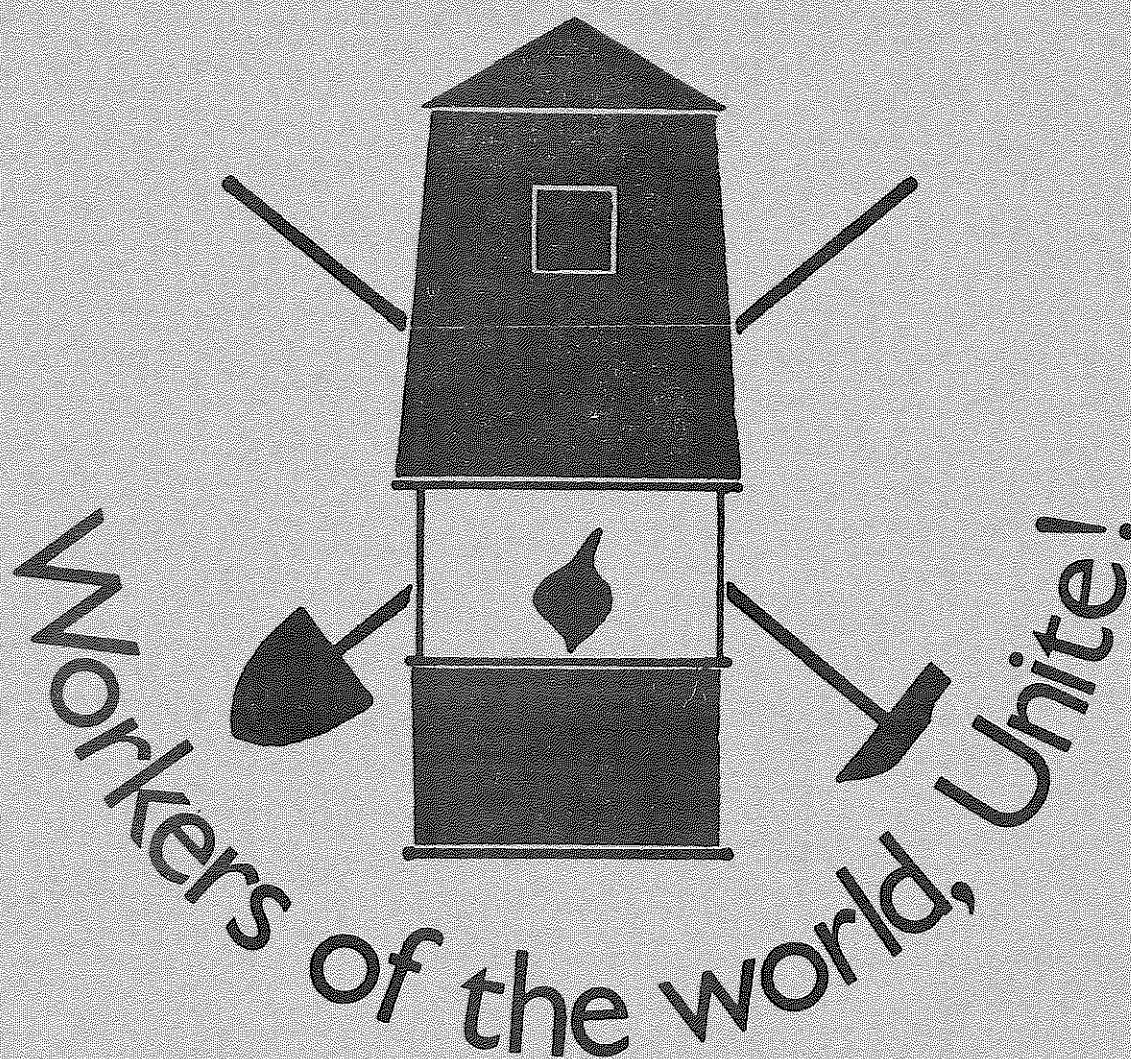


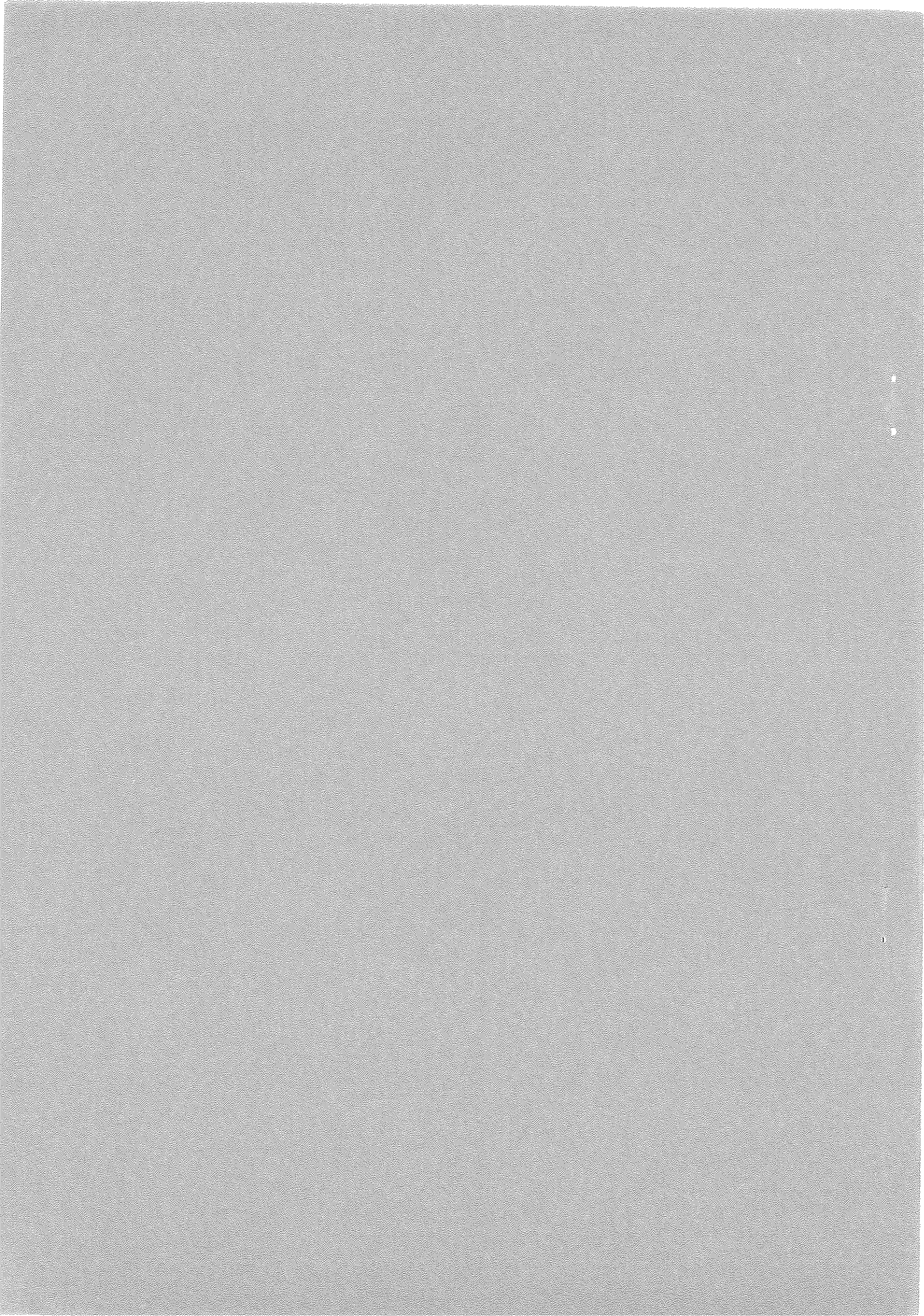
THE RED MINER

NO.10 JUNE 86



**workers
power**

Bulletin for miners and their families 10p





The extent of popular hatred for the Tories was starkly revealed in the local elections. The Tories lost 700 council seats. In the working class inner-city areas they were decimated. Even the Economist, a strident Tory journal, was compelled to comment:

"Most of built-up Britain is now Labour or (occasionally) Alliance - a devastating comment on Mrs Thatcher's social and environmental policies." (17/5/86)

There have been two responses in the Tory ranks to this crisis of credibility. Tory elder statesman, John Biffen, has become the latest, in a long line, of distinguished critics of Thatcher. Smarting from the series of policy disasters that have hit the Tories - Westland, British Leyland, Libya - Biffen criticised Thatcher's style and public spending policy. He talked of the need for a leadership in the party representing a "balanced ticket". He argued, along with another senior Tory Malcolm Rifkind, for a shift of emphasis away from tax cuts and towards public spending:

"We have allowed the impression to be created that we do not care about public services."

The second response is that of the Thatcher/Tebbit camp. They are not so stupid that they don't think they could lose the next election. So they want to finish off the job of vicious attacks on the working class as soon as possible. They want to demoralise us so much there is no fightback that could upset their chances at the next election. These policies are going full steam ahead with the nurses cheated out of their rise and massive cutbacks in shipbuilding rail and the pits, to name but two things.

As for their response to Biffen it was as intransigent as it has been to all other "wet" oppositions. Thatcher announced that a "balanced ticket" had won the Tories the 1979 and 1983 elections. That is, she is the "balanced ticket".

The overall position in the Tory party is that the Thatcherites remain firmly in the saddle, but popular hostility to them is causing divisions within the ranks. In this situation what should be the response of the labour movement? Conflict in the Tory ranks is to be welcomed. We can and



"Pssst Neil, at least give me something I can sell to the membership"

should exploit their divisions - but not by taking sides in the conflict. Biffen disagrees with Thatcher over the tempo of the attacks on the working class and the "style" of presentation of those attacks. He does not disagree that in the interests of British capitalism, the attacks have to be made. He wants to dress them up in a more presentable electoral package

No, the way to exploit Tory difficulties is to fight their attacks in the here and now eg. link-ups between miners and rail workers can deal a real blow to Thatcher's plans.

ON COURSE FOR DOWNING STREET?

The majority of miners and miners wives vote Labour and during the strike many became active Labour Party members, impressed by the support from rank and file Labour Party members, despite Kinnock's treachery. Everyone from the branch officials to Scargill is now saying we will have to wait for a Labour government. In the aftermath of these election results what is Kinnock up to?

He was, of course, delighted with the election results - "on course for Downing Street", he claimed. Yet, behind the celebrations, there were fears that Labour was still not doing well enough, against the Alliance.

Tribune ruefully admitted that the strong showing in the local elections

"may not have been quite enough to ensure a majority in Westminster" (16/5/86.)

Indeed a breakdown of the voting patterns showed that the rise in the Labour vote was 2.7% overall (it in fact fell by 1.5% in England) while that of the Alliance was up 4.3%. In terms of council seats this meant a 570 seat gain for Labour and a 380 seat gain for the Alliance. Clearly Labour has not yet regained the ground lost to the Alliance in the early 1980's. Above all else this is fashioning Kinnock's strategy.

Under Kinnock the Labour Party is distancing itself from class struggle. We saw the way he carefully avoided any support for our strike and condemned every thing that may have upset the middle class voters he was so keen to court. In a calculated bid to woo the Alliance's middle class base, Kinnock is now emphasising Labour's "caring" role, its commitment to

keeping the unions in their place, and to purging the Labour Party of "extremists" like Militant. Realism - a euphemism for a thoroughly pro-capitalist strategy - has taken over from "socialist promises", however vague. This is why Kinnock attacked those people (the left):

"who would rather promise the earth than gain real ground."

This is why Hattersley has refused to promise a serious expansion of the wartorn public sector and instead assures the tax-conscious middle classes and the profit conscious capitalists that there will be a

"a tough framework for public spending" and "a rationally calculated ceiling to public borrowing."

We have no hope of getting the pit closure programme reversed or victimised miners re-instated by such a government and Kinnock is careful not to make any promises in that direction.



Instead of putting themselves at the head of resistance now, Labour and union leaders, like Bickerstaffe of NUPE, are advising a "wait for the election line". Scargill is saying that is all we can do now! This is disastrous. It may help Kinnock's respectable image but it will leave more workers on the dole now, more factories, pits and shipyards decimated now. It will ensure that Kinnock - if he gets to power - will inherit a demoralised working class. Make no mistake, by signalling his intention to manage capitalism and nurse it back to health, Kinnock is signalling his intention to betray every progressive Labour policy and attack the working class. The deepening crisis of capitalism - output fell by 0.3% last month, the first major fall for some years - will propel him, inevitably into such attacks. A working class that cannot fight now, will be in poor shape to fight him then.

Of course these attacks will come heavier and quicker if a hung Parliament leads Labour into a coalition with the Alliance. Those sirens of the subordination of the working class to an all class popular front, the Communist Party, are already advocating such a course. From the election results they concluded that Labour must take the Alliance seriously because on many issues "they have important and persuasive points to make" (7 Days.17/5/86.)

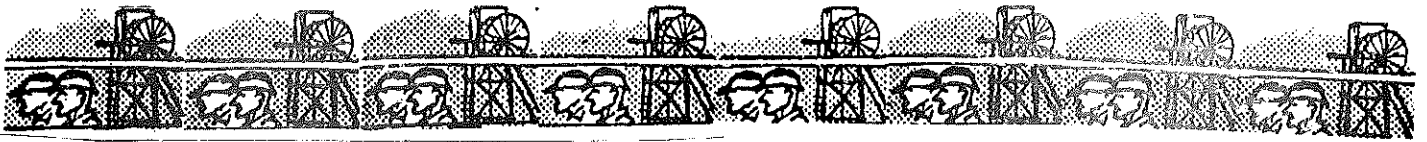
COALITION GOVERNMENT

While Kinnock, for electoral purpose, is formally rejecting all talk of a coalition, his policies are preparing the ground for one. Such a coalition would give Kinnock a convenient excuse for the attacks that he would launch.

The watchwords of the day are clear for those who want to fight capitalism. There should be no holding back on the class struggle to serve Kinnock's electoral ambitions - act now to defend jobs and services - oppose all coalitionism and moves towards it. Force the Labour leadership to use the divisions in the Tories ranks to encourage and support active resistance now to their attacks.

RBD MINER will be running a series of articles and interviews about the Labour Party and it's record. We would be pleased to publish any comments and letters on this subject. Send to R.M. c/o 138 Crookesmoor Rd, Sheffield 6.

REGIONAL ROUND-UP



SOUTH WALES

CONFERENCE

Last month saw the first Area conference in South Wales since the strike. In his first speech to conference as Area President, Des Dutfield concentrated on the consequences of the defeat of the strike, 6,000 jobs and 11 collieries have been lost. This he said was too high a price to pay for the coalfield breaking even, and also destroyed the myth of jobs for all pitmen - there have been many compulsory redundancies. He also spoke at length about the controversial "return to work" resolution promoted by the South Wales leadership, which was "submitted to our national conference on the clear understanding that whatever the decision there would be no unilateral return to work." This he said was done "because by Christmas of that year, unlike South Wales the strike in a number of areas was visibly crumbling." Dutfield conveniently doesn't mention the devastating affect on strikers in other areas of the threat of South Wales leading a retreat back to work. This threat helped undermine further the national strike, in the interests of preserving the "unity" of one area - and look at the result.

One of the main architects of the "return to work", Terry Thomas, was safely re-elected as Vice President, defeating Gwyn Williams from Taff Merthyr by a 4 to 1 majority. Thomas himself had been easily defeated for Presidency last Autumn by Dutfield. Williams picked up his support mainly from the more militant central coalfield pits, such as Tower, Merthyr Vale and Haerdy.

Conference backed several motions on pay and conditions, the demand for a basic wage of £120 a week (13% increase) for the lowest paid surface workers and 'substantial' across the board increases for all other grades, lowering of the retirement age to 55 and compensation for travelling time (up to 4 hours a day in South Wales). Conference also passed an area executive motion urging the energy unions to work together against the threat of privatisation, which it said would lead to further job losses and increased reliance on nuclear power. The accident at Chernobyl also provoked an emergency resolution calling for a halt to the



building of any new nuclear power stations in Britain. Hopefully this won't become a case of mineworkers against nuclear power workers, as it is an issue the whole working class needs to confront in a non sectional manner.

Whilst covering many important issues, conference didn't really debate the sacked and jailed men. This reflects the unwillingness of the Area Executive to even support the formation of a South Wales section of the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign. We must fight even harder for them to take up the release and reinstatement of victimised miners.

WOMENS' SUPPORT GROUPS (WSG's)

The South Wales Womens' Support Groups organised a public meeting with Scargill as the main speaker. The rest of the platform were women with speakers from the long-running Silent Night dispute, SOGAT 82, the Blaenan Ffestiniog WSG (recently ended a 7 month slate quarry strike), and Sian James the chairperson of South Wales WSG's. The meeting was in effect a rally for victimised workers, pushing for support for these struggles in the mining communities. The meeting was a good morale booster for the WSG's and at the same time a blow against Area Executive who did not support the meeting and were made to feel conspicuous by their absence. P.T.O. →



NCB NEVER SATISFIED.

As expected, the NCB announced that in April the South Wales coalfield made its first profit (£0.85m) since 1972. At the same time they are now looking for a further 10% reduction in the workforce this year, around 1,400 jobs - mainly surface workers, as part of a push to increase productivity by another 30%. Beyond that the NCB are planning a further 10% increase each year for the next 5 years. When will it end? Although the Area Director states that the axe will not fall on any of the remaining 17 pits this year, this seems doubtful to say the least.

Around 150 of the job losses will come at Haerdy, with the third and final stage of the link up with Tower colliery. This will leave the workforce at around 300 the smallest in the coalfield. The lodge agreed to the jobs going over 2 years ago and are not opposing the NCB's plans. On the lodge itself the Stalinist Arfon Evans has been voted out as Chair - he became infamous during the strike for his "back to work together" plans. It looks like the Communist Party are likely to lose any remaining influence they have on the lodge committees in the forthcoming elections, they were seen as leading the strike to defeat. It remains to be seen whether Mike Richards the new Lodge chair has any answers.

MILITANT WITCH-HUNT.

Ian Isaac, former Lodge Secretary at St. John's colliery is facing an enquiry by his local Labour Party (Ogmore) into his "political allegiances". Isaac is well known in South Wales as a Militant supporter, and his possible expulsion is a further move by the rightwing (particularly strong in South Wales) to witch-hunt socialists out of the Labour Party. As with other threatened Militant supporters he appears to be fighting the case through the courts rather than campaigning in the labour movement for support. Despite this we should support Isaac's right to Labour Party membership, together with all other Militant supporters in a similar position.

SCOTLAND

Voting has been going on in Scotland for the post of Area Vice President, where George Bolton, (a leading right wing critic of Scargill and one of the first to decide after the strike that we should have had a baaaalot) is being challenged by victimised miner David Hamilton, who spent 64 days in jail during the strike.



The case of the sacked lads is a very big issue here. There are still 125 sacked in Scotland, and many of the men are getting frustrated with the lack of any fight from the Scottish leadership to get their jobs back. Things are so bad that some of the sacked lads are talking about taking the union to court for negligence after losing their chance of an industrial tribunal.

Stirling Miners Support Group held a meeting on the sacked lads last Thursday (22nd) with many from Polmaise in attendance where 1 in 15 strikers were sacked. Both Bolton and Hamilton were invited, predictably Bolton didn't come but Hamilton did and promised to take up the case of the sacked lads. As an immediate issue he is calling for a meeting of all the sacked miners in Scotland, and a march from Edinburgh to London to highlight their case.

Unfortunately it looks as though Bolton will get re-elected especially with the method of election being used which has nothing to do with real workers democracy.

NUM branch meetings decide how all the votes at a pit are cast. The problem with this being that with so many pits shutting and many miners living 30 or more miles from the pit attendances at Sunday branch meetings are low. In addition very little publicity has been given out on the candidates, the Scottish Miner is not being published at present and there have been no leaflets giving information on the candidates.

What we need are branch meetings at or nearby the pit during work time, this would guarantee that the majority of miners would be involved in important decisions and would be a valuable weapon for winning action against the board and any backsliding on the part of the area leadership.

SABOTAGE

Meanwhile an independant inquiry has found out what we knew all along, that the board let Polkemet flood deliberately during the great strike. Yet more evidence of the lengths the bastards will go to in their attempts to grind us down. The independant inquirer said it would take over 3 years and in excess of £20 million to get the pit back but someone here suggested we wait for a Labour Government and dry it out with all the hot air which we'll no doubt get from Kinnock.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

RED MINER recently spoke to Notts. Area NUM President Mick McGinty about the situation for the union. He told us there were 7,000 men left in the NUM with as many as 320-50 at Ollerton and 370 at Bevercotes and yet the Coal Board still refuse to recognise them. Management know this is a sure way of keeping men out of the union as they can't be represented. The NUM officials can't take literature into the pit and management spies are told to report any 'gathering' of NUM members in canteens etc. As Mick points out the tables are set out for four people to sit at so does this mean NUM members can't sit down to eat and talk together!

Officials have been successfully prevented from carrying out union duties openly - the alternative is the SACK as in Paul Whetton's case. The denial of these basic Trade Union rights has been taken to an Industrial Tribunal by the NUM. The management are watching individuals like hawks and people are frightened. Mick McGinty believes the key to the problem is recognition for the NUM which he says would finish the UDM off. Notts. NUM put UDM membership at less than 20,000 yet the scab outfit are still apparently claiming a membership of 900 at Ollerton when "We know the true figure to be about 550".

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NORTH DERBYSHIRE

The backpage of April's edition of 'The Miner' reads "Derbys. digs in as bonus discontent spreads". It went on to say attitudes were hardening in North Derbyshire with a weekday ban operating and the possibility of it extending to weekends.

The overtime ban referred to was introduced following a 2-1 vote in favour of industrial action a result which sent shock waves through the Coal Board. What marvellous reading. Glad'sens the heart don't it.

Then along come those class fighters, the Area Executive, (somersaulting off the cherished wall they sat their arses on during our year long strike), waving the white flag, which makes more appearances than the North Derbyshire banner, to accept the new bonus scheme. This scheme requires faces to stand alone with no allowances made, for any reason whatsoever and the acceptance of this as the first stage towards the Boards objective of a move to "more meaningful and equitable incentive package".

Shock waves eh!

It must have been a bloody earthquake felt at the NUM headquarters in Chesterfield at the outcome of the ballot. It must be those thousands of copies of The Miner they don't bother to distribute that help prop up the crumbling foundations of that bastion of socialist thinking!

SOLIDARITY WITH SILENTNIGHT STRIKERS.

Whitwell colliery have adopted ten families and are providing food parcels for the Silentnight strikers out now for 12 months. See article in this issue for contact numbers.

SCAB UNION MAKES A MOVE FOR N.DERBYS.

The latest issue of the Scab Rag makes much of ex NUM member David Thompson swapping allegiances for good to the UDM after attending their conference as a 'secret NUM mole'...so secret only Thompson knew about it! He apparently works at Markham pit although few seem to know much about him. His avowed intention is to build the UDM in North Derbyshire Area. What is known about this man? Write in and let us know.



YORKSHIRE

Armthorpe miners were out on strike for a full week in response to a one man picket put on by a man sacked for coming out early. Two men were sacked for this offence yet one got his job back. The other a transfer from the Hicketon pit and active in the strike did not. The mass meeting on Friday (23/5/86) decided to return to work pending negotiations with the management. Men are obviously still prepared to act against what they see as victimisations.

A rally held in May as part of the fight to save Kinsley Drift attracted 200 people. The branch and the Kinsley Drift Action Committee have done well to keep the fight going given the lack of any direction from Area or National. The five speakers ranging from Richardson to Dennis Skinner had little to offer the campaign. Homer from Yorks. area used his speech to urge a vote for Labour in the local elections.

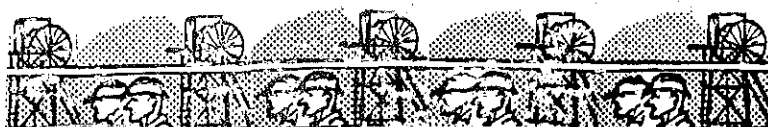
All credit is due to the the men and women fighting in the campaign we must back this fight and do our best to prevent Area and National from wriggling out of active support for those fighting closures.

SOUTH AFRICA UPDATE

Trade Unions Must Impose 'Workers Sanctions'

The South African government has signalled its intention to continue its repression and terror by launching attacks on the bases and refugee camps of the African National Congress (ANC) in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Lesotho. Daily it continues its war on black people in the townships since the township rebellion began two years ago, at least 1600 have been killed

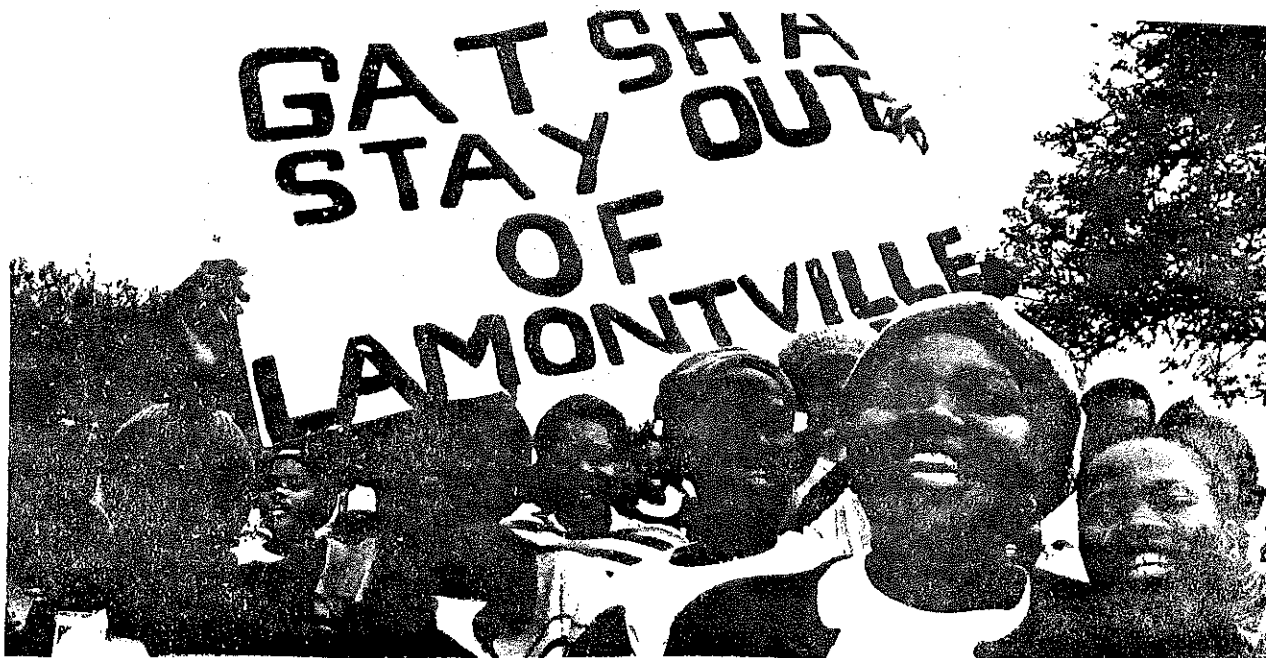
In the face of this evidence of terror and repression, Thatcher refuses to bring in sanctions. Even if the Commonwealth succeeds in winning some minor gestures from the British government, we can be sure that the Tories will let their banking and business partners wriggle out. Months after an official ban on the gold coin 'kruggerands', customs officials at Birmingham Airport who stopped a shipment coming in, were told that no official instruction had actually been issued yet!



These people cannot be expected to operate effective measures against Apartheid. This task falls to the working class. Our Trade Unions should be organising to stop all South African goods coming into this country, and also taking measures against firms with major trading and financial links.

One of these is the gold mining company Consolidated Goldfields, which has many civil engineering subsidiary businesses here. Counter Information Services is launching a campaign against this notorious low wage mining boss. The aim is to get action to ensure no Local Authority places contracts with these subsidiary firms. Undoubtedly NUM representatives on Trades Councils, and councillors from mining villages, can play an important part

Lodges and branches should contact Counter Information Services on 01 439 3764 for further details



Organised protest against the 'homelands' system

WOMEN ORGANISE MEETING WITH SCARGILL

o o o o o

Arthur Scargill recently spoke at a Public Meeting in Caerphilly, South Wales organised by South Wales Womens' Support Groups. The platform also included women speakers representing various groups of striking/victimised workers (see South Wales report.) The meeting was an opportunity for around 500 NUM militants, miners' wives and supporters to see "Where Scargill stands" a year on from the Great Strike. The speech, as usual well received, revealed both the strengths and weaknesses of his politics.

Quite correctly, Scargill gave support to the campaign for associate membership of the union for the Womens' Support Groups. He also expressed outrage at Reagan's attack on Libya and Thatcher's support for it.

However, Arthur still talks of the strike not being a defeat. He pointed out that "only" 27 out of 50 pits on the NCB hitlist have closed. Isn't that is a very high price to pay for "victory"? There were victories out of the strike, the Womens' Support Groups for example, but overall it was a defeat and Arthur must learn to accept that and all that it means.

SCAB UNION

Scargill talked of the "breakaway breaking up". True, the scab union has lost its hold in Lancashire, North Wales and Warwickshire. However its influence remains strong, Look at Jack Jones' campaign to keep the Leicestershire area in the NUM - he did all he could to make the NUM seem 'moderate' ie like a scab union. Lynk and Prendergast and co. won't just go away as Arthur hopes, they need to be fought against, through an active campaign in the Wotts, coalfield - involving militants from the scab free areas. This is already happening and must be built on in the coming months.

Referring to the sacked and jailed lads, Scargill said "they must not be forgotten in the way some people seem to have done." However instead of calling for support for the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, the only hope he could offer was "the election of a Labour government on socialist policies." No mention was made of the often successful industrial action taken at several pits to get reinstatement for victimised men.

While we should campaign for a Labour government, to put demands on it, to 'put it to the test', we can't rely on the treacherous Kinnock as Scargill seems to. Kinnock is rapidly junking any hint of socialist policies (even the Red Flag logo !) in the hope of becoming Prime Minister at any cost. Although understandable, it is wrong to place any faith in a future Labour government delivering the goods. It's up to the rank and file militants themselves to lead the way in the fight for the release/reinstatement of all the victimised men.

SOLIDARITY

Scargill talked of internationalism in his speech, applauding the massive solidarity from abroad during the strike eg. the Australian dockers - now on strike themselves. However, he later called for coal import controls, which would only mean the export of unemployment to workers in other countries, and in turn would lead to greater exploitation of workers here as a result of eg. higher prices. The real enemies are the bosses in this country, not fellow workers abroad.

On a similar theme Scargill was in favour of shutting down nuclear power stations - because they reduce NCB production targets. Again this plays one group of workers off against another and only serves to divide us. The only acceptable solution to the hazards of nuclear power and mining, is for the workforce (and local community) themselves to decide safety standards through workers inspection of every aspect of the industry.

CONTRADICTIONS

Overall the speech showed the contradictions of Scargill's politics. While able to win the support of militants with left sounding talk, he can't provide an effective way for the union to fight the attacks of the NCB and the Tories. The answer lies in building a national rank and file movement in the union, not as a split in the union but to strengthen it, ensuring that the whole membership can take an active part in the decisions and struggles ahead.

WOMEN ORGANISATION FOR THE ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS CHERNOBYL

The accident at Chernobyl has shown up the very real dangers of nuclear power production. In fact the consequences of that disaster were not as devastating as they could have been, but showed the possibility of much greater accidents. As it is, the radiation will have effects for many years, not only on the workers effected immediately by radiation sickness, but also on the estimated 10,000 people who will suffer cancers or birth defects in the future. Scientists also estimate that problems with contaminated fields and agricultural produce will continue for at least 10 years.

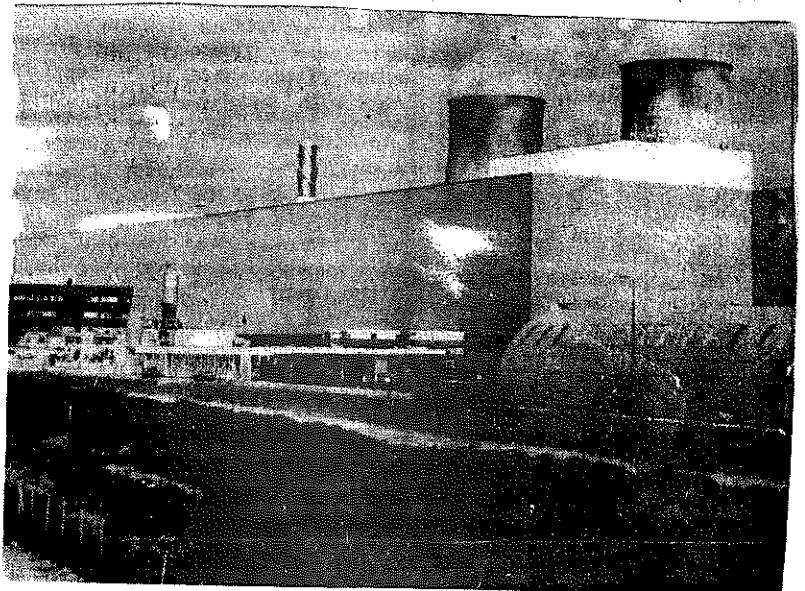
HYPOCRISY

The Chernobyl events were reported in the West with a smugness which implied that it couldn't happen in our 'democracies'. The press and governments attacked the Soviet Union for its secrecy and lack of information given to the Russian people. The hypocrisy of this has since been shown - in the last week news has filtered out about serious radiation leaks in several French nuclear power plants which were hushed up for weeks. In this country the government has deliberately ditched previous policy on reporting nuclear accidents and adopted a similar cover-up attitude in the name of 'business secrecy' and 'national security'. They also systematically deny information to the United Nations monitoring body, and have failed to provide adequate monitoring for radiation levels.

It is clear that nuclear power production that takes place under capitalist ownership or under the management of the Stalinist bureaucracies is unsafe, and that the working class will be kept in ignorance of the real level of danger.

What can be done to prevent similar or even worse accidents in the future? Many people in the ecology movement, the women's movement, in the Labour Party and the NUM are arguing for a total shutdown of all nuclear power plants. We don't think this really answers the problems for the working class.

Firstly, the question of the need for efficient energy production must be answered. Although fossil fuels like coal and oil can provide adequate energy for some countries, these supplies are finite, and do not offer a solution for the whole world. In Britain it is easy for well-off middleclass politicians to argue that 'energy conservation' is the answer. But when there are millions in the less developed countries who have no electricity, no running water and often no food, there is an obvious need to expand industry and energy production. Socialists from Marx onwards have argued that the way to alleviate suffering in the world is not to just redistribute resources more equally, but to expand production and technology so that everyone, all over the world can have a decent life. For millions in the world today that argument is literally a matter of life and death.



Storage tanks at Sellafield

So we recognise the need for more effective, expanded energy production. But if we do need other sources of energy how do we make sure they are safe? This relates to our second disagreement with those who argue for a closure of all nuclear power stations. We think that the only way to ensure that industry of any kind is made more safe is to have inspection, monitoring and control of safety standards by the people who work there. The bosses, governments or the bureaucrats in the USSR simply don't have the same interests in keeping it safe! After all, it's not generally them who will die of radiation or pneumoconiosis or any other work related illness. And making industry safe requires the spending of money. In capitalist production spending on safety would eat into profits and will be resisted. In the Stalinist countries they want cheap energy to help overcome slowdown and stagnation in the economy. The absence of a safety cover at Chernobyl shows that they too cut corners to fulfil their bureaucratic plans.

WORKERS CONTROL

A workers' enquiry into the nuclear industry should be immediately fought for. There may be plants which are so obviously unsafe that they must be closed. But there may be others which could be made safe if the money was spent and stringent inspection by the workers was won. We are in no position to say in advance that nuclear power is inevitably unsafe. All we can be sure about is that under capitalism it is unsafe, so we've got to struggle for workers' control.

During the Great Strike many miners and miners wives said they thought no-one should have to work down the pit really, but that didn't mean we should support the closure of pits. What it means is that workers should fight for the best technology, the safest ways of mining coal and the minimum exposure of workers to dangerous underground work. But that has to be done under workers' control so that jobs are not lost but are

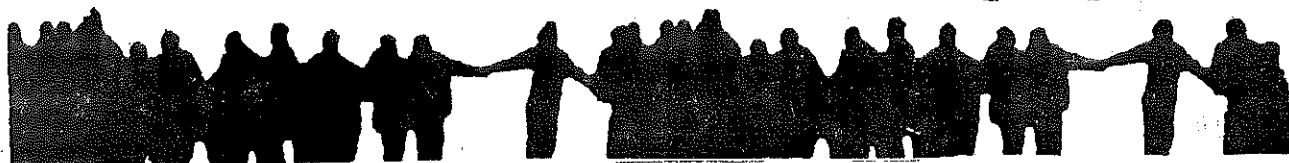
changed, the hours shortened and the work shared. We must look at the nuclear industry in the same way, arguing for workers in the plants to link up with other workers and women from the local communities to investigate and decide on safety in the plants. If these enquiries decide that they cannot be made safe, we should close them down, under workers' control since that too is a risky business and re-employ the workers in other jobs.

If we just adopt the call for the government to close all nuclear power stations, we are excluding workers from actually fighting to take control of those industries and making their own decisions. The anti-nuclear movement rejects this approach because it does not believe the working class have the ability or interest to take such control and decisions. It would prefer to rely on pressurising the government, just like they try and get 'public opinion' to persuade the bosses to give up nuclear weapons. Petitions, peace camps and so on will never persuade the bosses to disarm themselves, and neither will they stop them pursuing cheap, profitable and unsafe energy production. The only way to force the government and bosses to shift on these issues is by direct working class action. By fighting for a workers' enquiry and control into nuclear power the labour movement can begin to challenge the bosses 'right to manage' and impose the decisions of the workers themselves.

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WORKERS HISTORY



In the last RED MINER we described the explosion of working class anger and militancy that toppled the Tsar in February 1917. We also described how despite that militancy which won the soldiers to the workers side and routed the old police force, a Provisional Government of capitalist politicians was formed. That government was committed to maintaining capitalism, carrying on the imperialist war and putting off all discussion of constitutional and social reform until the war was over.

While authority was officially in the hands of the Provisional Government the workers, soldiers and sailors established their own organisations in the factories, garrisons and urban centres. In the factories workers committees mushroomed as an expression of the workers intention not to allow the bosses of the old regime to push them around any more. The most hated directors and managers were dealt with swiftly. At the giant Putilov works, for example, the director and his chief aid were killed and dumped in a canal. A festival of 'carting outs' swept the factories as the bosses and their narks were coated in noxious substances and wheelbarrowed out of the gates to public humiliation. Lesser offenders were put to useful manual labour for the first time in their lives.

The factory committees exercised considerable power in the plants. They insisted on an eight hour day against the wishes of the Government and the bosses. They took action to push up wages. Workers militia policed the workers districts now the old police force had collapsed.

The giant Kronstadt naval base mutinied on the 28th February. When Governor General Viren threatened the mutineers with loyal troops an unknown sailor replied "*This is not a mutiny, comrade admiral, but a revolution*" and put an end to Viren. Most of the Kronstadt top officers went the same way. Power in the base and on the ships passed to the sailors committees who put a stop to the humiliating and demeaning discipline the sailors had been subject to. Such committees spread throughout the armed forces.

The mobilisations and organisation of the Petrograd workers, soldiers and sailors were coordinated, above plant and garrison level, by a central workers, soldiers and sailors council - the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers deputies. Each workplace and garrison elected recallable delegates to the Soviet. Soviets along such lines spread to all the major industrial centres of Russia. The workers



What WE mean by workers democracy: delegates to the Congress of Soviets in Russia in 1917.

looked to the Soviets as their voice. On March 1st an influx of soldier delegates to the Petrograd Soviet forced it to issue its order number 1 calling on all military units to elect their own officers, send delegates to the Soviets and only to accept orders on the Soviet's say so.

In reality therefore there were two sources of power in Russia after the February Revolution. Power had been created with a bourgeois Provisional government on the one hand and the power of the Soviets, workers militia, factory and garrison committees on the other. One way or other that Dual Power situation could not last. Either the bourgeoisie would re-establish stability and order on their terms against the Soviets, or the workers would have to assert the power of their soviets against the bourgeoisie. Posed point blank was the question of whether the workers and soldiers would fight for their organisations to become the basis for working class power and the creation of a workers state.

BOLSHEVISM VERSUS MENSHEVISM

The February revolution had taken most of Russia's organised socialists by surprise. Russian socialism had long been divided into two major camps - the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. The Menshevik's view of February 1917 and the tasks of the Soviets was a simple one. As far as they were concerned Russia was not ripe for socialist revolution as it had not passed through a sufficient stage of democratic capitalist development. Therefore there could be no question of the soviets usurping the power that rightfully belonged to the bourgeois government. Instead they should use their influence to propel the Provisional Government in a more democratic direction and prevent any backsliding on its part.

Initially it was the members of the Menshevik camp who made up the leadership of the workers movement. They dominated the Soviets and the committees in virtually every factory in Petrograd. They had three quarters of the Putilov workers backing their slates in March.

The position in the other camp of Russian socialism was more complicated. Various Bolshevik organisations responded to the events in different ways. Certain elements, including the editors of the Bolshevik paper Pravda, Stalin and Kamenev, wanted to give conditional support to the Provisional Government for reasons not unlike those of the Mensheviks. However the Bolsheviks in the thick of the struggle took a more militant stand. In the Vyborg workers district of Petrograd the Bolsheviks called for the Soviet to immediately establish itself as a Provisional Revolutionary Government. In March the leadership inside Russia tended mainly to support the line of conditional support for the Provisional Government. Except in two Petrograd plants the Bolsheviks were a minority within the leadership of the working class.



Lenin the principal leader of the Bolsheviks, opposed the dominant line of the Bolshevik Party. On March 7th in a letter from exile he insisted that: "*The Soviet of Workers Deputies is an organisation of the workers, the embryo of a workers government*"

On his return to Russia in April he vigorously set out to win the party over to his position that no support should be given to the Provisional Government and that the mass of workers must be won to seeing the Soviet as the embryo of a workers government and fighting for it to take power into its hands....ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS!

In successfully winning the Bolsheviks to his position at April's all-Russian Party conference Lenin had resolved one vital question for the Russian working class. it now had a party committed to leading the working class to insurrection against the bourgeois government and the seizure of power. the key question now facing the Russian working class was whether that party could win leadership in the Soviets, the factories and garrisons against the Menshevik compromisers who were still leading the workers.

Relations between the workers and the Provisional Government declined sharply in late April. On the 18th Foreign Minister Miliukov announced to Russia's war allies that the government intended to honour all the war obligations that the Tsar had undertaken and solemnly swore not to sign a separate peace. This meant that the Provisional Government was set on continuing an Imperialist War which, on its part, aimed at capturing Constantinople, large parts of Asia and a greater share of Poland.

The news was greeted with great anger in the factories and garrisons. There were major strikes and demonstrations in Petrograd against Miliukov. The number of Red Guard workers militia increased considerably. In

the last week of April there was a wave of resolutions from factory meetings calling on the Soviet to exercise stronger control over the Government. In the most militant Vyborg district some factories openly called on the Soviet to take power from the Government.

The Mensheviks responded to this crisis of the Government's credibility by proposing that the Soviet should endorse the formation of a coalition government which should include representatives of the socialist parties. Against Bolshevik opposition the Petrograd Soviet accepted that position. on 4th May. Six representatives of the Mensheviks and the peasant based Socialist Revolutionary Party took their cabinet seats alongside a majority of bourgeois ministers. when delegates reported the decision back to the factories the majority of workers supported it.

The question of leadership was all the more sharply posed for the Russian workers. The Mensheviks were dragging the soviets into direct participation in a capitalist government. Only the minority voice of the Bolsheviks stood firm against them. How that minority became the leadership of the Russian working class will be discussed in the next article.



Petrograd women take to the streets

SILENTNIGHT : OUT 12 MONTHS !

A year ago this month workers at the Silentnight bed making company came out on strike.

A month later 500 of them were sacked.

Today they still fight on for reinstatement most recently organising a national demonstration (May 17th).

This important strike started when workers who had accepted a 'no rise' deal in exchange for no redundancies found that management had no intention of sticking to their side of the deal when 52 jobs were lost just 8 weeks later. Workers from the recently formed, active Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union (FTAT) branch failing to get management into any conciliation bodies voted by ballot for industrial action. Management suspended 200 as soon as they started a go-slow and the strike began.

RED MINER received the following update from a striker working in Wales to raise support for their fight for their rights.

Dear Red Miner,

Dear Editor,

We have now been on strike for 12 months, the morale of the 250 left, is remarkably high considering, that sometimes we feel to be achieving very little, however recently three strikers visited the Docks, at Felixstowe and were assured that should the essential Coir Fibre used in mattresses be found in the Docks, it would be blacked.

One problem with Timber supplies, is that there are four docks around Hartlepool area, and they have all said that they would black, if the others do, but somehow they are loathe to meet us with their reps., from all the docks concerned. As a result, the Abba Shipping Company, cross our picket lines regularly and pickets risk life and limb, if we try to talk to the drivers. We appeal to people who could help us with this problem to do so, and ask all other Docks, not to handle Silentnight materials.

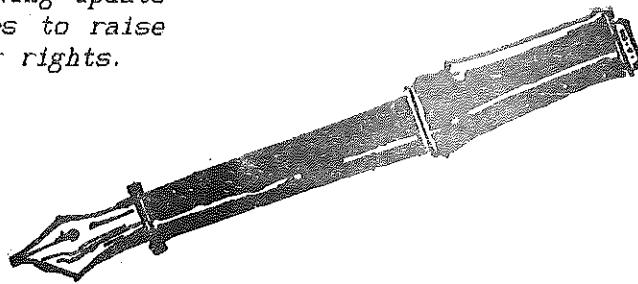
Apart from anger and bitterness we feel because of supplies getting through, we are boosted every day as the scabs REMAIN ON SHORT TIME due to our Boycott Scab Beds Campaign.

We are still lobbying the Co-operative regions to help us by not stocking any

Silentnight beds. Already Liverpool, Leeds, Coventry and Royal Arsenal are no longer re-ordering beds for the duration of the strike and we hope that the rest of the Co-ops will help.

If your Co-op. is still selling Scab beds write complaining to the Area Manager and do the same for Queensway and Debenhams, please as they are reported to be ordering a substantial number of beds. We are also seeking help in affecting the mail order side of Silentnight, as it is a hard area to break into. Please write to any mail order catalogue that deals with Silentnight, Sealy, Lay-e-zee or Perfecta, (they are all part of Tom Clarkes Empire), and express your reluctance to be part of an organisation that supports Union breakers.

A SILENTNIGHT STRIKER.



For speakers contact Terry Bennett, 22 Garrick Street, Nelson, Lancashire. BB9 8JA. Tel. 0282-603055/814556/843649.

Please send any donations to : FTAT Cravendale Branch, 92 Branch Strike Fund.c/o Mrs Ann King, 10 Rainball Crescent, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancs. Tel.0282-813662.



WHERE WE STAND

RED MIRROR

The Red Mirror is produced by members and supporters of Workers Power. Workers Power is a revolutionary organisation fighting to build a new revolutionary party to overthrow capitalism - at home and abroad.

WORKERS' STRUGGLES

We support all workers' struggles against the bosses. We fight to turn all struggles into conscious anti-capitalist struggles.

REVISIONISM

The trade union and Labour leaders believe capitalism can be reformed, made better, but they do not aim to overthrow capitalism. They act as go-betweens for the bosses with the workers. Even militant leaders limit their struggles to the fight for gains within capitalism. For this reason we are for building rank and file movements politically independent of the bureaucracy and committed to transforming the unions into democratic, class struggle unions.

REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

A revolutionary party will be a workers' party, a party that, built in struggle, can learn and pass on the lessons of the 1984-85 strike and other struggles. We stand for miners taking their place in the front ranks of building such a party as they did in the 1920s. Only by building a new revolutionary party can we create the class army that can fight and destroy the stinking capitalist system that threatens us with always having to fight to protect our jobs, conditions and organisations.

INTERNATIONALISM

We are committed to fighting capitalism internationally. We strive to build an international organisation of revolutionary parties. (Workers Power works with Irish, German, French and Chilean revolutionaries in the Movement for a Revolutionary International). In particular we fight nationalist solutions to the crisis put forward by reformists like calls for import controls. Such demands merely divide the working class.

DIVISIONS

We fight all divisions in the working class. Divisions are fostered by the bosses to weaken us. We are implacably opposed to racism immigration

controls, fascism, discrimination against and oppression of women, gays or black people.

THE OPPRESSED

We support all struggles by people oppressed by the bosses of Britain, America, France, Italy and the other capitalist (imperialist) countries. Immediately in Britain this means we support the right of the Irish people as a whole (not just those in the north) to determine the fate of their country. We unconditionally support the republicans and socialists in Ireland fighting for this right and demand the immediate withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland.

WORKERS' STATES

The USSR, Eastern Europe, etc are workers' states. Capitalism has been abolished. However, in each of these states a bureaucracy, based on the Stalinist Communist Parties, holds political power. This situation arose out of the international isolation of the Russian Revolution in the 1920s. The revolution degenerated at the hands of the bureaucracy headed by Stalin. The other workers' states were degenerate from birth in that they were created in the bureaucratic image of the USSR.

Therefore we call for a political revolution in all of these states to overthrow the bureaucracy and realise the full potential of these non-capitalist economies through democratic planning. At the same time, in order to preserve the gain for the working class represented by these economies, we defend the USSR and degenerate workers' states unconditionally against imperialism which, through war, will seek to re-introduce capitalism in these countries.

OVERTHROW CAPITALISM

The revolutionary party we seek to build will have as its strategic goal the overthrow of capitalism by workers organised into workers' councils and armed so as to defeat the police and army that the bosses have used, and will use again, against us. We are for a socialist society in which all property is in the hands of the workers' state and all production is directed towards meeting human need - not satisfying the profit greed of the capitalists. We stand on the old slogan of Karl Marx:

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE,
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS,
AND A WORLD TO WIN.