

*Eddie Collins*

**PARLIAMENT  
THE  
PEOPLE'S  
ENEMY**

By  
**CLARA GILBERT COLE.**

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## PARLIAMENT THE PEOPLE'S ENEMY.

CLARA GILBERT COLE.

Now that so many of the workers have learnt that they are an oppressed and robbed class, learnt through bitter experience, it seems cruel that parties should arise which are trying to revive their faith in Parliament.

To-day we have more homeless and badly-housed, ill-clad, semi-starved, sick people in the British Isles than ever before, and yet we have more Labour Members in Parliament.

These facts, which greet us at every step, should convince us that Parliament does not protect or save the common people.

Putting aside the fact that Parliament is not democratically chosen by the people, but that candidates and election funds are in the hands of certain cliques in which the workers have little power or choice, the machinery of Parliament is devised to suit the interests of these same people—not the workers.

Parliament is used to keep the rich rich, and the poor poor, and the Labour Party is impotent to alter this.

It can alleviate or apply palliatives during industrial crises when Capital over-reaches itself; in other words, it staves off the explosion of the gasometer.

On Wednesday, May 5th, 1921, the important subject of the London rates was discussed. Eight Labour Members turned up.

On Wednesday, May 6th, when Col. Wedgwood Benn tried to move that the House should adjourn in order to discuss the Polish War, only 36 Labour Members supported him—36 out of

66; so you can send your Member to Parliament, but you cannot be sure he will attend to your business.

Questioned on the Polish War, the Speaker replied: "That cannot be said to be a matter of urgent public importance." Has, then, the taking of human life and the diverting of labour from useful production to the making or sending of munitions become such a small matter, at a time when bread and other necessaries are badly wanted in order to defend our country from within?

It was not so when the capitalists wanted to discuss war in order to wage it, but stopping it is another matter.

When the *Daily Herald* grumbled at the Labour Members for not being in their places, the Secretary wrote to say: "The Party was taken unawares."

That condemns the Parliamentary machine more than ever, for it shows Capital can easily get its own way by "taking them unawares," resorting to tricks, subterfuges, and other underhand means which would be impossible under the Soviet system.

Many a well-intentioned Socialist enters Parliament in the vain hope that he can revolutionise it, but Parliament revolutionises him.

He is brave enough to enter Parliament, but seldom has the courage to come out, shake the musty dust off his feet, and build ready against the day when Parliament has played its last dastardly card and fallen by it.

I would write over the door "Abandon hope all ye who enter here," for Parliament is dehumanising.

To people who think it useful, I would point out that the Parliamentary machine is too com-

plicated and overburdened with capitalistic rules, which would prove a stumbling-block to the workers; rules made in order to baffle the workers and to find soft jobs for lawyers and capitalists' sons; rules made in order to awe, impress and silence the uninitiated. Well may the man in the street say: "I don't understand politics."

In the preface to Frank Hodges' "Nationalisation of Mines," J. R. Clynes admits "The freedom of political democracy is a magnificent accomplishment, but it is now realised that the slavery of industry is harsher than the slavery of the unenfranchised serf." Proving that industrial freedom is more necessary than political freedom; in fact, true industrial freedom spells political freedom.

When everyone is assured of good industrial conditions there will be no need to petition the political machine.

If we build away from it, it will die.

When we have no rich, no poor, when all our children are well fed, clothed, and housed, our country will be defended.

Parliament is a machine for exploiting the people, not for defending them.

As regards its being wrong to strike for political reasons, so long as politicians interfere with Labour, Labour is right in striking for political reasons, and it is often the only redress for industrial wrongs.

If Labour had struck against the War and continued the industrial fight instead of calling a truce, we should not be in the plight we are.

The Soviet system, even in this early stage, has shown some grand results; but with the blockade lifted, and the cessation of capitalist intervention, life in Russia for the workers would

be Heaven in comparison with the worker's life under our system.

It is useless even to ask a question in Parliament, for Ministers constantly reply: "It is not in the public interest," or they give a half-lie which is more misleading than a whole one.

Why do we need to ask so many questions which ought to be common knowledge? When these people ask to be allowed to represent us in Parliament and they know the business and we do not, how can they be said to represent *our* side of the question?

If capitalists in Parliament cannot work their will by fair constitutional means, they never hesitate to do it by foul unconstitutional means, such as Lloyd George used when he refused to give the House an assurance that it would be consulted before any new allied advance was made in Germany, also when he suppressed Krassin's Peace Note in October 1920 he unconstitutionally kept the peace terms from the nation.

Telegrams and letters are suppressed, and Lord Milner even altered one telegram, thus causing the Boer War.

All the tall talk about Parliament being our servant is nonsense. Parliament is our master, and what they do not say or accomplish at Westminster is said and carried out in secret at Lympne or elsewhere.

Two or three men arrange and ratify secret treaties which are to be the means of murdering millions of useful and innocent people, and *all* the boasted machinery of Parliament is useless to restrain these men or take precautionary measures for frustrating or even knowing their plans. This same Government causes the man in the street to be arrested for the slightest un-

constitutional act, at the same time allowing Carsonites to stop by force a constitutional ballot.

In Belfast on May 17th, 1921, the Labour candidates were forcibly prevented from opening their election campaign. Why talk about acting in a constitutional manner and the power of the ballot-box when in America, after five members had been elected constitutionally, the capitalists refused to allow them to take their seats?

Moreover, of what use to waste time in getting a Bill passed and placed on the Statute-book, as the Home Rule Bill for Ireland was passed, if the Bill is not to be carried out?

When the Home Rule Bill was placed on the Statute-book the British Government, by sending troops over to suppress the Irish people, was fighting against what it had itself made lawful by Act of Parliament.

Three or four men were instrumental in dragging England into the greatest war in history *without* the knowledge of Parliament; indeed, the alliances were denied, and the majority of members deceived.

In fact, now they do not even declare war, probably knowing that if they did, the war-weary nation would object, so they wage it without declaring it or asking permission, as in Ireland and Russia. Labour's hard-earned wealth is squandered to crush peoples who are fighting for Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality.

The Speaker can refuse to give his eye to a Member, and thus scotch or shelve anything.

The Indian question was treated thus, and Col. Wedgwood, the chosen speaker of the Labour Party, was denied a hearing, though his name had been duly and constitutionally handed in beforehand.

We are suffering through Parliamentary administration, and do not want to capture a machine devised by the capitalistic class. How can it be adapted to the aims of Socialism?

The following condemn Parliamentarians out of their own mouths:—

Mr. T. A. Blane (*Coalition Member*), speaking at Leicester, said: "Members of Parliament are a strong body of men sent to Westminster to carry out the wishes of the majority; but they are disappointed to find this country is ruled by a mere handful of men who are simply the mouth-pieces of bureaucracy."

"He recognised how futile was the effort of the individual Member of the House of Commons. When he saw how little they could do, either collectively or individually, he wondered how the people tolerated the present system of government."—*Daily Herald*, May 23rd, 1921.

If it is wrong and futile, why not scrap it? They do not hesitate to do so where a battleship is concerned; but the more important ship of State, however obsolete, is to be retained.

We allow Parliament to scrap much better things, the Plimsoll line, for instance, a reform that a man fought twenty years to obtain, was scrapped in order to make money, and seamen's lives counted of less value than a heavy cargo.

When Commander Kenworthy asked leave to move the adjournment of the House on the allied advance into Germany, only thirty-six Members rose to support him on April 28th, 1921.

A telegraphist or ordinary paid servant of the community is forced to show a doctor's certificate if he does not turn up at his post. The Members of Parliament are the well-paid servants of the community; why are they not made to do the same?

Pacifists who will not enter the revolutionary movement, deeming it militant, deceive themselves when they enter Parliament if they think they are still pacifists and the man who belongs to a party that has a red army is not, because Parliament is upheld by, and rests upon, force.

The Lord Chancellor (and he ought to know) said: "Mr. Collins was apprehensive that an attempt . . . might be made to destroy the provisional Government by seducing the armed forces, upon whom, if it came to a trial of strength, it must in the last resort depend."—*Daily Herald*, February 15th, 1922.

After result of election, Richard Davies said: "I have lost because my opponents took special care to circulate the idea that the Labour Party is a party of disruption, out for a violent revolution with the object of destroying capital and reducing society to a state of chaos!"

The *Daily Herald* adds: "Lord Percy's wealthy supporters lent him an enormous fleet of cars. Davies was placed at a distinct disadvantage owing to the weather and lack of cars."

Is Richard Davies out for the destruction of capitalism? If not, he is useless either inside the House or outside; for so long as we have capitalists, so long shall we have poor people on the precipice of starvation.

Of what value the vote of a man if he will only register it for a ride in a motor-car?

If the vote depends on the possession of cars, the rich man can always win; for the workers only *make* them, they do not *possess* them.

Now turn to the Privy Council, "the private Council of the English Sovereign, the members of which are chosen at his or her pleasure." This Council does not represent the people.

A Labour leader takes the Privy Councillor's oath of allegiance, in which he swears over and over again to defend the King, but he never swears to defend the people.

In times of crisis history has again and again shown that the parties, Conservatives, Liberals, and Labour, quickly join hands (coalesce) against the interests of the people. At the declaration of the late War the Labour Party dropped the workers' war in order to back up a capitalist war; and if Parliament wants to do an unconstitutional thing it makes it constitutional by rushing a Bill through in a few hours, as in the case of the "Emergency Powers Bill," and the people have no voice or choice in the matter.

Parliamentarian Socialists say they are going to get Communism through Parliament.

If a Bill had to go through the House of Lords which would destroy the Lords' position, how could you expect it to pass? These men have long stuck to one-third of the land. Do you think their evil record should lead us to hope that they will themselves help us to get back the land? As soon expect the proverbial camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

The reason Parliamentarians will never bring Communism is that they can only think and act in Parliamentary palliative grooves, for their idea is to sit aloof and aloft on a glorified platform, graciously giving the people Socialism, whereas the people ought to carry it out for themselves.

During the coal strike, Members of a future Labour Cabinet altered or refused to carry out the decisions that had been voted upon. If these men let a strike down, be sure they will let the revolution down.

If the present capitalist basis of society is

to be razed to the ground, Parliament must go first as it is built upon the foundations of capitalism—namely, money.

Do not waste your time trying to smash it from within, or you will fall with it. When organisation in the workshop is complete, Parliament will die; industry can live without politics, but politics cannot live without industry.

Can you imagine after the foregoing unconstitutional record that capitalists will be turned out of Parliament by constitutional means?

No; to enter Parliament with the capitalist system still going is only to perpetuate that system.

Under the present system no number of Labour men in Parliament can achieve Communism, for if they get more money than the industrial worker they go in as members of a ruling or superior class.

Communists inside Parliament are out to improve the capitalist system.

Even Earl Stanhope admits economics and politics are one and the same thing. He says. "Why, oh why, can British diplomacy not realise that it exists for trade, and because of trade, and that its reason for existing is primarily to ensure the peaceful and uninterrupted flow of our commerce and all the fruits of our industry throughout the markets of the world."

Note: "Our industry," from a man who is only industrious in spending the profits.

How seriously these men take the affairs of starving people the following will show: "The Home Secretary himself lounged on the Treasury Bench with his feet on the table.—*Daily Herald*, May 15th, 1921.

The following is a quotation from a speech by C. B. Stanton, M.P.:—

“ Besides,” he added, “ is the Government aware that if the answer is in one direction I have lost a bet with a friend? ”—*Daily Herald*, May 6th, 1921.

On August 5th, 1921, the *Daily Herald*, which advocates voting, said: “ By appointing an Advisory Committee of big business, under the chairmanship of Geddes, the Government is now openly and publicly proclaiming its own incompetence, abdicating from its duties, and handing over the destinies of the people to a clique of oligarchs *not elected* (italics mine) not wanted, not to be trusted.” Of what use your Member or your vote?

The *Daily Herald* says of the new Bill to reform the House of Lords (the House that owns one-third of our land): “ It will remove the last vestige of popular control and enable the Second Chamber to thwart every proposal of a Labour Government.”

Col. Malone says: “ I entered Parliament in the hope of assisting to better the social conditions. I have seen from the inside the futility of Parliamentary action so far as fundamentals are concerned,” and “ If you are out to destroy the system, you cannot begin with taking the oath of allegiance to the symbol of that very system.”

In conclusion, “ present want knows no futurity ”; of what *immediate* value is the vote to a starving man? William Morris says: “ To return to our Government of the future, which would be rather an administration of things than a government of persons.”

Control your own workshops, your own food stores. In short, control all that makes life worth while. Only allow commodities to be distributed, but never allow profit to be made out

of them. Make for use, not for profit. Work the land that is held up by those who never till it, or allow others to do so who, while they never work, yet have recreation grounds that stretch from sea to sea. Plough the untilled land from John o' Groats to Lands End. Share the fruits, each for all and all for each.

One great objection to Parliament is that men with £400 to £5,000 a year are not capable of legislating for the great majority of workers. No man has a right to preach economy to another until he has reduced his income to the same level as the man to whom he is dictating.

Kings, dukes, and rich men cannot represent slum dwellers.

The *Daily Herald* said on July 15th, 1921: “ Parliament is adjourning from August to February,” for six months. Business went on just as usual, but when the miners struck, or were locked out, industry was paralysed.

The actual stonework is crumbling, workmen daily try to patch it up; this symbolises that the spirit which animated it is dying.

Come into the sunlight and build away from this unconstitutional constitution.

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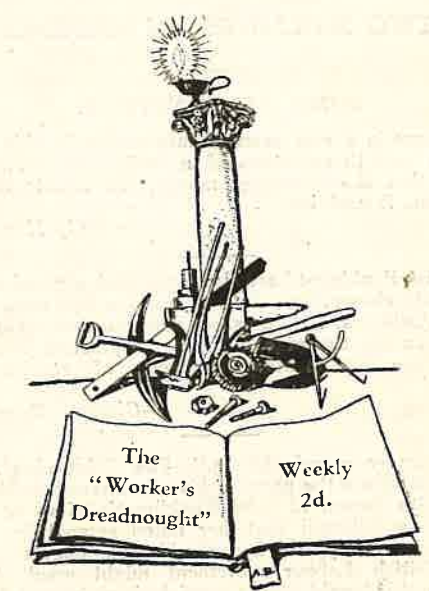
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