

COMMUNISTS AND LOCAL COUNCILS OF ACTION.

By HUGH HOPE.

I think it is of vital importance that Communists as such, should seek representation in the local Councils of Action. When Comrade Whitehead argues that "the action contemplated is industrial action, the people who are going to act are industrial workers," he is merely presupposing a beautiful syndicalist dream that has no reality in our real world of capitalist domination. If the industrialists of a council were to formulate and act upon a "down tools" policy only, that would merely be a demonstration of protest against the exploiting class. In the ensuing struggle should the industrialists win, they would immediately have to decide upon an "up tools" policy, and take over the social work of administration that was formerly done by the expropriating class. It matters not that industrialists may be appointed to carry out the new duties of distribution, exchange and community welfare work. The moment they accept the appointments, they are no longer industrialists, but community workers or politicals. Communists should note clearly the difference—and there is a vast difference—between industrial (productive and distributive) and social (useful and necessary) work that is not rooted in the Trade Unions, workshop or factory, although it derives its strength therefrom.

Comrade Whitehead beclouds the issue and misinforms us when he states that "the action contemplated is industrial action," and leaves it at that. It was the making use of an industrial weapon for a political purpose, viz., to stop an open war against Russia. It is self evident that the British workers wouldn't stand for conscription for another great war—they were willing to lend their industrial strength to their political Labour leaders to prevent an act that would have affected them vitally, but the moment the danger seems passed they become apathetic. The war against Russia still goes on, but the mass mind of the workers is as callous about it as it is towards Ireland's martyrdom. While Whitehead advocates Communist abstention from the local councils (except as industrialists), he wants to SOVIETISE THE COUNCILS OF ACTION.

If, as Communists, we accept the Russian Soviet principle, we should clearly understand that the Soviets do not exclude non-industrialists. (1) The local Soviet is made up of all useful workers. Red Army, and Peasants' Deputies. (2) The City Soviet takes its members from a. the factory; b. the Union; c. political parties; d. (with the workers' consent) individual candidates; e. the military. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat which is one of the conditions for membership for the Communist Party is clearly the political expression of the industrial workers. What Comrade Whitehead advocates is the very negation of Communism, Sovietism, the Communal or Community Life. It is Syndicalism pure and simple—a form of industrialism that some proletarian Anarchists who require economic backing like to flirt with. But even some of the French pioneers of this movement have come to realise that Syndicalism is not enough, that under modern conditions of life, it would be unworkable, and the Bolsheviks are urging the French Communists to fight the Syndicalists.

Communists who ignore the local Councils of Action are making a big mistake. Where are our eyes and our vision? These Councils are the nuclei of the British Soviets, which it is the bounden duty of Communists to enter and transform from Trades Councils into All Workers' Councils. In our local districts we should form Leagues and Societies and seek admission to the local council in whatever way we can. We should endeavour to get the ex-service men on the councils. It is more effective to get inside and act than to criticise from without. Criticism of the National Council is unnecessary and beside the mark. We all know that it is the creature of the Labour Party and Trade Union Officialdom. It is not a National Council. But it is up to the local councils to destroy it in the interest of the Revolution.