

After The Miners' Strike - What Next ?



10p

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Erratum - On page 45 paragraphs one and two have been printed in the reverse order.

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What Next ?

In less than a year two tremendous strikes changed the face of British Trade Unionism. In the spring of 1971 the UPW was defeated in one of the worst defeats any British union has suffered since 1945. The employers, the Tory government and every right wing supporter in the country was triumphant. It appeared only to be a question of who was next for the beating. A year later everything had changed. In the first national miners strike for 45 years the NUM had driven the Tory government to its knees. The government's unofficial incomes policy seemed in ruins. It was one of the most dramatic turnarounds in the trade union history. It is the reasons behind this strike, what can be learnt from it, and the way ahead after the strike that this pamphlet tries to deal with. The introduction is based on a pamphlet 'The Meaning of the Miners Strike' which was produced during the course of the strike itself. The rest of the material however is almost entirely new.

New Tories and old Labour

When the present government came to power the entire British economy was, from the point of view of the employers, in a total mess. Profits were falling rapidly and the rate of growth of the economy under Labour had completely failed to rise. Far from achieving the 4% growth anticipated in the George Brown 'National Plan', the growth of the economy had fallen from 2½% to under 2%. Economic growth under capitalism does not in any way directly improve the conditions of the working class, on the contrary it frequently makes them worse, but from the point of view of capitalist competition economic growth is absolutely essential. In particular in order to compete with the firms of the Common Market countries, British capitalism needed to greatly increase its profits and hence its rate of growth.

The Labour government's solution for increasing profits and growth had been to promote monopolies, mergers and 'rationalisations'. The formation of a firm such as the huge GEC—AEI—English Electric complex may have cost 15,000 workers their jobs, but it meant a bigger return on capital for the employers. For dealing with the working class, the key weapons of Labour were 'Incomes Policy' productivity deals, and eventually the 'In Place of Strife' anti-union Bill. But the policies of the Labour government, although they greatly harmed the standards of living of large sections of the working class, completely failed to solve the problems of British capitalism. The decline in the rate of profit continued. The average rate of profit which in 1950-54 had stood at 20.2%, by 1969 had fallen to 10.9%. In an economy in which production is carried on for profit and not for the

needs of the people, a declining rate of profit is the worst situation possible for employers. The first priority of any government which accepts the private ownership of industry, must therefore be to get the rate of profit up, even if this means, and it generally does, a wholesale attack on the living standards of the working class. The fact that the Labour government failed using its methods, meant only that the employers looked for a government which would use new tactics. By the last year of Labour's period in office, a huge strike wave was beginning which aimed at getting sufficient wage increases to make up for the Wilson cuts. The Incomes Policy completely failed. As a result the employers, many of whom had supported the election of Wilson in 1964, looked for a tougher line. Wilson's last minute attempts to get into the Common Market and to pass the anti-union laws were designed to convince the employers that he could provide that tough government, but by then the capitalist class had lost confidence in him. Capitalism looked to Heath to do what Wilson had failed to do.

When the Tories came to power they decided to make the centre of their policy two interlinked measures. One was the Industrial Relations Bill. This was designed to permanently weaken the ability of the trade unions to defend the living standards of the working class. The second policy was to enter the Common Market. The two were interlinked because while entry into the Common Market would open up new markets and hopes of profits for British capitalism, nevertheless it would only be the employers who would benefit. Higher food prices and the losing of jobs due to competition forcing firms to cut labour costs, would worsen the position of the working class. If the trade unions were still strong these effects might lead to a wage revolt and a tremendous increase in militancy. To prevent this the trade unions had first to be weakened by the Industrial Relations Bill.

In implementing the Industrial Relations Bill, however, the employers and government faced a big problem. In other countries where similar measures had been introduced, there had been a massive revolt of the working class against them. In Australia, for example, most of the unions simply refuse to pay the fines imposed by the government, and when a union leader was arrested over 500,000 struck, demonstrated and eventually forced the government to back down. Similar events have occurred in this country when governments have attempted to fine, imprison or in other ways attack trade unionists. For example, in 1950 the Labour government tried to imprison seven dockers leaders. There were immediate mass strikes in the docks and huge demonstrations to the courts. The government was forced to release the men it had charged. An even bigger action had occurred during the First World War in similar circumstances. Then the government, in defiance of an agreement with the unions, tried to break shop organisation by drafting men into the army.

A massive strike was immediately planned in Sheffield, some workers did not even wait for the call and thousands walked out at once; huge meetings were held all over Yorkshire. The government immediately backed down. At a time when new types of struggle, for example factory occupations and mass flying pickets, are being used by workers, the government is definitely having to think very carefully about who it first chooses to use the Industrial Relations Act against. For example, if it used the Act against the leaders of the NUM or AUEW, it might find itself with a General Strike on its hands. The leader of the Scottish NUM was quite right to challenge the government to try to use the Act against the miners. In fact the government will probably wait for some poorly organised group of workers to use the Act against first.

If, however, the government is going to have to wait before clobbering somebody with the Industrial Relations Act, nevertheless from the point of view of capitalism, it needed to do something very quickly about the trade unions' bargaining strength, for when Heath came to power he found himself in the middle of the biggest strike wave since the 1920s.

UNEMPLOYMENT AS A WEAPON

The first weapon tried by Heath in an attempt to stop the unions' struggle was to increase the level of unemployment. In using this weapon the Tories were only building on a policy which Wilson had already started. In the first five years of the Labour government alone, the number of unemployed rose from 340,000 to 551,000. In some of the worst-hit areas, the increase was still more severe. In the North of Ireland, unemployment, even by October 1968, had reached 8.6% and in Northern England it had reached 6.2%. In increasing unemployment in this way Wilson was following the advice of the capitalist economists, in their belief that increased unemployment would scare the working class into accepting a cut in its standard of living. The influential economist, F.W. Paish, for example, advised that 'Incomes must never again be allowed to rise as fast relative to output as in the last few years; and this, in turn, means that the margin of unused productive resources and the average level of unemployment must be higher than it has been since the end of the war'. If we take away the jargon this means that in order to stop wage increases there must be more unemployment and more unused equipment. The aim of this is higher profits. The Labour government, because it accepted the private ownership of industry, and therefore that production should be for profit, was forced to carry out this policy suggested by Paish and others.

When the Tories came to power they found themselves in a situation where capitalism needed to 'curb' the unions even more than Wilson had done. However, by this time so much resentment had built up in the working class that exceptional militancy developed. For example, in 1970, over one million working days were 'lost' in a struggle for a

decent wage in the mining industry, and almost 1¼ million in a magnificent strike by municipal workers. Heath built on Wilson's policy and hoped to increase unemployment to a point where the unions would be scared into retreat. By August 1971 the number of unemployed reached over 900,000 and it now stands at over a million. This was quite a deliberate move to increase working class misery on a massive scale so as to scare those still in work. This increase in unemployment was dictated by the needs of capitalism but the Tories set about implementing the policy with relish. To some extent their policy began to work.

The number of strikes in the first six months of 1971 were only half the number of strikes in the first half of 1970. As a result of this less militant policy by the Trade Unions the standard of living of the working class began to fall. It was calculated by the newspaper *The Guardian*, that in the period between April 1970 and April 1971, probably half the working population suffered a fall in their real income, and on average a fall in real wages of 3% for the working class occurred.

Despite the rocketing unemployment, Heath's tactics did not work. Whereas the working class of the 1930s was a demoralised working class because of the defeat of the General Strike, the working class of the 1970s was confident of its own power. A magnificent fight back started. The occupations and work-ins at UCS, at Plessey's at Mold and at Fisher-Bendix, all showed a new militant way of fighting redundancy. Factory occupations indeed terrify the employers. They still remember the massive strikes of May 1968 in France where ten million occupied their factories, and it looked for a period as if a workers revolution was going to destroy capitalism in France.

Even before the start of the factory occupations (in the Autumn of 1970) however, the Tories realised they were up against a really tough opponent. The power workers, the post office workers, Ford workers, all had pay claims coming up. In addition in that winter four massive political strikes took place against the Industrial Relations Bill. It was obvious that unemployment by itself was not going to deal with the trade unions. The government therefore decided to take on the unions in a direct battle and defeat them.

STATE V. UNIONS

The original reason why trade unions were formed is because isolated individual workers were helpless against a firm. You do not have to be a socialist to understand that. For example, even in the 18th century, the economist Adam Smith wrote that "the masters being fewer in number can combine more easily.....the masters can hold out much longer. A landlord, a farmer, a master, manufacturer or merchant, though they did not employ a single workman, could generally live a year or two upon

the stocks which they have already acquired. Many workers could not subsist a week. In the long run, a workman may be as necessary to his master as his master is to him; but the necessity is not so immediate." The tactics of employers in strikes is also decided by this position. Their aim is always to hold out until hardship forces the men back to work. Just like unemployment, the capitalist answer is to use human misery to force the working class into submission. Normally the employers attempt to hide this policy but it is always their basic idea, however much they talk about "avoiding hardship". Sometime, however, they blurt out the truth. For example, the Dublin transport employer, W.M. Murphy; stated his real tactics for dealing with strikes when he said that

"What chance would men have without funds, in a contest with the company that could and would spend £100,000 and more? You must recall that when dealing with a company of this kind, every one of the shareholders will have three square meals a day whether the men succeed or not. I do not know if the men can count on this."

This is the real voice of capitalism, and it was on this elementary point of class tactics that Heath proceeded to deal with the Unions pay claims. However, firms in the present day do not have to face the unions alone. They have the whole power of the state to back them up. This means a network of civil servants to calculate for the government when to launch its attack, police to harass and attack the picket lines, a network of public relations men to spread lies and, in the nationalised industries at least, the fact that the government can always write off the cost of the strike to the working class anyway in the form of increased charges or higher taxes.

In the case of the municipal workers strike, the government did not have time to swing the whole apparatus of the state against the strikers. Tremendous support, great militancy and obvious working class sympathy won the strike. In the case of the power workers, however, the government planned things more carefully. A carefully controlled campaign of hate and lying was launched in the press, on the radio and on television against the power workers. Headlines such as "Power Maniacs" filled the press. It was suddenly announced that 10,000 pensioners were going to die of cold whereas not one single one of the newspapers bothered to mention that thanks to the appallingly low pensions that number died every year. Any incident of violence was blown up until it appeared that lynch mobs were roaming the country looking for power workers to kill. Even David Frost was drawn into the act. The union leaders became scared and backed down. As capitalist courts had earlier ensured that there is virtually no democracy at all in the major power unions such as the ETU, the rank and file had no way of reversing the decision. A miserable pay rise was all that was achieved.

The government onslaught on the power workers was significant for a whole number of reasons. In particular, it showed that the capitalist state

was prepared to use any form of lie or intimidation against the trade unions. Secondly, it meant that the government was prepared to crush even the most right-wing and reactionary trade union. The ETU had been the most pro-employer union you could imagine in the power industry. It had virtually removed all internal union democracy, and had accepted every single productivity string the employers had demanded. During the power dispute, the union leaders practically begged Heath for an excuse to call off the struggle. They openly pointed out that if they could not get a higher settlement they would come under intense left-wing pressure from the rank and file. Heath refused to budge. He simply refused to deal even with the most right-wing of the union leaderships. He showed that he was prepared and determined to defeat any union that got in the way of capitalism's economic needs.

The next group of workers to find out about capitalist strike strategy were the Postal Workers. This was the most vicious attack of all. The UPW rivalled even the ETU in class collaboration. It had no record of militancy at all. It had scabbed on the General Strike and in 1921 had decided on principle that it did not need a strike fund. Its leader, Jackson, had openly declared that he was in favour of redundancy. In a letter to *The Times* he wrote that "It is the policy of our union so far as posts are concerned to seek a gradual reduction in the number of staff employed". As a result of these union policies, pay in the Post Office was miserable. For example, a young girl telephonist's take home pay before the strike was under £8. Naturally, however, when the UPW membership revolted against those wages and went on strike a whole host of lies, slanders and intimidations were produced by the employers, the press and the state. For example, the *Daily Express* declared that a postman received £23.20 a week plus £5.70 overtime. What they deliberately did not say was that this was pay of a *senior* postman in *inner* London. In short, that the figure they gave was for the highest paid postmen of all. They naturally didn't deal with the fact that take home pay for a family man could fall as low as £13.00 a week.

Naturally every single sign that the strike might be folding up was exaggerated almost beyond belief. In a situation where even the Post Office was forced to admit that in most sections, such as for example letter deliveries, the strike was 100% solid and where international support was gained for the telephonists strike, the *Daily Mirror* screamed in a headline 8 inches high "REVOLT! BY THE HELLO GIRLS". The *Daily Express* had a picture covering 50 square inches about the 'defiance' of one telephone operator in going into work. In contrast, the fact that the entire postal service had come to a standstill was reported in half an inch in the *Evening Standard*. Despite this tremendous attack, it was only lack of support by other union leaderships that lost the UPW strike, and even then the workers held out for 44 days making the Post Office strike easily the biggest strike since the second world war.

By defeating the Post Office workers, Heath took a big step forward in his plans for dealing with all the unions. By allowing the UPW to be defeated, the TUC and the union leaderships in general had enormously weakened the positions of the trade unions. Nevertheless, the employers still did not have it all their own way. A massive and magnificent strike was held in Fords. Although in the end they were forced by the union leaderships to accept a secret ballot to return to work, nevertheless the length, militancy and cost of the strike gave the employers a very unpleasant surprise indeed. A sort of stalemate was achieved. The government had shown it could batter weakly organised unions into the ground. This encouraged some employers to go on the offensive. The Engineering Employers Federation, for example, circulated a secret document with a plan to smash DATA. GEC launched a general attack on its workers. London airport and various other employers decided the lock out had returned to fashion. Nevertheless, the most strongly organised sections of workers had not been defeated. The economically decisive section of workers such as miners, engineers and dockers were still fighting. In addition, during the summer, the work-in at UCS started off a series of militant actions. The employers and government held the initiative with regard to weakly organised groups, and were able to impose a 7% wage increase norm on municipal and hospital workers, but in the decisive sections of industry the unions were still undefeated.

It was at this point that capitalism ran into a new problem. By the winter of 1971-72 the situation of unemployment had got so bad that even the employers began to get worried. They were scared that the economy was now so stagnant that it would never be able to compete in the Common Market, and they were also terrified that increasing discontent caused by unemployment might lead to a working class explosion. After all, the British working class is supposed to be peaceful. Attacks on Parliament, occupations of Social Security offices and factories are not what it is supposed to do. The employers became worried that their policy of increasing human misery might not lead to fear but to revolt. For the first time in 60 years, trade union membership was increasing in a period of rising unemployment, and there were few signs of a cooling off in militancy. The employers, therefore, decided at all costs that the economy must begin to expand. The increased profits and share prices caused by the government's victories against the trade unions made it possible. However, a big danger threatened. This was that in a period of falling unemployment the trade unions would seize the initiative and make up the fall in the working classes standard of living that had occurred. As the employers journal *The Banker* put it, "More demand, faster growth, and less unemployment would surely intensify the militant pressure for an over-growing share of wages in the national income". To prevent the situation of the trade unions being able to defend the living standards of the working class, the employers

decided that an absolutely massive defeat must be inflicted on a key section of workers so that all the other unions would be scared into submission. This would allow the implementation of the Industrial Relations Act, the entry into the Common Market, the expansion of the economy, and, most importantly, the raising of profit rates, without meeting any real resistance from the union. The group of workers selected for those "terror tactics" were the miners.

It is only when things are seen against this background, that the real meaning of the miners strike can be understood. That is what the government's toughness throughout the coal industry negotiations meant. It was determined to inflict a decisive defeat on the working class that would allow the problems of British capitalism for the next two or three years to be solved with practically no resistance from the working class. It was for this very direct and immediate reason that in the case of miners, even more than most groups of workers, the ensuring of victory in the strike was something that affected the whole working class. It is for this reason that the failure of the Heath government to crush the miners was one of the potentially most decisive events for the working class since the Second World War.

The worsening situation in the mines

The national Union of Miners, and its predecessors, have the proudest history of struggle of any major union. Often in the past it has fought when all the rest of the movement had retreated. In 1926 it struck for a magnificent six months while the entire trade union leadership betrayed it by calling off the General Strike. This struggle had been just the culmination of a whole period when the NUM had been trying to get the trade union movement to act in a co-ordinated way against capitalism. The union then had been the inaugurator of the mass strike tactics in the period before and just after the First World War. Even after the defeat of 1926, and in the changed conditions of the 1930's, the NUM continued to be in the vanguard of using new forms of struggle. The occupation strike, which is now spreading rapidly through the British trade union movement, was pioneered by the NUM.

The tactic of the work place occupation was first used on a big scale in this country by the miners in the 1930s. The first struggle of this type took place at the Nine Mile Point colliery when the owners tried to replace Miners Federation men with black legs enrolled in a company 'union'. In previous struggles of this type, the mine owners had always won because they had brought in police and threatened the use of troops to break the strike. The Nine Mile Point workers saw they could break this tactic by occupying the mine. It would be impossible for the police to go in and fight the miners underground. In addition their action could serve as a rallying point for the entire Welsh coal field and would gain tremendous support. Therefore, at the end of one evening shift the men occupied the mine. They were supported by a network of men on the surface who sent food, drink, blankets, etc. down the pit. When the company tried to send blacklegs down one part of the mine other Miners Federation men moved in to occupy that part as well. In solidarity with the Nine Mile Point men, eleven other mines were occupied and local railway union branches gave support by refusing to transport blacklegs. After just over a week of occupation the miners won all their demands for recognition of the union.

An even more bitter struggle of the same type occurred in the Parc and Dare collieries in the Rhondda where 1,500 men were involved in a 13 days occupation. Here the company tried to stop food being sent down the mines. To prevent this, the union declared that if the management carried out its threat, it would mobilise men from other collieries and

the wives of strikers to attack the pit head, and would hold safety officials underground as hostages. Eventually the company was forced to accept the demands of the men. It was only through these two great occupations and other similar struggles that trade unionism was safeguarded in the mines.

After restabilisation of the miners unions in the war, a process culminating in the creation of the nationally organised NUM instead of the old federation, the miners set their sights firmly on a future Labour government nationalising the pits. When this was finally achieved it was seen as the culmination of generations of struggle. One NUM secretary remembered the event as follows "It was our life dream coming true. It was Utopia. We were for it 100%. What celebrations there were. The industry which had broken generations of miners was ours at last." Unfortunately the realities of nationalisation under capitalism showed themselves only too soon.

CAPITALIST NATIONALISATION

At the end of the Second World War the British economy was in chaos and the whole ruling class was discredited. It had been the economic system of the industrialists, the bankers and the press barons which had created the unemployment of the 1930s. It had been the employers who had financed Hitler in Germany and Mosley and his fascists in Britain. It had been capitalism which had led to the bloodbath of the Second World War and the gas chambers of Germany. In a great wave of disgust the working class in 1945 threw aside the Tories and returned Labour to government in one of the greatest electoral victories of all time. This feeling had been reflected in the 1944 Labour conference where the delegates had insisted on a policy of large scale nationalisation "democratically controlled and operated". If the Labour Party had acted on this policy it is probable that the capitalist class would have responded by violence, but in a situation where capitalism was completely discredited and where there was a government clearly acting in the interest of the working class, any attempt at resistance would undoubtedly have been easily crushed. But Labour never even attempted to act on the 1944 decisions. Instead of the mass take-over of industry only a very few nationalisations occurred. To all these nationalisations, except for Steel, there was virtually no resistance by the employers. It is interesting to find out why, because it reveals the real reasons lying behind the Labour Party's nationalisation of the mines and other industries.

In 1945 the basic heavy industries of Britain were on their last legs. The coal industry, which had not been really profitable since the First World War was in a bad state of repair and its production was down 50 million tons on pre-war figures. The railways were clearly on their last legs with rolling stock that was at least 20 years out of date. The electricity industry could supply only half the demand. Yet if British capitalism was to be rebuilt then these vital sectors of the economy would have to be kept going. They were so

unprofitable however that no private investment could be found. (An excellent example of ruling class concern for their mythical "national interest".) What the Labour Party therefore did was to nationalise the ailing industries and pay out an enormous £3,000 million in compensation. This money was then straight away invested by the capitalists in industries where it would earn them a hefty profit. In addition, as most of the economy remained in private ownership, the nationalised industries found themselves operating not in a planned non-capitalist economy, but in an economy dominated by production for profit. The nationalised industries were in fact used to further subsidise private industry. We can see that easily in their prices. They are far lower for industrial concerns than for the average, that is to say working class, consumer. This can be seen in every nationalised industry. For example in the post office the system of rebating of companies mail has been calculated to hand out an £18 million a year subsidy to firms which is then paid for in increased charges by the ordinary and therefore usually working class letter writer.

The effects of this situation in the mining industry were not long in coming. Almost every major trend in the coal industry since nationalisation has been made to work against the miners interests. Firstly there is the question of the interest payments. The old owners and their leeches have bled the industry dry. In every year since nationalisation the NCB has made enough money to cover the running costs of the industry and more besides. In thirteen years out of 23 it has made over £20 million profit and in seven of them over £30 million. Yet interest charges to the previous owners are so massive that after interest payments a *loss* appeared to be made in eleven years and there has not been a single year in which £20 million profit was made. To take just one example, in 1963 an enormous £72 million profit was made, over £50 million of that was promptly taken by the interest holders. Of course in a socialised economy not all that money would necessarily have gone in investment in the pits, or in higher wages, it might be decided that other good uses could be found for some of it in the Health Service, in housing, or in schools, but under capitalism what it means is that year after year the NCB explains that it 'cannot afford' to give the miners a decent wage. This argument is in any case rubbish. The real starting point should be that the productive possibilities of the British economy are sufficient to give everyone a decent standard of living. If the private ownership of most of the economy produces a situation where even with production worth £39,000 million a year, it cannot give sections of workers a decent wage, then it is that system which is wrong and not the miners. What the workers in any industry under capitalism have to look after is a decent standard of living and not the profits of the industry. But in the case of NCB, the reply that a decent wage cannot be granted is even more dishonest than usual. What is in fact occurring is that money is being handed away to the previous owners, while the miners suffer. In short the NCB simply says that the interests of the people who used to own the industry are now more important than the men who work in it.

PAY AND PRODUCTIVITY

THE IMPACT ON PAY

During the 1950s the strategic position of the coal industry had meant that both government and NCB had been hesitant about inflaming things in the pits. They had been prepared to see the miners continue with wages which were at least as good as the low standard enjoyed by the working class in general. After 1958 however the bargaining position of the NUM declined as the international shortage of coal came to an end. From that point on the NCB and the government began to turn the screw on the miners. Wages of miners failed completely to keep up with those of other groups of workers (not that other workers were doing too well either under successive Conservative and Labour incomes policies). Even the Wilberforce report was forced to note that "From a position in which average weekly earnings in coal-mining had stood well above average earnings in manufacturing industry, the industry found itself in 1971 in the reverse situation, where its workers earned substantially less on average than those in manufacturing." (Guardian 19.2.92).

This decline became most sharp following the signing of the National Power Loading Agreement (NPLA). The NPLA was quite specifically designed by the National Coal Board to hold down wage rates and thereby maximise profit. This was openly stated in the NCB Report and Accounts 1966-67 which stated that "with a standard shift (payment) *wages can be more effectively controlled.*" By abolishing piecework and therefore taking negotiations out of local hands the NCB hoped to prevent local militancy having any effect on earnings. The Wilberforce enquiry again was forced to admit the intention of the NCB in introducing the NPLA. The enquiry held that "the NCB had aimed to reduce wage drift (the term given to employers by locally negotiated rises) by removing wage bargaining from pit and area level to the national level and that the day rate system discouraged the locally agreed rises seen in other industries" (Guardian 19.2.72).

Unfortunately in its aims the NCB succeeded only too well. While output per man soared (up 77% between 1957 and 1971) wages were held down. In fact in a large number of cases wages decreased under the NPLA. For example a Kent miners wife wrote about the situation in 1972 that as a result of changes in agreements in mere three weeks her husbands wages had fallen by £5 a week. In 1971 the following could also be reported "In 1966 a face worker at Houghton Main was getting 100 to 120 shillings per shift. He now gets the Yorkshire rate under NPLA of 89s and 10d" Another Yorkshire miner recalled that "Just after the NPLA was brought in there was a pit which didn't come under the agreement and they were getting £2 a shift more than the other pits". The Kent area of NUM calculated that they would need a £5 a week increase to get back to the situation that existed three years ago. The end result of this whole process is that it may be possible in the mines in 1972 to earn as little as £12.50 a week and there were 88,000 men who earned under £20 a week.

One of the original reasons why the NPLA had seemed a good thing to many miners was because it promised to overcome differentials between the different fields. These pay differences had often led to disunity in the past with the high paid Nottingham field, for example, failing to support the lower paid miners in other areas. However the NPLA instead of Levelling *up* all wages was in fact used by the NCB to hold back the higher paid and in consequences to carry out a levelling *down*.

Bernard Savage, member of the Notts Area Executive for example explained that:

"In the past, Notts miners have often had very high earnings compared with other areas. But now they are very pissed off because they have lost out on the national agreement to the extent of actually suffering cuts in earnings. Under the old piecework system, when productivity went up, the workers gained. On the new day rate system this is no longer the case. Take Hucknal pit, for instance, where production has gone up nearly 10,000 tons a month to something like double what it was only a year ago. During this period earnings have gone *down* by as much as £6 a week!"

Again, in the end, and after much denial by the NCB and the government, the Wilberforce enquiry was forced to admit all these facts. *It found that in every single area there had been a decline in the real wages of the miners.* Even in areas which had received bigger increases under the NPLA it noted that "these (areas) . . . received increases which involved a small decline in real earnings. In the case of the high rated districts the real decline was substantial" (Guardian, 19.2.72). By the end of the 1960s these effects of 20 years of collaboration with the NCB were becoming apparent to ever larger number of miners. A new militancy began to develop in the coal fields.

THE NUM AND THE NEW MILITANCY

Unfortunately, during the whole period of nationalisation the NUM completely lost the record of its past militancy. No serious resistance was put up to the process of pit closures and deteriorating conditions. This was acknowledged even by the NCB in its 1968-69 report when it said that "Despite the heavy closure programme and the high rate of manpower run down in recent years, the Board have, by close co-operation with the Unions, by maintaining good industrial relations, avoided major industrial disputes, and made continued progress in reducing the tonnage lost from disputes". In regard to NPLA it was agreed that in the document accepting the deal "the Board and *the Union* consider that power loading techniques have now developed to the state where a day-wage is appropriate, provided that method study is adopted to determine maximum machine utilisation". In other words the NUM leaders accepted the basic principle that mechanisation was to be used to extract maximum working and profit from each machine installed and not to improve the conditions of the miners. The results of this we have already looked at. In addition the NUM leadership became mainly concerned with not the size of the increases in pay, but how they would be shared out. Will

Paynter, when National Secretary of the NUM, agreed that the real way they negotiated was the NCB stated "there are only X pounds available this year; you decide how it should be shared out". Even in the crucial matter of safety and compensation for accidents, the NUM has not really carried out its task as a union. Donald Boydell, a chief insurance officer of the NCB stated that "It would be foolish to deny that we were surprised at the absence of claims since 1963 (when the limitations Act made it easier for such actions to be undertaken) but why should we tell the union?" However this weak policy of the NUM leadership has come into increasing conflict with a new mood amongst the rank and file created by the deterioration in miners pay and conditions and by increasing unemployment. Whereas previously miners in the Midlands and the South of England regarded redundancies and closures with something approaching indifference, since there were always plenty of alternative jobs going in other industries in the area, the high level of unemployment nationally means that even in these areas redundancy can mean permanent or long-term unemployment. These factors came to a head in the response to the 1970 pay claim.

The NCB's 1970 wages offer to surface workers must have been one of the biggest insults in the history of trade unionism. In 1969 half of the surface workers were earning less than £17 a week even with overtime. Lawrence Daly reported to the 1970 NUM conference that "23,000 men were on the £13. 12.6 minimum, many of them taking home substantially less after deductions and paying £2, £3, £4 or more in rent". To these miserable rates of pay the NUM claimed the magnificent rise of 27s. 6d. This offer was decisively defeated when, by a majority of 28,000, miners voted for strike action. It was only the undemocratic nature of the union rules, which at that time allowed a minority vote of a mere third of the membership to overrule strike action, that prevented an 'official' decision for a strike. In the event the Yorkshire miners gave a magnificent lead with all 75 pits in the area striking for £20. for surface workers, £22 for underground men and £30 for face workers. By the 30th October 130,000 miners were on strike in 132 pits. These miners were then subjected to a tremendous 'Red scare' campaign by Robens, the NCB, and the government. Robens even declared that the Fleet Street Press, who were solidly against the strikers, were "hiding the menace of Communism". He said "those who speak up against anarchy and the Communists are termed red-baiters; a few left-wing journalists in Fleet Street are good at this". When even some M.P.s got up the courage to protest against Robens speeches, he declared "These were the super-Democrats the Lefties, the softies and the constituency band-wagoners—a poor lot". The real motives of the great "defender of democracy" Robens were shown up in his absurd statement that "the decision of the rank and file was against the strike.....For strike action 143,466 against 115,052". Similarly when Lawrence Daly quite correctly said that the rank and file must decide the issue of strike action, Robens

stated that "Daly's reply in October 2nd (1970) was that the decision of the annual conference meant that there was obligation to consult the membership and ballot on the strike action would proceed. This was leadership from below with a vengeance". In other words, Robens' ideas were clearly that if a leadership decided *against* a strike without consulting the membership, that was 'democracy' while if the rank and file voted *for* a strike, that was clearly a "Communist conspiracy". Unfortunately the leaders of the NUM gave in to this. For example Sidney Schofield of the Yorkshire area ordered miners to return even after the Yorkshire Council of the NUM had voted by 43 votes to 33 for strike action. Lawrence Daly appeared on television and ordered the men back to work. He then went on to attack 'violence' by pickets. The NCB intervened in this situation by offering 27s 6d. to the surface workers but without any concessions on hours and no real improvement on their previous offer for the other men. The demand: for £20, £22, £30 was nowhere near met.

Although defeated, out of the 1970 strike a whole host of lessons were learnt. The first was the real nature of the NCB. Any illusions about co-operation were swiftly removed by the attitude of Robens and the part of the NCB. Robens described the miners on the pickets as a "yarling mob, crude, vulgar". His attitude towards the strike was simply that hardship should be used to bring the miners to their knees. He stated. "I could not understand why the men did not realise that the only effect of a strike was to lose them wages. No one in management ever lost a penny as a result of a strike." (*Sunday Times*, 23.1.72). Secondly from the strike a lesson was learnt in understanding the industrial power of the miners. Although the strike was unofficial and never total, it immediately brought a flurry of fear from employers in a whole host of industries. Most important of all however, a new sense of initiative was gained by the rank and file. It had been ordinary miners who had forced the NUM out of its twenty years of relative quiet. While the union leadership had sat back the membership had acted on a mass scale with organised picketing, rapid spreading of the strike, new militant methods, etc. All these lessons were to be remembered when it came to the 1972 strike.

As the build up to the 1972 strike began in the winter of 1971, feeling in the mines was at its highest level for decades. For the first time since 1926 there was complete unity. The editor of the rank and file paper *The Mineworker* described the response to the strike in the following way, "Never in my experience have men been more determined to fight, on the last shift on the last day miners emerged from my own colliery singing union songs and mimicking student demonstration, chanting and linking arms. If news had been declared at that time that the strike was off, there would have been a riot". Even in the traditionally conservative pits the response was complete. A Yorks miner simply said, "Our pit is one of the most conservative. They say that if our pit is on strike then it must be right.....A lot of miners are saying its going to be a long one—anything

up to six months, but I'm worried it may be over in a few weeks with not much gained." In the Coventry area the response was the same. One militant there summarised the situation when he said "The men were certainly ready to take militant action. A broad section of the men feel that for far too long we have just accepted anything, and when they start to compare their conditions of work and the wages they take home, which are very much worse than in ordinary factory work, then there is the feeling that some desperate action is required to try and alter this".

The secretary of New Stubbin, Rotherham, expressed the same feelings when he said, "The offer is a disgraceful insult particularly when they intend to raise rents by £2. 12 a week. At our meeting New Stubbin voted unanimously for the strike.....I expect this to be the same everywhere". The strength of feeling was also shown clearly by the complete solidarity of the miners wives with their husbands. In strikes in other industries the employers and press have tried to play on wives opposition to their husbands actions. In this strike this would be so much wasted effort and they have not even tried it. A Kent miners wife explained, "There has been more togetherness than at anytime since the war.....Everyone is behind the strike. There's one shop in the village and the people in the shop have been making cups of tea for the pickets. Two men who were on the club on sick pay signed off when the strike came because they wanted to be on strike with the rest of the men. They did this although they could have got more money off sick than from the Social Security when on strike....."

"When it started no-one knew what to expect. We had only had strikes of two or three days. The first two days of the strike were very quiet but it all started on Wednesday. There was a call to all to go to Kingsnorth Power Station, and everyone went flying off to picket. The support for the strike has been marvellous. The officials in the village have had 50p stopped off their pay for the strike fund. They want to be out on strike with the men, but it depends on the Union. The press tries to make the miners look illiterate and stupid. They think that because they work in dirt they also live in dirt.

"Italian television came here and interviewed the wives after our visit to London. And we also had a reporter from the *Sunday Telegraph*. He came and asked me what my husband was doing in his spare time. My husband has been away picketing most of the time since the strike started.....The miners are determined to win. They don't like what Joe Gormley says on television. They won't go back until they get what they are asking for".

That these views expressed the real feelings of the miners was made clear as soon as the strike began. The miners were out 100% in every coal field. The fact that even the safety work was stopped was a tremendous indication of determination. But the government had not been wasting its time in the period since the 1970 strike. It was absolutely determined to crush the NUM.

The tactics of the strike

When a capitalist government and employers face up to the task of defeating a strike, they have many tactics open to them. Some favour a 'quick kill' approach with hordes of police and public statements on the television stating the strikers are destroying the economy. Others favour a softly-softly approach with last minute talks and the real meat of 'productivity' concessions, redundancy etc. hidden in a host of talk about 'mutual understanding', 'co-operation', and 'avoiding hardship'. The particular approach adopted of course depends on the balance of forces. Under Heath, as we saw in section one, the employers have decided to stand no nonsense. The employers' "City of London Newspaper" stated on February 1st, "Months before the coal strike started, ministers were saying in private that the government would establish their 'anti-inflation' policy by a resounding victory over the miners." Unfortunately most union leaderships have not in the slightest come to terms with this new situation and in fact, because they do not want a real fight, try to pretend it does not exist. They want to go back to the cosy old days of the fireside sell-out under Macmillan and Wilson.

Under Labour and Conservative governments when the crisis of British capitalism was not so deep, the Prime Minister and various members of the Cabinet played a supposedly 'conciliatory' role in dealing with the trade unions. The aim has always been the same, to hold down wages, but the

methods have been fairly subtle. Harold Macmillan for example used to tell stories of the suffering of the First World War and the need for patriotism. The maximum pressure was exerted by appeals to the 'National Interest' while carefully ignoring the fact that the only interest referred to was the interest being gained on company profits. The main aim of these dramatic ministerial interventions has either been to get the union concerned to agree not to strike at all, or to get them to agree to limit the scope of the struggle. If this can be achieved then the government can pick of the isolated groups of strikers. Unfortunately only too often in the past the government of the day has succeeded. A typical example, and one of the few where most of the wheeling and dealing later became public, was the intervention of George Brown in the 1966 railwaymen's pay claim. At the last moment he issued a dramatic appeal and 'underlined the grave danger of a strike to the union, to the Government, and to the country.' The union leaders were then rushed straight to Downing Street where Harold Wilson made a dramatic 'personal appeal' to them. After more than 8 hours of talks the NUR men caved in completely. Before negotiations they had voted 18 to 5 against the Government's proposals. After Wilson's intervention, and despite not one single concession being made by the government, the strike vote was reversed by 13 votes to 10.

What any government relies on to carry off such manouvers is the belief held by the TUC that trade unionism is not a political matter. While the government and employers organise massive press campaigns against the unions, pass laws to hamper them, give massive financial backing to nationalised industries to defeat unions in strikes, impose incomes policies and so on, the trade union leaderships unfortunately largely sit back and think that the government and state are neutral, and things can be judged in purely 'economic' or 'industrial' terms. Although as we discussed in the first section, the state is the key weapon in the industrial strategy of the employers, and it is the government which set up the miserable 7% wage norm, the TUC in particular has always been unwilling to face up to the interrelation of politics and trade union struggle. When the last Tory government was elected the TUC declared that "we shall continue to examine every question solely in the light of its industrial and economic implications". This statement was supposed to indicate the 'non-political' nature of the TUC's actions and ideas. This was the policy it followed from 1951-1964 and the result was the defeat of the bus workers in 1958, the Selwyn-Lloyd pay freeze, and the beginning of Incomes Policy with the so-called 'National Economic Development Council'. Under the 1945 Labour government the TUC pursued the same policy and the result was the 'wage restraint' policy of 1948, the wage freeze of 1949-50, and the attempted imprisonment of dockers leaders in 1950. Even under Wilson the same policy was pursued, leading to the crushing of the seamen in 1966, and the incomes policy and productivity deals offensive. Exactly

the same policy is being carried out under this government and the results are equally disastrous, e.g. the public hounding of the power workers and then the defeat of the UPW. The basic reason why the TUC is unable to really fight this unending series of attacks is simply because it believes it is engaged in simple 'industrial' affairs, whereas in fact every large wage struggle inevitably becomes a political issue.

The second thing which the government relies on is lack of unity between the various unions. This lack of solidarity is extremely serious, because probably more strikes in history have been lost due to lack of united action than due to any other cause.

Here, for example, is a description of two strikes in the United States at the beginning of the century—which show only too clearly that failure to wage a united struggle leads to defeat for all sections of the working class.

"Take for example the first street car workers strike in San Francisco....Not only were all motormen, conductors and ticket agents organised....but all the barnmen, linemen, and many of the repair shop workers....also the engineers, the ashwheelers, oilers, etc. in the power stations. The strike ended with a signal victory for the workers; this was accomplished because the workers had quit their work spontaneously....In the second strike of street car workers in 1907 the absolute failure, the complete disaster, was solely due to the fact that the workers, separated in several staff groups, could not strike together and win....if the investigator will follow the investigation of facts and underlying causes he will be surprised to see how the employers take advantage of this divide-up policy. He will see how the capitalists gleefully helped to pit one portion of the workers against others in the same or other industries so that the latter, while busy fighting amongst themselves, had no time nor strength to direct their fight against the employers and exploiters." (Why Strikes Are Lost — W. Trautmann)

We can see exactly the same thing in the recent example of the UPW strike. This strike indeed was only too typical because of the role of the other unions within and outside the Post Office. Apart from the 200,000 odd members of the UPW there were also within the Post Office 110,000 members of the POEU. The men in this union are absolutely vital to keep the telephone service running, and the UPW would have won in no time at all if the telephones had been stopped. As the POEU itself had a pay claim coming up it would have seemed no trouble at all in arranging joint action between the UPW and the POEU. Faced with simultaneous action by the two unions, the Post Office, which would have been losing money at a tremendous rate on the highly profitable phone service, would have been forced to give in to the pay demands of both unions. Furthermore, it should have been obvious that if the Post Office were to defeat the UPW that would have greatly strengthened its position to deal with the POEU

in any future struggle. However no joint action came. The POEU collected money and came out on a one day solidarity strike, but it was a question of too little and a lot too late. The UPW was defeated in a strike which could easily have been won, and all public sector workers have been feeling the effects of that defeat in their pay packets ever since.

During the Post Office strike it was not merely the union inside the Post Office which did not show solidarity. Throughout the course of the strike the goods traffic on British Rail rose dramatically and the same applied to road transport. Much of the extra business was material which would normally have gone by post. In road transport in particular the situation was very bad, with drivers working for individual companies acting as couriers between the different part of the firm. The local government departments and nationalised industries carried on their business as usual, as anyone who received a bill for electricity gas or rates during the strike knows. Yet all these industries are unionised. The main unions in these fields are the NUR, the TGWU, the GMWU, and NALGO. None of these unions showed the necessary class solidarity. Gifts of money are no substitute for action, and in any case are rather meaningless if the members of the unions are doing jobs which strengthen the employers position during the strike.

During the Post Office strike, as in the present miners strike, local arrangements were made. For example, at the Wren House and Faraday House International Telephone Exchange no oil was delivered for heating. (This oil was necessary to keep the delicate and sophisticated machinery running properly). The potential for class solidarity was shown when lorry after lorry was stopped and virtually every union card carrying driver refused to cross the picket line. It finally took a scab driver accompanied by 60 police to get oil into the building. This solidarity could have been repeated nationally, but at this level all that was heard, just as in the miners strike, was vague and meaningless expressions of good intent.

For example, on January 27th 1971 it was reported that: "the road transport, rail and local government unions agreed to prevent government and local authorities from circumventing the strike". This of course amounted to nothing. Life, as we have seen, went on unaffected by vague 'promises'. There should have been no question of feebly promising to 'try' to do something. The unions could have stopped the Post Office and government using any of the industries where scabbing was possible.

It is important to realise that this lack of unity in action flows directly from the political weaknesses of the union leaderships. This operates in two ways. Firstly by trying to keep politics out of the strike they in fact make it far harder to appeal to other sections of the working class for support, and secondly because the refusal to take political action means that when it really comes to the crunch, the unions back down. We can see the first of these two points clearly revealed in the Post Office strike.

During the struggle the UPW leaders time after time declared that they were only fighting the Post Office and not the government. This policy led to disaster. First of all it meant that all the time the government was pulling the real strings behind the scenes, but the UPW never attacked it. This meant that it never faced up to the real enemy and merely kept a sniping fire against one of its tooges. Secondly, it made it far harder for the UPW to call on other unions to support it. If the struggle was *really* only between the union and the Post Office than it did appear to the other unions as a private quarrel in which they might feel a moral duty to support the Post Office workers, but they were not directly involved. Unfortunately in this hard headed world people are not moved very much by moral arguments. The way the UPW needed to get through to other trade unionists was to point out that the real struggle was between the union and the state, and therefore *every* worker was directly involved because if the state beat the UPW it would be greatly strengthened to go on and deal with the other unions. By refusing to face up to the political facts of life the UPW was depriving itself of the weapon to make any real appeal to other trade unionists.

As we have seen, this interlinking of politics and trade union solidarity is inevitable and failure to realise it in the past has cost trade unionism dearly. The most famous example was of course 1926 when the selling out of the General Strike because it opened up political questions left the miners isolated and defeated. A more recent example occurred during the 1958 strike of the London busmen. When the leaders of the TGWU appealed to the TUC General Council to support an extension of the strike, the reply was that "an extension of the strike.....would bring the unions concerned into direct conflict with the Government". This the TUC said must be avoided because it would "end in failure which would be disastrous for the whole Trade Union movement". (TUC Report 1958-7). What this cowardly statement actually meant was that the TUC refuses to fight the government if it looks like a real clash is threatened. As a result of this stab in the back, the London busmen suffered a crushing defeat. This attitude shows just how useless words of solidarity can be. After all when you really need solidarity is when there is a fight on. To talk of solidarity but to back out in the struggle is like a man who declares himself in favour of war but then starts playing cricket as soon as the enemy brings up artillery. Unfortunately this type of thing is only too common in the history of the union leaderships. The worst similar act came when during the time Lloyd-George was Prime Minister, the leaders of the Railwaymen, Miners and Transport Workers called off a strike because they were told it would bring down the government. In other words when they had got the enemy beaten, they decided it was unfair to knock him out. In this case, as in so many others, the employers and government, once they had got off the floor, proceeded not merely to knock the unions to

the ground, but also to put the boot in. In the year following the retreat of the Triple Alliance a million workers were thrown on the dole and another million left the trade unions. The lesson is simple, when the government and employers negotiate they may or may not have a smile on their face, but they *always* have a knife in their pocket. As long as the working class tries to fight without understanding this, and using kid glove methods, it will always be defeated.

HOW TO FIGHT A STRIKE

As always in the period leading up to the miners strike the government relied heavily on the lack of political understanding by the trade unions and their lack of unity in action. Firstly the government allowed a situation in which very high stocks of coal existed to be created. There was an actual eight week supply of coal at the power stations. Compared to the year before there were over 9 million tons extra held by consumers and the NCB with a total stock of 31.8 million tons in the last weeks of December (this incidentally shows how much the slackness in the overtime ban was exploited by the NCB). The view of the employing class was expressed in an editorial on 6th January in *The Times*. This said 'Coal stocks away from the pits are large enough to withstand a strike for weeks, if it does not spread, with only marginal disruption to industry and commerce as a whole'. The key question here was "if it does not spread". What in short the employers were banking on was the struggle being confined to the miners. Under these circumstances the employers were confident they would win. In this belief they and the government were given great encouragement by the attitudes of the TUC and some of the important unions. The TUC refused to call a meeting of transport unions to plan solidarity with the strike, and the seamens union, when asked not to allow its members to be used to import coal, merely stated that while it was sympathetic "it must be remembered that our members are on articles (regulations of the Merchant Shipping Act) when on board ship and they cannot break these". Even some of the unions whose members worked at the pit heads failed to show solidarity. Coventry CAWU for example gave £60 to the miners, but failed completely to stop their members scabbing at Keresley pit. Somehow here the CAWU had acquired members without the NUM knowing. The fact that there were CAWU members there was only discovered a week before the strike. They were both in the pit head proper and the 'Homestead' processing plant. The NUM requested they come out on strike. The CAWU refused saying that they had received no national directive. In fact a formal directive had been issued in the second week of the strike not to cross NUM picket lines, but little or nothing was done by the CAWU to implement it. The majority of CAWU members continued to work until the last week of the strike. They got in by using side gates, through holes in the fence etc. Only

in the last days of the strike did they decide they had had enough. In all this time nothing was done by the CAWU to put a stop to this. A whole section of the NUM leadership encouraged the government to believe a hard line would pay. Joe Gormley was reported as saying that he did not think it would be a long strike, and that a £1 extra rise to the £1.90 offer would be sufficient to persuade the executive to call off the strike (*The Times*, 7.1.72). The biggest stab in the back was of course by the GMWU and the ETU. At the time the miners came out, the powermen had a claim in the pipeline. A declaration of joint action by GMWU and the ETU with the NUM would have given a tremendous boost to union strength and ensured success for both pay claims. Instead the GMWU and ETU not merely refused to take joint action, but right in the middle of the strike settled for a wage increase almost exactly the same as that originally offered by the government to the miners. These actions were immediately seized upon by the government and employers up and down the country to try to convince workers that the miners were 'wreckers' and 'only interested in themselves'. In a few cases, such as Longannet power station, because of this act by the GMWU and ETU, the management succeeded in persuading groups of workers to break picket lines, handle blacked oil and try to break the strike.

The result of all this hesitating and wobbling by the union leaderships was to encourage the government and the NCB to take the hardest line possible. Even the miserable 'improved' pay offer was withdrawn immediately the strike started.

Against this prepared government attack and with large sections of the TUC rapidly getting out of the firing line, the NUM leadership prepared to fight with one arm tied behind their backs. Heath and the NCB must have been laughing all over their faces as Joe Gormley told everyone he did not want the strike, and said "If we are forced to strike from January 9th, it would be the first official dispute of the NUM since it was formed towards the end of the last war, when we were so full of enthusiasm to make nationalisation a success. In doing that we acted, as many people said 'responsibly'; we did not rock the boat when fuel was in short supply. We never held the country up to ransom." (*Morning Star*, 22.12.71). If this meek and mild attitude had been carried on the strike would undoubtedly have been lost. The NUM would have gone the way of the UPW. But unfortunately for the government and fortunately for the miners, the rank and file of the NUM had other ideas.

The first issue to clearly bring out the differences on how to fight a strike was the question of the safety men. The NUM leadership told the safety men to stay at work. But one of the miners' greatest weapons was precisely the fact that in any long strike millions of pounds worth of NCB equipment would be wrecked. As there is nothing any employer likes less than loosing money this was an extremely powerful weapon for the

miners. In the vast majority of pits the men understood this and the safety men came out. This was condemned by Gormley who said to the press that "the men are being a damn sight more militant than we would want them to be: and they are ignoring advice on safety manning". (*The Times*, 12.1.72) Here in a nutshell was the difference in approach between those people who really knew how to run a strike, and those who wanted to attempt to play the rules of the game the government was trying to establish. Gormley, in the middle of perhaps the most vital strike since the war, attacked the men for being too militant!!! If this approach had been followed the NUM would undoubtedly have been defeated. Fortunately the rank and file completely ignored Gormley's advice, and by the second week of the strike there were only 36 pits with full safety cover. At 139 pits there was no 'safety' work being done at all. A picket from Murton pit in Durham put the situation very well when he said, "A lot of the men don't care now if the pit does close—we won't go back now we're out, unless they give us more. We've held ourselves back too long because we were sold out by our own leaders and the Labour Party. They want the pickets to be respectable. Being respectable got us where we are—at the bottom". (*7 Days*, 16.2.1972)

The second thing which rapidly began to happen was that despite the apathetic response of the TUC solidarity action by other trade unionists began to make itself felt, as soon as the strike was underway. All ships bringing coal into Cardiff were turned away and dockers at Middlesbrough refused to unload 20,000 tons of coal which the Electricity Board had been trying to sneak into the country before the strike started. This action at docks however was being broken at Dover. Here violent clashes broke out between pickets and scab lorry drivers. These scabs were paid £20 a day to get coal out of the docks and use any weapon, including iron bars, to break the picket lines. Almost as soon as the pickets and solidarity action started however, the miners were faced with what to do about the quite obvious attempt of the government and employers to use the forces of the state and scab labour to break the pickets. Examples such as that of Dover spread. In Kirkcaldy scab labour, also at £20 a day, was used to take coal through pickets.

At Grimethorpe three miners were injured, one with a broken leg, when a scab driver smashed his lorry straight through a picket line at a Coalite depot. At Bolsover in Derbyshire blackleg drivers sent their 31 ton lorries directly at the picket lines at 40 miles an hour. Quite clearly if the lorry scabs were allowed to get away with it, highly paid blacklegs would be put to work breaking the picket lines. "Incidents" rapidly escalated. At the firm of T. Simpson in Nottingham a miner had his foot crushed when a scab lorry drove over it and a miner was injured by a meat hook wielded by a blackleg driver. But the leadership of the NUM had condemned 'violence' in the 1970 strike. Once again if they had been listened to in this respect in the 1972 strike, the miners would have been lost. Gormley re-acted true

to form by sending out a letter to area secretaries, telling pickets that it was illegal to make any 'physical contact' with scabs crossing picket lines and it should be completely avoided. Fortunately, however, the rank and file decided to prevent the scabs getting in come what may. This naturally led to a large number of arrests with lorries being boarded, loads of coal dumped in the road, and various other goings on not suitable for those of a weak nervous disposition. Similarly at a few pit heads where there was trouble things got a little rough for the faint hearts as well. At Keresley the floodlights were shot out with an air rifle, the junction box for the lights was smashed with a sledge hammer, six inch nails were embedded in the drive and bottles smashed all up and down the roadway. Eventually the pit gate was baricaded with a tree and benches. At Alderman's Green power station a nasty situation developed when the GMWU and ETU within the plant refused to co-operate with the pickets. With this support the management started taking oil in in concealed wagons and then put an oil line across a river to the station. This stopped working when the bolts 'mysteriously' disappeared during the night. But these tactics won in a way kid gloves methods never could have. After a few days the employers were forced to see that whole scale strike breaking was simply not on. Once again rank and file action had saved the day. (It must be noted in fairness that the solidarity of most lorry drivers was magnificent. At Keresley even two self-employed hauliers joined the picket lines. The struggle against the scabs has been kept up even after the strike. Several TGWU men have been forced out of the union for breaking the Saltley picket lines and a coal haulier who charged above normal price for coal allowed out of Keresley for old age pensioners has been blacked.)

Another 'respectable' idea was also quickly destroyed by the strike. That was that the police were impartial. At Bolsover even Labour M.P. Dennis Skinner was forced to point out that it was the police who were encouraging the drivers to speed up as they drove at the picket line. (*The Times*, 13.1.72)

Indeed right from the beginning of the strike, the police left no doubt as to whose side the forces of 'law and order' were on, and whose interests the state served. Here for example is just one description given by a miner from Grimethorpe colliery:

"We were here picketing deputies. There were about forty picketers and about three police at first, then a 40-seater bus arrived full of police and several vans bringing more police and there turned out to be about 90 to 100 police to 40 pickets. A superintendent started picking people out saying 'keep your eye on him' and 'keep your eye on him'. After a time the superintendent himself went and arrested a young lad for disturbing the peace. All he'd done was shout 'scab' and 'blackleg' to a deputy trying to push his way through the pickets. Within two or three hours he was arrested, charged and convicted. When he came back in the afternoon the superintendent said 'that's what we want, swift justice'.

This got one or two of our backs up and we started shouting at the police, but nothing physical. Then the superintendent started all the bother. He went wading in with the fist and boot, and one or two inspectors joined in. One sergeant, he started on two of our lads who were just walking up beside a wall, he was shoving them against the wall, putting the fist in. There was none of us using a bit of violence bar that superintendent, the two inspectors and a few police. They arrested one bloke saying he was going to throw a brick. He went to court and they said he ran up behind the picket line picked up a brick with his right hand and was going to throw it. But everybody in Grimethorpe knows he's a lefthander, the best lefthander in Grimethorpe, he can't throw with his right hand. He was convicted on both charges. That's the type of attitude the police were taking....

The superintendent has been here twice with his heavy gang; on Friday and the time that chap was killed at the coalite depot. Both times there's been some knuckle thrown and some boot dished out by the police".

In Scotland, in particular, the police kept up continual harrassment of the pickets. This was worst at Longannet power station when 13 men were arrested, but perhaps the lengths to which the police were revealing their real role was shown by the attitude to the arrests shown in Dunfermline. Here a man in a Rangers supporters scarf, and therefore fairly certainly a supporter of Orangism in Ireland, led a chant of 'Internment Out'. The Director of Public Prosecutions was also showing precisely whose interests the legal system served. When a complaint was made about the drivers wielding iron bars to get through the pickets at Dover, the DPP simply stated 'It would be necessary for the prosecution to prove that the truck-driver carried the bar with the intention of using it to injure. If therefore he was merely holding it so as to cause the pickets to move back from his truck so that he could drive away without danger to himself or anyone else, I do not consider that an offense would be established. I do not therefore propose to take any action in the matter.'

The real crunch however came with the mass picketing of power stations, docks, coal depots, etc. As we have seen the government was relying on the immense coal stocks to keep power and other production going for weeks before the miners action began to pinch. If they had been allowed to move coal this would have worked. The obvious way to deal with this situation was for the transport unions to ban the movement of all coal. However, as we have seen and as the government hopes, they refused to do this. Instead of an official black they merely said their members were not to cross picket lines. A few wry smiles must have been pulled at the General Council of the TUC over this. With 31 million tons stored away from from the mines what did it matter if drivers could or could not reach any pit-head stock piles. If the miners had followed the normal strike procedures of merely picketing their places of work, the unions agreement not to cross picket

lines would have been absolutely useless. Fortunately once again the rank and file decided to make up for what the union leaders would not do. Instead of fruitlessly standing outside pits where no-one was going to scab anyway, the picket lines were thrown out across the country. This was not in any way planned by the NUM leadership. They merely gave vague instructions to picket the movement of coal by land and sea in their areas. But rapidly the men got the idea of extending the pickets from their local areas. The Kent area, after initially starting on the local towns of Brighton and Maidstone, started to spread its pickets into the London area. Miners from the Barnsley area, after initial joining pickets round Doncaster, set out for East Anglia where, amongst other things, occupation of Essex University by miners and students took place.

Once the local pickets were in place the response from the rank and file of other unions, and from other groups such as students, teachers, etc. was tremendous. In virtually every case ordinary workers were attempting to make up for the lack of support by union leaders. Innumerable small but vital acts of solidarity were carried out. In Scotland men from the TGWU visited all the miners clubs asking for details of what was needed and giving details of what were the planned movements of coal. In some cases, for example Grangemouth oil refinery, if there were no pickets when a load arrived the rail men would halt, ring the NUM to send pickets, and then stop until miner arrived who would declare himself to be a picket line. The driver would then "carry out the instructions of his union", by refusing to pass the picket. Another example comes from Hans Hall power station. This was picketed by pits from the Coventry area on a rota basis with each pit supplying 20 miners for a five hour shift. These were all given reports by a convenor on all aspects of coal, oil and other stocks. At this power station the management tried various manouvers made possible by the fact that there are many gates and within the station's boundaries are a number of private firms whom the miners were prepared to let oil get to. However the unions inside soon put a stop to this by refusing to unload anything that came in through the pickets, used side entrances or had got in by claiming to be for a private firm. Similarly every help was given to ensure that every form of picketing was as successful as possible. The convenor from the Midland Red buses at Nuneaton visited pickets asking whether they wanted the buses carrying deputies stopped, but the pickets suggested and it was agreed, that buses should not drive as usual into the plant but should rather drop deputies by the pickets so they would have to try to walk through. In the supply of oil most lorry drivers co-operated 100%. A typical example is the firm of Charrington's which delivers 'black oil' from the Coventry area to various power stations in the Midlands. The firm instructed their drivers, who were in the TGWU, to take oil in past the pickets. The drivers took to taking their load to the picket line, turning round and coming back so that the firm had to pay for

the entire run. After a fortnight of this the managements of the power stations gave up their attempts to get oil in. Similar events occurred with the firm of Caroco which made daily deliveries of 14,000 gallons to the 'Homefire' plant in the Birmingham area. Miners stipulated that no more than the 5,000 gallons necessary to keep the plant ticking over were to be sent in. Despite management threats and pleas the TGWU drivers completely refused to move more than 5,000 gallons a day.

There were of course a few failures. *The Guardian* reported the following for example:

"At a certain Northern power station (Miscellany will not name it for the same of the relatives) there were adequate stocks of coal, but no oil to fire it. Early one bitterly cold morning, a huddle of frozen picketers was amazed to see the manager's car stop by them. 'Nip on in', he invited them jovially, sympathising behind his hand with their cause. And he poured them large tots of rum in his office. At the sound of an approaching motor vehicle, they looked up, just in time to see three large oil tankers whizz past the window." (*The Guardian*, 19.2.72) Whether that particular report is in time or not, it is hard to tell, but in general the pickets were superbly successful. Every conceivable form of activity was carried on. For example, a 'naval' blockade was carried out in the Thames. Miners boarded a pleasure boat and down river, complete with loudhailers, to stop coal being transported by river into Battersea power station. Two coal ships were then circled in a boat while miners explained the NUM's case to the crews. In many areas temporary action committees were formed with local inhabitants co-operating with the pickets. For example, in East Anglia a united front was set up to keep watch on all the ports and coast for attempts to import coal. It would be impossible to cover a tiny proportion of all the important picketing struggles. Two, however, can be dealt with, because they show both how things should be done and how they should not.

The great victory of the picketing was of course at Saltley. Between February 4th and February 10th the struggle of the pickets to stop coke being transported out of Saltley depot, Birmingham became a vital testing ground for the tactics being adopted by the miners throughout the country. A defeat at Saltley would have had demoralising consequences for the struggle as a whole, coming as it did after the death of a picketing miner in Scunthorpe (knocked down by a scab lorry).

Saltley was also of practical significance. With its stockpile of 130,000 tons of coke it was the last remaining solid fuel store in the Midlands and thus an obvious confrontation point. The government through the West Midlands Gas Board was prepared for such a confrontation and fairly confident that by using the police and the press it would be able to inflict an important defeat on the miners. This coupled with the sell out by the leaders of the

ETU, on whom the miners were hoping for solidarity action, could have played an important part in bringing about a 'settlement.'

On Friday, February 4th, nine miners arrived at Saltley from Hern Heath Colliery, Stoke-on-Trent. The picket had begun. This immediately received front page coverage in the Birmingham Mail almost in anticipation of the conflicts to come. But the picket was immediately made ineffective by the intervention of the police who sent a contingent of officers to ensure that the scabs could move to and fro with ease. Saturday and Sunday saw an influx of pickets into the City from Nottingham, Stafford and Yorkshire areas. Insufficient pickets on the Sunday meant that the depot worked almost as normal. However, enough pickets arrived to close the depot from 11 a.m. that day until 10 a.m. Monday.

Monday set the pattern for the rest of the week with at times violent police reaction against the pickets. The number of pickets on Monday was about 600 against 400 police and although unable to close the depot they reduced the number of loads leaving to 40. The first solidarity action was taken on that Monday. S.U. Carburetor men, Warwick student union and 250 building workers of the ASPW & B (who had struck against the victimisation of their leading steward) all came to support the picket; 18 arrests were made. Wednesday saw the most violent picket of the week and in one incident 4 police including Inspector Frank Shelley who broke his leg, and one miner were hurt. Despite 20 arrests only 31 loads got out. Despite the power workers' decision, militancy remained very high. Wednesday in many ways was the turning point. The police used 600 men with a further 150 in reserve. Despite new pickets arriving from S. Wales the picket was almost outnumbered at times and the depot remained open.

That afternoon there was a meeting held of the Birmingham AUEW Eastern district. Shop-stewards from 200 factories representing 40,000 men, recommended a walk out on Thursday in support of the picket. The police described this as "intimidation".

On Thursday morning the miners were just beginning to outnumber the police at the picket. Only about six lorries had left the depot though already there were many arrests. Then the AUEW members began to pour down the hills. There were about 11,000 workers there. They came from Rover (Solihull), GEC (Witton), Lucas, BSC (Bromford Tubes), Pressed Steel Fisher (Castle Bromwich), Valer, SU Carburetor, Salisbury Transmissions, Dunlop, Halada Drop Forgings, Tractors & Transmissions, etc. They marched into Saltley that morning and ensured that nothing would move while they were there. The gates banged shut at 10.45 a.m. They did not re-open until after the strike was over.

If, however, Saltley was the greatest victory for the pickets, Longannet power station held the greatest warning for the future. This particular power station was absolutely vital for the West of Scotland industrial belt and even

in normal periods supplied three eighths of the power for the factories of this region. By the middle of the strike it was supplying over half their power. Here the management was making full use of the sell out of the of the power workers by the GMWU and the ETU. The managers offered to pay all workers twenty-four hours pay a day to work an eight hour day but to sleep inside the station & hence avoid the pickets. One night 200 men did sleep in. The key question however rapidly became oil supplies. Longannet is directly connected to the mines which supply it and had immense coal stocks—roughly estimated as enough for three months work. Nevertheless the station could have been quickly brought to a stop is its supply of oil had been cut off. However, the GMWU refused to black oil. The NUM pickets cut off all supplies by road and rail, but two loads were brought in by sea. Because of the GMWU's action, the men in the power station used this oil to continue working. The pickets settled down for a long siege.

The first victory came with a fine gesture of international solidarity. The Danish transport workers union succeeded in cutting off the labour carrying oil in by sea. The pickets concentrated now on stopping the men going into work in the power station. The Electricity Board replied by offering to hire helicopters to carry the men in. This at least was rejected. The Electricity Board therefore concentrated on getting police reinforcements in order to be able to smash the picket lines. The special 'hard' police squads used for dealing with demonstrations were brought in from Glasgow and Edinburgh. In addition six naval boats were brought up to get oil in by sea. The police literally smashed into the pickets arresting the picket leaders who had been trying to coordinate the activity through loudhailers. Mick McGahen, President of the Scottish area of the NUM was assaulted by police and when thirteen pickets were arrested they were handcuffed and kept in jail without bail. It was only the calling off of the strike that prevented further tough action by the authorities.

What happened at Longannet was that scabbery by the GMWU had placed the NUM in an isolated position and therefore allowed the police and other forces of the state to pick off the mines. But perhaps the most disturbing thing of all in this area came in the aftermath of the strike. Two NUM members at Whitrigg and Polkemit had taken jobs during the strike. The men in the firms when they found this out went on strike and six were sacked. These two men were therefore first class scabs. When the strike ended the NUM members at their pits refused to work with them and walked out. The management said that according to the new Industrial Relations Act these men had a right to work even if they were not in the NUM. The closed shop had been made illegal by the Act. Here was the first direct challenge to the unions using the new act. The Scottish Executive led by area president McGrahen

gave in and ordered the men to return. This was a most serious defeat with grave consequences for the future.

THE END OF THE STRIKE—THE BATTLE BUT NOT THE WAR

Although in cases such as Longannet, lack of union solidarity and lack of clear leadership led to defeats, in general rank and file solidarity gained success after success. As the strike continued section after section of industry was forced to close down as power was cut. The government was rapidly forced on the defensive. This crisis was greatly heightened by the massacre carried out by the British Army in Derry. This led to a wave of demonstrations and protests, most of which linked up the struggle of the miners with the struggle against the British policy in Ireland. It was from then on that the newspapers began to be filled with articles about how Britain was becoming 'ungovernable'. On the economic front, by the end of the third week of the strike three power stations had already been closed. These included Thorpe Marsh in Yorkshire which the CEBG had been banking on keeping going for another three weeks. As the fourth week of the strike approached, members of the government began to talk about the need for a State of Emergency. But they decided to do nothing until they had got the Power Workers settlement out of the way. After this was achieved all sorts of schemes were looked at. Amongst the suggestions was to bring troops in to break the picket lines and import vast quantities of foreign coal. However, this had to be abandoned when it was realised that given the amount of rank and file trade union solidarity the miners were getting, this action might provoke a General Strike. Although under their extreme Emergency Powers laws the government could have done virtually anything it liked legally, it was forced to back down when confronted with massive trade union action. The M.P. W. Deedes expressed the real views of the Tory government in an article in the *Daily Telegraph* after the strike. He said, "The crux at places like Saltley was not how the law was interpreted, but how it could be enforced. It was no doubtful law but numbers which held the police back". (15.3.72). As we have seen, where the police had numbers on their side, there was no 'holding back'. As always it was the relation of forces and not the employers 'law' which decided the issue. Meanwhile the miners were hitting industry harder and harder. The government had to impose a 50% restriction on the use of electricity by industry. As the strike reached its final week eight power stations were closed completely and sixty seven out of 142 coal powered stations were working below capacity. It was announced that if the strike went on until March 1st, every single coal fired power station would be closed. In this situation, the dramatic 'close down the factories' declaration by the government, was a last

desperate attempt to break the solidarity of the working class. The *Evening Standard* spelt it out on Feb. 11th when it said "Ministers are now hoping that with millions of jobs affected in varying degrees, the TUC will put pressure on the NUM to advise a return to work". This plot failed and solidarity was as high as ever. Faced with this solidarity the government, who are, unlike most trade union leaders, well aware that it is strength which decides everything, decided to give in for the time being. The Wilberforce enquiry was set up as a face saving device.

Wherever the ruling class in Britain feels that it has created a mess it cannot get out of, its first resort is to set up an inquiry with a peer of the realm at its head. In most cases the latter is well advanced in years both to give it a touch of "impartiality" and to ensure that the peer in question is sufficiently senile to carry out the particular tactics of the government which happens to be in power. After massacring 13 Irishmen in Derry, Lord Widgery was appointed to lead an enquiry. Lord Wilberforce was dragged out by the Tories to help achieve a compromise with the striking miners. The capitalist press warned the miners that they'd better accept Wilberforce's terms (and this, mind you, before this so-called enquiry was even formally completed) or face the consequences. The *Daily Telegraph* of 15th February summed up the government's position perfectly. "If Lord Wilberforce's recommendations are accepted by the miners it will be possible, just, for the Government to save face; but if the miners, in a fit of self-righteous pride, decide to reject, then the Government will have no option but to fight on to the bitter end. And the end will most certainly be a bitter one: for the use of troops to break the picket lines around the power stations will become unavoidable."

In other words what was being said was "O.K. so we admit the Government has suffered a setback. But watch it, If you get too ambitious, fight for the full claim and aren't prepared to accept what we offer, then we will get out the iron fist".

Wilberforce by no means gave the miners everything they had claimed, and indeed it contained some very dangerous provisions which we will discuss later. But it was regarded by the entire working class and quite rightly so, as a victory for the miners over the government. Heath had stopped the NUM getting its complete claim, but he had had his nose well and truly bloodied in the process and had been forced to settle for far more than would have bought off the NUM leaders at the beginning of the strike. Nevertheless in order to see just what Wilberforce meant and therefore what the starting point for the struggle is, it is necessary to go back and look at the basic forces that were at work in the miners strike.

As we say in the first section of this pamphlet, the capitalist class has been in the last few years, reconsidering the best ways of attacking the trade union movement. One section has been saying that the best way to stop

the trade unions defending the living standards of the working class is to get their leaderships to accept an incomes policy, national planning and so on. It was this section who supported the election of Harold Wilson's government in 1964. Another section of employers represented politically by Heath, believe that an officially agreed incomes policy and similar measures are not sufficient, a direct clash and defeat of the unions they believe is the only policy which will work. Neither of these policies is in anyway in the interests of the working class, and they only differ in means not in aims, but they produce rather different government policies, and therefore rather different dangers for the working class.

For the first 18 months of his government Heath had quite clearly succeeded in gaining the acceptance of his policy by the decisive sections of the ruling class. He had achieved this even more clearly than Wilson had in the pre 1964 period. Previously one section (of the ruling) class was looking for a deal with the unions so as to cool militancy. Another section was looking towards a more desperate solution. What Heath seemed to have succeeded in doing and which he would have done if he had smashed the miners would have been to rally the ruling class round the second alternative. After the strike however the situation is far less clear. Heath had banked on defeating the working class by mid-1972 and therefore having a couple of years before he went to a General Election. He could have rallied the ruling class behind him and, given a two years of increasing profits, even afforded to throw a few sops to sections of the working class. Now that whole policy had received a severe set back. It would probably take at least a year to eighteen months to restore the situation to what it was before the miners strike. Then Heath had almost succeeded in convincing a considerable section, even a majority of the working class that it was impossible to defeat the government. After the failure of the UPW strike, although resentment and hatred of the Tories was higher than ever, a certain feeling that nothing could be done stood a chance of seeping in. UCS and the various factory occupations had already reversed that tide. Now the best organised sections of the trade unions will have had their confidence greatly raised. A series of severe individual struggles in key sections of the economy can be expected. In this situation a section of the ruling class, including a section of the Tory party, will say that we cannot wait for over a year to deal with the situation. We must now, if only temporarily, go back to the policy of trying to do a deal with the union leaderships so that they will do our dirty work for us. Others say that it is impossible to turn the clock back to 1964. The condition of British capitalism they say is much worse now than it was then and the working class is far more militant. Therefore it is impossible to rely on the leaders of the trade unions. It is necessary to press on with the policy of confrontation. The newspaper *The Economist* for example, decided that the government had gone soft. It bemoaned the fact that "The Prime Minister talked on television last Sunday

of the double danger before Britain, of growing inflation and growing intimidation: 'I do not believe you elect any government to allow that to happen, and I can promise you that it will not be tolerated.' Instead, his government has decided it will be rewarded. Mr. Heath spoke on the morrow of giving an inflationary £100 m. a year to the striking miners, and on the eve of giving £35 m. to the Clyde sitters-in . . . The message that is being taught by the Government in Britain today is that, if you are in a declining industry, then your best course is either to picket your work-place or (better) the workplace of some expanding industries, to intimidate, to demonstrate as loudly as possible, to seize property, to strike.'" (7.3.72).

The confusion of the situation has shown even in the actions of Heath, after the strike. On the one hand he went on the television to talk of dark forces of anarchy threatening the country and to talk of tough measures. On the other he was forced to make the gesture of having the first economic talks with the TUC since he came to office. In this rather confused situation it is necessary to spell out the dangers of both possible ruling class policies for the working class.

The implications of the confrontationist course are fairly clear. There will have to be a further tightening up on Social Security payments, more severe laws against picketing, increased use of the police and the making use of the penal provisions of the Industrial Relations Act. Indeed, on this last score, the Act *must* be used in the coming period or it will be reduced to the status of farce. Not to use the Act in a situation where the unions may wreck the entire economic policy of the government means abandoning any real hope of permanently altering the balance of forces by hamstringing the unions. We must therefore expect in the coming period a whole series of struggles in which demands for the defence by working class action of victims of the Act will be needed.

It is quite clear that the NCB and government are already beginning to make preparations for taking an openly hard line. Inside the mines itself the NCB is quickly trying to re-assert a position of tough discipline. The first sign of this was their refusal to sack the non NUM members in Scotland. Since the return to work however there have been many indications of a similar policy. The NCB have supported a private contract employer in Derbyshire who sacked 17 men for taking part in the strike. In the Doncaster area there was an almost immediate strike after the return to work at Hickleton colliery because the management forced the men to stand in sodden clothes for an hour until the end of their shift. In South Yorkshire the NCB is trying to withhold concessionary coal. Even more significant than the actions of the NCB however is the way in which the government acted after the strike in relation to returning power supplies to normal. It quite deliberately stopped the resumption of full power supplies for as long as it could and then, when it did restore them on March 1st, it declared it was

a 'risk'. The following is the account of the inside story of this as it appeared in the newspaper *Seven Days*.

"All over the country from February 19, when the miners withdrew their pickets, power stations were deliberately run at less than their possible capacity. At the stations at Blackburn, Kearsley, Fleetwood and Agecroft, in the North-West, all of which had ample stocks of fuel, almost no power was produced over a week after normal distribution of coal had begun. Agecroft, for example, had 17 days of fuel supply, and is across the road from Agecroft colliery, yet until Monday 28 February it was putting nothing into the grid".

"Frank Allaun, Labour M.P. for Salford, visited the station over the weekend. When he complained to the minister, Sir John Eden said the station was producing no power because there was no demand for it. The reason there was no demand was because of restrictions and cuts. At Drakelow station in Sutton Coldfield, right up until March 1, only 330 megawatts out of a possible 2170 were produced. A member of the technical staff at the station says "We had plenty of stocks of coal and other supplies, but we were told to run the station at far below capacity".

"Many of the London power stations were in the same position. West Ham has a capacity output of 120 megawatts. At the start of the strike it had 35,000 tons of reserve stocks in the station. Because of a ban on overtime by the power workers for part of the miners' strike the station dropped below capacity and used less of its coal than it might otherwise have done. Yet at the end of the strike, with ample stock of fuel, it suddenly dropped to 30 megawatts. Similarly Cliff Key station, just outside London, which all the way through the strike had been producing at its full capacity of 350 MW three days after the withdrawal of the pickets.

This state of affairs, as the government said on many occasions, was likely to go on well into March. What altered their plans was that the workers in the power stations, who knew what was going on, began to ask their bosses why these needless restrictions were being imposed. They also contacted various Labour M.P.s Frank Allaun, started asking pertinent questions in Parliament. On March 1 the government's "emergency" committee suddenly announced, surprise, surprise, the restrictions could, after all, be lifted.

"But why did this happen? . . .

Though Heath & co have been anxious to remind us of what a terrible blow to the economy this strike has been it knows that in fact the long term effects will be small. In 1968 despite the general strike of May and June the French economy did very well. With the lesser disruption caused by the coal strike, and with industry running under capacity anyway, the government is confident that lost production can be made up quickly."

The cuts from the last weekend in February onwards were aimed at domestic consumers, and the ugly fact is that the government has been trying to teach people a lesson; "Support a striking group of workers in this way and look what happens". (8.3.72).

We can therefore see that even before the strike was over the government must have been laying its plans for how to stir up opinion against any future strikes. The employers may have lost a battle, but they know that the miners strike is only one of many coming battles, and it is the war they are interested in, not just the individual struggles. We must therefore be prepared for many, many new direct attacks by the employers on the working class.

If however, one section of the ruling class is preparing a straightforward frontal assault, another is preparing a more cunning flank attack. A key role in these plans is played by Harold Wilson and the Labour Party. The aim of Wilson in most of his period in office was to use the links between the Labour Party and the Trade Unions in order to 'integrate' the union leaderships into the running of capitalist economic policies. There are many ways of doing this; by trying to get them to police incomes policies, by getting them to accept and conform to government economic policies as in the so-called "National Plan", by trying to involve them in running organisations designed to strengthen employers against the trade unions, for example, the old Commission on Industrial Relations on which George Woodcock and others served. The particular thing which the Labour leadership wants now is for the trade unions to accept the principle of an incomes policy. This is why Wilson so eagerly took up the "Special Case" argument put forward by the NUM leadership. This argument is extremely dangerous. By saying that the miners are a special case and should therefore get an increase of more than 7% the NUM leaders in fact admitted that the rest of the working class **should** only get a 7% increase. This is extremely dangerous even from a trade union point of view—how can you ask other workers to support you when you are saying that they should not get as large a pay rise as you? In political terms it is even worse however. To accept the principle of **any** 'norm' is to accept the principle of an Incomes Policy. It is for this reason that Wilson made so much of the "Special Case" argument. He thought that by persuading trade unionists that this was the correct argument to use against the Tories, he could also persuade the working class to accept the principle of an incomes policy.

The Labour Party's whole policy during the strike was to try to show that their policy of doing a deal with the trade union leaderships was more efficient at holding down the wages of the working class than was Heath's confrontation tactic. In week one of the strike Harold Lever said that the task of the government was to get round a table with the TUC. In week five of the strike Roy Mason repeated the same idea. Wilson attempted to put the integrative line of Labour into practice. His trip to Fisher-Bendix factory

'sit-in' to have the occupation called off, had a far greater significance than merely the fact that he did not like having an occupation in his constituency. What he attempted to show was that while the confrontation policy of Heath produced factory occupations and immense strikes with considerable risk for capitalism, the policy of Labour was a better way of dealing with the trade unions and involved far less risks. These intentions now key in fairly exactly with the motives of the leadership of the trade unions. If the Labour Party wishes to rekindle the policy of integration, then there is nothing that the trade union bureaucracy would like more than to go back to the situation of cosy chats with Labour leaders, rather than open confrontation, strife and struggle. If Wilson could persuade the trade union leaderships to accept an incomes policy then he would have a possible alternative strategy for running-capitalism to that of Heath. It was this that explained some of Wilson's "warlike" speeches during the strike. In a certain sense he knew it was in his interests if the miners won a limited victory. If Heath had defeated the miners then Heath would have been able to have presented himself as the man who kept his nerve when the others panicked. Wilson would have been unable for years to convince the employers that Labour's policy was the correct one. Naturally Wilson was not in favour of a real miners victory. He could not, with his position as a defender of British Capitalism, be seen to actually support the unions in defeating Heath's unofficial incomes policy. But a victory on the grounds of being a 'special case' was perfectly acceptable as part of propaganda for an incomes policy. After all Wilson's formula for dealing with the unions is to cover the poison in icing sugar while Heath's is to put a label marked 'arsenic' on the top.

Wilson and the Labour leaders were particularly delighted with the way in which Heath was forced to bring the strike to an end. They lost no time in telling the ruling class that when it came to the real crunch Heath was forced to adopt Labour methods in their entirety—right down to the midnight dash to 10 Downing Street. If Wilson could only gain the agreement of the Trade Union bureaucracy for an incomes policy, only acceptable under a 'humane' Labour government of course, then he would have an apparent policy to sell to the ruling class. As long as Heath was successful, Labour was being moved towards being marginalised to the main stream of British politics. Now Wilson had the chance to move right back into the centre of the stage.

But no matter what the manoeuvrings of Heath and Wilson, they both merely represent different ways for the ruling class to deal with the Trade unions. Neither Wilson nor Heath represents any real alternative for the working class. Indeed Labour & Conservative can chop and change about quite rapidly if circumstances change. It was Wilson the 'integrationist' who launched one of the most vicious 'red-baiting' scares of all time when he went all out to smash the 1966 Seamen's strike, and

Quite definitely at least certain sections of the Tories would only be too glad to have an official incomes policy if only they could be sure it would work. It is not on these twists and turns in the employers strategy that the working class can base a strategy, it is only on the effect that the strike has had on the rank and file of the trade unions. Here there is no doubt. All sections of the working class have been enormously encouraged by the miners strike. After all the twisting and turnings of Wilson, all the backpedallings of the TUC and trade union leaderships, the miners gave a show of what real working class organisation and struggle can achieve. Millions of workers have had new heart put into them. Even if the war is only beginning, and the government still possesses the enormous strength of the state to back up the employers, nevertheless a far better starting point has been reached for a real fight against any capitalist government than existed before the strike. Whatever the outcome of the re-thinking by the employers and government, the basic tasks of militants in the economic struggle remain the same: *to smash any wage freeze in whatever guise and under whoever's sponsorship; to make the Industrial Relations Act unusable; and to redouble solidarity action for any section of workers on strike.* The miners strike has however ensured that the struggle gets off to a flying start.



A Fighting policy for the NUM

A FIGHTING POLICY FOR THE NUM

As we have seen in the first three sections, the causes of the miners strike cannot be found simply in terms of the situation which exists inside the mining industry. Any struggle in a large scale industry inevitably becomes involved in the most complicated sorts of problems and has repercussions reaching far outside the sector of workers involved. In addition the state with the forces of the police, the Civil Service, the control of publicity and so forth, is far stronger than even a whole trade union. The struggle of workers in one industry can only be won to the extent that they can prevent the state isolating them and to the extent that their policy is not guided by blind militancy but by a workedout plan of action. The last strike was won largely because the tremendous solidarity of other workers, as for example at Saltley, made the state scared of using its full resources. For future struggles the state will be better prepared. As we saw in the last section, these preparations have indeed already begun. In this situation the organisation of groups of miners who also have an understanding of the situation and can prepare for future struggles is vital. Unfortunately, as in all strikes the interest and militancy of the mass of members disappears rapidly. The daily problems of living soon make them forget what they learnt in the strike. This however, need not be disastrous if those who do still remember get organised. Then when new struggles break out, as they inevitably will, it is not necessary to start at square one again. Many of the lessons of the last strike will have been kept alive and can be used in the new struggle. If, however, the militants do not get organised then they just act as individuals and soon get swallowed up in the

tide of general forgetting. For this reason the most urgent immediate problem in the mines is the organising in a rank and file movement those people who still understand the lessons of the 1972 strike, and can begin to prepare for the next, and much tougher, one. The rest of this pamphlet is aimed at discussing some of the lessons of the 1950s and 1960s which are necessary in preparing any policy for the future.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A LONG TERM AIM

The key thing in trade unionism, as in everything else, is to know where you are trying to go. It is when every union member has a common and clear understanding of the goal of the struggle that real unity and purpose is achieved. The history of the NUM provides a perfect example of this. In the 1920s and 30s, when the union was at its greatest, every member knew that the real aim of the struggle was nationalisation. The matter was the day to day issue of wages, conditions and so forth, every miner knew that this was only one part of the struggle for nationalisation. It was this which gave a sense of purpose to every little conflict. There are always going to be struggles inside the mines under the present system, the only thing that can be altered is whether people feel they are really fighting for something that will solve their problems or not. Is there going to be continuous and apparently unending struggles over wages and conditions or is the struggle going to be over more fundamental issues? That is the only choice that has faced the NUM and it is still the one which faces it today. The way in which the men see the struggle however affects their whole attitude towards it. If there is conflict after conflict and no apparent way out, people become discouraged and seek merely to make the best out of a bad situation. There has now been one national miners strike since the war. It was completely solid. There will undoubtedly be another in the next few years. That will be solid. But what happens the fourth or fifth time? The militancy and spirit will only remain if the struggles are seen as leading somewhere. Even the day to day struggle can therefore only be kept up in the long run if the miners see where their struggle is going. What produced the tremendous militancy and solidarity of the pre-war period was the goal of nationalisation. Since that was achieved, and did not solve the problems of the miners, there has been no real sense of direction. It has been this that has allowed the right wing to dominate the union. When there is no sense of direction people tend to follow the person who offers the quietest life. Now the new militancy offers the left a chance to put its mark on the union again, but the ability to do this depends of the ability to set a long term goal for the NUM which will have the same effect as nationalisation did between the wars. This is the challenge that faces the left inside the NUM today.

WORKERS CONTROL

First and foremost it must be recognised that the only policy which is worth fighting for is one which will actually solve the problems of the miners if achieved. There is nothing which demoralises people more than struggling for something which when it is achieved does not solve the prob-

lem it was supposed to. Take, for example, wages. The increases obtained at the end of the 1972 strike were fairly considerable. However, by the time the sixteen month agreement comes to an end inflation will have eroded most or all of the gains made. If therefore any real permanent gains were to be made then it would be necessary to fight for not simply a wage increase, but also automatic rises geared to the cost of living so that the real value of wages was protected. However, wages are only one of the problems which confront the NUM. Already, as we have seen, the changes in working make worse the conditions and safety of miners. This tendency is bound to increase. A real struggle for the NUM must involve the protection of miners interests in these fields as well. This brings up the whole question of workers control, because it is not the machines or work practices in themselves which make worse the conditions in the mines, but the way in which these things are used in a system whose aim is to produce for profit. The key question is therefore how the use of these machines and working practices is to be decided.

At this point however, a trap exists. Only too often nationalised industries have tried to claim that they are in favour of something they call workers control. For example, the Steel Industry has a few 'worker directors' who are supposed to represent the interests of the men. In fact the purpose of having them there is completely different to the aims of workers control. What is here intended is simply that the stooges on the boards of directors would like the responsibility for the closures and redundancies that are being dictated to the steel industry because of the operations of the capitalist market. The working class should take no responsibility for this sort of thing and withdraw from all such schemes. Indeed under the present system of production the mines can never be run in the interests of the miners. To see this we only have to look at some of the most basic processes going on in the mining industry. Why is it that nationalisation did not produce the benefits that it was expected to. The main reason for this is simply that although the post-war Labour Government nationalised a few important industries, the whole economy was still dominated by private production. The mines produced for a market on which private firms dominated and it bought its machinery and raw materials from private firms. As long as this economy remains dominated by private production and hence by production for profit there cannot even be a real beginning to solving the problems facing miners.

Take, for example, the simple facts about safety. The mines have, of course, always been one of the most dangerous of jobs and nationalisation has done far too little to improve the situation. Since nationalisation over 6,400 miners have been killed in industrial accidents. Studies in the Derbyshire coal field indicate that about a third of all miners have suffered an injury or disease serious enough to make them either compensation cases or cases where the management were forced to make special allowances. In the Kent field a miners wife described a not untypical situation

in the following way. "The ambulance comes from the pit to the medical centre two or three times a day. You can't help thinking its your husband. All the wives along the road come to the windows to see. Last year a twenty four year old boy, an electrician, was electrocuted. So many thousand volts went through him that he didn't stand a chance. He left a wife and two young children. There's so much pressure on the worker to hurry up. My husband works as a ripper starting new faces. He works with a pick and a shovel, they reckon the work has all been mechanised, but it's hard work. Once he asked for more timber to prop up the coal face. He was told to keep going. Three days later he went to work and saw a great pile of timber props in the entrance. He has to prop timber up quickly as the mines inspector was coming. It was a terrible nightmare where he is holding the beam with his hands and he has to go to get out quick because the walls are going to collapse. He was talking with a young couple in London when going round collecting and seeing them, crying out in this nightmare. Often, he works in water up to his waist and at other times has to crawl along. He gets an extra 25 pence a day for working in water. Many of the men have dermatitis from working in water. Many have silicosis. Their lungs when they die harden up like concrete."

Many of the worst hazards of mining could however relatively easily be got rid of by safety precautions. Yet, in many situations it is miners themselves who are the main opponents of these measures. The reason is simply that under production for profit safety measures may cut down profit and the NCB will close the pit. Faced with the choice of an unsafe job or no job many miners will opt to ignore the safety precautions which could be taken.

The effect of most changes under capitalism is to make this type of situation worse. Take, for example, mechanisation. This has rocketed in recent years, with the proportion of coal mined through mechanised methods increasing from 38% to 87% between the early and the mid-1960s. This is potentially a tremendous boon for the miners. It could make possible easier working conditions, more pay and shorter hours. However, the increase in productivity which is associated with it can be used directly against the interest of the miners. For example, if productivity is increased but total output remains the same then clearly either everyone could work a shorter week, or men will be made redundant. The first of these is clearly in the interests of the miners, the second is not. In other words, the introduction of mechanisation can be used to serve either the interests of the men or to work against them. There is nothing inherently good or bad in mechanisation which increases productivity, it depends entirely on who controls the effects of the increased productivity.

In the case of the mines, as in all industries producing in an economy based on production for profit, the increased productivity has been

used against the interests of the miners. Instead of increased output per man being used to cut the working week, it has been used to cut the number of miners. The NCB is forced to try to get more and more productivity out of a smaller and smaller labour force. Since nationalisation over 400,000 jobs have been lost in the mines but output per face worker manshift has increased from 58.4 cwt to 144 cwt. The situation has got particularly worse since 1960. Since that year the number of collieries has fallen by 56%. There are now 299 collieries compared to 698 in 1960. The labour force has fallen by approximately 50% in the same period, from 583,000 in 1960 to 295,000 in 1970. But output only fell by 23% in the same period. Equally bad was the way in which safety deteriorated in the same period. In the early and mid-1960s, the years of fastest mechanisation, the accident rate was 60% above the previous rate. It is only in the last three years, when the rate of mechanisation has fallen to an average of 2% a year that accident figures have dropped again. Quite clearly we can see in the case both of redundancy and safety, that mechanisation, a potential great benefit for the miners, is turned in a system based on production for profit into something which actually makes the conditions of the miners worse.

Further more this type of situation does not only apply at the level of the mines, but also at the level of government and of all industrial and social policies. We have already seen how the nationalisations by the post-war Labour Government were unsuccessful. Exactly the same effects as in the 1945-51 Labour Government can be seen in the record of the last Labour Government. Even if the Wilson Government had intended to rule in the interests of the working class, (which, of course, it wasn't) they would have been completely prevented from doing so by the working of economy based on private production. This lesson was rammed home in the first few weeks of the Wilson Government. Hundreds of millions of pounds worth of capital assets were transferred out of the country simply because the employing class had a misguided idea that Labour intended to do something to help the pensioners. This will always be the case as long as private employers control the economy. They produce for profit, and any government which appeared to be putting the interests of the working class before the interests of employers would obviously be a threat to those profits. The employers would then transfer huge sums of money out of the country, cease to invest and so forth, and the government would then lack the economic means, even if it had the will, to carry out its welfare and industrial policies.

Strangely enough, it does not even need a revolutionary socialist to realise these points. One of the pre-war reformist leaders of the Labour Party, Sir Stafford Cripps, summed it all up when he said that 'the idea that wielders of economic power will co-operate with a Labour government is quite fantastic.'" By this he meant of course a Labour Govern-

ment which attacked the power of the capitalist class. Employers are, of course, only too happy to co-operate with a Labour government which rules in the interests of capital. Indeed, in the situation where the Labour government is going to rule in the interests of capital, the representatives of the employing class may actually prefer to have Labour in power. For example, in 1931, when unemployment pay was cut in the middle of the great depression, one of the leaders of the Liberal Party explained "In view of the fact that the necessary economies would prove most unpalatable for the working classes it would be in the general interest if they were imposed by a Labour government." What he meant by this, of course, was that the working class expected a Labour government to act in their interests and they might therefore be more easily persuaded to accept an attack on their living standard as being in their interests if it was introduced by a Labour government.

It is very easy to see how this general principle that as long as the economy is dominated by private production, and therefore by production for profit, the mines will always be run against the interests of the miners. Take for example, the introduction of new types of machinery. This is potentially a great step forward. It can get rid of hundreds of completely boring and thankless jobs. However, as long as the coal industry produces in an economy dominated by private production for profit all the coal board will see in the machine is something which can be used to extract the maximum possible profit from the operators work. The more expensive the machine the more continuously it must be used to gain the full benefit for the profit of the coal board. Instead of being used to cut the hours of work of the operator, the introduction of expensive machinery under capitalism leads to an **increase** in working, and in particular to a massive increase in shift working. Instead of a cut in the working week at some collieries in Nottinghamshire the rotating seven day week has been introduced. The rest of the industry has experienced the two, three or four shift systems. Between March 1965 and 1966 alone the number of longwall faces working three of four shifts increased by 18% and in the first year of the NPLA this increase was 33%. The impact of shift working is disastrous for the health and conditions of those involved. For example, one survey found that 'day workers get an average of seven and one-half hours sleep per night, which is an hour more than the overall average of rotating shift workers. But when they are working the night segment of their shift, rotating shift workers average only five and one half hours sleep.' Another study, done amongst German workers showed that the ulcer rate was eight times as high for the rotating shift workers as for the fixed shift group."

Another way in which the mechanisation is used against the miners is in the stepping up of supervision. This is intended to make the introduction of new machinery more profitable by securing more intensive working.

If however, it is not possible to run the mines in the interests of the miners and the working class as long as the system of private production for profit continues, nevertheless it is possible to put forward demands for workers control which can be fought for and which if gained would improve the situation in the mines. However, as long as the mines cannot be run in the interests of the miners, which is as long as a private production economy exists, then the miners must take no responsibility for the running of the mines. Demands for control must therefore be put over in a way which retains this essential principle. They must be demands which do not take any responsibility for what is being done by the management, but simply demands which prevent the actions being carried out which go against the interests of the miners. This means for example the right to refuse any increase in the rate of working, to ban dangerous working and so on. Within this general principle it is easy to explain that it is going to be impossible to achieve the aim of the workers control (in any real way) as long as the system of private production for profit is not brought to an end. Any fighting policy for the mines must start with this. The aim of socialism must no longer be something which is just talked about at conferences, but must be the starting point of any policy. By pushing this aim into the background, and instead, accepting the present system, the NUM in fact gets itself into a situation where every change in the mines, no matter how potentially good for the miners, in fact works against the interests of the workers. The problem however is of course not simply to talk about socialism, but how to start a struggle for it.

In the North Derbyshire area, for example, the ratio of officials to workers increased from 1:12 in June 1967 to 1:9.5, in July 1968. At the coal face the ratio is nearer 1:6. A Barnsley miner summarised the situation as follows "Before 1966 you had a deputy, the occasional overman coming round, and the shotfirer (Grade II deputy). Now you have a district deputy, a face deputy, a district overman, a face overman and Grade II deputies." The aim of this increased supervision is clearly spelt out in the instructions given to the North Derbyshire management. This states "The Face Manager will ensure efficient and economical working of his face **with maximum machine utilisation time.**" The effect of this situation is described in the following statement by a Warwickshire miner "For my own part the most important feature in the PLA has been a very cunning phrasing of the whole agreement which weighs it very heavily in favour of management. If you take clause after clause they say 'the men shall do this, shall comply with that,' and when it refers to management it says simply 'the management may'; and it gives almost complete autonomy to management to select what they think are suitable workmen, suitable development teams, and this militates very badly against the progressive outspoken type of worker".

A UNITED FRONT ON A DEFINITE PROGRAMME: FOR A RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT IN THE NUM

As we have pointed out many times in this pamphlet it is **not** possible to solve the problem of the miners simply by a struggle inside the mines. The government and the state possess far too great a power for a single union, or even group of unions, to win a fight over really fundamental issues. It is only when the struggle in the union is connected up with the struggle at the level of government that it is going to be possible to win. Once the question of government is raised, however politics is clearly brought in. This is inevitable, no great issue in society can be fought for without politics coming into it. But there are many differing ideas of what socialism means, and how to get there which are held by different people. For some, Socialism means Russia, while most others, including the authors would claim that a country in which workers democracy does not exist could not be socialist. As for how to get to socialism there are as many different ideas as there are political viewpoints. Some people believe that the Labour Party under its present leadership can achieve socialism. Others think that the present leadership has no intention of attempting to get rid of the present system, but that Wilson and company can be replaced by other leaders who will fight for socialism. Members of the Communist Party think that the goal can only be achieved if a left Labour Party makes an alliance with the Communist Party. The authors of this pamphlet think that the employers will never give up their power peacefully and that the Labour Party could never be reformed to accept Socialist ideas. Quite clearly, if all miners had to agree on **how** the goal was to be achieved before the start was made in the struggle, the situation would be hopeless. Fortunately another alternative exists. That is to decide on a **policy** for the mines and for socialism, to struggle for it, and then to find out **in practice** which political organisation is actually going to be sincere in fighting for this policy. For example, on the question of the Labour Party, we think that this party cannot be reformed to accept socialist ideas. Many other miners do not. What we must therefore do is to allow each to put forward his own point of view and at the same time start a struggle for a definite programme for the mines. If miners of all political opinions continue together to struggle for this programme, and do not compromise, then we will see who is right in practice on the question of the Labour Party. If members of all socialist political viewpoints, and those who support no particular organisation, start off in this way, then a real beginning for a struggle can be made. In the present situation, the NUM, no matter what the political views held by those elected to lead it, must continue to fight for socialist policies, no matter how defined, within the Labour Party. It is in this way, by a struggle carried on both at the level of the day-to-day struggle, and at the level of a struggle for a govern-

ment which will give the miners the right to protect their own interests, that the NUM can go forward. As a basis for discussion on such a programme which can be accepted by all miners to fight for in their union branches and political organisations the International Marxist Group put forward the following series of demands originally presented at a conference of the newspaper "*The Collier*". We think they can still provide a good basis for discussion and the building of a rank and file movement in the union.

SUGGESTED PROGRAMME FOR ADOPTION BY ANY RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT IN THE NUM

1) We recognise that there is no solution to the problems facing miners as long as the mines are producing in an economy dominated by privately owned industry and democratic socialism has not been achieved.

The task of the NUM must therefore be to fight for socialism and to defend all interests of miners against the NCB and attacks by employers governments.

2) As wages are only one of the chief issues facing the miners, our aim is to fight for workers control of the mines. This must include the right to ensure that mechanisation, increased output per man, developments in working practices etc. are only carried out in the interests of the miners and not of the national coal board and the profit of other industries. Therefore we demand:

A. Productivity and Profits.

i. As long as the mines are operating in a privately owned economy, and as long as there is not generalised workers control of industry and as long as production for profit continues any management of the mines will always be forced to act against the interests of the miners. For this reason the NUM cannot accept any responsibility for running the coal industry. For this reason it must reject all forms of workers participation in management and all forms of productivity bargaining.

ii. Nevertheless the NUM can and should struggle to prevent the nationalised mining industry from being used to artificially boost the profits of private industry. We therefore demand an end to all payments to previous owners, an end to all interest payments, an end of cheap coal to private industry and the immediate nationalisation of all distribution outlets and any unnationalised mining operations of any type.

B. Wages.

i. Existing wage levels must be protected against inflation. All wage agreements to have a built-in cost-of-living increases. The composition of the cost-of-living index to be under the control of the trade unions.

ii. No payments systems to be introduced unless agreed by the men concerned at properly convened meetings after full information has been made available.

iii. An immediate move to a wages structure of £30-£35-£40; no loss of pay on regrading; all DHSS benefits to be in addition to full wages; special rates for dirt, discomfort and hardship; wage agreements to run for no more than 12 months (November to November); full pay at 18.

iv. Free housing and travel to work.

C. Shift Working and Overtime.

i. An absolute and unconditional right of the union to reject any form of shift working. In particular a complete rejection of 'continental' shift working.

ii. The right of the union and men concerned to reject any overtime including weekend working. Washing and changing time to be counted as hours of work at full pay. Travelling time to work to be paid at full rate.

D. Modernisation, Safety and Benefits.

i. The right of the union and the men concerned to reject any equipment which they consider against their interests. No reduction in manning levels.

ii. The right to reject movement of men within the mine.

iii. The right to reject any change in working practices or payments system which the men consider is against the safety interests of miners. Elected rank and file safety officers on every shift to ensure the observation of all safety requirements.

iv. Full union rate wages for all miners retiring due to accident, disease or normal retirement.

E. Redundancy and Job Loss.

i. An absolute and unconditional right of the union to veto any reduction in the labour force. Any suggested redundancy to be met with the demand for a reduction of the working week with no loss of pay, or with no loss of earnings for men forced to leave for geological, safety, or other reasons. An immediate move to a thirty hour week with no loss of pay.

4) In order that these policies can be fought for, and in order to ensure that any gains made are operated in the interests of the rank and file miners, changes are needed in the structure of the union;

i. Yearly election, with right of recall, of all full time officials.

ii. All decisions regarding strikes, acceptance of wage agreements etc. to be decided by a simple majority vote of the membership affected.

iii. Voting on all issues to be at properly convened branch meetings with adequate notice given for every member to attend.

iv. Replacement of chergemen with elected stewards. No loss of pay for any time lost on union business.

v. Complete freedom of communication between branches.

vi. Fully lay executives at all levels, to be elected annually, with no full time officials having any voting rights.

5) Democracy within the union is only meaningful if the union itself is free to defend its members interests. Therefore:

i. Complete opposition to the Industrial Relations Act. No registration; no use of any bodies established by the Act; no observance of cooling off periods or injunctions; no payment of fines imposed under the Act; full support by any means necessary, including industrial action, of all victims of the Act.

ii. Complete rejection of any form of incomes policy.

6) We recognise that it is impossible for one single trade union to obtain these demands against the resources of the employers and their governments, and therefore, while struggling for these demands in the mines, the campaign for the NUM to put forward the demands we have outlined, and similar demands for acceptance by other unions and the TUC, and within the Labour Party and campaigns for a government to guarantee the carrying out of these policies. As a first step towards this we campaign for an alliance of all unions within the public sector of industry. We believe that any Party or government, and particularly of course the Labour Party, which was truly acting in the interests of the working class would carry out the policies we have described and therefore the NUM must continue to struggle for these policies until a government is achieved which will implement them. We hope all miners, whatever other trade union or political views may divide them, unite together in a common struggle for the policies we have described.

THE INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

The International Marxist Group is a revolutionary socialist organisation which believes that the struggle of the trade unions against the employers and against the present Tory government is completely inseparable from the struggle against the entire system of capitalism. We therefore support every struggle against that system and its effects, including every struggle on the issue of wages and conditions, the struggle of blacks against racism, the struggle of women against oppression and the struggle of the Irish people against British rule. We believe, however, that all these struggles can only be brought to success if linked to a general strategy of nationalisation of all major industry and the establishment of workers control. In

addition, as the struggle against capitalism is an international one, we are members of the Fourth International. To achieve these ends it works within all the organisations of the working class and welcomes co-operation with any group or individual on any of the issues for which we campaign. In this way we believe both the superiority of revolutionary socialist ideas can be seen in practice, and an organisation can be built which will be able to fight all parts of the capitalist states. The IMG has produced a whole series of local papers and articles on the problems facing miners. For further details about these, and the other activities of the IMG fill in the form below.

INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

(British Section of the Fourth International)

182, Pentonville Road, London N.1.

Please put me in touch with IMG militants in my area.

Name:

Address:

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The Red Mole

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