

The General Strike of 1926 and British Labour Party

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Abstract :

The General Strike of 1926 was the most important British industrial action of the twentieth century. It was a huge solidarity action in support of the miners' union. The mines had been brought under state control during the First World War, but were returned to private ownership after the end of the war. In June 1925, the mine owners announced that wages would be cut again and that working hours would also be increased. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) offered its support, including strike action, to the Miners Federation of Great Britain. Negotiations between the miners and the mine owners broke down and the immediate reaction of the working class surprised both the TUC and the government. 1.7 million Workers went on strike. The strike was unilaterally called off by the TUC on May 12, with no guarantees of fair treatment for the miners, who fought until bitter defeat in October.

Key Words: General Strike of 1926, Labour Party, Trade Union Congress (TUC), British industry, Miners Federation of Great Britain.

1. Introduction:

In outline, the British miners quarrelled with the owners, who in 1925 proposed increasing working hours and reducing wages to make the coal industry more competitive. Baldwin's Conservative government tried to avoid conflict by providing a nine-month subsidy to maintain existing wage levels; at the same time, it appointed the Samuel Commission to propose a longer-term solution. In March 1926, the commission recommended ending the subsidies and introducing temporary wage cuts until the owners could reorganize the mines more effectively. (Leonard, 2005, p333)

This was opposed by the owners, who announced a unilateral wage cut in April 1926. The miners resisted and asked the Trades Union Congress (TUC) for support. The TUC was negotiating with the government to try to stave off a general strike, which it would call if necessary to support the miners' cause. When these negotiations collapsed between May 2 and 3, the TUC General Council called out transport and railway workers, printers, gas and electricity workers and workers in heavy industry. The remaining workers should follow in due course. The government had meanwhile taken special precautions to combat the effects of the strike. These proved so effective that on May 12 the TUC decided to end the general strike and adopt the Samuel Memorandum. However, this was opposed by the miners, who were left to fight alone until the end of the year when looming starvation forced them to return to work. (Lichtheim, 1974, p221)

This article discusses the main issues surrounding the events of 1925-6. Why did Britain come to the brink of a general strike in the first place? What was the significance of the general strike in the short and long term? And what were its effects on labour?

2. The General Strike of 1926 and the British Labour Party

The British coal-mining industry suffered an economic crisis in 1925; the most important issue to confront the British working class was the General Strike of 1926. It lasted nine days, from 3 May 1926 to 12 May 1926. (Renshaw, 1975, p117) It was called by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in an unsuccessful attempt to force Stanley Baldwin government to act to prevent wage reduction and worsening conditions for coal miners.

Four main factors led to the strike: The decline of the coal export, the fall in the prices, the reintroduction of the Gold Standard and the reductions in wages. First, during the First World War, it was led to the depletion of coal because of heavy domestic use of it. Britain exported less coal in the War than it would have done in peacetime, allowing other countries to fill the gap. The United States, Poland and Germany benefited in particular. (Renshaw, 1975, p117) Second, the fall in prices resulting from the 1925 Dawes Plan that, among other things, allowed Germany to re-enter the international coal market by exporting "free coal" to France and Italy as part of their reparations for the First World War. Third, the

reintroduction of the Gold Standard in 1925 (Renshaw, 1975, p117) by Winston Churchill made the pound too strong for effective exporting to take place from Britain, and also because of the economic processes involved in maintaining a strong currency raised interest rates, hurting all businesses. The fourth was that the mine owners wanted to normalise profits even during times of economic instability, which often took the form of wage reductions, which coupled with the prospect of longer working hours, put the industry into disarray.

In 1926, the owners responded to these problems by asking the miners to accept cuts in their wages and work an extra hour per day. The owners insisted on large cuts, whilst the Miners Federation of Great Britain fought these proposals. The miners responded in the famous slogan of their militant leader, A. J. Cook, 'Not an hour of the day, not a penny off the pay'. (Farman, 1974, p92) On 30 April 1926, the miners who refused the cuts were locked out and Britain's coalfields came to a stop. The miners refused and so the Government intervened by paying the owners a subsidy to balance their losses. Under the threat of this new trade-union unity, the Conservative government temporised on 31 July 1925 'Red Friday' (Renshaw, 1975, p125) and it announced a nine-month subsidy to maintain wages at their present level, until a new royal Commission, headed by Sir Herben Samuel, could investigate its state of health and propose remedies. (Renshaw, 1975, p124) Red Friday was regarded as a magnificent victory over Baldwin by the trade union movement but it simply led to overconfidence.

The Samuel Commission reported in March 1926, and recommended long term reforms in the industry, accompanied, however, by immediate wage reductions. (William, 1950, p19) The miners rejected any wage cuts, and the owners therefore refused to support reorganisation; subsequent deadlock reigned. The majority of the TUC leaders believed that the Samuel's recommendations did provide a basis for negotiations; (Lyam, 1965, p12) but they were unwilling to coerce the miners over the wage claim. The government therefore abandoned any attempt to impose a settlement on the owners, and prepared to face a showdown with the TUC leaders over their support for a general strike in defence of the miners, which none of them really wanted but to which they were now committed.

On 1 May 1926, the subsidy ran out; (Eccleshall & Walker ,p 299) and since they refused to accept the owners' terms, the miners were locked out. They believed that Red Friday had shown that the government could be forced into supporting the level of miners' wages. In fact, the government was determined not to repeat the experiment, and had used the nine months to prepare for such a strike. Accordingly, when the strike began, it was met with firm government resistance. Negotiations broke down between the TUC leaders and the government on the night of 3rd and 12th May.¹ On the following morning, the General Strike began.

The TUC called all trade unionists to strike, and Britain was paralysed as most of the British workforce came out on strike to support the miners. On 12 May, the TUC was forced into unconditional surrender after nine days, the other unions

¹ *The Hutchinson Illustrated Encyclopaedia*, p 303.

returned to work as the TUC had managed to agree on terms with the Government. (Worley, 2005, p 98) The miners carried on their strike for several months, but by October 1926 hardship forced many miners back. By the end of November most miners were back at work. However, many were victimised and remained unemployed for many years. Those that were employed were forced to accept longer hours and lower wages.

3. The Reasons for the General Strike

Four different strands need to be unraveled before a full perspective on the reasons for the general strike can emerge. One is the underlying state of the economy, with the decline in basic industries and the consequent rise in unemployment and social hardship. The second is the specific impact of these conditions on the coal industry, which has suffered more than any other. The third is the crisis that developed in the coal industry as the two mine owners and miners pursued goals that proved incompatible. The fourth and most critical is the policy the government is pursuing to deal with this confrontation. (Pope, 1998, p96)

The general strike came at a time of painful economic adjustment. This was partly due to the shrinking of staple industries such as coal, steel, textiles and heavy engineering, which before the First World War had accounted for over 50 per cent of British industrial production and 70 per cent of its exports. These continued to absorb most of Britain's resources and investment after 1919, although they became increasingly inefficient. Little was done to improve or modernize production techniques, as was the case in the United States and Germany, and the need for an urgent readjustment was clouded by the illusion of security created by the winning side of World War I. (Pope, 1998, p96)

The problem was exacerbated by Britain's return to the gold standard in 1925, which boosted export prices by about 10 per cent, and by the mounting pressures from within Britain from the growth of new and more efficient industries such as electricity and gas. As heavy industry became less and less competitive, there was a strong tendency to blame lack of productivity on wage levels, making labor disputes more and more likely.

These problems were most intense in coal mining, although their seriousness was not immediately apparent. Coal had originally fueled the Industrial Revolution, and by 1913 Britain had been the world's largest exporter, accounting for a 4 percent annual increase in world demand. During the war, demand still exceeded supply, and favorable external factors meant that the problems of peacetime adjustment were less evident than in other industries; British coal was given respite from competition from the United States, which experienced a miners' strike in 1922, and the Ruhr area of Germany, which was occupied by the French in 1923. But by 1918 British coal was increasingly vulnerable. (Renshaw, 1975, p 75)

Its domestic market shrank with the decline of basic industries and the conversion of major modes of transportation to oil and electricity. Foreign markets had shrunk considerably and British exports faced competition from Polish coal

and a dramatic increase in German supplies after the Dawes Plan ended the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1924. British production had suddenly become uneconomical. The main factor was the organization of the private mines; here coal mining was even less mechanized than in Poland, and about 80 percent continued to be hand-picked. There was little prospect of improving working conditions or increasing productivity.

So, all the conditions were ready for the confrontation between employers and workers. In fact, the antipathy between the two sides was more extreme in the coal industry than in any other. In manufacturing, many employers had been entrepreneurs who had invested much of their own money, time and effort. This had meant a not uncommon common interest between employers and employees. However, the same tradition did not exist in the mining industry. Mine owners rarely reinvested their profits in development and had allowed other countries to overtake Britain in mining techniques and infrastructure. (Worley, 2005, p96)

They reacted to the growing competition from abroad by demanding wage cuts and longer working hours, thereby shifting the problem onto the workforce. This was in line with the view of some orthodox economists, who argued that the market should be allowed to find its own level of wages. For miners, on the other hand, the problem was not due to rising labor costs, but rather a lack of adequate investment that could best be provided through full government control. From 1919 onwards the miners therefore usually demanded a working day of six hours, a wage increase of 30 percent and the nationalization of the mines.

Such arguments led to a series of conflicts between the mine owners and the miners. In 1921, for example, the owners attempted to cut wages, a strategy repeated in 1925. The first time the miners had received no support from workers in other industries. By 1925, however, the TUC saw his involvement as essential. After all, it was the miners' ultimate representative against the owners. In this conflict the contrast between the sides was particularly clear and seemed symbolic of the crisis affecting British industry as a whole. If the miners lost their case, workers in other sectors would soon come under similar pressure. At the same time, the TUC had to be careful not to provoke conflict by seemingly giving the miners unconditional support, thereby reducing their willingness to negotiate.

The dispute originally between miners and owners had reached a new level. On one side stood the representatives of the entire labor movement. On the other side was the government, whose attitude was crucial. (White, 1987, p89)

What exactly was his position? The government had temporarily controlled the mines during World War I but ended it in 1921, ignoring the recommendations of the 1919 Sankey report on the principle of state ownership.¹ At first the government claimed that the dispute between owners and miners was not its direct concern, until the TUC put pressure on in 1925. Then his reaction was cautious and defensive for a while.

For example, on Red Friday, Baldwin acknowledged a subsidy that would last until the Samuel Commission had time to report. At the same time, however, he began to make preparations for a possible general strike. This was done under

the Emergency Powers Act of 1920, which allowed the government to take emergency measures to counter threats to the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel, or light, or to transportation. (White, 1987, p89) The government was clearly playing the wait and see game until own preparations were complete.

Baldwin's handling of the drift into labor disputes has been criticized for two reasons. The first charge is that he failed to seize the opportunity offered by the Samuel Report to find a solution to the looming conflict. Despite urging by some moderate businessmen, Baldwin made no attempt to enforce it, hastening the move toward a miners' strike.

On the other hand, it is difficult to see how the implementation of the Report would have helped in any way. The mine owners had rejected that part which placed upon them the onus for improvements and rationalization, while the miners had refused to take a temporary cut in wages; their official response had been 'Not a minute on the day, not a penny off the pay'. Baldwin would merely have diverted the wrath of the miners from the owners to the government. The only thing which would have prevented a strike was the restoration of the subsidy. But the Report had specifically advised against this and any move in that direction would have been interpreted as a major climbdown by the government. According to Clegg:

It is almost inconceivable that they [the government] could have renewed the subsidy so as to allow further negotiations unless they had first been given a firm commitment to accept wage cuts. ...They also had to consider their followers, especially those in parliament, many of whom had been unhappy over Red Friday, and would not have tolerated what they would have seen as an abject and wholly unnecessary surrender. (Thomson, 1991, p94)

Baldwin cannot, therefore, be held responsible for the owners' announcement of a unilateral wage cut on 30 April, nor for the subsequent lockout and beginning of the miners' strike.

More serious is the second charge that Baldwin did less than he could have done to negotiate a settlement with the TUC to avert the General Strike announced by Ernest Bevin for 3 May. The TUC was less militant than the miners, and clearly wanted a negotiated settlement which would avoid a general strike and the implications that would have for the millions of other workers the TUC also represented. Baldwin's answer was peremptory. In response to industrial action taken by printers at the Daily Mail, he refused to see a delegation from the General Council in the early hours of 3 May and clearly signalled the end of talks. According to L.C.B.Seaman:

Baldwin's cessation of talks was the most provocative action taken by any participant in the sequence of events up to that moment; and the readiness of the T.U.C. to go on negotiating even after it, indicates that the General Strike took place because Baldwin forced their hand. (Thomson, 1991, p100)

By this analysis, Baldwin was more concerned about maintaining the recently re-established unity of the Conservative party than about averting industrial conflict. Any instincts for conciliation he might originally have possessed were clearly subordinated to a desire not to provoke cabinet hardliners like Winston Churchill, Neville Chamberlain and Joynson- Hicks. To have done otherwise would, in the view of Phillips, have required an intellectual capacity to grapple with complex industrial issues, an imagination to take the long rather than the short view, and the courage to meet ill informed criticism. (Kennet, 1989, p56)

An alternative view is that Ramsay MacDonald was trapped by events. According to McDonald:

The General Strike was the accidental by-product of an unsuccessful attempt at high level co-operation between the government and the T.U.C. to avert a coal stoppage. Neither the government nor the T.U.C. had consciously planned to have a massive confrontation. (Kennet, 1989, p88)

There is something in this. Well intentioned and moderate though it was, it was very unlikely that the TUC would be able to persuade the miners to accept a pay cut. Without it, the government could not hope to implement the Samuel Report. Any renewal of the subsidy would involve a major climb down, so what was there to negotiate about when the TUC delegates came to Downing Street on 3 May? The strike of the printers at the Daily Mail was, admittedly, an excuse for the government's hard line response, but would the extension of the negotiating period have done anything except discredit Baldwin with his own cabinet?

Whatever his motive, Baldwin did not come well out of the movement of the TUC towards a general strike. He appeared tired and jaded and was pushed into a corner by his cabinet. There was even an element of hopelessness: 'everything I care for is being smashed to bits at this moment. (Kennet, 1989, p102)

4. Reasons for the Defeat of the General Strike

Two key factors were involved in the failure of the General Strike. One was the relative weakness of the TUC leadership and the tactical errors it committed. The other was the government's comprehensive planning and the effective way in which Baldwin handled the crisis.

Historians have generally argued that the TUC played its hand badly. According to C.L.Mowat: 'For the rank and file it was a triumph; for most of its national leaders a humiliation.' (Lichtheim, 1974, 103) S.Pollard maintains that 'The strike brought forth much capacity for organization, enthusiasm and solidarity of ordinary membership, but these were wholly nullified by the attitude of its leaders.' (Lichtheim, 1974, 103) How, precisely, were these limitations shown?

In the first place, the TUC was overawed by the enormity of the step it had taken. Most members of the General Council disliked the term 'general strike', some preferring the strategy of a series of local strikes. They eventually settled for

what they hoped would be a swift 'national' strike that would be called off as soon as a settlement had been negotiated with the government to end the coal dispute. There was never any intention of taking on the government at a political level. This placed the TUC at a considerable disadvantage. Far from acknowledging the moderation of the TUC's approach, the government proceeded to accuse it of launching a political offensive against the constitution itself. In addition, the TUC had no means of forcing the government to negotiate on the coal dispute and, once it had become clear that Baldwin was determined to hold out on this issue, the TUC felt that it had no option but to back down and call off the General Strike. There was also the fear that the longer the struggle continued the more likely it was that it would be taken over by radicals and converted into a more extreme display of force. In this event, it would certainly become politicised, possibly even revolutionary. (Lichtheim, 1974, 103)

The General Council's understandable caution affected the quality of its leadership. Numerous trade union branches complained about indecision at the centre. The response to the callout on 4 May of railway, transport, iron, steel and printing workers was excellent. But the engineers and shipyard workers, unleashed on 11 May, were given no clear instructions and were then told to return to work on the following day. Throughout the period of the strike it was clear that the TUC had entirely underestimated the determination of the government to see the crisis through. Nor had it used the period of grace offered by the Samuel Commission to prepare in detail for an extended conflict.

Instead, organisation was based on strike committees which were improvised and established by local trades' councils. The TUC had even deprived the strikers of any chance of favourable press coverage, as a result of its defective decision to call out the printers as part of the first wave. At the same time, it became increasingly concerned about the future of its strike funds; within the nine days of the strike, some £4 million had been used up out of their total of £12.5 million. Unless the general strike were ended swiftly, it was felt, there would be no prospects of financing action by individual unions on a smaller scale in the future.

Overall, the TUC miscalculated. It assumed that a show of collective trade union strength would be sufficient. It was not. It also expected the government to confine its response to the industrial sector. It did not. Two different wars were therefore being fought out at the same time; for the TUC it was partial, for the government total.

The government had been preparing for the confrontation during the nine months between the granting of the subsidy and the eventual report of the Samuel Commission. During this period it had taken a series of essential measures. These included the consolidation of coal stocks and a systematic preparation of an emergency structure. The country was subdivided into ten areas, each under a civil commissioner. There would also be an emergency committee for supply and transport, together with an organisation for the maintenance of supplies, the main intention of which would be to co-ordinate the activities of strikebreakers. These

measures were crucial, showing Baldwin's determination to go far beyond the rudimentary outlines of emergency organisation that had existed the previous year.

When the General Strike occurred, the government made immediate use of the Emergency Powers Act, submitting Orders in Council to Parliament to requisition essential land, buildings, vehicles and fuel. Such preparations enabled the government to maintain essential services during the period of the strike. Food supplies were kept flowing, although prices increased to cover the extra costs of haulage. According to Phillips the government's planning for road haulage 'appeared afterwards to be the most vital... aspect of the success of the emergency administration'. (Farman, 1974, p96)

Effective organisation was reinforced by a highly successful propaganda campaign. Baldwin associated the strike directly with an attack on constitutional government, which meant that the government was seen as something much higher than one of the parties in an industrial dispute. His views were regularly repeated in the British Gazette. On 5 May the public read that 'The general strike is...a direct challenge to ordered government...an effort to force upon some 42,000,000 British citizens the will of less than 4,000,000 others'.²³ The following day Baldwin declared that 'The general strike is a challenge to Parliament, and is the road to anarchy and ruin.' (Farman, 1974, p88) He continued:

Constitutional Government is being attacked.... Stand behind the Government.... The laws are in your keeping. You have made Parliament their guardian. (Farman, 1974, p88)

The same message was repeated on the BBC on 8 May: 'I am a man of peace. But I will not surrender the safety and the security of the British Constitution'.²⁶ In this way the government was able to project itself as a force for moderation, while the strikers were portrayed as the authors of aggression.

Historians agree that such measures were crucial. According to McDonald, 'the government's policies and actions had, in effect, defeated the General Strike'. Its supply and transport organisation had 'neutralised the T.U.C.'s strike policy and destroyed the hopes of a quick victory', while its insistence on unconditional surrender 'dealt a blow to the T.U.C. hopes of forcing the cabinet to resume negotiations'. (Farman, 1974, p88)

5. The Effects of the General Strike on Labour

The immediate results were negative. The miners, whose case against wage reductions had been the main factor involved in the General Strike, were now either forced back at work or were isolated and abandoned. Their prospects were worse than ever before. There was no chance that the government would now heed the action of a single union, and any further chance of support from workers in

other industries had gone for good. Despite the hopelessness of their position, the miners struggled on until the end of 1926 before being forced back to work on lower pay scales. Of all the sectors of the working class, they became the most embittered and potentially the most radical. The coal industry was severely affected through the fall in production: the amount of coal mined in 1926 was under a half of that produced in the previous year; 28 million tons were lost for export, and huge quantities were imported from Germany and Poland. (Farman, 1974, p 305) There were also knock-on effects on other industries, as altogether 500,000 men were made redundant and some £270 million were lost in wages. (Farman, 1974, p 239) Of course, these figures reflected the damage done by the miners' strike rather than by the General Strike.

After 1926, there were obvious curbs on the power of trade unionism in Britain. A major result of the strike, the Trade Disputes Act of 1927 (Renshaw, 1975, p 240) was imposed by Baldwin's government in the immediate aftermath of the General Strike, replaced 'contracting out' of the political levy as established by the 1913 Act with 'contracting in'. This Act made all sympathetic strikes illegal, and ensured that trade union members had to voluntarily "contract in" to pay the political levy. This was a significant threat to Labour because whereas under the 1913 Act the apathetic worker had been deemed to wish to pay the levy and so paid it, under the 1927 legislation he or she was deemed not to wish to do so, and so did not. It also forbade civil service unions from affiliating with the TUC, and made mass picketing illegal. Trade-union membership fell by the end of 1926 from 5.5 million to under 5 million. (Renshaw, 1975, p 243) There were also fewer strikes from 1927 onwards as trade union leaders tried to avoid further conflicts not only with the government but also by employers. This process was directly influenced by a swing to the right and the predominance of moderates like Ernest Bevin. Labour tried to arouse nationwide opposition to the legislation, but its protest campaign flopped and the Party had to face a significant fall in income. (Worley, 2005, p 76)

The General Strike also had a major impact on political developments between 1926 and 1929. The cost and failure of industrial action confirmed the faith of the Labour Movement's leaders in political action; and, as after Taff Vale, resentment at the 1927 Act tended to increase trade-union support for the Labour Party, which in any case was now forced to concentrate more on building up its individual membership. All this strengthened the position of Ramsay MacDonald. He had played no part in the General Strike and shortly after the strike was over, he wrote in the 'Socialist Review',

The General Strike is a weapon that cannot be wielded for industrial purposes. It is clumsy and ineffectual. . . I hope that the result will be a thorough reconsideration of trade union tactics. If the wonderful unity in the strike... would be shown in politics, Labour could solve the mining and similar difficulties through the ballot box. (Renshaw, 1975, p 244)

The Trade Disputes Act 1927 consolidated working-class support behind the Labour Party that contested it bitterly in Parliament. The Conservative Party

seemed to become more and more disunited, with a growing rift between the hardliners, like Churchill, and the younger moderates, with Baldwin to hold the centre. In the circumstances, this led to the vastly increased support for Labour in the 1929 election.

In the case with women, and before 1914, radical feminism had played a part in Labour politics, the 1912 by-election agreement between Labour and the NUWSS was already been noted. In 1918, the Party constitution had provided for separate women's representation on the NEC, the formation of women's sections in the CLPs and an annual women's conference. All this had led to high expectations among women, but their hopes were soon disappointed. Attempts to achieve a higher status for the women's conference were repeatedly rejected by the NEC, and calls for the women members of the NEC to be elected by women, rather than by the Party conference as a whole, were similarly unsuccessful. Issues like birth control were swept under the carpet, despite strong support from the women in the Party, partly for fear of alienating voters, especially the Catholics who had begun to come over to Labour in large numbers after the collapse of the Liberal Party and the resolution of the Irish question. Women continued to play an important role in the Party, especially at the grassroots, but overall the Party slid away from too overt a link with 'women's issues'. (Renshaw, 1975, p 251)

Labour moved towards a set of policies which sought minimal short term change at home alongside 'pacification' abroad. The result was the 1928 programme, *Labour and the Nation*. This took almost a year to produce, and it was, in many ways, more comprehensive than *Labour and the New Social Order 1918*. It was significant that at the 1928 conference Wheatley chose to attack the lack of prioritization and specificity of the proposals. According to him, what was needed was not a list of ideal policies to be implemented over fifty or a hundred years, but a hard-nosed choice of policies which would be implemented by a single Labour government in a five-year term. (Renshaw, 1975, p 158)

6. Conclusion:

The Labour party, in the meantime, was able to prove that the defeat of the General Strike did not mean the decline of Labour as a political movement. Here the wisdom of MacDonald's aloofness during 1926, which had so infuriated some of the radicals, becomes apparent. The truth was that Labour had outgrown its dependence on the trade unions and was now appealing to a wider constituency; 1926 had actually helped MacDonald project this more extended appeal. 'I am an outsider. I stand apart. I am not a member of a trade union'. (Farman, 1974, p104) This did not, however, mean that Labour lost the trade unionists. Those workers who had placed their faith in industrial action now became disillusioned with the TUC and opted instead for political action through the Labour party. This showed

in the vastly increased support for Labour in the 1929 election. For the first time in its history Labour became, with 288 seats, the largest party in Parliament, due mainly to the predominance of moderates like Ernest Bevin.

This serves to refocus attention from the events of 1926 to those of 1931. Those who argue that the General Strike was in some ways a turning point for Labour go on to say that many of the gains were subsequently cancelled out by the crisis confronting Labour between 1929 and 1931. The revised view, however, sees the General Strike as part of a continuum of events from 1918 to 1931 which did little either to weaken the trade union movement or to enhance the political prospects of Labour. Rather than reversing the positive effects of the General Strike, therefore, the crisis of 1931 merely subsumed the whole continuum.

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