

Workers power

25p/10p strikers

Fortnightly paper of the Workers Power group

FILE COPY

TUC-Deeds, not words...

GENERAL STRIKE

NOW!

DAVID BASNETT, GMBATU leader and key figure in the dominant centre-right bloc in the TUC, issued an ominous warning to the miners: "You can't allow a dispute like this to rumble on. It is disturbing our economy and it is disturbing our industrial relations" In other words, the NUM dispute is disturbing the TUC leaders' peace.

What Basnett, Murray and their crew will try to do now is use this year's TUC Congress to get more influence, if not control, over the miners' strike. The record of these gentlemen in selling out strikes is proof enough that if they do get their grubby hands on this strike they will do their best to lead it to defeat.

Last year they launched their policy of "new realism" The bosses' press was full of praise for Lionel Murray's new style of approach to industrial relations. It consisted of attempting to talk to the Tories to persuade them of the need to grant concessions to the unions. In return for talks the TUC would see to it that industrial action against their anti-union laws would be derailed by Murray and Co.

LEFT ISOLATED

In limbering up for "new realism" the health strike and the ASLEF strikes were sold out. Then, in late 1983 "new realism's" finest hour came when Murray swung the General Council into opposition to the NGA. The NGA, fighting the anti-union laws and being fined nearly a million pounds for their efforts, were left isolated last December. Murray proclaimed that the decision to support unions up against the law as passed by the special Wembley 1982 Congress, was no longer valid and support would only be given if the union concerned obeyed the TUC.

In this case the fact that the NGA had called mass picketing in defiance of an earlier TUC instruction disqualified them from being entitled to support. Once again the Tories and their Fleet Street scribes were fulsome in their praise for Murray.

In 1984 the GCHQ debacle and the miners' strike have blown holes in the policy of "new realism". They

have not yet, however, defeated its perpetrators. The Tories attack on union rights at GCHQ was allowed to win by the failure of the TUC to organise any action against it. But it did cause many union leaders to successfully push for the breaking off of talks with the Tories. This development divided and weakened the centre-right bloc. The miners' strike has furthered these divisions. However, while the open bosses' men, Sirs, and Chapple, are simply denouncing the miners, the more influential and devious union leaders, like Basnett, are maintaining verbal support, while laying dangerous traps for the strike. The danger is that Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield and Mick McGahey are walking into these traps.

At each stage of the strike the NUM leaders have told the TUC their help was not required. Insofar as this meant their help in negotiations was not required this was a sound and correct policy. Insofar as it meant not calling on the TUC to launch supportive action it was folly. It meant that Len Murray could plausibly attack the regional days of action, as being not requested by the NUM. The General Council report to Congress makes this clear when it points out that regional TUC's were told of, "the clear limits on the authority of regional councils in connection with disputes and industrial action". While this did not stop six days of action from taking place, it ensured that they were kept as one-day affairs. The TUC's position prevented them from being used as starting points for further action.

DOING NOTHING

The problem was that the NUM, firm in its belief that it would win on its own, allowed the TUC, right and left, to get away with this. Murray could justify doing nothing by arguing: "...that it would not be consistent for the TUC or a constituent body of the TUC to take any action beyond the terms of the General Council's present decisions without a specific decision of the General Council, which itself would only be taken after consultations with the NUM." (General Council Report -



(John Smith, IFL)

The miners need you!

our emphasis). It was a perfect excuse. The NUM were not asking for anything.

The spineless left - Buckton, Knapp, Todd and Co - were able to use the same excuse. Knapp and Buckton settled on railworkers' pay thereby taking their unions out of a joint fight alongside the miners. Todd talked of a "big bang" and a "major disruption" to support the miners while at the same time insisting that the dockers' dispute had nothing to do with the miners. He was party to the deal that ended the July docks' strike and allowed the dockers to be taken out of the battle, leaving the miners once again isolated. Buckton, as chair of the TUC, has repeatedly insisted that nothing can be done until the NUM ask. He stated: "As far as the TUC are concerned, when the miners ask us for help, their request will be seriously considered... We are waiting for the miners to tell us."

For the lefts it was a heaven sent pretext to do nothing to spread the strike. They could go to miners' meetings and be cheered to the echo as they poured forth bucket fulls of sympathy and contributed conscience money. But they were able to hold back on promises of industrial action. They were guaranteed safe passage on that issue by the NUM leadership.

This same error is about to be repeated at Congress. The NUM is fixed in its belief that all it needs is money to see it through the winter and pres-

sure on transport, power and steel workers not to cross picket lines. With this help Scargill argues that the NUM can "go it alone" to victory. To this end the NUM are actually horse-trading with the TUC leaders to get support for their resolution and the amendments calling for a levy and respect for picket lines from the NUR and ASLEF. They have shown Murray and Basnett that they are responsible negotiators - going to ACAS, "reluctantly agreeing" to Orme's proposed settlement, getting 14 union leaders to call for negotiations on the basis of Orme's proposals.

BUREAUCRATIC UNITY

All of this is aimed at uniting the TUC behind the miners' requests. By the same token the NUM, in the name of unity with Murray, Basnett and even Sirs - are refusing to support an amendment from the Furniture Workers calling for a 'day of solidarity action'. Such a proposal would upset the apple cart of bureaucratic unity that Scargill and the other NUM leaders are trying to set up. This approach to the TUC is all wrong. Worse, it could lead to the miners being left completely isolated. It could lead to defeat.

The bosses and the Tories have shown that their aim is to smash the power of the NUM. They know that

if they can sack miners and get away with it then the rest of the public sector will be easy meat. To this end they have used a massive police force to smash the strike. They have at long last used the anti-union laws. They were able to get away with seizing the South Wales' Miners' funds. They are now conducting a vicious physical and propaganda war on the miners. These issues - jobs union rights, the ability of the Tories to attack workers, the police, affect every worker. Every worker must be mobilised to fight these attacks. Once again a docks strike gives us a good starting point for spreading the strike action and fighting for a general strike. To get such a strike we must combine rank and file action with pressure on the union leaders to call a strike.

Immediately miners, dockers and railmen must form joint committees to co-ordinate and spread their action. The rail strike on September 12th should be extended indefinitely. Rank and file delegates from joint committees must seize every opportunity to break out of isolation and win other workers to strike action. This means leafleting factories and transport depots. It means getting speakers to factory gate, or better still, mass meetings at every plant. It means using the networks of militants that have developed through miners' support committees to campaign in every workplace for strike action. The

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INSIDE: Chile

RUC murderers



Class war in Minneapolis

6 months of the Miners' strike

AUGUST SAW A dramatic and desperate acceleration of the government's drive to beat the NUM. Their previous attempts to break the miners having all met with failure, Thatcher and Walker decided on a change of tactics.

For the first six weeks of the strike, Thatcher and the bosses hoped that the divisions within the NUM, propaganda about the daunting scale of coal stocks and massive police protection for scabbing miners would destroy the strike's momentum. That is why they held back MacGregor from using his injunction against the Yorkshire Area, for fear of helping spread the strike. A confident *Economist* warned on March 31st that "to attack the assets of the NUM just as the moderate backlash is starting to appear would make little sense" (sic).

On its part, the NUM Executive failed to come out clearly for a national strike and take the fight for that strike into the traditionally more backward coalfields. Instead, it opted to hide behind endorsing a series of regional stoppages. This provided a fig leaf of rule-book legality for the scabs and backsliders to carry on working behind police lines. And it effectively deprived the NUM of any means of proving to the waverers that a national strike call had been endorsed by a majority of NUM members. With the bosses and their agents clamouring for the kind of ballot they could exert maximum influence on - through the media - the NUM Executive should have replied by taking the campaign for a national strike to pit-head meetings in every colliery.

Such democratic pit-head meetings would not only have registered a huge majority for strike action by a show of hands, they would also have created the organs of mass working class democracy as the bedrock of the strike from the very start. As well as achieving a national majority for a strike, such meetings would immediately have strengthened the hand of the striking minorities, enabling them to win over the waverers and making it more easy to isolate the hard-core scabs.

The failure to lead from the front in the first six weeks seriously hampered the strike, and left



the legacy of a huge scabbing minority. The scabs remain an excuse for every right-winger in the labour movement to hold back support for the NUM. But the resilience and energy of the flying pickets and the courage of the striking minority in the scabbing areas held the strike firm enough to foil Thatcher's first offensive. It was only in late April that the bosses finally realised that they were in for a long and bitter struggle if they wanted to break the morale and strength of the NUM as an example to all organised workers.

At the same time the NUM leadership realised that the union had to alter its tactics. It was not until week six that a special NUM delegate conference declared the strike to be a national strike.

CARROT AND THE STICK

The next phase of the Tories' strategy was based on stepping up police thuggery and repression on the one hand and offering hints of a deal that would get the NUM leaders off the hook on the other. The repression was needed to demonstrate the power of the police to bust picket lines. The offer of a deal was intended to lure a section of the left on the Executive into

SIX MONTHS

isolating Scargill. The government saw it as essential to defeat Scargill who had identified himself with total opposition to MacGregor's job-cutting plans and with the young militants on the picket line.

The government also knew that the Labour Party - deeply embarrassed by the strike - were pulling and pushing the NUM towards a negotiated settlement - i.e. a sell-out. Kinnock himself made it clear that defeat for Scargill and the rank and file militants on the picket line would be no bad thing, providing it didn't mean total annihilation for the NUM.

Eight weeks into the strike, MacGregor - who had previously insisted it was a waste of time for him to meet Scargill - declared that he was now anxious to talk to the NUM. As they went into negotiations so the NCB pinned their hopes on splitting the NUM Executive and getting McGahey and Heathfield to secure a compromise settlement over the heads of Scargill and the militants.

As *The Economist* candidly explained "Mr Heathfield is the man whom the Coal Board's industrial relations people chat up on the telephone, while publicly Mr MacGregor and government ministers try to isolate Mr Scargill from other miners' leaders".

The Tories and the NCB backed their negotiation gambit with a massive show of force. Negotiations were offered as a means by which the NUM Executive could climb down in the face of such a display of superior force on the part of the bosses' state. While the NCB was trying to negotiate a rescheduling of the closure plans, the police were cracking miners' heads on the Orgrave picket line. As the NCB signalled they wanted to talk, so the strike-busting lorries were rolling into Ravenscraig for the first time.

Yet the Tories' plans failed, principally because of the courage of the miners at Orgrave. Far from being intimidated, they fought back. The police repression escalated to a level that made a deal with the NCB difficult - nay impossible -

for any NUM leader to defend. In addition, Scargill came out and defended the Orgrave pickets. By putting himself in the front line, alongside the young militants, he outmanoeuvred the compromisers on the Executive.

THE NUM'S RESPONSE

Despite the heroism of the pickets, Orgrave was not a victory. The use of scab coal underlined all too graphically that the strike had to break out of the isolation that the Tories and the NCB were trying to impose on it. Orgrave did not become another Saltley because it failed to break through to other workers.

Rank and file miners have to reach out to workers everywhere, win their support and enlist them to fight alongside the miners. The NUM Executive responded in a different way. Repeatedly throughout the dispute Heathfield and Scargill alike have attempted to secure backing through clinching agreements with the left-talking trade union officials. And repeatedly those left-talkers, like Knapp and Buckton have shown how cheaply they can be brought off to get out of the firing line.

With the government and bosses prepared to break the strike with well-prepared plans for scab lorry trains and a limitless police budget to see them through, the question of stopping the movement of all coal was vital to hitting production and profits hard enough to hurt the bosses.

Yet the NUM leaders, especially those in Scotland and Wales, did not go out wholeheartedly to stop these supplies. In Scotland, McGahey - in the name of saving Scottish steel - allowed production to continue at Ravenscraig, and failed to organise the pickets to stop the coal and its police minders. Emyln Williams repeated the same trick for Llanwern in South Wales. Jack Taylor tried to sidetrack Orgrave-bound pickets down into Nottinghamshire. Most vitally, when pickets had arrived in sufficient numbers - as at Orgrave - they lacked the organisation and equipment to beat the police.

What was central was not simply organising sufficient numbers of pickets but most crucially that they be organised and protected to hold off the police attacks they were experiencing. Mass pickets had to become organised workers' defence squads. The NUM leadership did not respond to the might of the police in this way. With the partial exception of Scargill, the NUM lefts still thought they could settle the dispute through negotiation.

In the hotel room talks, the NUM Executive showed that it remained committed to settling the strike through a secretly negotiated deal with MacGregor on the issue of pit closures alone. Scargill - more than any other Executive member - has often used his platforms to stress that the aims of the strike embrace not only pit closures but also winning the pay claim in full, a shorter working week and earlier retirement. We agree that there should be no return to work without full satisfaction on all these fronts and a no-victimisation guarantee that every single striker gets their job back.

However, the negotiations have taken place behind closed doors away from the scrutiny of the rank and file strikers. This goes for the dealings with Stanley Orme and ACAS in late August as well. And it is increasingly clear that the negotiations have focused almost entirely on the issue of the closure programme. What else can we make of Scargill's claim that only one word stood between the NUM and the NCB when the talks foundered in mid-July? It certainly did not mean that the board had offered a four-day week, higher pay, early retirement etc!

Throughout the first negotiating phase, the NUM Executive and its closest friends such as Dennis Skinner were confidently trumpeting >

THEIR VIOLENCE AND OURS

A VITAL COMPONENT of the Tories' attack on the miners has been the media campaign against 'violence and intimidation'. No trade union or Labour Party leader can appear on TV without being invited to, "condemn violence on the picket lines." To his great credit, Arthur Scargill has repeatedly and trenchantly refused to do this. Quite rightly, he has pointed to the police as the first to use violence.

In sharp contrast to Scargill have been the official leaders of the Labour Party such as Kinnock and Hattersley. They have shown neither sympathy nor support for the strike. From calling for a ballot, to pleading with Thatcher to intervene, they have kept their distance from the miners - especially from miners on picket lines or demonstrations. When two miners were killed on picket duty they kept silent.

Only when challenged to take a position on the violence of strikers trying to resist Thatcher's baton-wielding goon squads did these gentlemen have something to say. They condemned it in the harshest terms. And why? Because they recognised that they were being questioned on their own fundamental loyalty to the bosses' state. When they condemn picket line violence they are signalling to the captains of industry, the Fleet Street barons and the General Staff of the Armed (and the supposedly unarmed) Forces that, if they were the government, they too could be relied upon to use force against striking workers.

Of course, Kinnock claims to be against all violence. With unspeakable hypocrisy this false friend of the working class had the nerve to tell a party of striking miners' children that, "Violence has no part in industrial disputes. It is utterly alien to the way we conduct affairs in this country." Can this man ever have been on a picket line? Obviously not for anything more than a ritual, vote-catching photo-call. The police always try to make picket lines ineffective. From the humblest recognition dispute in a back street sweat shop to set piece confrontations like Orgrave, the purpose of the police presence is to stop the strikers from enforcing their will on their opponents. Even where police attempts to stop pickets are limited to 'requests' not to block the pavement there is never any doubt that behind this there is the threat of force and violence. If you do not move on you are causing an 'obstruction'. If you resist arrest the police are 'entitled' to use force. If there are enough of you to prevent this, more police will be brought in, and so on to the snatch-squads, the cavalry charge and, one day, perhaps soon, plastic bullets or the army.

Police escorts for scabs and blacked supplies, arrests of pickets and intimidation of strikers are a fact of life in this country as they are in others. Look at the facts in the miners' strike; two pickets have been killed but no scabs and no policemen. Over 2,000 pickets have been injured, many seriously. Police injuries, although spectacularly displayed, are far fewer. The scabs themselves have suffered very little. Police vio-



Unarmed pickets beaten at Orgrave

lence is not limited to confrontations on the picket lines. A report to the Yorkshire NUM documents the use of terror both against individuals and communities. Physical abuse of arrested miners verges on torture. One victim testifies, "... the Inspector who I had spoken to outside the club came up to me and said to his rank of uniformed thugs, 'We'll have this bastard next ... give him the Special Treatment'. They put me on the ground in a prone position ... a truncheon was brought horizontally from my back over my head, in front of my eyebrows and across the bridge of my nose. My head and torso were then levered up from the ground with the truncheon. Some kind of foreign body was inserted into each nostril and stuffed up my nose with what I assumed to be a ball point pen. ... The truncheon was then placed under my nose and this was used as the levering point instead of the bridge of my nose. I was lowered back to the ground and my back was jumped on several times ... Finally, my head was turned sideways to the ground and something soft like a cloth was put under it, then someone jumped on my head."

There can be no question then about whether violence is used against strikers. The only question is, 'What should be done about it?' "Renounce violence" say Kinnock and company. What would this mean? It would mean standing by and seeing the strike defeated. It

would mean telling scabs, in advance, that there was nothing to stop them going to work, breaking the strike, earning the overtime. It would mean the forcing through of MacGregor's pit closures, the ruination of whole communities and a generation on the dole - but we could take comfort that we, at least, were not violent. We, at least, behaved as Mr Kinnock thinks British people ought to behave.

Rightly, nearly every striking worker will reject Kinnock's advice with the contempt it deserves. The miners have every right to use violence in their war with the British state. To take up sticks and stones, and anything else to hand, against fully-armed riot police is only elementary self-preservation. To build barricades against the scabs and baton charges, to set fire to them to stop the cavalry charges, is completely justified. To take covert 'guerrilla' action against the material apparatus of scabbing, buses, trucks etc, is a perfectly legitimate response to the state's covert operations of phone-tapping, misinformation and their 'state of siege' roadblocks.

Legitimate? Certainly. Sufficient? We think not. We believe that the determination of the miners, the ingenuity of their picket squads, the solidarity within their communities and the sheer guts and energy of the pickets themselves have to be combined together through the formation of picket defence squads.

To date, the police have been able to break

picket lines not primarily through weight of numbers but by superiority of organisation, discipline and military technique. The mobilisation of really mass pickets around key points in all the coalfields (and in the docks strike) can greatly offset some of the state's advantages. However, as long as the issue at stake is the enforcement of a picket line, the smaller, disciplined force will defeat the bigger, undisciplined crowd. But, a large crowd which includes organised teams whose job is to defend the crowd, teams who are known to each other and to the crowd, that is a very different matter. Within every village the candidates for such teams are already well known. Already, spontaneously, they take the lead in confrontations, they discuss tactics and targets amongst themselves. What is required is the formal step of open organisation, open support for such teams from the miners' leaders at local and national level. Both on the picket lines and in the villages, the formation and the training of defence organisations is now vital. Their appearance will transform the situation and give the initiative back to the miners. Of course, they will be greeted with mock moral horror and outrage by the bosses' media and politicians, including the leaders of the Labour Party. But their real horror, their real fear will lie in the realisation that the miners will not give way either to state violence or to the hypocritical pacifism of the Labour leaders. ■

OF THE MINERS' STRIKE



Police riot at Orgreave

▷ Imminent victory from the moment MacGregor came to the table. Saturday July 14th's issue of *The Miner*, under the headline "The cracks are showing" declared that "the NUM is heading for the greatest industrial victory in the post-war history of Great Britain". The membership were kept going on this diet of expecting an imminent victorious conclusion to the dispute.

June and July showed that the Executive were not prepared or able to organise to decisively rout the Tories. More importantly, they also revealed that despite the enormous strength of rank and file miners, they for their part were neither organised to hold their own leaders to account, **nor to mobilise the majority of strikers alongside them.** Whatever differences Scargill may have had with other Executive members over tactics or strategy, and whatever he might or might not have wanted to do, he was not prepared to openly organise the rank and file against the conciliators and backsliders.

As a result of this the rank and file militants - despite their enormous **inenuity and courage** - have got been organised as a force that can act independently whenever the leaders waver or climb down. They have not been able to create the degree of organised defence and military precision needed to hold the picket lines against police attack. They have not been organised to foil plans to demobilise or divert pickets. They have rarely been organised to take independent action to win fighting solidarity action from other sections of workers. And they have not been organised to break through the shroud of secrecy that has surrounded each and every stage of talks between the NUM, the NCB and the backstabbers in the Labour Party leadership, or to hold the negotiators to account.

Militants have generally also faced a major problem of drawing the mass of the strikers into direct participation in the strike. The failure to create the democratic mass meetings as the bedrock of the strike **from the very start** has continued to bedevil the strike. It has meant that the pool of picketers and strike activists has remained relatively small while the majority of strikers have been left uninvolved and outside of the day-to-day running of the dispute - except for the act of receiving their food parcels.

This already has, and will continue to have, important consequences for the strike. Not only does it leave a large proportion of the strikers to the direct mercy of Thatcher and MacGregor's head-fixers, it also means that the militants have not been preparing and organising the mass of strikers to hold out until victory.

In any attempt to sell the miners short, the Executive will appeal directly to the stop-at-home strikers over the heads of the militants. All the media will be on their side too, for a change. To allow the strike to become a stay-at-home-strike for most miners leaves the initiative with the NUM Executive, the NCB and the Tories. Militants will learn this to their cost unless they act to remedy it now.

THE TALKS BREAKDOWN ANOTHER TORY RETHINK

Whatever the weaknesses of the leadership and the rank and file militants, the Tories failed in their immediate objectives in this phase of the dispute. Such was the fighting spirit of the active miners that the Tories and the NCB could not achieve a negotiated settlement that would not have seemed to be a victory for Arthur Scargill and the NUM. The Tories have never budged an inch from their aim of ending this dispute only when they have broken the fighting strength of the NUM. The miners had received massive support from workers everywhere. A June opinion poll registered 35% support for the NUM against 41% for the NCB, despite the slavish work of the TV and press hacks.

Doubtless on Thatcher's say-so, the talks eventually foundered amidst a joint miners and dockers strike in mid-July. The breakdown of talks caught

the NUM leaders on the hop. They had been maintaining morale with bulletins announcing an imminent and total victory. In addition the energy and motivation of the activists had been maintained by a regular timetable of demonstrations and special conferences that at least buttressed the impression of forward movement in the dispute.

Arthur Scargill's statement that they were within one word of a settlement revealed a great weakness in the NUM's position. Even if the NCB and MacGregor conceded a word that went beyond "economic" reasons for maintaining a pit, it would not mark a decisive victory over job losses. It would merely signal a return to pit-by-pit negotiations with the NUM - a process that would still allow the NCB to close pits after due procedure. It would allow the management to return to the attack in a short period - perhaps next Spring - when the NUM would be ill-prepared for another national strike.

Anything short of a clear and unambiguous commitment in black and white that there will be no job losses whatsoever and that no pits will close without the agreement of the miners who work in them, will grievously sell short the enormous sacrifices of this strike. The NCB was never within one word of such a concession. It was never within one word of conceding victory to the NUM.

The collapse of the talks threw the NUM into some confusion. Thatcher immediately took the offensive. She announced on 14th July that she was prepared to use Emergency Powers to break the miners. She backed this up with a rabid call to arms against the working class: "We had to fight the enemy without in the Falklands. Now we are fighting the enemy within. It is more difficult to fight but just as dangerous to liberty".

The Tories now resorted to two new weapons: the "return to work movement" and the implementation of their anti-union laws.

THE BACK TO WORK MOVEMENT

The bosses had been trying to engineer a return to work movement since the beginning of the strike. In late May they tried to lure North Derbyshire men back with the bait of a Bank Holiday Pay advance. This met with little success. In June MacGregor appealed for a return to work with a personal letter to strikers, and Thatcher

backed him from the TV screen. Despite the press coverage and public hero status bestowed on scabs by the media, these pleas achieved no significant results for the NCB.

In July the NCB and press turned their attention to the Daily Mail's latest pawn - "Silver Birch", hoping that the call for scabbing would win more support coming from a miner than from MacGregor or Thatcher herself.

In terms of locating real candidates to spearhead a meaningful return to work, the Silver Birch campaign has achieved little. Perhaps the NCB have made a small dent in the strike in Scotland. The legacy of betrayal, defeats and retreats over recent years seems to have left the Scottish NUM comparatively weak in its picketing resources. But in general those who tried to go back were either got out again by mass picketing, as they were in Wales and Kent, or were so isolated and incoherent as to be incapable of masquerading as representatives of a movement of any kind.

POLICE INVASION

This back-to-work campaign however had its effect on the course of the dispute. It was the excuse to unleash a new wave of police violence against the militant areas. In early August Home Secretary Brittan announced that the police were being "given all the backing they need" - as if he needed to say that twenty-two weeks into the strike!

In mid-August the police took their cue to run riot in the streets, pubs and houses of Hatfield and Armthorpe. The Nottinghamshire occupation methods were applied in Yorkshire. The police served notice that they were launching an offensive to control the pit heads and access roads in traditionally militant areas.

The savagery of the police attacks showed once again how desperately the miners need organised defence if they are to hold their ground. Once again the absence of adequate mass defence was paid for in serious injuries and mass arrests. But the back to work threat and police invasion did serve to flood the picket lines with thousands of previously less-involved strikers. To this extent it gave the militants a new opportunity to mobilise the rank and file and create the mechanisms of mass workers' democracy to maintain that mobilisation.

Some of the Yorkshire pits - Silverwood for example - are organising visits to every strikers' home to keep them in touch. This is an exhausting diversion that will not solve the problem of non-involvement. Only by bringing the rank and file into the strike through regular democratic mass meetings can militants overcome the threat of the non-involved turning on the activists as the strike and its attendant hardships grind on.

LEGAL ATTACK

The Tories held off from using their anti-union laws until late July. The Institute of Directors and similar reactionary cabals such as the Argonauts complained that the Tories were playing it too soft. Some police chiefs squealed that the government was passing too much of the responsibility for bashing the miners onto them, with potentially disastrous effects for police credibility in the mining communities. But it was still not until 30th July that a High Court judge ordered the first sequestration of NUM funds when "Justice" Park demanded £50,000 from the South Wales miners.

The NUM faced - and still faces - the threat of further injunctions and sequestrations now that the Read brothers have established in court

that lorry-owning millionaires can sting the NUM for £50,000 whenever miners pickets come to the attention of scab lorry drivers.

This new higher level of legal attack has been accompanied by an ever-more hysterical propaganda barrage in the Thatcherite media about "picket-line violence". It brings with it the very real threat that the police will use conspiracy charges against strike militants or - if MacGregor got his way - against Arthur Scargill himself.

DEALING WITH THE SCABS

How have the NUM leaders shaped up to this new round of battle? The back to work movement has highlighted the failure of the NUM Executive to act decisively against the scabs. From June, Nottinghamshire strikers have been calling for mass expulsions of scabs and scab officials from the union. As if to meet this demand, the July Special Conference carried through a rule change creating a national disciplinary structure in the union. But still no action was taken to oust the scab branch officials who had taken office in Nottinghamshire in June. Scab full-time officials like Leicestershire's Jack Jones or the likes of Silver Birch still defy the NUM with impunity.

Fearful of legal action in the courts and loath to break the hallowed bureaucratic traditions of federalism in the NUM, the Executive has refused to take the union's discipline into Nottinghamshire and the Midlands, just as it refused to take the fight for a national strike there in the first weeks of the strike.

The result is that the rotten Silver Birch network has been able to maintain its claim to be NUM members while Jones, Toon and their allies have been left free to use the resources and offices of the union to extend scabbing and sabotage the strike. They will use these resources to further their project of building a Spencerite company union in the future.

FIGHTING THE SEQUESTATORS

The South Wales Executive faced the sequestrators with a symbolic show of strength in Pontypridd. Emylyn Williams promised victory or death and declared that "there should be general strikes throughout the country". Anti-Tory law TUC leaders were called on to "put their muscle where their mouth is". Arthur Scargill called "on the British trade union movement to now honour the undertaking made at the TUC Special Conference at Wembley and give total physical support to the NUM".

But - as our front page article shows - the transformation of these calls into action has been left, as it has throughout the dispute, to behind-the-scenes deals with the left trade union leaders on the road to the Brighton TUC congress.

The first six months of the miners' strike has been an inspiration to millions of workers. After years of the seemingly irresistible advance of the Thatcherite juggernaut, at last the Tories have met a massive obstacle. Despite daily prophecies of the strike's impending collapse, every major tactic adopted by the Tories has failed to break this strike. This is testimony to the resolution of the miners who have shown time and time again that they can inflict bloody defeat on the Tories.

WHERE NOW?

The miners will only realise their potential of a total victory if they learn the lessons of the struggle so far. The Executive's tactics have failed to force the Tories to surrender. Many militants will blame this on the conciliators on the Executive or on Heathfield or Jack Taylor. At every juncture the militants have looked to Scargill as their hope, and pinned their hopes on Arthur conjuring something from up his sleeve to resolve the dispute in their favour. The record shows that the best construction you can put on Scargill's actions is that he is a prisoner of the Executive, both as the result of his isolation on this body, and because he refuses to organise the militant rank and file to act against any conciliators whenever necessary.

It is up to the rank and file militants to take the running of the dispute into their own hands. It is up to them to organise the mass democracy that can hold the strike together at the base. It is their task to organise active self-defence of the pickets against the police. They must act independently to win the support of their fellow-workers in every other industry.

This means that the task of the hour remains that of organising the militant rank and file across the pits and the coalfields into a conscious independent force that can mobilise the members, support the Executive when it moves forward and check it when it hesitates or retreats. Steps have been taken in this direction - the Midlands Area Strike Committee is one of them.

But at the moment such organisation is limited to areas where the officials have shamefully betrayed the strike or refused to actively lead or co-ordinate it. The task now is to spread rank and file organisation to the strong areas, to create a national rank and file movement of militant miners. It is the key to effective tactics now. It is the key to total victory over Thatcher.

by Dave Hughes



(Bernie Malone)

Rank and file must control these leaders.

(John Harris, IFL)

In 1929 the "Roaring Twenties" in America were to come to an abrupt halt. In that year the banking and finance centre of the States heralded the oncoming economic slump with the Wall Street crash. The slump wreaked havoc on millions of American workers. Between 1929 and 1933 unemployment rose from 3.2% to 24.9% as more than 15 million were thrown out of work. In the same period the average wage in manufacturing industry fell 20%. Poverty and hunger became the norm.

The response of the trade union leadership to such a massive attack on the working class was "business as usual". AFL leaders like William Green, the AFL President, were a thoroughly reactionary bunch who had purged their narrow craft organisations of "radicals" in 1926/7. These "labor statesmen" as they liked to be seen, practised "business unionism". They operated the unions as services for the bosses in return for meagre reforms. However during the slump their services were not so necessary. By 1933 the AFL's membership had sunk to barely over 2 million, from over 4 million in 1920, as even skilled workers found their lives ravaged by capitalism's crisis.

But while the unions continued to decline in numbers, the anger of the working class in the early 1930s was demonstrated in a number of ways. Unemployed councils sprouted in every city. Their struggles against eviction and for relief often reached riot proportions. In Chicago evictions were suspended because of the direct action of the 45 branches and 22,000 members of these Councils. Such movements were normally brutally suppressed. The Ford Hunger March in Detroit in March 1932 was met with fierce resistance and 4 workers were shot dead by the police.

Non-unionised workers too, struck, spontaneously against sackings and wage cuts. In one such strike in North Carolina in July 1932 a few hundred hosiery workers walked off the job and within days 15,000 workers had joined them closing 100 factories. Such militancy needed to be organised on a permanent footing if workers were to defend themselves and advance. The urgent need for new non-craft based industrial unions and an independent working-class political party was clear.

HOSTILITY TO BOSSES' PARTIES

Indeed hostility to the traditional bourgeois parties was evidenced in certain areas. In Minnesota, whose largest city is Minneapolis, the hostility of workers and smaller farmers was evidenced in the 1932 election of Floyd Olson as State Governor on a Farmer Labor Party (FLP) ticket. But this experience was not repeated on a national scale. The Republican, Hoover, was the clear-cut candidate of Big Business. And the FLP channelled their efforts into supporting F.D. Roosevelt, the Democratic candidate, who offered the vague promise of a New Deal.

The bare bones of FDR's New Deal was an increased role for central government in an attempt to foster national economic recovery. As strikes increased in 1933, undermining the prospect of recovery, one element of the New Deal became the creation of Labor Boards to defuse strikes, enforce cooling-off periods and compulsory mediation. Symbolically Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act, granted labor the right to "organise unions of their own choosing". This legal provision was a useful propaganda weapon for the union militants. Nevertheless the provision lacked teeth and, to make organisation a reality, militants had to fight every step of the way against union busting bosses. Minneapolis was a case in point.

THE I. B. T.

The transport industry, central to Minneapolis' economy was typical. It was organised by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), nationally in the iron grip of the odious business-union man Daniel Tobin. Locally its membership of less than a thousand was divided into splinter branches or "locals" according to the commodity trucked. Local 574, a General Division Local, was used as a clearing house for new members pending sub-division. In 1933 its membership numbered 70 or so. With the exception of its President, Bill Brown, "a fighter by nature", its executive was slavishly pro-Tobin. "On balance, there was little more in Local 574 than an IBT charter with which to begin an organising campaign." (Dobbs). This was precisely the objective that the Trotskyists set themselves. It was a crucial step in their attempt to root their forces in the working class.

The local CLA leaders Carl Skoglund and V.R. Dunne and his brothers worked in the coal hauling industry. In 1933 they began a drive to organise coal truckers and loaders. Stealthily they organised a volunteer committee of workers to fight for admission into Local 574 against the local executive. During this struggle, eventually won in 1934, they democratically prepared the demands of the members.

In the thirties the city was a communication and distribution centre, a link between the vast agricultural expanses to the west and the large scale industry coming to dominate the neighbouring cities around the Great Lakes to the east. Its industry was ruled by the Citizens Alliance (CA), a federation of bosses dominated by the biggest capitalist concerns, which had crushed every strike attempt for 20 years. James Cannon, founder of the CLA, said of Minneapolis: "It was a town of lost strikes, miserably low wages, murderous hours and a weak and ineffectual craft-union movement." (*History of American Trotskyism*).

DRIVERS, ORGANIZE!

Because of the depression, wages of all workers have been reduced, and this has resulted in the general lowering of the standard of living.

The increase in the cost of living has resulted in further wage cuts.

WHAT MUST WE DO?

The Only Answer Is ORGANIZATION!

DO YOU KNOW?

That under Section 7-A of the N.L.R.A. workers are not only granted the right to organize, but are guaranteed the right to exercise this privilege without discrimination?

DO YOU KNOW?

That the coal drivers of Minneapolis took advantage of this privilege to organize and through our organization gained a 25% wage increase?

Monster Mass Meeting
Shubert Theatre, Sunday, April 15
at 2 P. M.

Will open the big campaign to organize
All Minneapolis Drivers, Helpers, Filling Station
Attendants and Platform Man

Governor Floyd B. Olson
Will Speak on "The Right to Organize"

Speakers from your union will outline a definite program
of organization for your approval.

Auspices of Minneapolis General Drivers and Helpers
Local Union No. 674

They centered on union recognition, increased wages, shorter hours, premium pay for overtime, improved working conditions, and job protection through a seniority system.

On Sunday 4th February 1934 a mass meeting gave the employers 48 hours to negotiate and elected a strike committee. With Citizen Alliance backing the employers stood firm against the coal truckers demands. On Wednesday the coal yards were struck. And how! Not only had the Trotskyists picked their target well - coal shortages in sub-zero temperatures - but their organisation and militancy shocked the employers.

The yards were tied up tight by over 600 pickets. Any coal truck movements were tracked and stopped by the use of cruising picket squads - or what are called the flying pickets. By Friday the bosses were forced to retreat. A Labor Board mediation resulted in union recognition and improved wages. This short sharp shock for the "Citizens" and their open-shop policy was also an encouraging prelude to a drive to organise workers in other sectors beyond coal. In line with the union rules Local 574 had contacted head office for endorsement. Typically the day the strike ended in victory the strikers received a letter from Tobin: "Strike endorsement..cannot be granted".

RANK AND FILE RULE

The organising committee developed in the coal drive now became an official body by rank and file consent. A recruitment drive on industrial rather than craft lines was launched. As in coal, the young militants who spearheaded the drive, built up the demands as they recruited. Objections of the official executive were overruled by the rank and file.

By April the Local was confident enough to make public its growth. A mass meeting at Shubert Theatre, packed to overflowing heard Governor Olson's message to workers "to band together for your own protection and welfare." By now 3000 had been organised. Carl Skoglund argued the unions next step and the meeting voted to strike on their demands if the employers failed to meet the union deadline.

A broad strike committee, elected from the meeting, then swung into action. Alliances were built with the unemployed and with poor farmers. Crucially efforts were made to get the blessing, if not the help of the AFL's local officialdom. This way the strikers hoped to neutralise the likely sabotaging interventions of Tobin. Following the lead of the earlier Progressive Miners' Strike, a women's auxiliary was set up.

As in the strike committee so in the support organisations it was the Trotskyists who took the initiative. CLA members active in the unemployed movement campaigned for an unemployed section of Local 574. Unemployed leaders were drawn into the union's picketing plans. Far from being a source of scab labor, as the Citizen's Alliance hoped, and the union officials, contemptuous of non-contributors to their fat salaries, predicted, the unemployed were drawn into battle alongside the strikers.

ORGANISING THE WOMEN

Marvell Scholl and Clara Dunne recruited women to the idea of active involvement in the strike - staffing the commissary, the office, nursing and when the action started, picketing too. Dobbs describes the motives, initial problems and eventual success of building the women's auxiliary in terms that ring familiar in the development of the miners' wives groups today:

"The aim would be to draw in wives, girl friends, sisters and mothers of union members. Instead of having their morale corroded by financial difficulties they would face during the strike...they should be drawn into the thick of battle where they could learn unionism through first-hand participation.... The proposal (to form a women's auxiliary- Ed.)

CLASS WAR

was adopted although not with much enthusiasm. After I got some reedling, especially from men who saw in their union activity a way to get an occasional night out, but all this stopped suddenly when the women went into action later on."

The Citizen's Alliance would not recognise the union. While they did meet the Labor Board "out of courtesy", they were in fact making time for their preparations against Local 574. Red-baiting and intimidation was rife. The Mayor and the police chief Michael Johannes (Bloody Mike as he came to be known) openly lined up with the bosses and declared their support for the union busting struggle ahead as the new CLA recruit, Farrell Dobbs, discovered when he infiltrated an Alliance meeting.

On May 15th, Local 574 held a mass meeting and voted unanimously to strike in a standing vote. They disregarded, in the name of workers' democracy, Tobin and the IBT's ruling on compulsory ballots for strike action. On May 16th Local 574 went on strike. Arthur Schlesinger, the Harvard History Professor noted: "The city, as they put it locally, was tied up as tight as a bull's eye in flytime." (*The Coming of the New Deal*). Once again the extent and power of the union's organisation caught the Citizen's Alliance on the hop. In the weeks preceding the strike, new headquarters were set up in a garage on Chicago Avenue. This housed a maintenance depot for the cruising squads, the commissary - which with expert help from the Cooks and the Waiters Union, fed 4-5,000 people daily - the offices and a hospital.

ARMY-LIKE OPERATIONS

An elected strike committee of 75 rank and file union members organised a loudspeaker system to address daily mass meetings. Subcommittees were set up to promote material aid, handle complaints, arrange legal assistance and under Ray Dunne and Farrell Dobbs, organise picketing. Dobbs describes this organised picketing: "Cruising squads in autos were assigned, district by district, on the lookout for scab trucks. A captain was designated for each of these squads...At all times a reserve force...was kept on hand...In situations where large forces were involved, a field commander was appointed...Special cruising squads with handpicked crews were constantly at the disposal of the picket dispatchers...captained by qualified leaders who carried credentials." In fact it was a force operating like an army. But it was an army recruited from and controlled by rank and file workers - and it fought for their class interests. These innovations and developments inspired many other workers and union membership quickly doubled to 6,000. Help poured in from hundreds of unemployed volunteers and students. Then the Yellow Cab drivers encouraged by its militancy joined Local 574 and struck. "Nothing moved on wheels without the union's permission".

By May 18th the Citizen's Alliance had recovered from the shock to organise counter-measures. A "citizens' rally" chose a "law and order committee" to emulate 574's military-style organisation and to enlist deputies. The next day fighting took place and a number of pickets were badly injured. That same evening an agent provocateur who had infiltrated the strike HQ dispatched a team of pickets into a trap. The pickets, 5 of them women, were badly beaten by "police clubs and by saps in the hands of hired thugs."

"Up to now the workers had gone about their activities bare-handed; but they found that attempts to exercise their right to peacefully picket were being prevented." They tooled up with clubs of all sorts. The Alliance let it be known that they intended to load trucks in the Market and on Monday "two organised and disciplined forces were to face each other, club against club, in a battle fought along military lines." Thousands of armed pickets prevented the scabs operating and more than 30



Fifty years ago the American city of Minneapolis was a battlefield in the class war between workers and bosses. Three strikes in 1934 shook the city, American society, to their foundations. The unique feature of these strikes by the Teamster union's 574 was that they were led by Trotskyists.

Minneapolis boasted the strongest branch of Communist League of America (CLA) the An Trotskyist organisation. This branch was led by veteran worker leaders like Carl Skoglund and the Dunne brothers - Vincent Raymond (known as Miles and Grant - and, in the course of the strike recruited young Teamster militants like Farrell Dobbs. In the battles of 1934 the Trotskyists exposed the lie, so often levelled at Trotskyists then and now by the Communist and social democratic parties that they are incapable of winning mass support leading workers to victory.

The victory of the 1934 Minneapolis strikes of decisive importance for the development of Trotskyism. So too was it for the whole of the American working class. The victory of Local 574 in turning Minneapolis a union town inspired other wo-

cops and deputies were hospitalised. When, in frustration, the police drew their guns, "Bob Bell a larman and fearless" drove a truck into the midst of cops allowing pickets to jump out and preventing shooting in the melee.

"Chief Johannes decided to call it a day." But only to call up reserves. A repeat of the battle was ordered by him for the next day. 1500 cops and deputies entered the fray. Many thought that a victory over the "lower classes" would present no problems at all. James Cannon wrote that the deputies "came to the market in a sort of gala holiday spirit. One of the special deputies wore his polo hat. He was going to have one hell of a time down there, knocking strikers' heads around like polo balls. The ill-advised sportsman was mistaken; it was no polo game this time." (*History of American Trotskyism*). The pickets were organised, they knew their job and they were led by seasoned picket captains. They proved the value of creating workers' self-defence organisations when the mass picket is faced with violent police opposition. In the ensuing battle the pickets concentrated on the less seasoned deputies. In the "Battle of Deputies Run" two of the special were killed in the fighting. The pickets won and again nothing moved on the streets.



Funeral march of Henry Ness - a picket shot in the back by the police.

IN MINNEAPOLIS



under the editorial control of union leaders and party journalists. This paper, transformed during the next strike into a daily, was to become a formidable weapon to counter the bosses' lies.

Alliances with the unemployed, women and farmers were strengthened and yet more streamlined organisation developed. On July 6th the union showed its strength when 12,000 filled a meeting hall leaving thousands more outside.

Five days later Local 574 voted for an all out strike by a standing vote. When the bosses countered about the undemocratic nature of the vote, the strike committee recommended a secret ballot to a mass meeting. The meeting threw out the proposal and reaffirmed its commitment to workers' democracy by repeating its standing vote and on July 17th Minneapolis was again brought to a standstill. The strikers elected a strike committee of 100, democratically accountable to them, to run the strike on a day to day basis.

THE BOSSES RETALIATE

On the other side, the bosses organised too. Just like MacGregor, Thatcher and her Cabinet cronies today, they attacked the union's leaders, wrote individual letters to strikers and then hurled the forces of the police and the National Guard against their enemy within. They were ably helped in their attack by Tobin, who now castigated the earlier strikes as illegal and the Dunne brothers as 'serpents in human form'. Tobin's red baiting, like that of a Laird or a Chapple, was faithfully regurgitated in the bosses' press.

The red-baiting was answered firmly and sometimes humourously in the Daily Organiser. In one edition the Organiser published a verbatim 'confession' from the Editor: 'Well, to tell the truth, it was all planned out in Constantinople a few months ago. Some of the boys worked a week driving trucks and saved up enough money to take a trip to Europe. They went over to see Trotsky in Constantinople and get instructions for their next move. Trotsky said: 'Boys, I want to see a revolution in Minneapolis before the snow flies.' They said 'O.K.' and started to leave.' (Cannon- Notebook of an Agitator) The Organiser could afford to laugh- its readership of 10,000 who paid for the paper and more besides through donations, had nothing to fear from the Trotskyist 'reds'. Their courage and their resolute defence of the workers' interest had earned them the trust and respect of these readers. The red-baiting showed the bosses and bureaucrats fear of Trotskyism precisely because it was winning mass influence.

Fearing the failure of their red-baiting and not fully trusting Governor Olson and the Federal Labor Mediators he brought in to settle the dispute, the employers decided to try and cow the workers into submission. Their lickspittle police chief did their bloody bidding with a vengeance. On July 20th, 'Bloody Friday' as it became known, the police ambushed two truck loads of unarmed pickets. Without any provocation they opened fire. When their revolvers and rifles fell silent 67 people lay bullet-ridden, mainly shot in the back. Two of these- Henry Ness and John Belor- died. Thirty four had a total of 160 pieces of lead removed from them in surgery. Just as today the police here beat miners in the streets of Armthorpe and on the fields of Or-greave, so, fifty years ago in Minneapolis, they were performing similar violent services for their overfed capitalist paymasters. The Minneapolis workers, like today's miners, fought back. But their methods of doing so- organised picket defence, mass mobilisation of other workers in solidarity strike action- can teach miners today some useful lessons.

CITY AT A STANDSTILL

On the evening of July 20th 15,000 angry workers attended an open-air meeting. On the Saturday there were four times as many pickets. The Organiser argued for a one-day strike by all transportation workers on Monday 23rd. That day too, laundry workers went on strike alongside Local 574 for their own demands linked with those of the teamsters. On Tuesday, Minneapolis was at a standstill as 50,000 workers attended the funeral of Henry Ness.

As the police attempted to resume trucking every operation was flanked by larger numbers of flying pickets. While the strikers had decided not to arm themselves with guns or knives, for tactical reasons, the police didn't know this and faced with mass organised cruising pickets, armed with clubs and instructed to 'defend themselves', they found it impossible to crack the strike.

Increasingly desperate federal mediators now proposed a settlement, endorsed by Olson who threatened martial law if either side rejected it. Another sign of Olson's get-tough policy was the arrest the same day of Cannon and Max Schactman, one of the CLA journalists. Then to the surprise of the Alliance, the strike committee recommended acceptance. The deal, which included recognition of the inside workers, was a basis to build on. Realising this the employers rejected it and Olson imposed martial law that was, in every respect, used against the strikers not the bosses. Far from being neutral in the conflict the state forces actually punished the strikers for the bosses' rejection. The powerful capitalists who

ran the Alliance referred to the mediation as surrender. The strikers responded by warning that on August 1st mass picketing in defiance of the state militia would begin.

At 4 am that morning, Olson moved against the strikers. Their HQ was surrounded and Ray and Miles Dunne with Bill Brown were thrown into the stockade.

To Olson's surprise the picketing after his crack-down intensified! The seasoned troops of Local 574, with its hundreds of picket captains improvised on contingency plans. 'Within a few hours over 500 calls for help were reported...usually to find scabs who had been worked over but no pickets.' Further Olson's attempt to find softer negotiators merely gave him the chance to meet Kelly Postal, Ray Rainbolt - one of the few Trotskyist red Indians - and Jack Maloney, 3 picket captains who refused to talk until their leaders were released. Olson retreated and the strike leaders were freed.

As August wore on some of the smaller employers were cracking despite Olson's attempts at military strikebreaking. Back to work movements failed. Dobbs describes a war of attrition between militia and pickets well into August.

Eventually the determined Local and its Trotskyist leadership won the day. AFL bigwigs, Olson and Citizen Alliance men all met with Roosevelt. A fresh mediation was launched under Roosevelt's direct supervision.

Olson now agreed the release of all pickets from the stockade prison. The union would be recognised, inside workers too, wherever it won an election. On August 21st the strike committee recommended acceptance to a mass meeting. Local 574 was soon recognised as the bargaining representative in all the major trucking firms and most of the rest. Wages and conditions were improved. And to cap their victory, the workers elected their tried and tested representatives in place of its moribund predecessor.

A FIGHTING UNION

The Trotskyists who led the organising drive and three strikes were confirmed as Local 574's leaders. In 6 months Minneapolis had been transformed from an open-shop citadel into a union town. In that time the Local had been transformed from a branch of 70 odd members under the control of tame Tobin men, into a fighting union of 7000 plus, democratically run by its rank and file. More than this. Their struggle had been closely watched by millions of workers suffering similar misleadership after a long period of retreat.

Three days before the victory Jim Cannon writing in an Organiser article: 'The Secret of Local 574' had said of the union: 'The outward form is old-fashioned and 'regular', but the inner content is

modern and pulsating with new vigorous life. In one sense of the word it can be said that Local 574 represents a fusion of the new and the old at the moment when the American labor movement as a whole stands before the prospect of great changes to meet the modern needs of the workers.' Two years later the CIO was formed in a yet greater wave of working class revolt.

Of course circumstances are vastly different in Britain in 1984 and the American city of Minneapolis in 1934. Nevertheless the reasons why the Minneapolis strikes won, are important guidelines to militants today. The democratic organisation of the strikes embodied in regular mass meetings whose decisions were binding ensured that the members were mobilised in the strike and not left at home tending gardens and isolated. The strikes were run by the rank and file. This was symbolised in the July/August strike by the election of the Committee of 100. Significantly its key leaders - CLA members- did not number a single full-time official in their ranks.

CLASS STRUGGLE

In the struggle to win the strikes Local 574 recognised the importance of defence and the spreading of the strike. Every instance of brutality was answered in kind and used as a means of mobilising support from other workers. The building of an active women's auxiliary played a crucial role in this latter endeavour. Their role was organising welfare plus spreading the strike and winning support for it.

In the end the strikers won union recognition. In an isolated town in vast America they could not hope to achieve much else. Union recognition itself was a tremendous gain. More than that, however, the influence of the Trotskyists made sure that Minneapolis achieved a more lasting significance. In their leadership of the struggle they showed that trade unionism, if it was to truly defend the workers' interests, had to be founded on class struggle not class collaboration. They showed, in the best traditions of revolutionary trade unionism, what could be achieved when the workers fought the bosses by asserting their own needs and interests above all else. Class fighters today, in the NUM and other unions must develop a similar understanding, an understanding that James Cannon expressed well when he wrote in the Organiser: 'Local 574 doesn't take any stock in the theory that capital and labor are brothers, and that the way for little brother labor to get a few crumbs is to be a good boy and appeal to the good nature of big brother capital. We see the issue between capital and labor as an unceasing struggle between the class of exploited workers and the class of exploiting parasites. It is a war. What decides in this war, as in all others is power. The exploiters are organised to grind us down into the dust. We must organise our class to fight back.' □

by Dave Jenkins

kers to take on the rapacious U.S. bosses. If the truckers could win against a powerful bosses' organisation like the Minneapolis 'Citizens Alliance' backed up by the police and National Guard, then other workers could defeat their bosses. Following Minneapolis the American working class, enthused and inspired by the struggles and tactics of Local 574 made a 'giant step for labor'. A wave of mass strikes and factory occupations in 1935 and 1936 gave rise to the new industrial unions grouped in the CIO.

In the last twelve months Farrell Dobbs, one of the strike leaders and the historian of the Minneapolis Teamsters and his companion, Marvel Scholl, founder of Local 574's Women's Auxiliary, have both died. We respectfully dedicate this article to them and to the heroes and martyrs of Local 574. We do this in the knowledge that their story is not merely fascinating history, but one rich in lessons for the militants today struggling against the bosses and their state. Picketing miners would do well to read Farrell Dobbs' book 'Teamster Rebellion' (Pathfinder Press) from which all quotations are taken unless otherwise stated.

On Monday and Tuesday, when the fighting reached its peak, the Building Trades Council called a sympathy strike. The electrical workers, inspired by 2 CLA members, marched as a body to Local 574's HQ to put itself at the teamsters' disposal. Delegation after delegation from union locals came to offer their support.

In these circumstances a panicky Labor Board quickly prepared a 24 hour truce- suspending truck traffic and closing the market while a settlement was prepared. The 'Friend of Labor' Olson mobilised the National Guard but was reluctant to use it because of union and FLP rank and file pressure. Instead the truce was extended to permit negotiations. Local 574 withdrew pickets pending 'union recognition and an acceptable settlement.'

By May 25th the union's negotiating team, under complete rank and file control via regular mass meetings had reached an agreement which the strike committee could recommend to a mass meeting as a satisfactory compromise. Improved pay and conditions, the reinstatement of all strikers, a seniority system and most important union recognition, were all won.

Membership soared to over 7,000, many of them 'inside workers'. That is workers other than truckers and loaders but employed as packers and such like in the warehouses or markets. While this agreement was being carried out by the employers and scrutinised by the workers a new row was brewing over whether the inside workers were properly covered by the settlement.

To the strikers the inclusion of inside workers in the deal had been a sticking point. This was an important statement of their commitment to industrial rather than craft, unionism. But the employers, then Governor Olson and the Labor Board backed-tracked. In late June Local 574 held a membership meeting which voted to press for union recognition for all its members and better pay. Preparations for a third strike began.

THE 'WEEKLY ORGANISER'

The CLA national leadership had earlier dispatched James Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, to the scene. In the light of the new events it now sent out a team of Cannon, plus two journalists, an attorney and Hugo Oehler an experienced organiser of the unemployed.

Apart from offering Local 574 their experience in class combat and a political understanding of the class struggle second to none, the Trotskyist cadres made one other vital contribution to the strike. They helped launch a union paper, the Weekly Organiser,



RUC MURDERERS: Tools of the Sectarian State

THE RUC BRUTALLY murdered Sean Downes on August 12th. They and their political leaders did not attempt to brush it off as a regrettable mistake. In fact over a week later the Unionist dominated Assembly in Northern Ireland passed a resolution moved by Ian Paisley saluting "the courage and dedication of the RUC".

Pumping scores of plastic bullets into an unarmed crowd of men, women and children was planned as an act of sectarian savagery by the Protestant paramilitary police force against the mainly Catholic anti-unionist population.

In killing Sean Downes on the 13th anniversary of internment the RUC were doing what comes naturally to them - violently repressing any Catholic, nationalist movement for reforms within this sectarian Orange State. Once again the events of August 12th, as with the whole 63 year history of Northern Ireland, have shown how impossible it is to reform the political institutions of the 6 Counties.

The very creation of Northern Ireland was an illegitimate, anti-democratic act against the majority of Ireland's population. In 1918, an overwhelming majority voted for Sinn Fein and an end to British domination. Yet Britain and the Protestant population of the North East counties conspired to thwart this wish. Artificial boundaries were drawn to ensure a 2:1 Protestant pro-Union majority in an artificial 6 County State that would be loyal to Britain.

The partition of Ireland had, and retains, definite advantages for the British ruling class. First, it kept the working class divided and thus prevented working class unity against the bosses. Secondly, it deprived the 26 County Southern State of the industrial heartland of the North East and prevented the emergence of a developed commercial and industrial rival. Thirdly it allowed Britain's armed forces an important military base on the western seaboard.

The Northern Irish State came into being in 1921

with a minority of anti-unionists - mainly Catholics - trapped within its borders. The history of the ensuing fifty years was one of unremitting repression and discrimination against the Catholics. The Unionists made sure that everything was done to carve them out of public political life. For example, in 1920 local elections had given control of 25 local councils in the Six Counties to nationalists. So, in December 1921, an Act was passed to replace elected councils with Unionist commissioners. This happened to dozens of them. In July 1922 they abolished proportional representation in local elections and redrew the boundaries. The result? After the 1924 elections only 2 out of 80 councils were in Nationalist hands. Boundaries were gerrymandered so as to give Catholics a huge and wasted majority in one seat, and the unionists small majorities in others. This process turned a 61% Catholic majority in Omagh, for example, into a 21:18 seat majority for the Unionists.

Wherever the Catholic majority grew over the years, as in Derry, so the Unionists would continuously redraw the boundaries. Gerrymandering continued until 1967. Added to this was a restricted franchise based on rate paying which excluded more Catholics than Protestants.

DISCRIMINATION

From the political discrimination everything else flowed. Control over housing and thousands of public sector jobs was in Unionist hands. One study in the 1950s showed that only 5% of non-manual workers in Unionist rural councils were Catholics. Worse, in Tyrone and Fermanagh, councils where over half the population were Catholic, only 11 and 9% of employees respectively were Catholic. Naturally the same was true of private employment where most firms were owned by Unionists or dependent on govern-

ment contracts. By 1970, in Harland and Wolff shipyards, out of 10,000 workers only 400 were Catholic. And wherever they were employed they were concentrated in the least skilled, lowest paid jobs.

The housing situation was exactly the same. Councils would buy the loyalty of the Unionist workers by giving them the new homes. Again in the mainly Catholic Fermanagh 1,042 houses were built between 1945-67 and 82% of them went to Protestants.

REFORM AND RESISTANCE

Naturally enough reform and resistance movements developed within the Catholic community during these years. The civil rights movement of the 1960s was feared and hated by the Unionists and brutally dealt with. The conflict came to a head in 1968/9. In October 1968 a 2,000 strong march in Derry was baton charged by the RUC. This was not the first or the last time. In 1950/51 they had baton charged six demonstrations. In January 1969 the RUC helped attack a 4 day march from Belfast to Derry at different points en route. The repeated acts of state violence merely served to underline to many anti-Unionists the impossibility of reforming the 6 Counties. Any movement of Catholics for equal rights threatened to re-open the whole question of partition itself, to raise the spectre of a united Ireland, which in turn threatened the privileged position of the Protestants.

The resistance to RUC and B-Specials brutality by the Catholics threatened to get out of hand by August 1969. Consequently the Labour Government sent in British Troops to restore the Unionists' position. By 1972 the British had abolished Stormont and were ruling the 6 Counties directly from Westminster. The British army replaced the RUC as the primary tool of Loyalist domination.

For the last 10 years each British government would have us believe that they have done their best to reform the situation in the North from above. The record shows what a sham this has been. More importantly for workers it needs to be understood that the origin of this deception has been the Labour Party. During the 1974-9 period the Labour government were the architects of the policy known as "Ulsterisation". The Tories merely inherited this from Labour in 1979. There is no distinctly Thatcherite policy on the Six Counties. What does Ulsterisation consist of?

Firstly, it has involved the attempt to persuade the unionists to make minor adjustments to their rule so as to allow the nationalist parties to participate in political life and thus hope the Catholics

will identify more with the sectarian state. But, since no British government will do anything against the wishes of the unionists, each initiative has fallen flat on its face. From the Sunningdale power-sharing executive in 1974 to the New Ireland Forum in 1984, each attempt to weaken the Unionists' monopoly of political power has been stubbornly resisted by one section of Unionism or another.

The second aspect of Ulsterisation is connected with the strategy of repression. Each government has been intent on labelling the militant resistance of the anti-unionists as criminal. Just as they do with the miners' pickets so the Tories and Labour have tried to portray the violence in the Six Counties as a "law and order" problem in which the "mindless minority" are out of step with the majority. In order to give this a chance of working, Labour tried to gradually replace the army as the chief force of repression with a reformed non-sectarian, "neutral" RUC. The number of troops has halved since 1974 while the numbers of the RUC have increased 300% since 1969 and a special section of the army - the UDR - was created made up of Six Counties men.

Of course the RUC and the UDR have not been instruments of reform at all. All unionist politicians were more than happy to see the new turn because they felt that the RUC could be a more directly political instrument for maintaining loyalism's supremacy. In 1969 11% of the RUC were Catholic and in April 1970 20% of the UDR were Catholic. Today less than 2% of the UDR and less than 4% of the RUC are drawn from the minority community. These figures, allied with the unsurpassed responsibility for day to day "security" operations make the RUC and UDR straightforward instruments of unionism. Sean Downes' death is but the latest sacrifice on the altar of loyalism.

MINERS WITNESS MURDER

Miners, in struggle against the Tories themselves, are beginning to wake up to these facts. Fourteen miners were part of the Troops Out Delegation which witnessed Sean Downes' death. One of them, Martin Bower of Cotgrave NUM - himself a member of a beleaguered minority - said: "I was naive on Ireland up to this point. But this police riot and wanton murder should alter every trade unionist's view on Ireland."

As Dave Douglas points out, many miners are now recognising what the left has said for years; that the repression of the anti-unionists has been a laboratory for experimenting with the techniques of repression. Now, in the miners' strike, the surveillance techniques, the police riot, the summary "justice" in the courts are being practiced on militants. But there is much more to come if we let them. Fourteen police forces already have stocks of plastic bullets. Will the third miner's death be from one of



LEFT: Sean Downes (right of picture) runs across the road while his RUC murderer (left) takes cold-blooded aim.

Below: Sean (bottom left foreground) collapses into the crowd of terrified onlookers as RUC wade in.

Pictures: An Phoblacht



MINERS A

We print below extracts of a speech by Dave Douglas, delegate from Hatfield Main NUM in Yorkshire. He has recently spoken at a series of meetings on Ireland around the country on behalf of the Troops Out Movement. Thanks to Dave for permission to print this speech.

You know the numbers game that's been played during the strike - they call 24,000 men working and 150,000 on strike a "split". I would have thought a split was 50/50 or near enough. They present the union men who are on strike in Nottingham, putting up with the hardest battle, as a tiny minority, when in fact they're part of a massive majority.

That's exactly the same game they've been playing in Ireland. In 1918 I believe, in the all-Ireland General Election, Sinn Fein won 80% of all seats, in an all-Irish General Election, meaning that the massive majority of Irish people had voted in favour of Home Rule. They didn't get it and Ireland was partitioned in 1921. There's never been an all-Ireland General Election since. The British state set up the rules, the nationalists won, so the British changed the rules.

In the three Northern counties that had voted massively for Sinn Fein they were split off from the other six, and the nationalists in the Six Counties are now called a minority - in the same way the union men on strike in Nottingham are called a minority, when in fact both are part of a massive majority.

Why did 24,000 Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and South Midlands miners vote to take the side of the Coal Board? Why did almost a million working class protestants in four of Ireland's 32 counties vote to stay under the British bosses' flag? In both cases because they were granted these minor privileges, safe-guarding them from the worst of acts of the depression.

It led them to identify with their oppressors

them? When will we see Emergency Legislation hustled through - based on the Prevention of Terrorism Act - to suspend our rights? Paid perjurers, no jury courts, effective internment without trial for months and even years? Be under no illusions: should the scale of working class resistance be so great, the Tories and Labour will not hesitate before introducing the most draconian of measures.

Rank and file miners around the country are rightly urging other trade unionists to open up other fronts in the war against Thatcher. The isolated anti-Unionists in the North of Ireland have been holding their front for over 60 years. They have been fighting an armed occupation for the last 15 of them. During this time they have received pathetic assistance from the British Labour movement. By our inactivity at best, we have condoned that repression. The miners now have a chance to make some amends. They are respected, they are listened to by other workers. They can do all workers a favour by giving practical and political assistance to each and every act of resistance of the fighting minority in the Six Counties, just as they do to those heroes standing firm against the scabs in the midland coalfields. A defeat for Thatcher there will be an immense victory for workers struggling against Thatcher everywhere.

Workers must put behind them the days when they refused to discuss Ireland in their branch meetings. They must discuss the issue and take it into the Labour Movement as a whole. Above all they must stand firm in their support no matter what forms of resistance the anti-Unionists take up. Soldiers will get shot, bombs will maim and kill. Should workers condemn them? Not in the least.

LOGICAL RESPONSE

In the miners' strike scabs are beaten up, NCB buses are burned. Acts of industrial or small group violence when planned and well orchestrated are necessary weapons of war forced upon the NUM by the conditions under which they are put by the enemy. Likewise in Ireland, where armed resistance is a logical response to armed oppression.

So we must not condemn such acts of resistance by the IRA when they occur. That would be playing the enemy's game.

However as socialist revolutionaries we do say that only mass working class action in Belfast or Bentley can defeat Thatcher. Only industrial power used to bring Thatcher's supporters to their knees can weaken the resolve of her class to carry on the fight. And that's the lesson the miners can teach the anti-unionists and the southern Irish workers who are their natural allies in the 26 Counties.

A successful mass strike action against Thatcher will help in the political education of Irish anti-Unionists. But they will only be listened to or respected if first miners and other trade unionists declare their practical solidarity.

To date NUM-sponsored Labour MPs like Roy Mason (Barnsley) and Don Concannon (Mansfield) have relied for their selection and election on thousands of miners' votes. Mason was probably the most tuggish of the Northern Ireland Secretaries, the architect of Ulsterisation. Concannon was the wretch who gloated over the death bed of hunger-striker Bobby Sands in 1981. A campaign by miners against them on their record on Ireland would be a great step forward. Concretely, it should be allied to pushing forward the demand in the NUM and the Labour Party for the disbanding of the RUC and the immediate withdrawal of troops. ■

By Keith Hassell

D IRELAND

rather than with their fellow workers. In both cases it was a deliberate design to give privileges to one and deny them to the other. The old divide and rule card, that the British had played all over the world, they're playing it back in their own back yard now.

Amazingly, during the strike, we've had in the scab coalfields, the police presented as a neutral force simply trying to hold the two warring factions of miners apart.

In Ireland, the troops are similarly presented as a neutral force, keeping apart two equally mad sections of Irish people, it's just over religion, and the poor old British squaddie has nothing to do with the dispute and he wishes they'd just stop fighting so he can go home.

People who believe that kind of stuff really should ask themselves why there is such a presence in Crossmaglen, in a place that is so staunchly Republican. That's not to say that it's 100% Catholic. Why is there such a massive concentration of the British Army there, and the Protestants who live there have lived very happily with the Catholic community. There's never been any hint of sectarianism, so why are they there? They're obviously not keeping the two sides apart, although there are two sides they are one and the population's the other.

The state's armed forces - and I regard the political police that's being used against us as armed forces - are being used to attack, brutalise, intimidate and kill the progressive forces on both sides of the water. Now that the police have revealed themselves in their true role, I think people are going to have to learn that the British Army similarly is not in business to defend us, it's there to defend them, it's there to defend the ruling class the same as the police is, and we're learning that.

The struggle of the Irish people for independence and socialism makes them allies of the British working class in struggle against the same crowd. ■

REFORMISM DELAYS PINOCHET'S FALL

IN THE LAST few months the Chilean dictatorship has staggered from crisis to crisis. Pinochet and the Junta have been able to effect only the shortest term solutions. In the final analysis their only solution to the economic, social and political difficulties has been to intensify the repression.

Firstly, Chile is staggering under the weight of the enormous external debt, a position it shares with the other Latin American Countries. Appeals for leniency have fallen on deaf ears. *Time Magazine* of 2nd July 1984 comments: "While the US bankers say they are willing to make concessions, they have failed to co-operate on any specific long-term plan that would forgive some of the loans or allow the debtors a grace period for paying them. Said Laurence Brainard, chief international economist for Bankers Trust: 'The only thing on which the Banks can agree is that they want their interest.'"

Secondly, the dictatorship has to confront the pressure of the 12 great US companies that buy Chile's copper. They are pressing Reagan and Congress to legislate to halve the import quota of Chilean copper. Because of the banking crisis the North American financial institutions are in no position to support any more economic experiments by the dictatorship. They want to prevent its collapse, to keep it afloat but cannot finance any re-orientation.

Add to these economic difficulties the effects of the collapse of other dictatorships in the continent and the advance of mass working class struggles in Brazil and Uruguay and you have the circumstances that have deeply isolated the Junta. The internal effects of the crisis are prodigious. Inflation is running at 40% for this year. The Government is pleading for a breathing space to the IMF but as the hitherto loyal servant and creature of the American bankers its requests are laughingly inadequate. The Government has requested a 2% hike in the fiscal deficit - an expansion of the economy of 600 million dollars. Yet the fall in the price of Chilean copper exports will lose the exchequer 700 million dollars in revenue. Also this year alone 2,000 million dollars must be paid to service the external debt. Nor is there any relief in sight. In 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988 sums of 3,700, 3,900, 3,500 and 3,300 million dollars must be repaid.

STRIKE ACTION

On the national protest of 27th March this year the population demonstrated against the dictatorship and for the repudiation of this crippling debt. Workers have resorted to strike action despite military repression. In a hunger strike at the Sewell Copper Mine seven dismissed miners forced Pinochet to back down. The day before they were re-instated Pinochet had publicly insisted that they could not be taken back "because there would be hunger strikes all over Chile."

Pinochet's short-term responses have been ministerial re-shuffles, a series of new austerity measures like the cancellation of the work-finding schemes and yet more repression. Two weapons he has deployed are an "Anti-Terrorist Law" and a law on the "Abuse of the Publicity Media".

Pinochet aroused laughter when he announced these laws as the alternative to "a turn towards a dictatorship - which I am not in favour of". When introducing the legislation on television a slip of the tongue led Pinochet to refer to it as the "Terrorist Law" and indeed nobody sees it as other wise than lawless state terror against the people. It increases the power of the secret police (the C.N.I.) and the civil police, setting up a series of Military Tribunals to try suspected "terrorists". There is no appeal against sentences handed out by these bodies. They can receive anonymous testimony in the absence of the accused, they can impose the death penalty or up to five years internal exile (condemnation to live in a specified area or exclusion from certain

Women leading protest demonstrations in December 1983



Pinochet's police thugs.

towns and cities.) Lesser forms of harassment are the right of the police to detain people for 30 days and prosecution based on "failure to exercise your profession" or lack of visible means of support. This in a country with 35% unemployment.

The Law aimed at the journalists opposed to the Junta has been justly termed the Gagging Law. Pinochet has threatened that: "If it is necessary we will have to make another 22nd September." This is an absurd dream, for 1984 is not 1973. The working class, the oppressed masses of town and country and large sections of the urban lower middle-classes are rising in revolt against the dictatorship. In addition the ruling class and even the Junta are deeply divided. True the mass movement is subject to periods of advance and then relative retreat but even in the past few months street agitation and strikes have continued as have forceful protests by the journalists against the gagging laws.

The problem is that the mass movement, whose profound inner logic is towards an insurrectionary general strike has met with the opposition not only of Pinochet and Co but also of the leaders of the Labour Movement.

The "Communist" and "Socialist" leaders of the Chilean workers, grouped in the Movimiento Democrático Popular (MDP) and the Alianza Democrática (AD) are putting forward ever more niggardly low level democratic demands. Now they go no further than a call for a "government of transition" Whenever they mention a Constituent Assembly it is in academic terms, not as a slogan of agitation or an object of struggle. The government of transition would include the Armed Forces, the bourgeois parties and the Stalinist and "socialist" bureaucrats.

The AD, which contains the major bourgeois parties and the right-wing elements of the fragmented socialist party is in periodic negotiation with the military. The Stalinist dominated MDP supports this providing that "any understanding or agreement must take place between the opposition groupings the MDP, the AD and the BS (Bloque Socialista: Socialist Bloc - fragments of the Chilean Socialist Party, a group of 'Christian Socialists' and certain

Left personalities." Both major groups call for a Grand National Democratic Accord. This they hope will pave the way for winning the military over to ditching Pinochet and participating in a grotesque "Popular Front" to restore "democracy" on the installment plan and at the same time push through austerity measures necessary to solve the crisis of Chilean capitalism at the expense of the workers, peasants and the urban poor.

Whilst the Socialist and Stalinist leaders agree on the measures of class collaboration necessary when Pinochet goes, they engage in a charade of recrimination and polemic with one another aimed at disrupting the united front of the workers for action to destroy the dictatorship. The "Socialists" in the MDP accuse those in the AD of pursuing a Pinochetista policy. The latter accuse their MDF colleagues of ultra-leftism - believing that the choice before Chile is "Dictatorship or Socialism" whereas it is of course "Dictatorship or Democracy". The Stalinists play a double game. Whilst endorsing totally the MDP programme they have recently had to deploy left demagoguery to hang onto the workers and youth involved in the street battles and mass agitation. Corvalan's party has issued the slogan "By the road of insurrection with a socialist perspective" and engaged in certain armed actions. The CP obviously feels itself pressurised by the masses and by organisations on its left like the MIR.

POPULAR FRONT PERSPECTIVE

The deceitful nature of this "leftism" is painfully obvious, combined as it is with the total integration into the Popular Front perspective of the Grand National Democratic Accord and the obstruction of the necessary general strike without which "armed actions" or "insurrectionary roads" are empty demagoguery.

Above all for these bureaucrats, the activity of the masses themselves must be kept in the strait-jacket of the Popular Front alliance with the bourgeoisie. Only through the misleadership of these forces has the impetus towards an indefinite general strike been repeatedly broken. Only thanks to these bureaucrats' sabotage actions can Pinochet still continue to deal repressive blows at the resistance movement.

Yet whilst these leaders may act as a brake on the movement, they have not stopped it. The bourgeoisie itself knows this. The magazine *Hoy* on 14th August reports that 8,000 million dollars (one third of the external debt) has recently been smuggled out of the country to foreign bank accounts. Pinochet and the Junta are at odds over the former's plan for an appointed "Parliament". The Junta protests that it alone is the legislature! The political regime of the Chilean Bourgeoisie is in acute contradiction with the new relationship of forces between the classes in Chile. That is why the dictatorship totters on the brink of the abyss. If the masses can break the conservative control of the apparatus of their own parties and unions, they can liquidate the Dictatorship. If they do so it will open a profound social revolutionary crisis in which the crisis wracked capitalist system that gave birth to Pinochet can itself be liquidated. On September 4th/5th the Chilean masses will again demonstrate their heroism and their power in mass strikes and demonstrations. Victory to the general strike! Down with Pinochet's Dictatorship! □

by Diego Mocar

Dockers, Miners, forge the links now!

SOLIDARITY WITH THE MINERS is the issue at the heart of the second national dock strike in two months. Yet, as in July, the dockers' leaders are trying to insist that the dispute is over the single issue of the British Steel Corporation (BSC) breaking a past agreement that only TGWU members can berth ships. Of course it is perfectly that BSC have broken the agreement that only TGWU members can berth ships at Hunterston. But to concentrate on this is to take the whole issue out of context, BSC could not use TGWU members because, quite rightly, they are blacking unlimited supplies of coal to Ravenscraig in solidarity with the miners.

John Connolly, national docks officer of the TGWU, may believe that more support for a stoppage can be won by focusing on the "demarcation" issue, but he is wrong. Everybody, from Employment Secretary Tom King to the dockers at Felixstowe and Dover, knows perfectly well that it is solidarity with the miners that lies behind the specific question of who is allowed to berth ships at Hunterston. The great danger exists that the bosses, their press and their government will be able to exploit the gap between what the union leaders say the strike is about and what the union members know it is about.

Press and politicians alike are already playing the "democracy" card, arguing that the dockers are being railroaded into strike action in support of the miners against their will.

This question will be vitally important at both Dover and Felixstowe, the two ports which have been most extensively developed since the 1972 docks strike, whose workforces do not have the same experience and militant traditions as the older ports. The collapse of the July dock strike in Dover, under threats of violence from red neck lorry drivers, has not been overlooked by the bosses. They sense the possibility of breaking the power of the unions on the docks and in transport generally. Bob Scholey, head of BSC, is acting on behalf of the whole capitalist class when he refuses to accept the TGWU's right to have any control over who does what in the docks. He is hoping to follow in the footsteps of his ex-boss Ian MacGregor and "do a Nottingham" on the TGWU.

It is vital for dockers and miners alike that his plans fail. Everything possible must be done to win over Felixstowe and Dover. The most effective way of doing this will be by calling mass meetings, in work time, at which representatives from other ports, and from the NUM, can explain their case. An explanation, by the people directly involved, of the importance of the TGWU retaining its authority in all docks, the need to extend the Labour Scheme nat-



John Sturrock (Report)

Wyvenhoe: Miners show the way to close scab docks.

ionally so that all dockers will gain its benefits and why that fight can and must be linked to the miners' strike, is the best antidote to the media's poison of misinformation and pseudo-democracy.

It is not enough for Brother Connolly to say that, if the two ports do not support the strike, then "We will have to deal with this in the way we normally do and use whatever means we can by persuading and explaining the issues." He should be organising joint mass pickets of miners and dockers to show the majority support for the strike that exists nationally, he should be ensuring that TGWU members in the road transport industry do not attempt to cross picket lines of either dockers or miners at the ports and he should be making it crystal clear to anyone thinking of repeating the threats from a couple of hundred reactionary lorry drivers that they will be repaid in kind by thousands of pickets from both the TGWU and the NUM.

If, having heard all the arguments and having seen the scale of support for the strike nationally, dockers at Dover and Felixstowe nonetheless decide to oppose the wishes of the majority and not strike, then they will have taken a clear decision to stand with the bosses and the same mass pickets will have to be turned against them. This too should be made clear from the start.

The July docks strike ended with BSC agreeing to employ dockers for

loading operations as at Immingham. The TGWU's insistence that this was the only issue in the dispute allowed the bosses to escape the consequences of a prolonged national docks strike. This time the particular issue which has sparked off the strike is more fundamental because it concerns the right of the TGWU to impose blacking of cargo in solidarity with another union. This action is unlawful under the anti-union laws since it constitutes "secondary action."

BSC, therefore, could choose to sue the TGWU and so could any other employer whose business is disrupted by the docks strike. Neither the government nor the boss class as a whole want to see the law made to look ineffective or unworkable. It is, therefore, unlikely that they will defuse the dispute by making yet another agreement which they would intend to break whenever it suited them. If their attempts to break the strike by dividing the dockers do not work within a fairly short space of time, weeks rather than months, then legal action is almost bound to be taken against the TGWU. Transport House should declare immediately that any such action will be met with official strike action of the whole of the TGWU's 1½ million membership and that they will call upon the rest of the organised labour movement to mount an indefinite general strike until the legal action is dropped. ■

by Steve McSweeney

WORKERS IN ACTION



SUPPORTING THE MINERS AT FORDS

There were four months between the start of the miners' strike and the July summer shut-down at Fords Halewood (Liverpool). During this time the militant minority of stewards and activists in the plant had mixed fortunes in struggling for support and solidarity action alongside the NUM.

Chief among the arguments for support put forward by rank and file T and G members in the plant has been the threat of job losses that have been hovering over the works for the last two years. Already in this period nearly 2,000 jobs have gone, mainly through voluntary redundancies. Between now and the end of the year management want another 700 to go. Striking alongside the miners to maximise the impact of a fight has thus been, and remains, the main argument to take into the various sections.

Although a complete victory for the NUM is in the best interests of Halewood workers the union leadership inside the plant have done their best to limit the support given to the miners' strike. Pressure from the rank and file militants-mainly organised in the Fords Workers Group (the Combine)-was instrumental in getting the April T and G branch for the plant to back the planned July 13th North West Day of Action in support of the miners.

The Combine went some way towards taking the argument into the sections. However the actions of the convenor and deputy convenor (Maguire and Rowlinson) worked against them. For example, they refused to allow miners to address the T and G branch on the grounds that the dispute "was not T and G business". In addition, they were dead against miners coming into the plant to put their case to Halewood workers in the canteen. Instead the strikers were confined to collecting money on Thursdays and Fridays outside the two

main gates.

But even this was not the limit of their "intervention". In the T and G branch and in the mass meetings of both shifts (A and B) that took place prior to the day of action, the union leadership proposed that the decision to take action be left up to individual workers' consciences and even proposed £5 conscience money instead! This kind of "leadership" did nothing to overcome the fears and doubts of the rank and file and the result was predictable - no strike action on July 13th. Given that T and G members in Liverpool docks and in Vauxhall's car plant in Ellesmere Port did take action, a positive campaign could have produced results.

The best work around the strike to date, therefore, has been carried out by a minority of T and G militants in the plant. On one section regular meetings are held to discuss the strike. But this is all too rare in Fords. About ten T and G activists spent the weekend of 23/24th June down at St. Johns Wood pit in South Wales. Regular food and money has been taken by Fords workers to the striking miners at Point of Ayr pit in North Wales and Bold Colliery at St. Helens.

Now the 3 week holiday is over the militants must regain the momentum, ensuring the level of support already achieved is consolidated and extended. Liverpool T and G dockers are again on strike; the jobs threat at Halewood is still present; the miners are solid. The Combine and T and G branch meetings in early September must become the springboard for a renewed political offensive inside the plant. It must win over the sections to confidence in the idea that strike action now is the best way to tear up the redundancy programme and secure a catch-up wage increase in the new autumn pay claim. ■

KEWALS: The fight goes on!

REGULAR VISITS BY miners from Lea Hall and Birch Coppice to the picket line have lifted the morale of textile workers on strike at Kewal Brothers in Handsworth. The strike began in May when three TGWU members were sacked to prevent unionisation.

Management have been able to recruit scabs even at the sweat shop wages of £60 for 40 hours, showing how desperately support is needed. Harassment of women pickets by management thugs, plus recent police intervention arresting strikers and supporters demonstrates the bosses' determination to prevent unionisation.

TGWU officials initially refused to sanction strike pay under the rule which requires union membership for 30 weeks before qualifying for strike pay. This has now been overruled setting an important precedent for future union recognition disputes. The support committee is actively trying to prevent recruitment of scab labour by producing multi-language leaflets and adverts.

In previous union disputes involving Indian workers the Sikh temples have been helpful, but with Kewal himself President of West

Bromwich Gurdwara Temple, the strikers have been left to fight alone. This is undoubtedly exacerbated by the support given to Indira Gandhi by Indian Stalinists against the Sikh autonomists in the Indian community since the Indian Workers' Association are identified with the strike.

A major drawback in the strike has been the failure to involve the majority of the strikers - who are women in the decision-making process of the strike. Fewer strike meetings have been held than in previous strikes (eg. P S Raindi and Supreme Quiltings). The Kewal strikers are all members of the TGWU 5/119 Branch which meets in a Smethwick pub. For this reason no Indian women attend branch meetings.

The men must recognise that their union is severely weakened unless they are prepared to meet somewhere more acceptable to women. They would do well to remember that many years ago there was a struggle to have the proceedings of the branch translated into Punjabi so that the branch business would be accessible to ordinary Indian workers. The time has long since arrived for the TGWU to be opened up properly to these women workers. ■

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▷ continued from front page

dems of the workers must be linked inseparably together. No return to work until the pit closure programme, the rail cuts and the threat to the dock labour scheme are totally withdrawn. No return to work by one section of workers until the demands of all others are met.

If these steps are taken then a mighty strike wave can be unleashed on the bosses. But the TUC cannot be ignored. By not demanding strike action from Murray and Co, Scargill and McGahey have actually stren-

gthened the chances of the TUC weakening the miners' strike. Behind the scenes deals, deals only with leaders at the top, concessions in order to get money, are all gifts to the TUC. A clear demand - call a general strike-backed up by mass strike action, can, on the other hand force these leaders into the open.

Of course they would still work like mad to sell a general strike out-just as their predecessors did in 1926. But if we make sure that our demands are clear and unequivocal-total victory to the miners, withdraw the pit closure plan, smash the anti-union laws- and fight to place the strike under the control of the local joint strike committees and their national representatives, then we could ensure that a sell-out would be extremely difficult for the leaders to engineer. We fight for the TUC to call a general strike. We fight for the rank and file to control it.

Many miners have and will continue to raise one objection to our argument. A general strike is neither possible nor necessary for victory.

It is possible. The docks strike and the impending strike on the railways, the fact that in six days of action almost half a million workers have already struck in support of the miners, the pledge from 300 Scottish shop stewards and union officials to support a day of solidarity action with the miners, all show that support for the miners exists on a massive scale. They show that workers are prepared to take action. They show the real possibility for a general strike- if only

that general strike was being conscientiously campaigned for by the rank and file.

As to whether a general strike is necessary, the matter is becoming clearer. The miners can win alone. But they can also lose alone- just as they did after months of strike in 1926. Victory is not something that can be decided by coal stock calculations. It will be decided by struggle. Even with low coal stocks, if the miners are left isolated dangers exist- from scab coal, from crossing of picket lines etc. A general strike would have a dramatic impact on the balance of forces in the strike. The scabs would suddenly become isolated from the whole labour movement. Excuses for the crossing of picket lines would be removed. The scabs that remained would be facing a picket army many times bigger than the miners alone can provide. Moreover, to smash the Government's array of anti-union laws a fight by one or even a few unions is insufficient. The successful seizure of the South Wales NUM funds shows that.

A general strike is necessary. It is necessary to ensure victory to the miners. Moreover, if it does succeed in inflicting a defeat on the Tories over both the mining industry and the laws, it will be a defeat they will find extremely difficult to recover from. It will be a defeat heralding the start of a new working class advance- one that must bring about the destruction not merely of a bosses' government but of their entire political and economic order. ■

Workers Power

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