

T.U.C - WAGES v. PRICES

At Margate, the Trades Union Congress opens its eightieth Annual Conference. Its delegates represent eight million of the nation's total working force of nineteen million men and women. Its two hundred unions embrace both skilled and unskilled workers, the craftsmen of old industries and the technicians of the new, in a vast organisation which has advanced the living standards of industrial Britain for over three quarters of a century. Its members are troubled. Fifteen resolutions on the conference agenda make reference to the rising cost of living. The wives who spend the national pay packet point to the increase in retail food prices....over two and sixpence in the pound within a year. The buying power of the average wage - five to six pounds - has shrunk at an alarming rate.

In February the Government moved price and wage freezing. The Unions backed the move....but first among offenders in increasing prices, was the Government itself. Coal rose, affecting other industries. Electricity charges went up. Gas increased, too, along with railway fares. Last but not least...the duty on tobacco, a national habit which defies frustration.

Sir Stafford Cripps, in turn, defies the circumstances which cause the deadlock. Stressing the point that wages, prices and output per man are inseparable factors he gives the delegates food for discussion. He gives ammunition, too, to the many speakers advocating wider spread of consultative councils in which the practical man can put forward practical ideas. Congress, in sober mood, discusses ways and means.