

district, about 1,000 of whom are estimated to reside in the Plantation and adjacent districts, so that you can understand the matter is one in which we are deeply interested.

We hold the view that Mr Maclean's dismissal without any definite charge being formulated is manifestly unfair, and in our judgment he should be immediately reinstated in the service of the Board.

A very characteristic resolution was received from the shop stewards at Weir's:

that we immediately get into touch with all Convenors of Shop Stewards or representatives of the Kindred Trades with a view to levying ourself 1d, 2d, or such a sum as would be sufficient to employ our victimized fellow-worker, John Maclean, as an independent organizer, at a salary equivalent to what he was in receipt of from the Govan School Board. Furthermore that we henceforth labour unceasingly until Comrade Maclean is reinstated in his former position.

23/The political strike

Two days later the scene of the drama changed back to the Sheriff Court.

Confounded by the refusal of tenants to pay the increased rents, and by their inability to secure evictions because of the militancy of the working-class women, the landlords and factors hit on what they considered to be a winning plan. They decided to sue the householders at the Small Debt Court, where the factors would be able to get their extra rent money deducted from the wages of the householders. But they reckoned without the Glasgow workers. When eighteen men were summoned to appear at the Small Debt Court on 18 November, they were roused in an unprecedented manner.

When the big day dawned, large sections of the population were keyed up and ready for action. From early morning Mrs Barbour was organizing her women for a great march to the Sheriff Court. Many of the Govan shipyards and factories came out on strike. From early morning McBride was organizing the strikers to take part in an orderly demonstration, together with

large deputations of men from Parkhead in the east, Cathcart in the south, Dalmuir in the west, and Hydepark in the north. The workers were on the march!

The different sections met in the town and the huge procession, preceded by a band of improvised instruments including tin whistles, hooters, and dilapidated big drums, aroused tremendous interest as it marched through the typical Glasgow November fog, the marchers carrying lighted candles to see the way.

One contingent marched to Lorne Street School where Maclean was teaching under notice of dismissal. They called him out, and carried him shoulder high through the streets till they reached their goal at the Sheriff Court. That was to be Maclean's last day as a teacher.

A crowd of about 10,000 people had now gathered outside the Court. The streets were packed and traffic was completely stopped. Platforms consisting of long poster boards picked up from the front of newspaper shops were improvised, placed on the shoulders of half a dozen husky men, and the speakers lifted on to them. Maclean was right in front of the court addressing the crowd as far as his voice would reach. In other streets, Gallacher, McBride, MacDougall, and other leaders were also speaking. Roars of rage surged from the masses as each speaker told of the robbery and injustice of the factors.

Maclean was instructed to forward the following resolution to Prime Minister Asquith:

That this meeting of Clyde munition workers requests the Government to definitely state, not later than Saturday first, that it forbids any increases of rent during the period of the war; and that, this failing, a general strike will be declared on Monday, 22 November.

Meanwhile the deputation sent by the crowd was waiting inside the Court along with deputations from Beardmore's of Dalmuir and other factories and yards; once more the Court was crowded to overflowing. The Sheriff and his clerks were white with anxiety. Inside the deputations were demanding to be heard; outside the roars of the crowd were making the windows rattle. The Sheriff consented to hear the deputations. Each man's declaration was the same. The workers were going to down tools unless the landlords were prevented from using the present extraordinary demand for houses to raise rents. The Sheriff realized that the situation was too desperate for a compromise, and telephoned Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions. His panic communicated

itself to the Minister, who told him to stop the case immediately, and that a Rent Restriction Act would be introduced as soon as possible. That night working-class Glasgow celebrated its victory.

The BSP Glasgow District Council was also triumphant. They had been advocating direct action in the form of the political strike for some time.

Maclean commented in the December *Vanguard*:

It should be noted that the rent strike on the Clyde is the first step towards the Political Strike, so frequently resorted to on the Continent in times past. We rest assured that our comrades in the various works will incessantly urge this aspect on their shop-mates, and so prepare the ground for the next great counter-move of our class in the raging class warfare—raging more than ever during the Great Unrest period of three or four years ago.

On 19 November Maclean went to prison to serve his five days, having refused on principle to pay the fine. Early on the morning of his release a crowd gathered outside the prison gates to welcome him, but they had to go home frustrated. The authorities, fearing a demonstration, had let him out earlier than usual.

Another kind of demonstration, however, did take place. A deputation from South Lanark—forty miners who had struck work for the day—arrived in Central Station at 9 o'clock, wearing their pit clothes and with their lamps burning. They caused a great sensation in the station and in the streets through which they marched. 'Where is the strike?' people shouted. 'Is it a rent strike?' the women asked. 'No' they replied. 'We are here to protest against the imprisonment and dismissal of John Maclean.' 'Good luck to you, brave fellows!' came the reply.

They marched to the prison, and after finding they were too late, marched right out to Newlands to Maclean's house in order to be sure that their friend was alive and hearty after his ordeal. A meeting was held in Pollokshaws, then they made their way to the gates of Fairfield Shipbuilding Yard in Govan. A monster meeting was held at the dinner hour, the miners with their lamps burning scattered here and there among the huge mass of workers. Strong resolutions against the government, the Govan School Board, the Munitions Act, and also against conscription were carried. Then the deputation of miners went home, carrying with them the greetings of the shipyard workers to the Lanarkshire miners.