, one retired Alderman. The 30 company directors sit on the Boards of 190 Companies. Less than half these Companies have a combined issued capital of over £500 million.

They include banks (four of the "Big Five" are represented), a remarkable number of investment trusts and insurance companies, and a couple of Building Societies, a few newspapers, some steel concerns, a little cotton and a lot of shipping, some engineering and a good many breweries. And of course, the inevitable I.C.I. Employers' organisations are also well represented; for example, not only the Federation of British Industries itself, but also the National Union of Manufacturers, the Mining Association of Great Britain, the National Association of Port Employers, the Chamber of Shipping, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Leeds Chamber of Commerce and so on.

With all this many on the list are elderly, and one feels that the staff carries the burden of activity. The staff numbered 155 full-time in 1951. Of the 10 Regional Directors or organisers, 8 bear military, naval or airforce titles, as follows: 3 colonels, 1 major, 1 wing-commander, 1 Lt.-commander, two captains.

The objectives of the Economic League according to the President's Annual Statement in May 1952, include:

"to encourage by educational means high productivity,

good craftsmanship, and good citizenship in industry..."

"to answer with facts the persistent efforts of the Communists to cause unrest generally and particularly to lower production in industry..."

"to reveal to those who work in industry and commerce the immense and progressive contribution of our free enterprise system."

The activities of the Economic League are aimed at one thing—protection of capitalist interests. It needs no sleight of hand to read this in its pronouncements, or in the individual pronouncements of its Council members.

The Economic League continually extols the virtues of "free enterprise." In practice in the present-day world, "free enterprise" means the big trusts and monopolies.

In line with this, the League continually demands that taxation be slashed—particularly taxation on company profits.

Thus the Earl of Selborne, Chairman of the National Provincial Bank and member of the Economic League's Council, says:

"The present level of taxation is such as to make private saving virtually impossible... the level of taxation is even more serious in its effects on industrial resources. Between income tax, profits tax and excess profits levy,

industry has to pay to the revenue two-thirds or more of its profits."

This statement is quoted with approval in the Economic League's "Notes and Comments," March 16th, 1953. But would it not be "more *sincere*, more *sensible* and more *fair*" to add that the shareholders of the National Provincial Bank had an increase of dividend last year from 15% to 16%? Or that the trading profit of Boots Pure Drug Co. of which the Earl of Selborne is also a director, increased from £3.8 million to £4 million?

The Economic League is always insisting that profits are very small. For example, in a leaflet (1953 Series, No. 2) it is explained that the stockholders of I.C.I. received in net dividends only 5d. out of each £1. It would have been "more *sincere*, more *sensible* and more *fair*" if they had added that the average profit made out of each *employee* of I.C.I. in 1951 was £365.

The Economic League continually campaigns among other things for higher production. Lord Rochdale, member of the Economic League Council, explained to the House of Lords (May 7th, 1952) some of the ways in which he thought this could be achieved:

"The lengthening of the hours of work is suggested and I believe there is some value to be gained from that. I think there are many operatives who, if they had the chance, would gladly work longer hours. . . . It is also suggested that we should extend the normal span of working life. . . . I think that that is definitely a step in the right direction. . . ."

Mr. A. Harold Bibby, Chairman of Martin's Bank and member of the Economic League Council apparently thinks the workers are too well off:

"When £751 millions are spent in one year on alcohol, £769 millions on tobacco, more hundreds of millions on luxuries, and some £60 million turned over on gambling, it is impossible to maintain that the cost of living is cut so bare that there is no room for economies in the family budget without depressing the morale and physical standards of the country as a whole."

—(E.L. "Notes & Comments," March 16th, 1953).

And this is what Sir Waldron Smithers, one of the two Tory M.P.s on the Economic League Council thinks about the Welfare State:

"The comprehensive Welfare State is ruining the character and homes of our people, and instead of being a lifebuoy will be a millstone round our necks. . . . I do not fear the atom bomb or the hydrogen bomb which kill the body, so much as I fear the Socialist concept of using the law to relieve individuals of the responsibility of their own welfare and to deprive them of their freedom of choice, which kills the soul."—(May 7th, 1953).

Finally, the Economic League is always combating what it calls "subversive activity" and standing up for what it calls the "British Way of Life."

Now the "British Way of Life" has many mansions and it is interesting to recall some of those lived in by some members of the Economic League.

In the thirties there existed an organisation called the Anglo-German Fellowship ; its membership, according to the *News Review* (23.1.36) consisted of "distinguished representatives of British Big Business, who claim that Hitler has an unanswerable case, who plan to set up a lavishly equipped Club in London at which Nazism can be preached, Ministers of National-Socialism entertained, fêted." Lord McGowan, now a Vice-President of the Economic League, was a member of the Anglo-German Fellowship, and was one of those personally received by Hitler. (*Evening Standard*, September 12th, 1938).

The Observer (23.1.44) commented:

"It was inevitable, but particularly unfortunate, that such a man should, in the period preceding the war, have paid some attention to National Socialism ; for his attendance at the Nuremberg Rally of 1938 and his brief earlier approval of the Nazis' domestic activities provided his political opponents . . . with a weapon . . ."

Sir Harry Brittain and Viscount Runciman (the "hon. Walter" before the war), now members of the Economic League Council, both also belonged to the Anglo-German Fellowship.

Lord Riverdale, one of the League's Vice-Presidents, said soon after Hitler first came to power:

"Will the Germans go to war again? I don't think there is any doubt about it, and the curious thing is that I am almost persuaded that some day we shall have to let the Germans arm or we shall have to arm them. With the

Russians armed to the teeth and the tremendous menace in the East, Germany unarmed in the middle is always going to be a plum waiting for the Russians to take, and which we should have to defend if the Germans could not defend themselves. One of the greatest menaces to peace in Europe to-day is the totally unarmed condition of Germany."—(*Sheffield Telegraph*, October 24th, 1933).

The Earl of Selborne (then Viscount Wolmer) on the other hand, was a member of the committee of the "United Christian Front," an organisation which supported General Franco.

AIMS OF INDUSTRY LTD.

Aims of Industry Ltd. "is pledged to a long-term educational campaign to keep industry's workers and the general public fully alive to the contribution made by Free Enterprise to the national well-being."

In a shiny brochure recently issued under the title of "Danger Signal," Aims of Industry describes its activities as follows:

"(1). 500 newspapers and magazines, with a combined circulation of 19 million repeatedly used out editorial material during 1952 and are continuing to do so.

"(2). New films have been made by our own production unit.

"(3). 10 Mobile Film Vans tour the country, each giving three to four shows a day to a total annual audience of more than 1 million.

"(4). Meetings are addressed by our speakers" etc.

Here again protection of "Free Enterprise" means protection for the monopolies. In 1948, the employers in the sugar refining, meat, cold storage and water supply industries entrusted their defence against possible nationalisation to Aims of Industry Ltd. It was Aims of Industry, for example, which organised the "Mr. Cube" campaign, spending £15,339 in one year on behalf of Tate & Lyle.

Since that time, according to statements at the last Aims of Industry Ltd. A.G.M., the organisation has been plugging "constructive publicity for free enterprise and its achievements" coupled with work against "unofficial strikes and the Communist menace in Industry." This "work" has included a spate of ridiculous coloured cartoons glorifying capitalism.

But Aims of Industry is now preparing for an all-out campaign against any further nationalisation. Statements by Labour Party leaders about future nationalisation and the discussions between the Labour Party and the T.U.C. as to which industries should be next on the list have been taken as a "danger signal" and Lord Lyle, President of Aims of Industry, issued a special appeal to industrialists in February, 1953. Enclosing quotations from Messrs. Morrison, Dalton, Bevan, Wilson, Cole, Strachey and Ernest Davies on the Morecambe decisions he wrote:

"I feel sure that after reading the accompanying quotations you must agree with me that the threat which they contain to Free Enterprise industry is as grave as that

which some of us met and defeated a year or so ago. Whereas on that occasion only a few of us were singled out, now the whole of trade and industry is threatened.

"It is no use waiting until the blow falls. The fate of the Road Hauliers and others in 1946 was sealed before they could even start their campaign, and my own firm escaped not only by its own efforts, but because time was given to us through the pronouncements at the Labour Party Conference of that year. It is clear that because of these campaigns, many of the Party leaders will seek to avoid naming particular industries in the future; which makes the threat universal and more deadly.

"I assure you that I view this campaign, as I did our own fight, as in no way a political battle, but as a united defence of industry against a threat from any quarter.

"Industry" of course, as usual in the mouth of an employer, means the people who ride on the back of industry. Now comes the plea:

"You know that my own Company and others joined Aims of Industry Ltd., of 12, Carteret Street, S.W.1. . . . to fight our battle. Aims of Industry conducted that battle with all its resources through Press, Meetings—both public and private—Films, Recordings and Leaflets; and in view of the universal tributes paid to those campaigns both in this country and America, I make no apology for suggesting that this new effort in which we are all so vitally concerned, should be entrusted to this same body. We shall want support and ideas from individual firms and from Trade Associations, and above all, we shall want cash. If every Trade Association would, by way of levy on its members, contribute to this Fighting Fund, a substantial amount would be available for a worth-while campaign."

We append the list of 21 men who run "Aims of Industry Ltd."; all of them are company directors, and the number of their companies is 393. Lord Lyle, the president, is the great sugar king; like some members of the Economic League, he was a member of the Anglo-German Fellowship before the war; he was Conservative M.P. for Bournemouth from 1940-45, and in that capacity was one of the organisers of the back-bench Tory revolt in 1943 against the Catering Act, the first attempt to fix minimum wages in what had been a notoriously sweated industry. J. Arthur Rank represents two great empires, flour and films. P. L. Fleming represents not only the giant British Electric Traction but in addition a large number of investment trusts, not to mention a rubber plantation in Malaya. Lord Perry and P. L. Lord represent the motor industry; Col. W. H. Whitbread, breweries; G. F. Earle, the cement monopoly. In addition there are directors of English Electric, D. Napier & Son, Bristol Aeroplane Co., Babcock & Wilcox, and many others. Baron Ashcombe represents one of the largest building contractors. Though Sir Bernard Dudley Docker recently resigned from Aims of Industry, there are plenty of rich men left.

Why are Aims of Industry Ltd. and the Economic League so anxious to stress that they are "non-political"? The explanation is given quite clearly in the brochure, "Danger Signal," as follows:

"In the face of such certain attack, the ranks of all industry and commerce must close. Of the ability of the

forces of free enterprise to educate the populace there is no doubt. . . . The organised forces of industry properly directed, should be far more effective than those of the political parties, for industry and the non-party educative bodies which speak on behalf of industry, have a better access to the working masses, and have fewer prejudices to conquer."

In other words, since the Tory party is recognised by the industrial workers as the party of the rich, the employers feel they can do better if the Tory label is not attached. The Labour Movement is not likely to be deceived. Nor is it likely to accept these attempts from the opposite camp to dictate its policy.

APPENDICES

THE ECONOMIC LEAGUE COUNCIL

(As at June, 1952)

Below we give the name, the number of directorships held, and the most important companies of which the member is a director ("Ltd." is omitted):—

SIR WILLIAM BENTON JONES, (13), United Steel Companies, Wellman Smith Owen Engineering Corp., Westminster Bank; LORD ILIFFE, (5), Birmingham Post and Mail, Coventry Newspapers, London Assurance; LORD MCGOWAN, (6), Imperial Chemical Industries, International Nickel Co. of Canada, Midland Bank; LORD RIVERDALE, (6), Arthur Balfour & Co., Halifax Building Society, National Provincial Bank; CLIVE COOKSON, (8), Consett Iron Co., Wm. Benson, F.B.I.; WM.

ALEX. LEE, Mining Association of Great Britain; SIR HARRY BRITAIN, (6), Provincial Newspapers, Inveresk Paper Co.; HON. ANGUS DUDLEY CAMPBELL, (8), Combined Egyptian Mills, Phoenix Assurance, Waring & Gillow; SIR JOHN HOBHOUSE, (10), Alfred Holt & Co., Royal Insurance Co.; HALFORD W. L. REDDISH (Chartered Accountant), (6), Rugby Portland Cement Co.; ERNEST E. R. KILNER; LORD ROCHDALE, (4), Kelsall & Kemp, National Union of Manufacturers; VISCOUNT RUNCIMAN, (10), P. & O. Steam & Navigation, Lloyds Bank; SIR WALDRON SMITHERS, M.P., (Former Stockbroker); COL. HUGH BAIRD SPENS (Solicitor, Edinburgh), (24), Burmah Oil Co., Union Bank of Scotland; ALFRED STANYARD, (1), Yarrow & Co. (ship-builders); J. L. S. STEEL, (5), Imperial Chemical Industries, African Explosives & Chemical Industries; LT. COL. T. HARRY G. STEVENS, (5), Trafford Park Estates; ALDERMAN CHARLES TERRY, (2), Enfield Cycle Co.; SIR HAROLD WEST, (5), Newton Chambers & Co.; JOHN HORSLEY GRESHAM, (2), Gresham & Craven; HARRY RUSSEL ALLDAY; BERTRAM JAMES FIRKINS; CAPT. WM. APPELBY (Retired Army); EDWARD REED, (10), Wilson & Walker Breweries; ALDERMAN UNDERWOOD (Retired); COL. MAURICE B. BUCHANAN. (Stockbroker); GEOFFREY A. N. HIRST, M.P.; EARL SELBORNE, (6), National Provincial Bank, Boots Pure Drug Co.; WALTER LANCASTER HEY, (6), J. Hey & Co.; NORMAN HENRY COOPER, (8), Liverpool Warehousing Co.; ARTHUR HAROLD BIBBY, (8), Bibby Bros. (steamship), Martins Bank, Suez Canal Co.; KEPPEL F. MASSEY, (3), B. & S. Massey; LT. COL. HENRY HASWELL PEILE, (6), Priestman Collieries, Northern Gas Board; FREDERICK CYRUS BRABY, (1), Frederick Braby & Co.

Area Presidents (Other than included above)

COL. SIR ALFRED MOWAT, (2), English Card Clothing Co., Halifax Building Society; J. P. HUNT, (4), Hallamshire Steel & File Co.; A. E. MINNS, (5), Hudson Steamship Co.; R. G. GROUT, (4), General Steam Navigation Co.

DIRECTORS OF AIMS OF INDUSTRY

(As at December 17th, 1952)

LORD LYLE, (5), Tate & Lyle, Lloyds Bank; LORD PERRY, (5), Ford Motor Co., Firestone Tyre & Rubber; SIR GEORGE NELSON, (28), English Electric, Soc. of British Aircraft Constructors, B.E.A.M.A., International Electric Association, Lloyds Bank; G. F. EARLE, (9), Associated Portland Cement; G. A. MOBBS, (3), Slough Estates; I. D. LYLE, (7), Tate & Lyle; H. G. STARLEY, (1), Champion Sparking Plugs; L. S. HARGREAVES, (10), Aerialite; W. R. VERDON SMITH, (8), Bristol Aeroplane, Babcock & Wilcox, Rotol; J. R. ORR, (6), Blair & Co. (Alloa); H. SCHOFIELD, (2), Crabtree Electrical Industries, J. A. Crabtree; COL. B. C. LOCKHART H. JERVIS, (4), Malaysian Tin, Smith & Nephew Assocd. Cos., Pearson & Knowles; COL. W. H. WHITBREAD, (7), Whitbread Brewery; COL. A. D. M. SHAW, (2), Shaw & McInnes, Glasgow Alhambra; L. P. LORD, (11), British Motor Corp., Austin Motor; K. A. E. MOORE, (7), McDougalls, J. & W. Nicholson, Trinidad Petroleum; S. B. ASKEW, (51), Joseph Rank, Ranks; J. A. RANK, (182), Ranks, J. Arthur Rank Org., Gaumont British Picture Corp., Horace Marshall & Son, Eagle Star Insurance Co.; BARON ASHCOMBE, (15), Holland Hannen & Cubitts, London Assurance; G. M. LAMBEER, (5), Alfred Bird & Son, General Foods (Great Britain), Grape Nuts; P. L. FLEMING, (25), British Electric Traction.

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