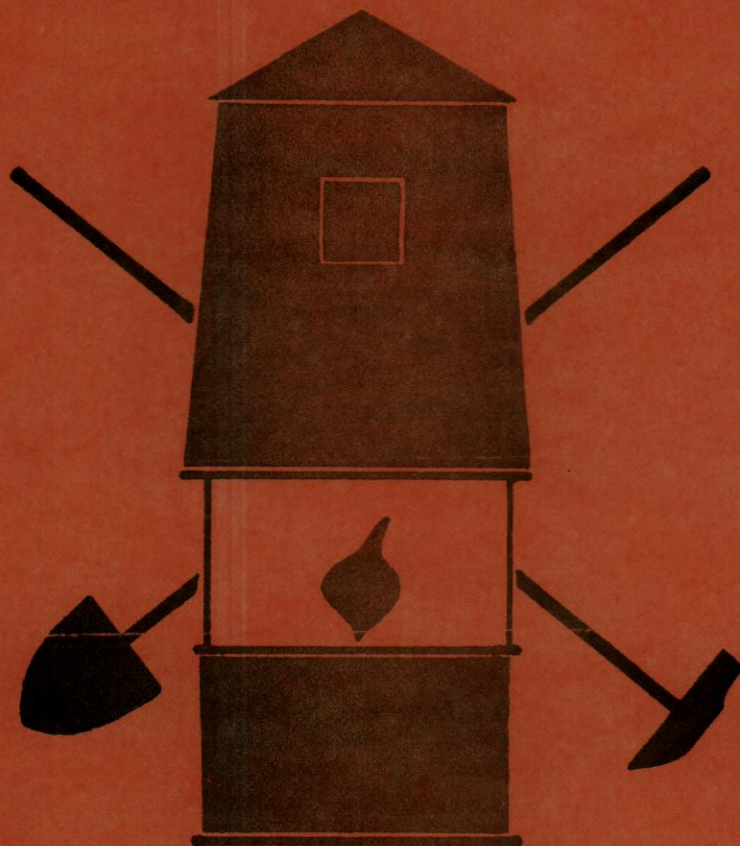


# RED MINER

No 17 SEP/OCT '87



Workers of the world  
UNITE!

## in this issue:

- ‡ Fighting closure at Renishaw Park
- ‡ Miners strike in South Africa
- ‡ Interviews with NUM militants
- ‡ Labour Party conference

**workers  
power**

Bulletin for miners and their families

# RED MINER

## EDITORIAL

The massive 3 to 1 majority for action in the ballot on the code shows a new willingness to fight amongst the rank and file. Also, as the figures show, it is fairly even throughout the country, which can only help to develop a fighting unity nationally against the board's attempts to divide area from area.

Area	Percentage
Yorkshire	74.2
North East	71.2
East	65.2
West	70.9
North West	62.1
South West	71.9
London	61.5
South East	62.7
Scotland	67.4
Wales	65.2
North	67.2
West Midlands	70.8
East Midlands	64.0
North Midlands	62.3
South Midlands	60.7

For the board the vote is a setback. They thought they could force the code through quickly. They need the code as a vital component in their overall offensive against the NUM. The code represents the continuation of the "sticking the boot in" strategy employed by McGregor in the Great Strike. The eventual privatisation of the pits depends on management being completely in charge with no prospect of disruptive action by militants. The vote in the ballot has temporarily forced the board to rethink their tactics and provided an opportunity for miners to turn back the management offensive.

At the same time as providing a real opportunity for new action, we have to examine carefully what role the present NUM leaders are likely to play. Without a doubt, the ballot was used by the bureaucrats in Yorkshire as a means of undermining the militant strike action that started at Frickley and was spreading throughout Yorkshire before the Area leaders called it off.

In the interview and discussion with Dave Douglass in this issue of RED MINER, we spell out how in fact Jack Taylor and co. effectively stabbed the Frickley

miners in the back in order not to lead a decisive fight. Indeed the role of Taylor and co. in Yorkshire has had a confusing and disorientating effect on militants in Yorkshire and elsewhere and made it more difficult to get the action that will be necessary in the coming weeks.

### LINK THE ISSUES

Related to the problems of leadership in the NUM, is the danger of keeping the issues faced by the NUM artificially separate. As RED MINER and others have argued, resistance to the code has to be linked to resistance to "flexible working" (see interview with Gethin Jones in this RED MINER).

The board is advancing on many fronts including pay and closures as well as discipline and flexible working. Although it may be possible to win a few concessions over the code in the here and now that will only be the signal for more attacks in the future from management.

That is why RED MINER argues that while an overtime ban should be called, there also has to be a concerted campaign for a new national strike this winter. Without an all out strike the Board can proceed with their plans to deliver up the industry to the privateers. The MINER and other NUM literature should be produced urgently and devoted to arguing the case for linking the issues and taking strike action.

Equally if the Board's attacks result in a new "rolling strike" as at Frickley, then it must be spread throughout the British coalfield.

The winter of 1987/88 will be the most important one since the end of the strike. RED MINER is convinced that it provides the first real chance to get full revenge for the defeat inflicted by the board in 1985 and reverse the setbacks of the last three years.

...Continued

# RED MINER EDITORIAL

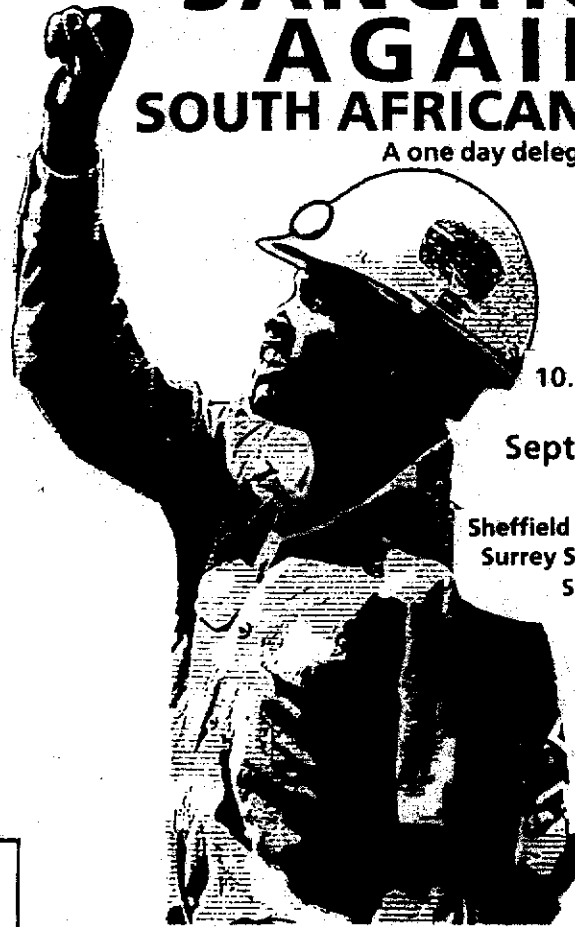
## SOLIDARITY STILL NEEDED

The heroic strike by South Africa's black miners is over. RED MINER has devoted several pages of this issue to detailing and analysing the events of that strike. Although not winning on the central wage demands, the South African NUM has demonstrated its formidable strength and ability to take on not just the mine owners but also the apartheid system itself. In saluting and paying tribute to the South African NUM, RED MINER says that all that is possible must continue to be done to develop serious **workers sanctions** against the South African apartheid state. Raising support and sending delegations to the two conferences advertised in RED MINER would be a crucial first step for NUM branches.

With the Australian miners also beginning to take industrial action against their bosses - IT IS VITAL THAT THE TASKS OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY ARE CARRIED OUT AT THE SAME TIME AS OUR OWN BATTLES ARE FOUGHT

# SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICAN COAL

A one day delegate conference



10.00am-5.00pm  
Saturday,  
September 19th,  
1987

Sheffield City Town Hall  
Surrey Street Entrance,  
Sheffield, Yorks

## MINERS UNITED



Anti-Apartheid Movement  
3 Mandela Street  
London  
W1 0DW



National Union of Mineworkers  
St James' House  
Vicar Lane  
Sheffield



## WORKERS' SANCTIONS AGAINST APARTHEID

### FREE MOSES MAYEKISO

March to South Africa House  
Saturday 10 October 1987

Meet 12 Noon  
Clerkenwell Green  
LONDON EC2  
Farringdon tube

### Campaign for Trade Union Sanctions Against Apartheid Conference

11am Saturday 26 September  
Carrs Lane Church Centre  
Carrs Lane  
BIRMINGHAM  
Delegates: £3  
Observers: £1.50

## TOGETHER WE CAN END APARTHEID

# SOUTH WALES REPORT

The recent ballot result showed over 87% of South Wales voters in favour of industrial action if British Coal do not drop the new disciplinary code. This was the third highest vote nationally, and was achieved with a 70% turnout. British Coal made a last minute attempt to show a special video in the pit canteens in the week of the ballot, urging miners not to be "misled" by the "biased wording on the ballot form". But the NUM responded quickly and held the ballot three days earlier than planned!

According to British Coal's Industrial Relations Officer for South Wales "sensible miners won't be affected by the code. In fact they stand to gain since it sets out their rights and ensures they can't be victimised". In other words, keep your heads down and you'll be OK. The ballot vote shows what miners think to that!

The new code is so bad that even Des Dufield is opposed to it! In moving the resolution opposing the code at the national conference, he said that "the code procedures were disgusting and vicious, and aimed at creating an atmosphere of fear". And speaking of the special South Wales Area conference in August, he went on to say "we believe we have been conciliatory to the Board (*too true?*); this is a major slap in the face from management". Well, Des, what did you expect?

## MARGAM

At the South Wales Miners Gala at Swansea, Arthur Scargill was the main speaker, much to the discomfort of Dufield and Co. On the issue of six day working, Scargill went on the attack: "You don't succeed by backing away from the Board, you stand up and fight against these types of policies. I was not elected President to argue for an extended working week; we should be fighting for a four day week." This received loud applause. Replying from the platform, Dufield talked predictably of utopian speeches on sunny afternoons, and of the need for realism (*ie capitulation*). It now seems that the South Wales leaders want the ballot form re-worded so as to read as opposition to the Wheeler Plan rather than to six day working - thus letting Margam off the hook.

Meanwhile British Coal now seem willing to discuss with other unions if the NUM finally rejects their "offer" on Margam.

But they still hold out hopes of a deal with the South Wales leadership, hence the delay in meeting the other unions - the UDM, TGWU and EETPU are all waiting in the wings at the moment. Roy Lynke has been busily praising the South Wales NUM leaders over their attitude to Margam, whilst at the same time his scab UDM outfit got leaflets into half a dozen South Wales pits over the holiday period (see the interview with Gethin Jones in this issue).

## Strikes

There have been numerous strikes, mainly unofficial, in the coalfield over the past two or three months. The 3,500 men at Abernant, Betws, Blaenant and Cynheidre in the west took strike action over the quality of concessionary coal for retired miners and OAPs. Trecewis Drift was on strike for two weeks over wet working conditions in some of the pit's new developments. The men at these five pits were all issued with final warnings under the new code of conduct procedures. Most recently the workforce at Deep Navigation took two days unofficial action over treatment of men at a new high-tech face. They were told by management that they weren't trying hard enough, and so walked out. After a weekend meeting they voted to return to work to allow union negotiations with management. At the time of writing the dispute is unresolved.

The British Coal Area Director, Ron Price, has condemned all the recent strikes, complaining about them being unofficial. He threatened that any more disputes would adversely affect new investment in the coalfield, including possibly the Margam project. He announced that over three million pounds had been lost in the first quarter of the year owing to strikes. But despite this British Coal claimed that in the last financial year the coalfield made a profit of two million pounds - the first profit since the 1950s.

cont.....



# INTERVIEW

## GETHIN JONES

There was also a one day strike in August by the opencast miners in South Wales, to protest about lack of job security. The total workforce of around 1,000 TGWU members took strike action. They are not employed directly by the Opencast Executive of British Coal but by civil engineering contractors, which means little continuity in their work.

The whole issue of opencast mining in South Wales is controversial and divisive at present. Local community groups and councils are often bitterly opposed to the opening of new sites, due to noise and other pollution problems. They are backed by deep mine workers, who find themselves in opposition to the opencast workers over the best way to mine the reserves.

### Canteen Workers

This month will see a further attempt by women canteen workers in COSA to get full rights accorded to other COSA members, such as the office staff. Their case is due to be heard by the Industrial Relations Appeals Court in September.

*Red Miner* talked to some canteen workers at Penallta colliery about the issues involved. The women explained how at present they receive no coal concessions, work six days to the office workers' five, have three rest days to the office workers' and miners' eight, and until recently were given no transport to and from the pit (management have now backed down on this). During the year long strike they received no food parcels or picketing expenses, despite being as active as the men in support of the strike. All the canteen staff in South Wales are involved in what they call a "question of equality" - ie full rights for COSA canteen workers in the NUM. British Coal have offered a deal on hours and job evaluation, backdated for two years. The women have gone to the court of appeal to get it backdated for eight years. *Red Miner* will carry the result in the next issue, together with an interview with one of the women leading the struggle.



*Red Miner* interviewed Gethin Jones, a Lodge committee member at Taff Merthyr colliery, South Wales. The discussion centred on how British Coal's national policies are being carried out at pit level, together with the role of the South Wales NUM leaders, the jailed miners, and the UDM.

*Red Miner:* Could you say how British Coal's new incentive scheme, the so called 'Doncaster Option', is being introduced in South Wales?

*Gethin Jones:* Well, firstly, Pontypridd (South Wales NUM HQ) is not able to stand on its own two feet and give a lead on how we should cope with it. As recently as May, George Rees the General Secretary didn't know if the Doncaster Option was being operated in South Wales! He wrote to all the NUM Lodge secretaries to find out. Well, it was being operated. At Taff Merthyr the management calls it the "Taff Merthyr Option" to keep the men in the dark. The idea is to set team against team underground. It's being introduced in bits and pieces with the aim of deskilling - electricians and fitters in particular. And this has happened with the knowledge of the Lodge committee.

*Red Miner:* As a result, what are the working conditions like at Taff Merthyr?

*Gethin Jones:* Over the last twelve months conditions at Taff Merthyr have been terrible. We've had 18" high underground supply roads, men have been carried to the face with no room for a stretcher. They've introduced what is known as the "magic carpet" at Taff Merthyr - a piece of belting was used to get supplies to the facers because there was no room for trains to get through. Accidents have increased, Taff Merthyr is probably top of the league table at the moment. The men are being paid more for the job but they're working in conditions where a rat shouldn't be.

*Red Miner:* There have been several strikes in South Wales recently, mainly as a result of management trying to introduce new work practices with the eventual aim of six day working. What's your view?

*Gethin Jones:* Yes, six day working is already being introduced, no matter how small the changes may now seem. It's a small change this week, but what about next week and the week after? These small



## INTERVIEW WITH GETHIN JONES

changes aren't always noticed and, in the end, become accepted practice. Before you know it management have introduced a new working system. And its being bought by overtime, but that will go with six day working. Overtime is definitely ruling the roost at Taff Merthyr in changing working practices.

*Red Miner:* Do you sense much opposition to six day working at Margam among South Wales miners?

*Gethin Jones:* Well, the Margam issue has been shelved at the moment because of the new disciplinary code. In a way the best thing British Coal could have done was to issue the code. The men have realised that if the Board can do that then they can't be trusted with anything else.

*Red Miner:* The ballot on the code only called for an overtime ban. Do you know of much support for strike action against it?

*Gethin Jones:* I don't really know. It will be difficult to get the men out now. But soon men will be nailed at every pit, not just in Yorkshire. the Board will then be forcing us out on strike, just like in '84. At Taff Merthyr we have refused to recognise the new code, and are keeping to the old procedures.

*Red Miner:* In the west of the coalfield, 3,500 men have been given final warnings after their recent strike over concessionary coal. British Coal are already using the new code in South Wales.

*Gethin Jones:* Yes, but they won't sack the lot next time. The point is that the threat is there, that's the main thing. They did the same thing at Trelewis: the men there have been threatened with the sack if they take action again.

*Red Miner:* What do you think of Des Dufield and the Executive on these issues?

*Gethin Jones:* It's all about bureaucracy in the system. Des Dufield has to be very careful. People wonder if Kim Howells, the research officer, is influencing decisions. A lot of people on the executive don't know what is going on, sitting there in their offices with their expense accounts and cars - they've lost touch with the rank and file. The men are looking to Pontypridd and wondering what the hell is going on down there. The union is losing credibility fast, men wonder why they should bother paying

dues when the NUM is doing very little about what is going on around them.

*Red Miner:* On the issue of the UDM, after the annual holiday miners at several pits in South Wales returned to find UDM leaflets in their lockers. Did this happen at Taff Merthyr?

*Gethin Jones:* Yes, they were put in every locker. How? They must have had permission from British Coal, there's no other explanation for how they were allowed to tamper with men's private property. They knew exactly what to do and where to go.

*Red Miner:* I know you regularly visit Dean Hancock and Russell Sharkland in Gartree prison. Are the NUM supporting them?

*Gethin Jones:* They're being looked after and are satisfied with the NUM's treatment. Dufield, Rees and Thomas have been up there. So has Scargill. His visit wasn't popular with the South Wales leadership because of the publicity it caused. They thought it might adversely affect their parole, but I know this wasn't the case. The boys really enjoyed Scargill's visit and look forward to him coming again. He keeps in touch regularly.

*Red Miner:* How long do they have to serve?

*Gethin Jones:* They have two years left now. They've settled in as well as can be expected and are being looked after. They hope to get transferred to Gloucester prison, where they'll be nearer home, before long.

*Red Miner:* I believe you've been trying to get more NUM support for the many redundant and retired miners in the Rhymny Valley where you live.

*Gethin Jones:* What I'd like to know is, where is the representation for the North Rhymny Valley? All the miners we've got here and Pontypridd say they can't afford a representative, not even for a fortnightly or monthly surgery. I've told them I will provide an office through the local Labour Party, to deal with the problems of the retired and redundant miners. Other areas have a rep but we are the forgotten valley - out of sight, out of mind. And the moment you raise your head the Area Executive are down on you - judge, jury and executioner. You get stamped on by your own kind as soon as you try and change things, and that's a fact.

# RENISHAW PARK -- FIGHTING

## CLOSURE

NORTH DERBYSHIRE NUM  
SUPPORT  
**RENISHAW PARK**

The fight to save Renishaw Park in North Derbyshire was launched at a packed public meeting on 22nd August at Renishaw Miners Welfare. Arthur Scargill was the guest speaker.



Mick Kirby and Brian Wood plan the public campaign to save Renishaw Park.

The pit employs 430 men (over 100 less than 1985 due to redundancies), and has been cut to one working face from two. Only 6 months ago the men were told they had a 14 year future.

The Board, true to form, initially denied that Park was to be closed, and that was after they'd informed the area executive of their plans. At a meeting on July 1st they explained how they would sweeten the pill phasing the closure over 18 months with an initial 100 to go in Sept. 87 - that is if the union didn't rock the boat - otherwise they threatened it could easily be closed a lot earlier.

Canteen meetings on every shift unanimously supported a branch vote to fight the closure and go through the review procedure.

This year North Derbyshire will see the closure of Arkwright and Ireland pits, and with the board's deliberate rundown of those pits not producing near the magical £1 a gigajoule, or £25 a ton (the production price of coal at the 10 best pits nationally), the future doesn't look bright for the remaining pits in the area. Local miners will remember the Area Director Moses telling them that "Scargill doesn't know what he's talking about when he says pits will close here. No pits will close in Derby's." But as Arthur

pointed out at the meeting, the boards plans for closures, new working practices and weakening the union can be traced back to the 1973/74 MIRON plan.

Despite the vote of the men at Renishaw it seems that the Area Exec haven't the stomach for a fight. So far they have done nothing to build the campaign despite having pledged support. Immediately prior to the 22nd August meeting the Renishaw delegate organised another series of canteen meetings to retake the vote. Despite this the vote to fight was restated with only 6 against.

This lack of enthusiasm from Area and even some of the Renishaw branch officials was highlighted at the meeting when a committee member Brian Wood put the point that 3 votes had been had and now the time and energy had to be put into the fight. Despite objections from the delegate Robinson this argument was backed by Scargill. "Every miner has the right to demand commitment from me. Now you have given us the mandate to fight we ask you to stand by the fight to save the pit."

The Area Exec. would be happy it appears for Renishaw to conduct a quiet campaign and not rock the boat. However it is obvious that there are militants in the campaign who will not allow the decision to fight to be squandered. These militants will be organising to extend the campaign and put pressure on the Area Executive.

The next question for the Park is what action needs to be taken if the review goes against them. That action, and here RED MINER agrees with Scargill will need to be industrial action, fought for and co-ordinated now. A commitment from N Derbyshire pits to take strike action against the closure has to be won and linked up with national action on the issues of the code, 6 day working and the sacked men.

NEXT CAMPAIGN MEETING  
ECKINGTON MINERS WELFARE  
SEPTEMBER 20th 10:00 am  
speakers:

PETER HEATHFIELD  
DENNIS SKINNER

# MINERS SHAKE APARTHEID

SOUTH AFRICA'S black mineworkers have shaken the mineowners and the apartheid regime with the strength of the strike led by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Before the walkout, the Chamber of Mines was pouring scorn on the ability of the NUM to stage a prolonged dispute, claiming that it represented only 170,000 of 500,000 workforce in gold and coal. But by the third week of the strike, the NUM still had 300,000 mineworkers out, even while the Chamber's own figures put it at over 200,000.

This was achieved despite intense pressure from the mining bosses, which ranged from the straightforwardly brutal attacks organised by Goldfields involving their own goonsquads and the South African Police (SAP), through to the 'reasonable' pressure from the so-called progressive bosses of Anglo American which threatened to dismiss 16,000 workers in an attempt to force a settlement. After two weeks of the dispute, six miners had been killed, 200 arrested and thousands sacked. This was set to increase with the rank and file's rejection of the Chamber's 25 August offer.

## POVERTY

Unlike their fellow mineworkers in other countries, black workers in South Africa's mines earn wages which are below other industrial wages. In fact 85% of all goldminers' wages are below the poverty datum line. In 1986 shareholders of South Africa's gold mines earned more in total dividends than the workers did in total earnings. The average miner earns £1700 a year, while the mining bosses' profits are worth nearly £3 billion!

The bosses have been able to achieve this because of the system of migrant labour. Miners come either from the 'Homelands' — areas usually of poor quality land which black families have to make their official homes — or from poorer countries dependent on the miners'

incomes, such as Mozambique and especially Lesotho. The apartheid system prevents the miners settling with their families in the same areas as the mines. Patrick Moseho, NUM chair of the Randfontein Estates gold mine explained in an interview with the *Weekly Mail*:

*'When I am at home my children do not know me as their father. I have to start afresh each time.'*

Miners like these work 12 month contracts, going home at the end and hoping to be able to return. Although 'liberal' bosses of Anglo American profess to dislike the apartheid system, they happily benefit from it, keeping miners in hostels, the cost of which is deducted from their wages.

Such are the super-profits achieved from this system that it may seem difficult to understand why the Chamber will not concede the 30% increase demanded by the NUM instead of sticking by the 17-23% already offered. But like bosses everywhere they are ruthless in defence of their profits. For the coal industry, it is precisely the cheapness of South African coal which is enabling them to export on an increasing scale. And it is not only the mineowners who want to see profits high. The state takes a total of R3366 million in revenues from gold mining profits. One estimate published in the *Weekly Mail* showed that for every extra rand miners managed to squeeze in pay, the government would lose 57 cents in tax.

Conditions for South Africa's miners are dirty and dangerous as they are for miners the world over but the apartheid state has shown a particularly callous disregard for black miners' lives. Particular hazards faced by South African miners are the intense heat in the deep gold mines, and cost cutting procedures. The bosses have been able to get away with such procedures as a result of their ability to keep effective union organisation out of the mines for decades. The hazards in the industry were tragically illustrated in the Kinross disaster last Autumn. A

major task the young union set itself was the improvement of safety and compensation standards. Meticulous attention to detail and individual cases, representation by shaft stewards, use of every possible legal procedure and lengthy battles for recognition have all helped the NUM build its reputation and its membership. Now safety and conditions are a major element in the claim with demands for danger pay, increased holidays and better conditions in the barrack like hostels.

## KINROSS

The NUM of South Africa has moved cautiously into launching a major confrontation with the Chamber of Mines. It still only unionises about 50% of the workforce. However the massive response to the NUM called one-day stayaway to protest at the Kinross Mining disaster showed that the union could draw non-unionised workers behind it. The current action itself has confirmed this with thousands of non-union miners joining the strike.

Anglo-American, the hardest hit of the mining companies has been trying to keep its 'liberal' image intact, emphasising that this was a normal industrial dispute to be solved by the 'normal' methods of collective bargaining. Of course there is nothing 'normal' about strikes in South Africa, especially in the mines. Anglo like the other employers did not hesitate to use its heavily armed security police against the strikers. It called in the SAP to regain control of hostels and has attempted to carry out mass dismissals. While it held off the mass recruitment of scab labour in the first three weeks, the massive rejection of the 25 August offer led Anglo to launch into a huge scab herding operation to try and break the strike.

Of course there was much more at stake for the Chamber of Mines and the South African state than simply the resolution of a 'normal' industrial dispute. The strike takes



place in a country wracked by massive struggles against the apartheid regime. While the vicious repression has contained and put on the defensive the struggles of the youth, school students and township organisations, the trade unions show no signs of suffering any such setback. Since Cosatu was launched there has been a considerable increase in union membership and strike activity. The strength of the NUM and its growth in the last period is one sign of this. The struggle for a 30% wage increase is part of the Cosatu launched struggle for 'a living wage'.

The recent victories at OK Bazaars and especially by the rail workers has greatly increased the confidence of the South African workers. It is estimated that half a million workers have been or are involved in industrial actions during August — a national strike by 20,000 postal workers, the strike at SASOL's collieries, several strikes involving several thousand Food and Allied Workers Union members, and the continued struggle on a plant by plant basis of the National Union of Metal Workers — are just some of the ongoing disputes. The Chamber of Mines and the government recognised that an all out victory by the NUM would have dramatically altered the balance of forces within the mines and within the struggle nationally. Similarly a crushing defeat would have had the opposite effect.

In this situation the strategy of the NUM leadership was vital. The NUM membership had shown itself consistently more intransigent than its leadership. A popular song composed during the strike had as its chorus line 'Leadership don't come back to us, until you have a better offer from the bosses!' One of the strengths of the NUM has been the development of the shaft steward system, with stewards' councils being powerful rank and file bodies in the union. Before the strike at the last NUM conference the NUM proposed the replacement of these councils by more geographically based area councils a step which would have seriously weakened rank and file control of the strike if implemented.

The proposals announced at the start of the strike by NUM General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa, that miners should leave the mines and go back to the homelands to avoid confrontation and violence, also appear to have been rejected by the membership.

A senior Chamber official indicated early in the dispute that the owners saw the weakness in this strategy:

*We are glad that the union has called on strikers to leave the*



300,000 miners struck demanding a 'living wage'

*hostels and mines. this means that those who want to stay at work will be able to do so without the threat of violence and intimidation. It also means that in the event of a long strike, we will not have to evict workers but merely recruit new workers to replace them.*

Only where mine owners succeeded in evicting or starving out miners does the return home appear to have happened, although obviously the pull to go home for workers who don't see their families from one six month to the next was considerable.

In many areas the NUM was instead attempting to take control of the hostels and actually occupying the mines at Harmony and at Anglo's Western Deep Levels where the workers responded to the threat of work or dismissal by starting a sit-in underground. These effective and vitally important tactics would have inevitably brought the miners into conflict not only with the company police but also with the SAP, raising the necessity, already recognised by Cosatu, for the workers to set up properly organised and armed defence squads.

It appears that it was the threat of Anglo-American and other mine

owners to institute mass sackings and use the SAP to smash resistance in the hostels, to the use of scab labour which led the NUM leadership to retreat on their members' rejection of the 25 August offer.

The alternative was precisely to develop the defence of the miners hostels and above all to win solidarity action from other workers as well as linking up with workers already on strike. The NUM should have placed an immediate demand on COSATU to call general strike action in the face of a police onslaught on the miners. The immediate linking of strike committees to the existing township committees, youth and student organisations in Committees of Action to organise food and aid to the strikers and mobilise for solidarity action and a general strike was the vital next step in the strike.

It is not yet clear what the impact will be on the NUM of its leadership's retreat. Already Anglo, while announcing it will re-employ the 40,000 sacked strikers, has said this will depend on satisfactory work records and job availability. If the NUM members fail to reverse the leadership's decision they will be faced with immediate struggles against victimisation in the mines. ■



This article has been taken from Workers Power No. 97 which went to print just as the strike was ending.

# FACTS AND FIGURES:

## SOUTH AFRICAN MINERS STRIKE

<u>NUM DEMANDS</u>	<u>ANGLO-AMERICAN CORP. RESPONSE</u>
30% wage increase (later reduced to 27%)*	16-23% increase
Increase in paid holidays from 14-30 days	No - then unspecified increase
5 years pay as death benefit	2 years - then increased to 4
Danger pay	No
June 16th "Soweto Day" as paid holiday	No
Reinstate all sacked strikers	No - then yes

\*Note: Black miners are paid only 20% of white miners' wages

## TRADE UNION FEDERATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

<u>NAME</u>	<u>FORMED</u>	<u>SIZE (approx.)</u>	<u>GENERAL POLITICS &amp; RACIAL COMPOSITION</u>
COSATU	1985	750,000	Split between militant trade unionists and supporters of African National Congress. Rank and file based, highly democratic. Non-racial but mainly black.
CUSA	1980	150,000	"Black oriented and controlled", linked to black consciousness groups. Community based. Tends towards class collaboration
AZACTU	?	50,000	"Black exclusivist", linked to AZAPO (militant black nationalists)
TUCSA	1951	340,000	White only (from 1969). Pro-apartheid. Linked to far right (particularly miners!)
UVUSA	1986	?	Scab union linked to Buthelezi's Zulu-based collaborationist Inkatha movement. Used against NUM in miners' strike.

Note: Number of black workers unionised- 1973: 40,000. 1986: 900,000.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MINERS STRIKE

Biggest strike in South African history-330,000 strikers out for 20 days

#### FOR ANGLO-AMERICAN & APARTHEID

- \* "There are still the 1988 wage negotiations to come and 1989 and 1990..." (Johannesburg stockbroker)
- \* 45% total South African export revenue from sale of gold
- \* Anglo-American accounts for over 50% of gold production. A-A is biggest monopoly in South Africa- has controlling interest in 64% of all shares on stock exchange.

#### FOR NUM & COSATU

- \* "This was a dress rehearsal."  
"We taught them (mine-owners) a lesson they will never forget"  
(Cyril Ramaphosa, Gen. Sec. NUM)
- \* 50%+ goldminers in NUM
- \* NUM is biggest union affiliated to COSATU. NUM has doubled in size in 2 years (now 300,000).  
COSATU membership-1985: 450,250  
1987: 750,000. COSATU seen as major threat by state-HQ bombed  
Thousands of trade unionists arrested, eg Moses Mayekiso.

#### THE COST

- \* Chamber of Mines lost £5.08 million per day (difference between union wage demand and bosses' offer = approx. 9 days lost profit)
- \* Anglo-American's "liberal" image badly tarnished.
- \* 9 black miners killed  
Hundreds injured by police & mine security.  
Hundreds arrested.  
Debts & lost wages (no strike pay or social security payment)



# ISSUES IN THE UNION



## INTERVIEW

### DAVID DOUGLASS

(BRANCH DELEGATE HATFIELD NUM)

*Red Miner:* The last two months have seen considerable strike action against the Board and in support of miners disciplined under the code, yet the area executive has sought to defuse rather than link up and spread the wave of 'unofficial' action - eg the Frickley issue and the Ted Scott sacking. What is your view of recent events?

*Dave Douglass:* You need to look deeper than surface appearances. Whether we like it or not, the 1984 Trade Union Act is still in force and this requires holding a ballot before any official strike - or else the sequestration of union funds, offices etc. Of course, the officials involved in any action may be deemed to be involved in an unlawful strike, the consequences being the same. If Jack Taylor had made any supportive comment it would have been a case of "death". So long as the area officials stayed uninvolved in the dispute there's little the '84 Act could have done (though the 900 Frickley men were warned of possible dismissal under the Board's disciplinary code). Unfortunately for the rank and file action - which was on the verge of stopping the entire Yorkshire coalfield - the NEC met in Sheffield in the midst of the biggest strike since '84/'85 and because of the uneven strengths on the executive, and the more or less universal fear of legal action, endorsement of the action was never really on the cards. The NEC, acting on the conference resolution, announced the national ballot on the code. Once this happened the area executive had to meet and its options were severely limited because official discussion of the action and endorsement of the national ballot meant, effectively, that a call to halt the unofficial strike had to be made. There were only three alternatives:

1. End the rank and file action but then call for a ballot of the Yorkshire Area to renew action within the law.
2. Ignore the rank and file action.
3. Call a for a halt whilst a national ballot took place.

The first option was discussed, but it was inconceivable to hold a national ballot for limited action alongside an area ballot for unlimited action. The second option is hardly credible so, reluctantly, even those who supported the Frickley initiative saw no real alternative to the third option. It must also be said that a number of branches had written to the area executive demanding that the situation be brought under control. Even a strongly left wing area leadership could hardly have ignored these calls for long.

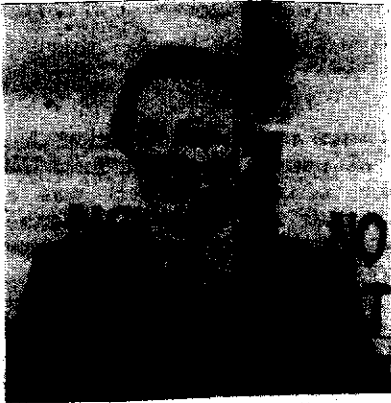
*Red Miner:* I have to say that I don't agree with the conclusions you've drawn on the limited options open to the Yorkshire executive. It is our view that the Frickley incident and the Ted Scott sacking could have been linked up, and the Yorkshire miners balloted for action while they were on strike. Here was a real chance to stop the Board's onslaught on all fronts.

*Dave Douglass:* Yes, I don't agree with unity in the abstract - it was a pity the action was not let rip. The area were using bureaucratic means to get unity. But in my view Jack Taylor could have been more obstinate if in his heart he had opposed the action. If he has to act in a legal fashion then, for the reasons above, he couldn't officially endorse it. There's an argument that says "damn the Act, lets fight". I don't know how far we'd get. If you're not interested in the fabric of the union then OK, but for compensation cases etc the union must be maintained.

*Red Miner:* But Taylor, Thompson and others all argued for the Frickley men to call off their action at the Frickley mass meeting and Frickley, to their credit, rejected that advice by 10 to 1. Isn't it vital to challenge the area leaders when they are holding back action that is necessary to prevent the effective use of the code to stop "rag ups"? In my view the rank and file were responding to the need to preserve that basic element of union power in the pit when they came out with Frickley and, in many pits, voted to continue that support.



**Dave Douglass:** You have to understand the unevenness in the area. The Frickley men had a determination far exceeding that of the majority of the other branches. When Frickley came home, the branch held a mass meeting and voted unanimously to support the action. I put the same question to the Yorkshire panel. But after that meeting the NEC pulled the plug by announcing the national ballot. Scargill made the call for a ballot "rather than a raggy, uneven response". The plug was pulled by the NEC and, I believe, pulled deliberately.



**Red Miner:** So you're saying that in the light of these circumstances you agree with the Yorkshire Area that the national ballot, not the unofficial action, was the means to unity. Presumably this is why Frickley pickets were asked to disband their Hatfield picket on that Monday morning?

**Dave Douglass:** The Frickley pickets agreed to take off their Hatfield picket - in fact the pit wasn't working since it was on holiday. To continue the unofficial strike would have opened up divisions between militant and backward areas, militant and backward pits. We need to avoid confrontation within the union, and to convince men of the need for action.

**Red Miner:** We believe in those circumstances it was necessary to support the Frickley decision, using mass meetings to get the message over, and to mobilise across the coalfield and out into the other areas. Are you saying that we have to wait and build unity from the most backward up, rather than seeing action as the way to build and spread unity? In our view a rank and file movement needs to be built within the union to take on the leadership where the officials fail to act in the real interests of miners.

**Dave Douglass:** I don't believe that the rank and file should substitute itself for the NUM. They should educate the members. If rank and file bodies can get action then why not official bodies? The real reason is that the membership have not been convinced. Recently at a local pit ten men were involved in a dispute and wanted a picket. The branch voted unanimously against, and so did men at a canteen meeting. Yet the ten men put a picket on. No wonder men resent what they see as an abuse of their principled refusal to cross a picket line.

The official apparatus is unsuited to do that education and will only respond to the least conscious. A rank and file movement should organise the best elements and generalise that consciousness to the others. It's a time for impatience, but there aren't any short cuts to convincing people that a fight is necessary and, given certain conditions, winnable.

**Red Miner:** What about the overtime ban and what if the Board back down and accept the NUM's proposals which seem to me to be a let off for the Board, falling well short of withdrawing the code altogether?

**Dave Douglass:** I would agree with an overtime ban if the code was an academic proposal, but it has been implemented against Ted Scott and, earlier, Paul Whetton - both sacked for doing union duties - and is therefore a woefully inadequate response. If we are saving our strength for something important, what will the Board have to do - sack a secretary?

We are asking officials to implement an overtime ban when Scott was sacked for much less, ie telling men not to cut coal during overtime. It's no use calling a ban against the sacking of an official for calling a ban. What, then, will be our response when the Board sack or lock out men calling for, or effecting, an overtime ban? We need an emergency special conference to decide on a response.

The other problem is the weakness of the NUM alternative, which appears to be ignoring the fundamental question of the right to strike - and by the right to strike I don't simply mean official national or area stoppages, but unit and individual rag ups. I for one do not want an appeals procedure, no matter how just, to try me for a crime that doesn't exist. Once we accept that ragging up is a crime, and all we're bothered about is how we are judged over that "crime", then the Board have won the compliance of the NUM in regarding certain forms of strike as industrial misconduct.



# RED MINER COMMENTS

A number of vitally important questions are raised in this interview with Dave Douglass. Throughout the interview Dave makes points that we would agree with, yet in contradiction he defends the 'unity' arguments of the area executive over the latest round of unofficial action in Yorkshire.

The argument rank and file versus bureaucracy is one that Red Miner has taken up many times. We argue that a rank and file movement must be built in the pits and the NUM with a programme for transforming the structure and policies of the union and on a platform against bureaucracy and class collaboration.

We disagree with Dave that the role of such a movement would be primarily educational. Obviously a rank and file organisation would educate but not in an abstract way but through fighting to win the argument about what is necessary and agitating for support for action.

In the context of the unofficial action initiated by Frickley (based on the mass support of the Frickley men), against the Board's use of the code, those seriously concerned to build meaningful unity would need to fight for support for that action, work to spread the action through mass meetings to convince the membership and to fight to force the area/national leadership to act in support. We do not accept Dave's argument that "because of uneven strengths on the NEC" Frickley's position was "unfortunate". Scargill is a prisoner on the executive and whilever he refuses to appeal directly to and be part of organising the rank and file for action (on the scale of '84/85 as he repeatedly says is necessary), rank and file miners have to act to build that action themselves. We can't afford to wait for a 'left' balance of forces on national.

A leader like Scargill might become part of a rank and file movement but only if he was to put himself under it's democratic control. Such a movement organised throughout the coalfields must be prepared, where it can't force the official leadership to act, to take forward the fight and lead itself.

So even in the situation where such a movement didn't exist we were for fighting to link up the Frickley and the Ted Scott in spreading the strike wave through pit mass meetings and appeals to the men.

We would say to Dave that he needs to decide which side he is on as his arguments are not consistent. We don't agree that the actions of the Area Executive over the unofficial action and our argument for spreading the action are "merely a difference in tactics". Nevertheless we would hope to convince Dave and militants like him of the need for rank and file organisation.

Finally, we would invite NUM members to put their points in this important debate. please write to RED MINER, c/o 138, Crookesmoor Road, Sheffield 6.

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# LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

## STOP THE RIGHT! FIGHT KINNOCK!

Neil Kinnock and his allies are planning a major offensive at this year's Labour Party Conference.

Already secure in his dominance of the National Executive Committee (NEC) and shadow cabinet, Kinnock is now trying to consolidate his grip on the party as a whole.

Such control is vital if he is to take the party in the direction he wants: towards the right and a possible coalition with the Liberals. Kinnock is committed to forcing the Party into the SDP's broken mould.

Underlying the leadership's strategy is its analysis of Labour's disastrous showing in the General Election. Labour lost so badly through years of failing to defend working class interests, through refusing to support workers in struggle, through policies which failed to meet workers' needs, and through constant emphasis on expulsions and witch hunts rather than on fighting the class enemy.

But Kinnock and the right disagree with this analysis. For them, Labour lost because it fought on policies which were too left wing, thereby frightening off SDP and even Tory voters. As they see it, the way to victory next time is to ditch any remaining policies which can be considered even remotely pro working class.

### S A W Y E R

Tom Sawyer, chair of the party's home policy committee, has spelt out clearly what this means. Labour must appeal to the "home owning, credit card carrying majority". Labour must "face the decline in [its] traditional working class vote" (*Guardian* 24/7/87) - and drop any pretence of fighting for policies which make the bosses and yuppies feel uneasy. Hence his call for a "review" of policies on defence, taxation and the economy.

Sawyer is not alone - far from it! Roy Hattersley believes present policies on defence, taxation and renationalisation lost votes and therefore need "looking at". John Prescott has written on the need to "re-evaluate" the party's policies and programmes. And of course Kinnock made plain where he stood when he called for a major reappraisal of economic, industrial, financial, employment and training policies. No doubt even this list could be extended when necessary!

This process of "policy review" is beginning now. Conference will definitely see determined moves to reverse the party's unilateral nuclear disarmament stand. Policy against renationalising privatised industries is also likely to be passed. Decisions at Conference will, however, be just the start of the process of "Owenising" the party.

But Kinnock is aware that his overall project may well founder on the rocks of opposition within the ranks. He believes this is unacceptable. In order to replace the SDP, and reassure the bosses of Labour's "reliability", the leadership must have unchallenged sway over the membership. The PLP must be able to act independently of the membership without having to worry about potential opposition or threats of replacement from their constituency members.

Hence the importance of Kinnock and the right's one-member-one-vote proposals. All the ballyhoo about increased democracy and participation is nonsense - a mere cloak to hide the real purpose behind the changes.

In reality the proposals are an attempt to erode the already limited power of local parties over their MPs which has existed since 1981. Removing the direct link between local party and MP will do just that - MPs will gain greater freedom to do just as they wish. Their support for anti-working class policies will then be much more straightforward.

cont ...

L.P. Y.S.

Similarly, the Sawyer proposals for the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) are aimed at curbing another source of left wing influence and potential opposition. By lowering the upper age limit to 21, giving the Kinnockite student poodles a greater say, closing down "Socialist Youth" - in effect trying to neuter the LPYS - the leadership hopes to silence another forum of left wing ideas and pressure.

Just in case all this fails to create a sufficiently docile party, Kinnock is preparing for increased centralisation. Larry Whitty is using "financial problems" as an excuse to close down *Labour Weekly*, *New Socialist* and *Socialist Youth*. Despite their faults, at least these organs provide a degree of inner party debate, and present views which may differ from those of the leadership. This is unacceptable to Kinnock, Whitty and Co. Instead, they would have us make do with the totally unpolitical, leadership controlled, *Labour News*. Be warned: this is the shape of things to come!

Yet despite the seriousness and obvious purpose of the attacks, the Left has failed to mount any meaningful opposition. No one is standing against Kinnock for leader, thus he has a free hand. There has been no national campaign to defend the LPYS and, despite the long period over which they have been taking place, there is still no effective campaign to fight the suspensions and expulsions.

Nor has the Campaign Group launched any fightback. Weak in the constituencies, and conspicuously quiet in the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Campaign Group appears to be sitting on its hands waiting for something to happen. The problem is, the only thing which is 'happening' is Kinnock and Co running amok!

Involvement in extraparliamentary and non-party campaigns and struggles, while central for socialists, is no substitute for a principled struggle against the anti-working class direction in which the Party is being taken. Such a struggle means fighting the policy retreats, fighting the constitutional manouvres - and fighting the leadership!

Conference can still provide the opportunity for launching such a fightback. It is vital to seize that opportunity with both hands.



**IRELAND AND THE MINERS  
DAY SCHOOL**  
SPONSORED BY : HATFIELD MAIN BRANCH NUM  
& DONCASTER LABOUR CTTEE. ON IRELAND  
THE SCHOOL WILL EXAMINE THE STATES RESPONSE  
TO COMMUNITY RESISTANCE IN THE MINING AREAS  
AND THE OCCUPIED SIX COUNTIES. DUE TO BE HELD  
IN DONCASTER IN OCTOBER.

DETAILS FROM DAVID DOUGLASS

INVITED SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- DENNIS MURPHY SEC. N/UMBRIAN NUM
- DAVE TEMPLE DURHAM MECHANICS
- JOAN MAYNARD EX MP SHEFFIELD BRIGHTSIDE



# WHERE WE STAND

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## Red Miner

*The Red Miner* 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.

## Reformism

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 struggle 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 can learn and pass on the lessons of the 1984-5 strike and other struggles. It is for miners taking their place in building such a party as the only way to protect our jobs, conditions and organisations. Only by building a revolutionary party can we create the class consciousness and destroy the stinking capitalism that threatens us with always having 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, Austrian and Chilean revolutionaries in the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist 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, lesbians, gay men 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 1920's. 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 the meeting of 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!**