

THE RED MINER

№2 MAY/JUNE 1985



**workers
power**

Bulletin for miners and their families 10p

EDITORIAL

Amazing but true ! Norman Willis, TUC boss, has got something right for once. He told the Welsh TUC at Tenby that the NCB was pursuing a 'ruthless' policy. He should have added that it was thanks to his treacherous efforts, along with Kinnock, that the miners were isolated and defeated. The NCB are ruthlessly pressing home the advantage of their victory, finally handed to them by the 98 delegates who voted for a return to work with no settlement.

The NCB are pushing ahead on all fronts. NACOD's much vaunted deal with the NCB is proving to be a joke - a sick joke at that. Pits are being closed without any reference by the Board to the Colliery Review Procedure. The latest closures to be announced in the North East, if pushed through, will mean over 3,000 jobs will go. Yet already in Yorkshire, Scotland and South Wales, pits have been closed since the end of the strike. The butchery will stop only if we can stop the butchers.

Not content with the 750 sacked during the strike, the Board has sacked many others since the return to work. What's more, the sacked lads who have been elected to union office, are not being recognised by the NCB. We cannot even choose our own representatives and negotiators under the new dictatorial regime.

Although the NCB want to smash our organisation, they are not getting it all their own way. One of the lessons of the Great Strike was to fight back every time the bosses attack us. At High Moor in North Derbyshire, at Westoe in the North East and in Yorkshire, strikes have been launched to defend gains like water money or against sackings. Every time we fight back like this we show to the Board that we will not be pushed around, and when they try it, it will cost them. This way we can rebuild the fighting strength of the union.

The week-long strike over 4 sackings at South Kirby in Yorkshire is a good example of how and how not to rebuild the strength of the union. They struck and, over the week, brought out Houghton Main, Ferrymoor Riddings, Dodsworth, Royston Drift & Shafton workshops. Once again the power of picketing was on display. The Board were worried by the prompt and determined response that their provocation was met with. At the end of the strike, however, those sacked were not reinstated. Here the way not to rebuild the NUM was in full display. First, branch officials, obviously in liason with the Area, blocked sending out pickets. Then the branch sent out pickets - but only to the pits that had voted to support South Kirby. At this point the Area Executive stepped in, fearing any spread of the dispute, and ordered the withdrawal of the pickets. This was a killer blow to the strike. Jack Taylor tried to escape all blame, claiming, "It is not an Area matter. It is up to the branches to decide." By ordering the pickets to go home, Taylor exercised Area authority - to strangle, not strengthen the strike.

The lesson is this - in the coming fights with the Board, the union leadership will not help us. At an Area level the officials want peace and quiet. At a national level Scargill and Heathfield are urging restraint. The scab leaders have not been expelled. Whilst Mc Gahey has invited the back-stabbers Kinnock and Willis to the Scottish gala.

To rebuild the union as a fighting class struggle union we cannot rely on the leaders. Out of strikes like the one at South Kirby we must build a rank and file movement. This movement must be rooted in the pits. That is where the power exists - through strikes, works-to-rule, overtime bans, etc - to fight the pit closures, win decent wages, defend the union and win reinstatement for the sacked lads.

REGIONAL ROUND-UP

WARICKSHIRE

In Warwickshire we are seeing a retreat in the branches. At Keresley 11 men remain sacked. The branch policy of a work to rule has not been enforced. Instead there has been a clamour for overtime. Meanwhile the President and Secretary are having private meetings with management.

At Coventry Homefire plant (Cokeworkers) the branch have now rescinded the rule that no scabs could serve on committee. Worse still, at Daw Mill 4 officials (2 NUM and 2 NACODS) are having an expenses paid trip to the USA, presumably at MacGregor's invitation... to experience at first hand MacGregor style scab unionism no doubt. Or more likely their reward for their years service to scabbing.

Generally the problem is one of isolation for the militants who do want to fight the NCB. Even the sizeable minority at Keresley, though in control of the Branch Committee are not at present leading any organised fightback. In fact two scabs have recently been elected to Midlands Area NUM.

LEICESTERSHIRE

All 4 Leicestershire pits are on the NCB closure list. Whitworth and South Leics. are due for closure this year. Bagworth, a previous high producer is now losing £100,000 per week. Bonus is down from £80-£50

P.L.A. average and there is a feeling of demoralisation among the men. They have been bought off with extra water money - up to £5 per shift and early papers. Men just sign a ledger when they come out of the pit to go early.

Management have treated the Dirty 30 reasonably well considering their position. But then they don't need to get tough when we have a union like the Leics Area NUM.

Although National NUM have waived our subs for the 12 months on strike Leics area has refused.

Therefore we are non-financial members of the NUM unable to take part in branch meetings or elections.

Now we are seeing the

National Union under attack from a "Triple Alliance" (Leics, S. Derby, Notts.) which is

Continued.....



WOMEN FIGHT ON !

Before the Great Miners Strike of '84-85 most miners wives concentrated on looking after the home, bringing up children. Many like myself may have had part-time jobs and to some extent knew the union structure, and the pitfalls of union bureaucracy.

For many the strike changed their attitudes completely. We picketed, organised soup kitchens, went on rallies, demonstrations and instead of standing behind our men, which had been the case in past struggles, we stood side by side and fought with them. Never again must women be allowed to recede into the background, they will always be there in the forefront with the men. We say women should be equally represented (which they are to be) in the National Rank and File Movement because everything that affects the men affects us. We say to the support groups keep going, build support in your area for a rank and file movement, it is not as some people think a breakaway from the NUM, it is a movement to build a stronger union. We are proud that our men are members of the NUM but we need a fighting union so that never again will we suffer the defeat of the 1984/5 strike.

Continued on next page.....

Leics. report continued.....
....continuing to work against the National Union, yet they are getting away with it!

Resolutions of action against these areas must be passed to make them accountable for their actions. The expulsion of these areas is long overdue. Then strikers and men who do not want to leave the NUM can get on with rebuilding these branches so as to rid this union of its weak link.

YORKSHIRE THE FIGHT GOES ON !

Last week the Doncaster area saw rank and file members at two pits say enough is enough enough to the management.

1. Sixty men at Brodsworth Colliery were sent home on the day shift because management accused them of being late, too late to go down the pit. In fact they were five minutes early.

Rank and file members spread the word to the 400 men who were already down the pit and they all came out in support. The afternoon and night shift also came out but this was no thanks to the officials of the union. The men who organised the fight back against the management tactics, can also see the need for new leadership at branch level.

2. Bentley Colliery walked out over management sending one man home for allegedly not doing his job. The rank and file again responded quickly immediately and brought the pit to a standstill.

These are just two of many instances where the rank and file have shown that by organising at a grass roots level they can achieve results. 14/5/1985

NORTH DERBYSHIRE.

Again a picture of sporadic disputes over management tactics. At Highmoor there was action over water payments that lasted 3 days, and at Ireland Colliery there was a 2 day strike over the 5 scabs from Doncaster who were set on. At Renishaw Park there was a strike over payments for extra work....the day shift were out for two hours only to find officials told the afternoon shift to go down the pit to meet the management. Markham saw action over a similar issue all of which show that the picture of an aggressive and confident management offensive is the same over the whole coalfield....and importantly so is the picture of rank and file resistance.

WOMEN FIGHT ON continued

Since the end of the strike a lot of people have just retreated back into their homes and said, "Oh, it's over now, we have lost, what can we do?" The problem is if we all had this attitude we would have been in the gutter where the Tory government wants us, long ago. We say to every rank and file member of this union and to their wives, get up off your backsides and join the National Rank and File Movement, get involved and get to know all the facts about the victimisations going on since the return to work....don't just think, "WHAT can we do?"

Alone we are useless, but if every militant miner and his wife in this country get together with other rank and file members, we can make the Tories and the Capitalists sit and beg. Join the Rank and File now and fight for amnesty and reinstatement for all sacked and jailed miners. DEFEND YOUR RIGHTS....NO-ONE ELSE CAN DO IT FOR YOU!

Patricia Kelly.

NOT MURDERS BUT CLASS WAR PRISONERS.

Two young miners - Russel Shanklin and Dean Hancock - have been sent to prison for life for their part in the miners' strike. The press has branded them as murderers. So have the courts. We must defend them.

Dean and Russell, in fact are class war prisoners. They have been captured and imprisoned by the class enemy for fighting the class war on our behalf. They were acting to stop a scab driver, Wilkie, taking lone scab, Williams, into Merthyr Vale Colliery under a massive police escort.

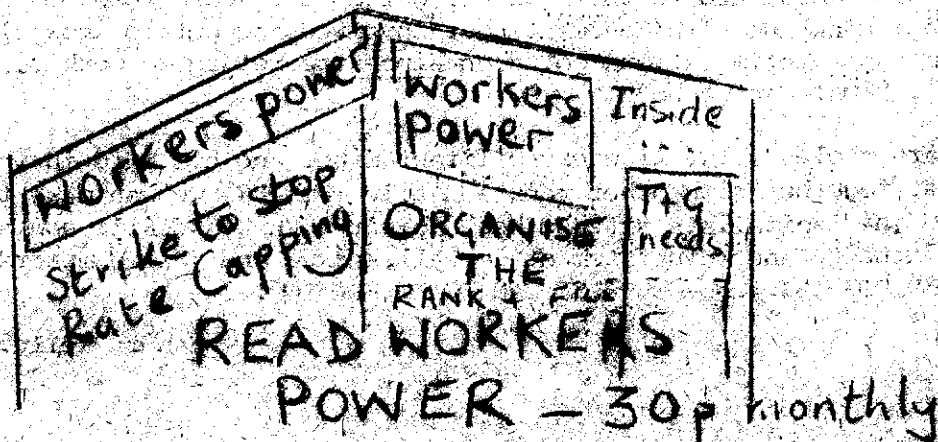
The police had invaded the village of Aberfan to get Wilkie and Williams past the pickets and break the strike. Hancock and Shanklin acted to stop the scab taxi, to keep the strike solid!

There will be many who will turn their backs on these young men. The NUM leadership denounced violence "away from the picket line". The South Wales leaders doubtless saw the attack as one that would frighten away allies in the Church and higher places.

These two miners were fighting for their jobs and for their class. We must not forget them. We must demand the NUM fight for their release and to win the release of the other jailed miners.

Today - 17/5/85 - two Welsh pits came to a standstill in protest at the verdict. Men from Oakdale Colliery said they would stand by the lads and would make sure they were visited regularly. This is only a start to a campaign to force the NUM to take up the cases.

B. Thompson.



ISSUES IN THE UNION



RANK + FILE GET ORGANISED

During the course of the year long strike we found a great need to organise a rank and file movement. In the first week it was rank and file militants who, at their own expense picketed out some Nottinghamshire pits.

We soon found we had to put up a fight against our own branch officials and area leaderships over the way to push the strike forward. But we had no effective way of challenging decisions such as the deals made by Taylor, Williams and McGahey on exemptions to steel-coal and about where pickets were sent even when we knew we were wasting our time. And by the end of the strike we had no way of stopping the sell-out as an alternative rank and file leadership had not been organised.

For many months through the strike men and women all over the coalfields organised picket lines, ran strike committees, support groups etc. Now the strike is over the need for a rank and file movement is greater than ever.

On the 13th. April 1985 rank and file miners, their wives and girlfriends from different areas of the coalfield met in Sheffield, to discuss the situation in the industry. Every area represented gave a report on the situation at their particular pit. These reports showed clearly that whichever area you came from you faced basically the same problems. They showed that unless we join together and form a national movement each individual area would be isolated and left to the mercy of the N.C.B.

We all agreed to commit ourselves to form a national rank and file movement which will work, not as the present N.U.M. works which is an affiliated basis but as a national organisation which fights for one union/ one rule book in the N.U.M.

Various tasks were suggested and agreed;

- i) to organise a National Rank and File which will campaign for re-instatement and amnesty for all sacked and jailed miners by direct action from the union...overtime bans, work to rule and strike action.
- ii) to continue the campaign against pit closures.

REPORT FROM APRIL CONFERENCE

iii) to campaign for these policies and build the rank and file movement by organising speaking tours in all the coalfields.

iv) to fight for disciplinary action to be taken against officials (branch or area) who scabbed on the strike and continued to work against the National Union.

The conference elected a steering committee consisting of four sacked miners, four working miners and four miners wives. We also elected a chairman, vice chair, treasurer and secretary.

Since the conference the Rank and File Movement has set up two offices (one in London and one in Birmingham) to collect money and information for distribution to the areas.

We have also organised a monthly newsletter to spread the information about what's happening in all the areas.

Those miners and wives attending the first conference committed themselves to build a National Rank and File Movement. After reading this report we hope you will also commit yourselves and join the N.R.F.M.

UNITY IS STRENGTH...MINERWORKERS OF ALL COALFIELDS UNITE..

DEBATE

Below we print an interview with a member of the National Rank And File Committee. The comrade has a number of disagreements with us and we have included a reply and hope that this could be the start of an ongoing discussion on this issue and others.

Red Miner. WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE TASKS OF THE NEWLY FORMED RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT ?

I'd say to co-ordinate with different collieries and find out how men have been victimised in different pits and different

areas and how we can build up to fight the N.C.B. and government over victimisations and how to fight for our colleagues jobs back, who've been sacked for any old trump-
-ed charge what the judiciary have seen fit to pin on them.

Red Miner. DO YOU AGREE THAT THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT HAS TO BE POLITICAL.

Yes, politics comes into everything I suppose - buying a pint is political when you see you are paying so much to the Tory Party through the brewery and so on. I am a member of the Labour Party and I am ashamed of the leadership of the Labour Party and I feel the majority of miners are in the same boat. So if by defending the rights what people have fought for over the years is political - bloody hell we want to be doing it !

Red Miner. WHAT POLITICS/PLATFORM SHOULD THE MOVEMENT BE BASED ON ?

The aims are set out in the leaflet. My first priority is to get jobs back. I know its going to be hard especially with the national executive taking them up as individual cases. I don't think they have the right to take them up as individual cases - all of them are part and parcel of the same dispute and we should recognise this and feel amazed when our own union is dividing them into different categories as to what representation they get.

Red Miner. WORKERS POWER SUPPORTERS PUT A RESOLUTION AT THE FIRST RANK AND FILE CONFERENCE (printed after this article for reference) , OUTLINING AN ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE NRFM - A BASIS FOR A POLITICAL CHALLENGE TO THE LEADERS LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY. YOU VOTED AGAINST THE MAIN PART OF THE RESOLUTION. CAN YOU SAY WHY ?

I agreed with its content in principle, but again the only other people who would have agreed would be a handful of activists from day 1 and I didn't think this would be right under the circumstances. The main aim was to fight for amnesty, reinstatement and building the movement up within the NUM.

In the long term I would personally campaign for 99% of the resolution.

Red Miner. IT HAS PROVED TO BE DIFFICULT TO MOTIVATE THE SACKED MEN - HOW WILL A RANK AND FILE SO CONCERNED WITH THAT SINGLE ISSUE HOLD TOGETHER IF /WHEN THE ISSUE DIES.

Sacked men at Rossington Colliery (Doncaster) have been told that if they have anything to do with the rank and file, hardship payments are likely to be cut off completely and we feel this is totally wrong and we are trying to link sacked men together without having to fight the bureaucracy of our own union. If these people are true trade unionists (the bureaucracy) they would help us rather than delay us. Also in using these tactics the R and F will gradually get bigger because people will see through the bureaucracy and realise what we are only here for to build this union and to have better unity.

RED MINER REPLIES

Our main difference with the comrade would seem to be simply a matter of timing. The time wasn't right for our resolution. The time wasn't right to put forward a full political programme for the rank and file movement.

In fact the difference about timing reveals a bigger difference over the nature of the rank and file movement. The comrade, and the founding conference, want to build the movement as a sacked miners campaign. In order to enlist official support, or at least neutralise potential official hostility, the conference believed that for the moment politics must be kept at a low profile.

In building up the movement over the gaoled lads issue the comrade believes more and more people will join the rank and file movement.

Continued...

We disagree with this view and we believe it will weaken rather than build the rank and file movement. The timing of the resolution put forward by Red Miner supporters was dead right. A rank and file movement is vital to rebuilding the strength of the union. That strength will in turn be vital to winning reinstatement. The bitter truth is that the sacked and sacking lads have no muscle to use against the NCB. The working NUM members have. Winning them to a rank and file movement is absolutely crucial to help rebuild the union and with a strong union, win reinstatement for all sacked men.

This begs the question, winning them to what? This is where our resolution provided timely answers to the problems working miners face - wages, closures, union democracy, the NCB offensive and so on. Far from scaring people off, the programme we proposed would have been a tool for the rank and file movement to build itself with.

Politics as the comrade agrees, are vital. The Red Miner has openly and honestly put forward the politics it believes are necessary for the rank and file movement. That we didn't win our position at the conference will not stop us giving wholehearted support to the Rank and File Movement. We will work to build it and its campaigns.

At each stage of the movement's development, though, we will repeat our basic belief that it must go beyond the issue of the sacked miners. To succeed the National Rank and File Movement must build itself into a force of working and sacked miners and their wives and families capable, when the officials get cold feet as they did in South Kirby, of organising independently of them to defend the interests of miners on all fronts of struggle.

BELOW WE PRINT THE TEXT OF THE RESOLUTION PUT BY WORKERS POWER SUPPORTERS AT THE NATIONAL RANK AND FILE CONFERENCE.

1. This meeting commits itself to organising a movement of rank and file miners inside the NUM and maintaining and supporting miners wives groups. The movement will campaign for its policies within the NUM and it is not split off from the union. It will be open to individual miners, delegates from branches/lodges and delegates from miners wives support groups.

The main priority of the rank and file movement at the moment will be a fight for the reinstatement of sacked miners.

a) We must campaign to win reinstatement and amnesty for all jailed miners. We will campaign for direct action by the union - overtime bans, work to rules, strike action - in pursuance of these aims. It will work to win financial support for the victimised and imprisoned miners.

b) A campaign to continue the fight against pit closures. We will press for the reintroduction of the overtime ban and will encourage and support local or regional strikes against closures. We will campaign to build up union strength in preparation for a further national strike against the NCB's national closure programme. If the campaign around sacked miners is to be successful

we also need to build a fighting rank and file movement inside the union which also argues for:

- * Shorter working hours, no redundancies union control over production levels, safety, hiring and firing and veto over closures.
- * An end to the area incentive scheme and replacing it with a national wage agreement which consolidates bonus payments as an average wage.
- * Wage rises must keep up with inflation.
- * A campaign to fully democratise the union by getting rid of the national ballot rule and refusing to recognise the Tory anti union laws, getting one rule book for the union and ending federalism.
- * Mass pit head meetings must be the policy making bodies of the union. Union officials must be accountable, union representatives on every face, shift, district and grade should form part of the branch committee. The delegate conference should be made up of delegates from every pit elected by mass meetings with voting strength based on the number of men they represent.
- * In all elections we will try to put up rank and file candidates, accountable to the membership, and fight for the politics of the National Rank and File Movement.

continued....

- * Campaign to defeat scab unionism in our ranks. Expel the scab led areas and fight to refound the NUM in these areas.
- * Maintain the wives groups, with the right to attend all NUM meetings as observers.
- * Keep up the links with other workers involved during the strike. The NUM must campaign with all unions who are in struggle against the bosses or the government.
- * We must fight to rid the Labour Party of such traitors such as Kinnoch and make our sponsored M.P.'s accountable to union policy.
- * Our constitution reads "...join in with other organisations for the purpose of and with a view to the complete abolition of capitalism." (Page 5) and we should do all that is possible to put that into practice.
- * To campaign for these policies and to build the National Rank and File miners movement we should organise a speaking tour in all coalfields to publicise and recruit members to our movement. We should aim to build local pit based or area based (as appropriate) rank and file groups.

To further these activities we will publish a monthly newsletter, open to contribution contributions from all miners (except fascists), miners wives and at the discretion of the steering committee (who should form the editorial board of the newsletter) from supporters of the miners outside the industry.

The steering committee should organise a national conference in September 1985 to review progress and plan further campaigns.

FOR OR AGAINST THE RULE CHANGES ?

The NEC proposed rule changes pose a sharp test for NUM militants. On the one hand they involve changes which serve to centralise the union as a national body. These measures should be supported as steps in the right direction. On the other hand, the changes contain proposals which would cushion the officials, make them less accountable and dampen rank and file initiative. All such measures should be opposed.

Lynk and Prendergast have swung the Notts area against the changes. What they don't like are precisely those measures which would rightly diminish the autonomy of the areas. In this they have been joined by Eilyn Williams and Dr. Howells who are jealous to protect the precious autonomy of South Wales.

Militants can have no truck with the campaign of the Notts and Welsh leaders. The Great Strike showed just how vital it is to create one union with one national rule book. It is right that "each area and each constituent association shall adopt and comply with the model rules and any amendments there to." (Rule 17G) and that the NEC and conference should have the power to call national strikes.

These kind of proposals would cut away at the autonomy of the likes of Lynk and company. They could make it impossible for the areas to ballot themselves out of a national strike - as the scabby Notts miner rightly put it "The proposed new rules would have blocked last years Notts strike ballot."

But the danger is that many good militants in the NUM will simply put a plus where Lynk or Williams put a minus. There are many rule changes that should be opposed or amended.

The proposed changes would serve to further protect the officials from accountability to the rank and file. It is wrong that Arthur Scargill should be made president for life. All officials should be recallable and up for regular election. We should also oppose that change which calls for a two thirds majority of conference, executive and individual members before officials can be removed. You don't see Lynk and Co. contesting this one! Although it is presented as a means of preventing a repetition of the Richardson affair, it will serve to featherbed all officials - whether they be "left" or "right".

We are for the NEC and conference having the power to call strikes. But the rule changes recommend more than this. They suggest that no strike should be made official unless the NEC sanctions it. This is presented as a means of defending the unions funds under the anti-union laws. In fact it will protect the officials funds for just as long as they give no official backing to a dispute. But under the new anti union laws it means the pickets, who've kick started every major dispute in the industry, will now be left to get hammered by the bosses as "financially liable". The rules should be changed to guarantee NEC official backing for every action decided upon by the men at the relevant pit, area or panel level. The NEC must not be allowed to climb back on the fence and pick and choose which battles it will support.

Rule 5d would read "The NEC shall determine the categories and qualifications of persons who shall be eligible for consideration as associate members". Lynk doesn't like this one either! In our view associate membership should not be a medal handed out by the NEC to chosen individuals in gratitude for services rendered. The wives organisations should have automatic right to associate status as groups. That is a necessary means of maintaining the fighting unity that was forged in the strike and developing the womens groups further. This rule change should also be ammended to make it clear that associate membership will give the womens groups the right to observer status at every level in the union.

Now rule 18h says that areas refusing to obey the new rules "May be excluded from the union." Fine words. In our view all scab officials should have been booted out the moment they stuck their knives into the NUM's back. Their members would then have been given the choice of either going with the scab officials or standing and fighting with the national union. Failure to do so allowed the waverers to keep scabbing. And it has given Lynk and his well placed adviser over a year to build their scab outfit inside the NUM.

Now they have drummed up two thirds of the Notts miners to prepare to split if the rule changes go through.

It's still not too late to take the bull by the horns. The scab officials in all the scab areas should be expelled now. It's just not enough to suspend Lynk from his job. The union should be reconstituted around those who stood and struck with the NUM. NUM members who scabbed should be given the choice between a company union and a union that will fight. Loyal NUM members must be given every backing to win that recruitment campaign. It should be the union loyal militants - and them alone - who should have the right to decide who can and can not carry a union card.

By Dave Hughes.

This article was written before the rule changes were circulated and discussed in the branches.

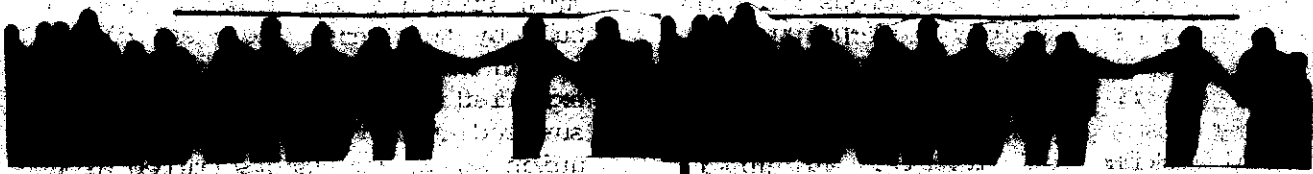
As a result we would like to hear your comments on the proposed rule changes.

We also welcome your comments on this article - additions, disagreements or changes.

If you have any comments on this or any other articles in The Red Miner, send your letters to

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WORKERS' HISTORY



THE MINERS' MINORITY MOVEMENT

The term "minority movement" caught on in the Midlands during the Great Strike. The Midlands strikers were a minority and they needed a movement to organise the strike; hence the Midlands Minority Movement.

As the strike wore on militants realised that it was not only scab officials who were preventing victory in the strike. Even 'left' officials like Emlyn Williams, were back-peddalling on the goals of the strike and sabotaging picketing. A minority movement of rank and file miners was needed to organise under the slogan "with the officials if possible, independently of them when necessary". Miners were beginning to realise that a problem existed with the officials, whose reformist politics and whose position as mediators between the men and the bosses, pushed them towards rotten compromises with MacGregor and the board.

The problem of the leadership in the unions is not a new one. Nor is the tendency of the rank and file to organise to resist the treachery of the leaders. The Unofficial Reform Committees that published the famous Miners' Next Step in 1912 was an example of this. The Miners' Minority Movement in the 1920's was another.

The Miners' Minority Movement was built by the Communist Party. This explains its success. It was built by the cadres of a then revolutionary party. The party won leadership of the Minority Movement by virtue of its politics and by means of democratic debate. The party gave the Minority Movement a clear political direction.

From the very beginning the Communist Party built the Minority Movement in the mines, and in other industries, on a firmly political basis. It had a programme of action. It voiced demands for the improvement of conditions for the class. It had a strategy for a way forward to achieve those demands and it was daily developing tactics to win over the mass of workers to build a movement committed to working class interests.

The initial moves towards setting up the early Minority Movement took place in March/April 1921 when unofficial Trade Union bodies like the Miners Reform Committee, the Shop Stewards Committee and the Railway Vigilance Committee came together at a conference in Sheffield. This conference forged a link between the new Communist Party and the trade union left. Although there were delays in forming a National Organisation, movements were built during the following years in the various industries.

Particular success was achieved in the coalfields. The Unofficial Reform Committee surviving the war years as a network of Marxist study groups centred around the Rhondda without doubt formed a springboard for the emerging MINERS' MINORITY MOVEMENT (MMM) in South Wales. In Scotland the Reform Committee went so far as to set up their own breakaway organisation, the 'Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan Miners' Reform Committee' in 1922. It took the persuasion of the developing MMM to re-unite these district organisations once again, and by 1924 the MMM had established itself to the point of calling a National conference. Its aim: to transform the Miners Federation into a United Miners Union affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions. Its

demands included a weekly wage on par with the 1914 wage level plus 2 shillings a shift advised by the Sankey Commission, and a 5 hour day.

The Movement was under no illusion that it could accomplish even limited aims without challenging the Capitalist system itself and its agents within the Labour movement - the bureaucratic leadership.

To this end it saw that rank and file forces must be gathered around

1. A fighting programme
2. Concrete demands for Union consolidation and re-organisation
3. The necessity for creating a new ideology amongst union membership
4. The necessity of training and developing a new leadership to replace the old.

The last two points illustrate the advance on the old Miners' Next Step methods. That is to promote a political understanding among fellow trade unionists and to take the question of leadership head on rather than put it aside. Leaders were to be made fully accountable to the membership and positions of leadership were to be ones not of privilege but of the responsibility of representation and carrying a wage equal to the average in the trade. This ensured that the interests of the leaders remained identical to those of the members.

The January 1924 National conference of the MM established an Executive Committee with Nat Watkins, a South Wales miner, appointed as National Organiser. District Committees were set up in Durham, Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire, Notts, South Wales and Scotland. The first issue of the movement's paper 'The Mineworker' then appeared on 16th February 1924.

The years of 1924 and 1925 saw a massive growth in the membership of the MM. Nowhere was this success

more apparent than in the South Wales coalfield noted already for its militancy and anti-capitalist politics. It grew especially in the Rhondda and Anthracite Regions where by the end of 1925, virtually every pit could boast of a branch and whose many had their own pit papers. The sight of being surrounded by so much communist militancy proved too unnerving for the Chief Constable of Carmarthenshire who boggled at the prospect. By the beginning of 1926, no doubt red-eyed with fear and dismay, he called for the immediate expansion of police strength in the Anthracite Region. This for no other reason than "because of the growth of Communism in the area".

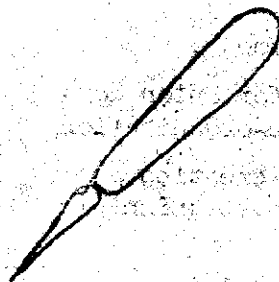
On a coalfield level the MM existed organisationally in 14 of the 17 South Wales districts. Its influence on the South Wales Miners Federation (SWMF) was considerable. Both the MM and the Communist Party were able to shape the SWMF policy on local and national issues to a large extent. It was through the Executive Committee of the SWMF that the movement could exert pressure on the Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB). Its strategy was to convert the MFGB from a defensive to an offensive attitude toward the coal owners and commit it to a policy of fighting for a Living Wage throughout the Industry. It called also for an industrial alliance between the Unions and rank and file control over negotiations. In fact, SWMF had adopted many of these demands at its April conference in 1925.

Although many constituent unions of the MFGB had adopted similar programmes, the E.C. of the MFGB continued to negotiate within the terms set by the employers. That is they accepted the bosses' economic arguments about the need for profitability in the pits. Under these circumstances the MM stepped up its campaign to build Rank and File committees to force the MFGB into taking on the owners.

Their work in forging alliances on a rank and file level within and between the Unions can be seen to be largely responsible for the success leading to Red Friday in 1925 when the Government backed down in the face of a threat of General Strike.

NEXT ISSUE : EVENTS LEADING UP TO RED FRIDAY 1925
AND THE GENERAL STRIKE OF 1926

LETTERS



Dear Red Miner,

We all know what the cops got up to during the strike, bending and breaking the law to stop picketting and to stop us demonstrating, and basically anything which would help further the strike, whether it was legal or not they would try and stop us.

Well now the government propose to make everything the plod did during the strike legal. Their new white paper on public order gives the police the right to control the size, place and duration any demonstration, meeting or picket. They will also be able to ban any demonstration on an even flimsier reason than at present, and without applying to the Home Secretary.

If any of us break the law on picketting or demonstrating, then we face a £1,000 fine or three months in nick. So when all this is legal God knows what the bastards will try on in the next strike!

Yours etc.

Robert Millar.

THE RED MINER EDITORIAL TEAM INVITES LETTERS AND COMMENT FOR THE NEXT ISSUE. WE NEED MORE INFORMATION FROM THE DIFFERENT AREAS. WE WANT TO SEE MORE DISCUSSION AND DEBATE OF THE POLITICAL ISSUES RAISED IN THIS BULLETIN. PLEASE ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE RED MINER BULLETIN, 138, Crookesmoor Road, Sheffield 6.

WHERE WE STAND.

1. 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.

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

3. 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.

4. 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 1920's. 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.

5. 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 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.

6. 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.

7. We support all struggles by people in countries 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 we demand the immediate withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland.

8. 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, and will again, use 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.